

Getting Started and Setting Your Goals

Adapting the Evergreen model for your city is a process that requires a great deal of time and effort. Adapting the model will help foster economic stability and prosperity for a community, but it can't be done in a month or even a year. The Evergreen Cooperative Initiative was started in 2007 and broke ground on the first two companies in October 2009.

The first year was spent interviewing and bringing together local leaders to develop a strategic plan. This was after a group of anchor institutions and community leaders formed an initiative bringing them together to develop a broader strategy. After the strategic plan, the feasibility of the different business opportunities was assessed to determine the best way forward. Each of the possibilities were weighed against the others, judged to see which could find the best home with local anchor institutions, and myriad other factors. Different partnerships had to be forged with organizations that could provide workforce training, business expertise, and financing. Different governmental offices and agencies provided partnerships as well, connecting the effort with local, state, and national funding and tax credit opportunities.

Evergreen was created to be the economic inclusion strategy of the Greater University Circle Initiative, which had already brought together anchor institutions and other community leaders into quarterly meetings with individual committees for each area of focus with their own work plans. The structure behind GUCI was vital for creating Evergreen and something vital for any effort adapting this model. This group initiated evergreen and their continued involvement made the cooperatives possible, not least because many of them ultimately investing purchased the services of one or more of them.

By having local anchors like University Hospitals, The Cleveland Clinic, Case Western Reserve University, the Cleveland Foundation, and the City of Cleveland meeting regularly and committed to building a broad revitalization strategy within a structure of regular meetings and a division of labor, the strategy that became Evergreen already had an avenue to be devised, vetted, and eventually supported. Local anchor institutions aren't the only organizations that need to be a part of an initiative like this though and the following documents

that outline the different phases of adaptation will provide more detail. The major lesson for starting an effort adapting the Evergreen model is that having a structure or system in place that provides a coordinating function is essential and should be ultimately made up of the type of organizations that will be required to build a successful project overall.

Setting goals is an essential first step, as these goals must be effectively communicated to stakeholders as close to the beginning of the initiative as possible.

These are the goals or principles Evergreen is based on:

1. Leverage anchor institution financial flows
2. Jobs alone are not enough; ownership and stability are essential
3. For-profit, not subsidy-based
4. Link strategy to growing sectors of the economy
5. Green businesses, green jobs, green ownership
6. Achieving scale
7. A network, not just individual businesses
8. Capture local financial flows to increase multipliers
9. Broad partnership based on a shared vision
10. Plan for success

Bringing together anchor institutions and additional stakeholders takes time. The development of the strategic plan takes time. Determining the feasibility of the businesses and other community wealth building mechanisms takes time. All the pieces take considerable time, but it's well worth it. All the documents, video, and audio files here will help with the adaptation effort, but nothing will take away the need for considerable time, effort, and the commitment of a community of organizations dedicated to building a local economy that works for people, planet, and profit.