ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS

University

Organizing for Action Guide

September 2020

About This Guide

This **Organizing for Action Guide** gives more insight into why entrepreneurial focus and stakeholder engagement are key to economic development and how to bring these players into the process. We also build on the tools and information presented in the **Community Readiness Guide** with additional resources for identifying community stakeholders and building engagement so your community can move forward with entrepreneur-led economic development.

The e2 University includes several additional guides to help you in your journey toward entrepreneur-led economic development:
- **Introduction to e2 University**
- **Community Readiness for Entrepreneurship**
- **Assessments to Strategy**
- **Working with Entrepreneurs**
- **Metrics, Stories and Sustainability**

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Part 1 – Introduction to Organizing for Action

Getting adequately organized for visioning and moving an entrepreneur-led development initiative forward is important. We use the word "adequately" intentionally. As is the case with entrepreneurial ventures, do not overthink this or work to replicate the perceived optimal organizational construct. Get organized so you can get going. Our **Organizing for Action Guide** provides you the basics to get organized and shares some models for more evolved and well-established entrepreneurial communities.

In our **e2 Development Framework,** we identify a progression from *Community Readiness for Entrepreneurship* to *Organizing for Action* to *Working with Entrepreneurs* to ultimately impact and sustainability. There is actually an interim process step you may want to consider between "readiness" and "organizing." We have included this interim step – **Energizing Your Community** – into this **Organizing for Action Guide,** but you may want to consider some of this content even if you are still in the readiness assessment phase of your initiative. We always encourage communities to scan all the guides and review our last book *Energizing Entrepreneurial Communities – Pathways to Prosperity* to get a good overview of all the content. By doing so, you can use resources from one guide that may actually fit better in your community's process.

Energizing Your Community for Entrepreneurship

For most communities, there are some folks who are interested in and committed to entrepreneurship as the way to go, so there are some early champions and maybe even a stakeholder group willing to move forward. But this foundation for success may be weak. Before you actually organize for action, you may need to do some "energizing" work. In Part 2 of this guide, we provide some ideas that will help you strengthen your foundation to organize well and then move into action with a greater prospect for success, impact, and sustainability.

Additional Resources. There are some other resources and tactics that could help strengthen your foundation for organizing. Clearly the work you do in **Readiness for Entrepreneurship** can help; if you have blown past this phase, reconsider it as an important starting point. You may believe your community is ready, but the tools in the **Readiness for Entrepreneurship Guide** can help you make sure.

If you have a community where community education and engagement are important (we hope that is the case as you always want to "do with" and "not for" or worse yet "to"), consider employing our **Entrepreneurial Community Survey**. This survey can be used either in the readiness phase or in the organizing phase. But it can be a starting point to get a better idea of what the larger community thinks about prioritizing entrepreneurship as a development strategy.

Empowering leadership is foundational to all strategic and impactful community economic development. We have developed an allied paper **Leaders are Key** that provides additional information on the key players and leadership roles within the development of a high performing entrepreneurial ecosystem. As your community is using this Organizing for Action Guide, be sure to download the **Leaders are Key** resource as it can help you identify key players in your ecosystem building process. Within this paper there are additional considerations worth reviewing related to our communities and their residents. We have come to recognize a key to community development success is a certain kind of community leader we call champions. **Community champions** are local leaders who empower their communities to embrace change, capture opportunities and sustain strategically important development. Where we have strong e2 champions we find we have successful e2 communities. Community champions and other e2 community leadership roles are detailed in **Leaders Are Key**.

Another resource you may want to consider as your community is organizing for action is our **Defining Your Community** paper, which can help your community vision your unique approach to entrepreneur-led development and ecosystem building.

In **e2 Job Descriptions**, we provide a vision of a well-developed but early-stage organizational structure for your entrepreneurship initiative. Within this paper, we also provide basic job roles and descriptions. Sometimes it is helpful to look at what the final organizing endgame looks like as you are beginning to get organized for action.

