

Executive Summary

Riverside County Business Centers

Overview

The Riverside County Business Center network provides collaborative business assistance services from three key locations in partnership with State, regional, and local business partners.

Challenge

As the tenth largest County in the United States, Riverside County's economic diversity and geographic size provide a unique challenge to delivering economic development services effectively. A centralized office doesn't provide efficient and effective service and business engagement to all parts of the county.

Innovative Solution

To solve this challenge the County's Economic Development Agency (EDA) opened a series of Business Centers to offer regionalized services in key locations throughout the county. The first Center opened in downtown Riverside's business district in 2015. Subsequently, a second location was opened in Indio to service the Coachella Valley, and a third opened in 2018 to serve the southwest region of Temecula/Murrieta and Hemet/San Jacinto. The Centers feature modern, retail storefront locations offering personalized economic development services that include demographic and market data, workforce development, and permitting services. EDA Concierge staff provides information about the County's economy, programs and services based on the important "local knowledge" of the County's market and sub-markets. Technology aids in service delivery with information being remotely accessible and also provided in downloadable formats. Listed below are services available to businesses and residents at each of the Centers:

- Workforce development service coordination
- Entitlement and permitting assistance
- Demographic and market analysis data
- International trade assistance
- Small business assistance from strategic partners
- Business financing programs
- Arts and tourism information
- Group and individual work space
- Networking events

- Free Wi-Fi connectivity
- Adjacent to ExCITE high-technology incubator (located at the Riverside Centre)

Originality

Important to the operation of the Centers is the leveraging of resources with partners. A key component of the Riverside and Indio Centers is the colocation of the EPIC Small Business Development Center and Coachella Valley Small Business Development Center (SBDC), respectively. The SBDC partnership provides one on one mentoring of entrepreneurs and classroom training events to take place within each Center. A unique offering in the Coachella Valley Business Center was the "Emprendedores" program which offered classes on how to start a business completely in Spanish. The program has been tremendously successful and has recently expanded to the Riverside Centre. Meeting space in the Centers has been used by private corporations for business meetings and strategic planning sessions.

Cost Effectiveness

The Business Centers are very low cost to operate and staff. All staff working at the Centers are existing EDA staff that have been deployed to the Business Centers from main offices. The physical locations of the Centers are in County facilities utilizing excess office and conference space.

Results

Since the first Center's opening 2015, over 1,700 individuals have utilized the Centers for meetings, one on one counseling sessions, and special events. The State's Employment Development Department, the Inland Empire Small Business Development Center, and the County's Office of Foreign Trade routinely utilize the Center for seminars, business meetings, and hosting of foreign delegations. The most important result of the Centers has been better coordination with partners that allows existing and new programs to flourish in Riverside County efficiently and cost-effectively.

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