

Best Practice

Tourism Development

CONTACT

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Project Date: 2001 (ongoing)

THE PRACTICE

In 1987, the Town of Eastend and the RM of White Valley Tourism Board was formed with a mandate to facilitate the development of tourism for the community and surrounding area. Following the discovery of a tyrannosaurus-rex fossil in 1995, Eastend Community Tourism Authority Inc. (ECTA) began setting up tours in the Frenchman River Valley. In May 2001, ECTA took occupation of a new, 16,000 square foot interpretive centre, known as the T-rex Discovery Centre.

THE PROCESS

To create and implement the practice, approval was required from both municipal governments and the Royal Saskatchewan Museum. The town and RM each provided seed money to secure funding through the Community Tourism Assistance Program. Once approval from the community was given, the Royal Saskatchewan Museum approved staffing of the Paleo Lab.

To assist with the design of the project, consultants were hired to determine what the community had to offer and public meetings were held to present a plan. Following the approval of the community, a feasibility study was done. The results were presented to the town and RM, who felt that the project was too big and needed to be modified. A modified, scaled-down version of tourism development was considered to be the best option to bring an economic boost to the region.

THE RESULTS

The main benefit from this project has been local employment. Since 1995, this project has maintained at least one full time employee, as well as several seasonal and part time positions. The development of the T-rex Discovery Centre has allowed the municipalities to attract new businesses and residents to the area. Residential property is being sold as soon as it goes on the market and property prices are on the rise with the community considering sub division expansion in both municipalities.

In order to achieve these results, the main challenge that the municipalities faced was that of access to the community due to the condition of local highways and signage to direct visitors. The Department of Highways has developed numerous signs to direct tourists to the community from the Trans Canada Highway.

LESSONS LEARNED

Through this process, the municipalities have learned that public consultation is imperative to ensure the public buys into a project. Patience and endurance, along with endless hours of volunteer service, and support of municipal councils and the community can make or break a project. The community thought the initial plan was too big and needed to be modified. Community engagement and participation allowed the municipalities to come up with an effective plan that has provided an economic boost for the region.