Getting Started Checklist

Some communities like to work with checklists, so we have developed a **Getting Started Checklist** central to effective and efficient organizing. You may want to employ this resource as you are getting organized. Feel free to adapt it to your preferences and needs. Always do share back your innovation of this work as this is how we learn. Remember e2 has been a co-creator of community economic developers across North America over the past quarter century.

In Part 5 of this Organizing for Action Guide, we provide information on our **Organizing Assessments.** The first assessment can help your initial organizing team do **stakeholder mapping**. This assessment is straightforward and can quickly help you identify who you should invite to an organizing meeting in which you can educate on your proposal to pursue entrepreneur-led development and use the second assessment, the **stakeholder mission alignment tool**. In this Organizing for Action Guide, we identify some of the more likely stakeholders and why they might align their missions with entrepreneurship. We have found these two quick assessments can be the launching point for securing stakeholder buy-in and commitments. Instead of folks saying, "This sounds like a good idea and we might be interested in playing," we find they say, "We can do this and make these specific commitments." Remember, commitments are only valuable if they are specific, actionable, and accountable.

Accelerating e2

Our longest-running statewide entrepreneurship initiative is NetWork Kansas. We have been honored to be part of its creation and NetWork Kansas has provided us the greatest learning laboratory. Check out the NetWork Kansas Case Study we did a few years ago for more background. In the **Community Readiness for Entrepreneurship Guide,** we talked about an important lesson NetWork Kansas learned the hard way with respect to community readiness to become a Kansas eCommunity. Another key lesson we learned was accelerating the organizing and opportunity assessment phases was important. Unless there is real progress, communities—particularly stakeholders—lose faith and disengage. This is a death sentence for any initiative. As part of our NetWork Kansas collaboration, we produced Accelerating E Communities in Kansas that captured the "tricks" of getting organized, assessing your opportunities, getting to working with entrepreneurs sooner and demonstrating value and impact within one year. You might want to review this paper as part of your early organizing strategizing.

Two final introductory suggestions before you dig into this content:

1. Take a look at our **Working with Entrepreneurs** and **Assessments to Strategy Guides.** Having a sense of what comes next can help you with the work at hand.

2. You may also want to take a few minutes and scan our **Metrics, Stories and Sustainability Guide** with content on metrics and story capture. We have found that there is a strong reciprocal relationship between solid organizing and initiative sustainability. Understanding early on the keys to initiative sustainability can be helpful as you are recruiting partners and getting organized.

Aspirations and Managing Expectations

In almost everything we do as communities, expectations are important. They can become an envisioned finish line and yardstick for measuring success. In entrepreneur-led development, we want to both inspire and manage expectations. Balancing being visionary and aggressive in your goal setting while providing some slack knowing any new initiative has start-up challenges, is prudent.

Now it is time to move on and get into the content in our Organizing for Action Guide. Good luck: be smart and work hard, and you can position your community for a more prosperous future by doing a bang-up job getting the right commitments and organization sooner.

Part 2 – Energizing Your Community

Our **e2 University** includes a resource package focused on community readiness for entrepreneurship. If you have not reviewed our readiness resources, we encourage you to do so. Our experience is clear: damage can be done to your community if it is not ready to adequately commit to any kind of economic development. Successful economic development requires robust investment of leadership, time, talent, and resources. Successful economic development is not a short-term proposition but a long-term commitment. Changing your community's trend lines in a positive direction requires a smart strategy and dedication to consistent and sustained execution.

We assume your community or region is ready for entrepreneur-focused economic development and the time is right to grow your band of entrepreneurship champions to a wider group of community stakeholders and organizations. This resource package can help you and your team energize your community in support of entrepreneurs as a pathway to increased prosperity. Assuming you are ready to move forward, how can you energize your community?

