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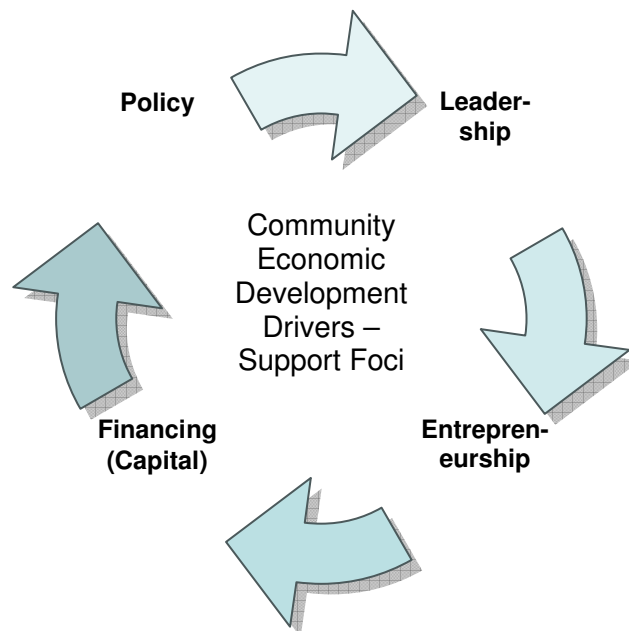
Iowa Community Economic Diversification Initiative

A collaboration between AdventGX, Iowa State University, the University of Northern Iowa, and Texas A&M University

Develop a Technical Assistance & Educational Resource Center (hereafter Center) that provides access to information and assistance to communities, landowners and entrepreneurs (project will be “framed up” using the ASD standard approach – see attached)

Proposed Approach

- 1) Develop a “custom” entrepreneurial training series (modularized) specific to the context of the needs of Iowa communities – AdventGX currently has developed resources, may partner with Texas A&M Extension Engineering (TEEX) and Recreation, Park & Tourism Sciences (RPTS).
- 2) Adapt the AdventGX “Rudy” Community Leadership Program for use in Iowa and the Mid-west
- 3) Adapt the “Nature Tourism: A Guidebook for Evaluating Enterprise Opportunities” for use in Iowa and the Mid-west.
- 4) Create a Web-based distance learning resource center that could be accessed through “partner” libraries, community centers and school computer centers/classrooms.
 - On-site, hands-on training seminars provided by locally trained instructors (using a train-the-trainer) approach supported from AGX and Iowa State University (seek sponsorship from Microsoft, Intel or other private entity).
- 5) Adapt AdventGX’s JourneyBuilder and Powervox to support the community effort.
- 6) Aim to enhance a holistic economic development strategy - entrepreneurship, tourism (agritourism, nature, heritage & cultural tourism), value-added agriculture, energy, micro-enterprise development.
- 7) Conduct research and project benchmarking throughout the initiative’s lifecycle.



Outcomes:

- Stimulate/create robust rural community economies
- Sustainability as a driver creating sensible linkages between the various complimentary “assets” and economic sectors within the community/region
- Conserve (and/or enhance) the natural & cultural assets of the community
- Enhance Quality of Life

This initiative aims to integrate all aspects of community economic development into a centralized strategy approach supported by a technology based information and service center. The AgMRC at Iowa State is providing excellent resources for Value-added agriculture. Also the Community Vitality Center is providing a platform for disseminating a dynamic new set of complimentary resources and tools to assist communities realize a more diverse set of economic development opportunities. These resources can be combined with other important areas of need including: leadership training & development, tourism development, community enhancement, technology development and utilization, and support to stimulate/enhance other economic activities that are necessary for communities to succeed.

The approach to be utilized will provide incentives for the adoption and diffusion of the use of new technologies and distance learning tools and information that is, essentially, universally needed for tourism and other economic development activities in rural America (and abroad). New Web-based technologies can create direct economic returns (rewards) for businesses and communities. These “rewards” then will stimulate people to expand their use of computers for running and growing their businesses and community economic development programs.

An active outreach and “marketing branch” of this initiative will promote resources and services and also conduct in-the-field research to identify and recruit communities that are “primed” with proper leadership and a community collaborative spirit. These communities (or groups of communities) can then be “seeded” with a package of incentives to stimulate their participation.

Because this approach is designed to be market-driven, it will be economically sustainable perpetually. Driven by a successful business development model, programs will be designed to be self-sustaining over time. Initial funds will be used to “prime” the initiative, but the “Center” will be designed to generate revenues so that the initiative will not need to be subsidized over time.

First Steps

- Conduct AdventGX Strategy Deployment (ASD) workshop
- Form working coalition
- Identify potential additional funding sources (public & private)
USDA (etc.) Senator Harkin & Grassley Private Foundations Corporations
- Identify viable sized “region(s)” to initiate project
- Create short list of prospect communities (regional based preferred – follow Van Horn approach)
- Evaluate those communities based on a set of criteria to ensure project success
(derived from Van Horn project, identify a set of criteria for a “perfect” project setting)
- Resources for the Center are already in development, or can be adopted/integrated from a variety of sources (e.g. AdventGX, extension at various universities, etc.)