



EDC-VC and Ojai: Here for Small Businesses

By Bruce Stenslie

The difficult economy has every business looking for ways to maximize their resources and maintain fiscal health. In Ojai, businesses have a resource that will help ensure economic vitality, thanks to a partnership between the city of Ojai and the Economic Development Collaborative-Ventura County (EDC-VC). The city's membership in the EDC-VC-with Mayor Sue Horgan serving on the organization's board of directors-assures that all services are provided at no cost to Ojai businesses.

This partnership is a valuable asset to every Ojai business because it cements the city's commitment to its businesses and the city's economic vitality, as well as providing additional business assistance resources through free, confidential business services and loan programs.

As a regional public/private economic development organization, EDC-VC's mission is to maintain the county's economic health and vitality, delivering programs that promote jobs and economic growth and raise overall productivity and incomes.

One of EDC-VC's important contributions to the city of Ojai is the Business Enhancement Program, an all-encompassing business assistance program that provides employers access to the latest business resources. The program includes Business 911, which provides expert turnaround assistance for businesses in crisis, and assistance for those seeking help with expansion and growth. All services-including business and strategic planning, financial planning, cash flow and payables, sales and marketing, and much more-are delivered one-on-one at no cost to each business through expert business consultants.

In addition to the Business Enhancement Program, EDC-VC operates loan funds for Ojai and Ventura County businesses that are looking to expand or that need funding for fixed assets or equipment, working capital, leasehold improvements or debt restructuring. Of these loan programs, EDC-VC's Revolving Loan Fund provides funding for eligible businesses to create and retain jobs. EDC-VC also collaborates with Ojai to make additional loan funds available to small businesses.

"Being involved with EDC-VC has been an asset to our community. The city has a great return on investment through our businesses' success. And EDC-VC's expert consulting for Ojai businesses enables our small town to have exciting, real results and business growth," said Mayor Horgan.

MOVING FORWARD

Expanding on immediate business services, EDC-VC has several new initiatives under development.

EDC-VC is drafting a strategy for establishing a green economy initiative, based on the encouraging successes of organizations such as the Ojai Valley Green Coalition. The initiative's goals are to improve market share and growth for Ventura County-based businesses, increase the number of Ventura County's businesses successfully participating in the green economy, promote job growth and improve educational and employment opportunities for Ventura County's workforce, and improve regional environmental quality and sustainable quality of life. This initiative is expected to launch early 2009.

Another initiative is in partnership with Ventura County Civic Alliance. It

will create a regional plan of action for economic development, helping assure that EDC-VC looks to the future while acting strategically during today's difficult times. The initiative's starting point will be retaining and advancing the county's high quality of life by building and retaining workforce talent, networking knowledge assets, energizing the entrepreneurial economy, transitioning to advanced manufacturing, and promoting regionalism. The necessary core funding has been identified to enable the project to begin late 2008.

With the city of Ojai as EDC-VC's partner, these and other new initiatives will be rolled out in the coming year. More immediately, however, EDC-VC is here to help Ojai businesses reach their potential, survive and thrive in a down economy.

Bruce Stenslie is the president/CEO of EDC-VC. For more information about EDC-VC programs and services, call 805-384-1800 or visit www.edc-vc.com/. Or contact Kathy McCann at the city of Ojai, 646-5581 ext 111 or mccann@ci.ojai.ca.us.

NOVEMBER

PLAN AHEAD CALENDAR

TUESDAY, NOV. 4
Election Day - BE SURE TO VOTE
Business Referral Group Meeting
@ Eggs N Things 7:30 a.m.

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 5
Evening Business Referral Group
@ EarthPlay Eco Store
6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.