Time to Energize Your Community

Community economic development is both extremely important and a major commitment. Your core team should particularly focus on:

- Local Responsibility
- A Smart Game Plan
- Robust Investment
- Sustained Effort

A sure takeaway from this assignment will be an appreciation for engaging a broad segment of your community's development stakeholders. A strong champions group for your entrepreneurship initiative will ensure that it is locally owned, a smart game plan emerges, there is robust investment and your initiative is sustained over time, allowing it to succeed in growing a more prosperous economy and community. This resource package can help you and your team achieve the collaboration necessary to energize your community for entrepreneurship.

Understanding Economic Development

Most of the likely suspects in your community will have a basic understanding of the "why" and "what" of economic development. Entrepreneur-focused development can bring a larger and more diverse group of stakeholders into your initiative's collaboration. Many of these new faces will come from education, government and human resource organizations, agencies, and institutions. New faces, new to economic development, may need some grounding; they may need some help getting up to speed on economic development 101. Taking time to work with new potential partners can expand your capacity to undertake and succeed with this work. To help you and your community with the basics of economic development, this package includes a paper titled Community-Centered Economic Development.

Economic development is most successful when other types of development precede it. Foundational to all economic development is *people development*. Developing human talent is more important today as North American communities and regions compete globally through value-added economic ventures. The quality of community, the environment for economic development, is increasingly important as well. Urban landscapes, access to public lands, recreation, education, health care, housing, shopping, etc. are all part of smart *community development*. Human talent and high-value economic ventures demand quality communities in which to live and work. With robust investments in people and places, the stage is set for successful *economic development*.
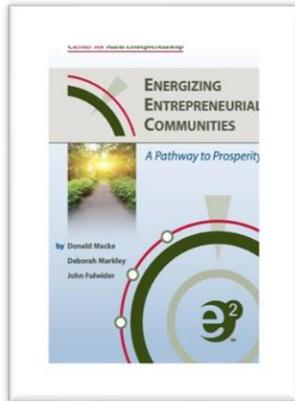
Within the practice of economic development, there is a hierarchy of development options. Foundational to most successful economic development today is entrepreneurship. A community environment that is strong for local entrepreneurs is also competitive for retaining and expanding existing businesses and attracting new businesses. Most communities can no longer hope to grow and diversify their economy through attraction. Paying attention to growing ventures from within (e.g., the concept of Economic Gardening) is increasingly important. Additionally, entrepreneur-focused economic development is typically more cost effective than business attraction. Attracting high quality ventures is very expensive and risky; candidates for attraction may not stay once the incentives and inducements are complete. Locally grown entrepreneurs are more likely to root in place and commit to the community for the long haul.

Why Entrepreneurship?

In the early and mid-2000s, we conducted dozens of e2 Institutes where we explored the related topics of "why entrepreneurship as a development strategy" and "emerging strategies for entrepreneur-focused economic development." In 2005, we captured this content and learning in our widely used book, *Energizing Entrepreneurs, Charting a Course for Rural Communities*. In Chapter 5, "Making the Case – Why Entrepreneurship?" we addressed this all-important topic. While entrepreneurship has been part of North America's culture for generations, it was not often part of a state's (province's), region's or community's economic development game plan. The first step in energizing your community is making the case for entrepreneurship to the development stakeholders in your community.
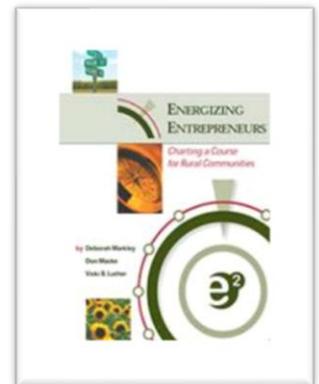
Our e2 book spawned significant development efforts in Nebraska, Georgia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Wisconsin, Washington, Canada and other locations throughout North America and the English-speaking countries of the Pacific Rim. With new research and an evolving framework, we published *Energizing Entrepreneurial Communities, a Pathway to Prosperity*, our second book on this topic. If you are looking for additional information on how to make the case for entrepreneurship in your community, we offer the following suggestions:

● Chapter 5, Making the Case – Why Entrepreneurship, in *Energizing Entrepreneurs, Charting a Course for Rural Communities*.

