

# THE BRIDGE

*The Quarterly Newsletter of Building Rural Innovation & Development for Growing Entrepreneurs*

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## NEW INCUBATOR

By the Spring of 2026, the BRIDGE plans to host a new Incubator program location in Sunflower County. More BRIDGE Clients will be able to hold a free office space to grow the county's economy.

## WEBSITES

For a limited time and a limited number of clients, the BRIDGE program, in the Spring of 2026, will be offering free websites that will help clients take their businesses to the next level! Inquire next Spring

## QUICKBOOKS

Many BRIDGE Clients use QuickBooks to reconcile their business finances. Coming in the Spring 2026, BRIDGE will host a QuickBooks workshop tutorial to show clients how to use the program.

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## FINANCIAL LITERACY WORKSHOP

At the end of October and during the month of November, our partner, Planters' Bank, sent representative Keshawn Jennings to DSU to share Financial Literacy tips with our BRIDGE clients. They learned details including balance sheets, profit-loss statements, business loans, and checking accounts.

Clients were actively engaged in the workshop and asked questions that applied to their own businesses. They were provided expert advice and support and walked away ready to get their businesses growing and thriving!

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## NEW PARTNERSHIP W/ SCCSD

This Fall 2025, the BRIDGE was honored to enter into a partnership with the Sunflower County Consolidated School District to enter into the Career & Technical Center to teach Entrepreneurship and Financial Literacy to their students. We are excited to begin this journey in January 2026.

## SMALL DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS

On December 10, BRIDGE Clients were able to partake in a workshop that centered around who qualifies for and how to register for the Small Disadvantaged Business Federal Contracting program. For mor information, contact our office to find out if you qualify.

# BUILD YOUR OWN BUSINESS NOW OR NEVER

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### BRIDGE JOB POSTING

In January 2026, the BRIDGE Director will hire two new BRIDGE Business Recruiters to join the staff at Delta State University. The BRIDGE Business Recruiters will cover and recruit small business owners in Sunflower County to become clients of the BRIDGE program. The Business Recruiter positions are remote with heavy travel throughout the county area.

The positions are paid on a performance-based basis. There will be a designation between North and South Sunflower Counties. The positions are for 12 months, beginning January-December 2026.

If you are interested in applying for one of the BRIDGE Business Recruiter positions, please contact Leslie Cartlidge by emailing your resume to [lcartlidge@deltastate.edu](mailto:lcartlidge@deltastate.edu) or calling 662.846.4908 for questions.

### PROJECT OFFICER SITE VISIT

This Fall, the Kellogg Project Officer, Joi Owns Norwood, visited the Mississippi Delta and the BRIDGE program. She made her first stop at the Drew Incubator offices to visit the Incubator Clients, Alshunda Quinn, Quinton Smith, and Natasha Dozier. She was impressed by their businesses and the work they are doing in the community.

Following her site visit at the Incubators, Ms. Owens visited Delta State to meet with the BRIDGE staff. We discussed programs and how we can continue to make BRIDGE the great program it is!



### FUNDER

The BRIDGE is supported by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and is housed at Delta State University in Cleveland, MS.

### STAFF

Gene Finley is the Director of the BRIDGE Program.

Leslie Cartlidge is the Business Developer of the BRIDGE Program.



# ENTREPRENEURSHIP & FINANCIAL LITERACY *6-wk Course*

HOSTED BY THE DELTA STATE  
UNIVERSITY BRIDGE PROGRAM

BEGINNING JANUARY, 2026

