

THE DELTA I-FUND

The Delta I-Fund™ is an early stage, proof-of-concept accelerator formed to train entrepreneurs in the eight-state Delta Regional Authority territory. Each startup team accepted into the program will complete 12 weeks of rigorous training, be matched to a mentor from the business community and receive technical assistance or access to seed-stage investment capital, depending on the team's geographical location.

The Delta I-Fund is administered by Winrock International, in partnership with entrepreneurial support organizations ("ESOs") throughout the Delta region.

The Need

The Delta Regional Authority territory has suffered from poverty for decades. From 1980-2011, over 43 percent of the counties within the region were classified as having "persistent poverty." To receive such a designation, a county or parish must have 20 percent or more of its residents living in poverty over the last 30 years. When compared to the United States at approximately 11 percent, this statistic alone indicates the distress level of the target region.

The region is home to a rich culture, unmatched natural resources, metropolitan and rural areas with unique economic opportunities and higher education institutions that rival those across the globe. It also boasts an impressive transportation network, including the Mississippi River, that connects the United States to the globe.

Today, there are over 250 innovative technologies available for licensing and/or commercialization at the 11 largest research universities within the DRA territory.

There is no question that the DRA territory has the potential for growth and economic development. However, due to the lack of entrepreneurial training and funding within the region, innovators are leaving the region in pursuit of better resources or deciding not to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams.

The Model

The Delta I-Fund closes this gap in resources for early-stage entrepreneurs within the DRA territory and seeks to ultimately break the region's cycle of economic underdevelopment and poverty.

The Delta I-Fund recruits entrepreneurial teams throughout the DRA territory and develops them by administering a structured, 12-week training

program modeled after I-Corps™, a program formed by the National Science Foundation in 2011. Thousands of teams have been through the national I-Corps program, which includes curriculum founded by Steve Blank and Stanford University.

The program teaches entrepreneurs how to develop and document their proposed business model on a lean canvas and how to test their hypotheses through a rigorous customer discovery process.

Another key value proposition of the Delta I-Fund is the support and guidance of a mentor from the business community. Nearly every aspect of the Delta I-Fund program is virtual and flexible to meet participants where they are throughout the region.

The Delta I-Fund prepares Arkansas teams to pitch for local, private investments made available as the successfully navigate through the Delta I-Fund program.

The program provides a capped amount of technical assistance to teams located in non-Arkansas DRA counties and parishes.

Partner ESOs

The Delta I-Fund partners with four entrepreneurial support organizations (“ESO”) located throughout the DRA territory: Innovate Mississippi of Jackson, the Louisiana Technology Park of Baton Rouge, Propeller of New Orleans and Start Co. of Memphis.

These ESOs aid the program in recruiting entrepreneurial teams, mentors and sponsors from their local communities.

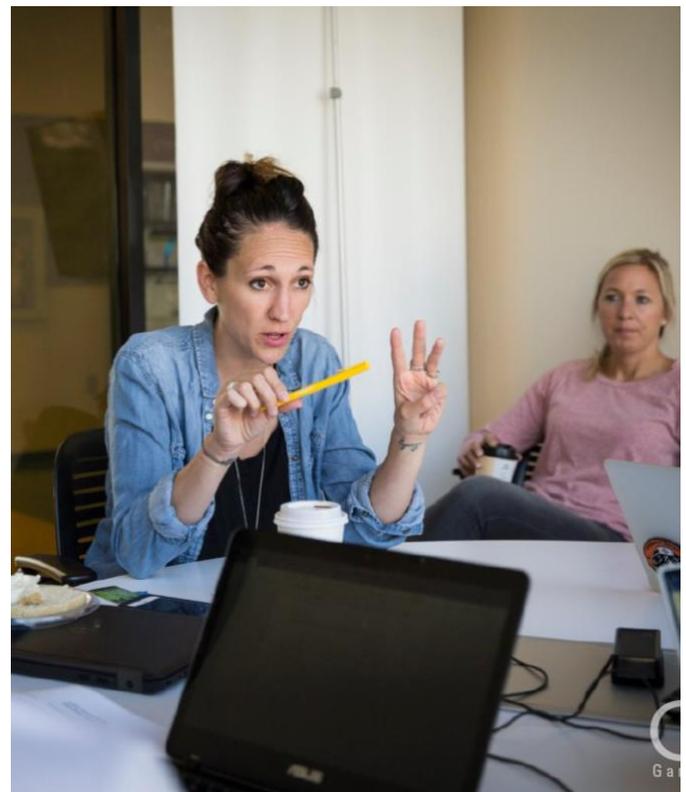
The Team

The Delta I-Fund is managed by Jeff Stinson, Executive Director of Fund for Arkansas’ Future and an Innovate Arkansas advisor and Amy Hopper, Program Officer at Winrock International. Jeff has been with the Delta I-Fund since its

inception in 2016. Jeff’s background includes big 5 accounting, marketing for a large healthcare organization, an MBA from Vanderbilt University and over 13 years fostering entrepreneurship in Arkansas.

Amy joined the program in April 2017. Her background is in finance and business continuity program management.

Jeff and Amy have recruited talented and experienced lean-startup instructors and mentors into the program. These individuals provide guidance to entrepreneurial teams as they navigate the lean canvas and the rigorous customer discovery process.



Garrett Hubbard Studios