● Part 1, Making the Case, *Energizing Entrepreneurial Communities, A Pathway to Prosperity*.

● Our paper Why Entrepreneurship? Making the Case for Entrepreneurship! included in this resource package.

A critical rationale for entrepreneur-focused economic development is that it contributes to increased community prosperity today and builds wealth within the community for the future. Wealth formation is important and entrepreneurial people are particularly good at creating wealth not only for themselves but for workers, charities, local governments, and other businesses in the community.

Entrepreneurship and Community Wealth Connection

North America has a long and rich history of entrepreneurship. New ideas, innovation and new ventures have fueled cycles of economic growth and prosperity. The ability of motivated people to evolve an idea and grow a business around a new product or service has been the basis of American and Canadian economic success generation after generation.

New ideas and new ventures do not always prove successful. But when one does, whether it is Disneyland or Microsoft, new wealth is created. This new entrepreneurial activity certainly creates wealth for the founders, but also for investors, employees, communities, and family members. Today, entrepreneurship is the primary pathway to personal success and wealth. Successful entrepreneurs are often part of another rich tradition in North America: philanthropy and charitable giving. Generally, they give back to the causes they believe in, ranging from the arts to economic development in their community.

Connecting a development strategy focused on growing successful entrepreneurs with community giveback can be powerful. It can be the foundation for sustaining economic renewal over generations. In 2011, we published *Transfer of Wealth in Rural America – Understanding the Potential, Realizing the Opportunity and Creating Wealth for the Future*. This book connects the dots between North America's remarkable and unprecedented transfer of wealth opportunity and how increasing community giveback could fund new generations of economic renewal.

There is extensive research focused on why some communities succeed and others fail. While there are numerous reasons that explain different community outcomes over time, a common factor surfaces time and time again in this vast research: the importance of leaders. The right people exercising empowering leadership are central to community success. Based on this research, a central focus of our Entrepreneurial Communities work is identifying and empowering community leaders. Our success in

helping communities become more entrepreneurial depends in large part on the ability of community leaders we are working with to help their communities understand their entrepreneurial opportunities and act effectively on them.

Traits of Successful Communities

One does not need a PhD to understand why some communities are more successful than others. There are volumes that document the characteristics that make some communities stand apart from their peers. For entrepreneurial communities, we have identified community traits that are most often associated with optimal success. *When you review these traits and reflect on your own career and life, you will begin to see your own personal formula for success.*

Figure 1 – Characteristics of Successful Communities

Opportunity Focused	Compelling Goals	Leadership Team
Successful communities take the time to identify genuine opportunities that will improve the community. Successful communities act on these opportunities and make them reality.	Successful communities set compelling, clear, and accountable betterment goals. These goals provide both a roadmap for action and goal posts for celebrating progress and success	Nothing happens without leaders willing to help their community discover opportunities, grow a vision for the future, set goals, and sustain effort over time. This local leadership includes a local point person who coordinates between the community and outside resources.
Community Engagement	**Smart Action Plan**	**Regular Meetings**
Successful communities involve the entire community bringing the full potential of the community's talents, skills and ideas to bear in support of community agreed upon development goals.	Having a vision and setting goals is essential, but without a smart action plan that moves to implementation, such plans are nothing more than words. Successful communities have smart action plans.	Successful communities stay engaged, and one key tactic is regular meetings where the business of community betterment is undertaken. Regular meetings provide important pacing essential for progress.
Strong Execution	**Staff Support**	**Funding**
For community betterment to occur, work has to be undertaken. Strong execution of the action plan ensures that, over time, goals are met and the community's vision for a better present and future is realized.	Our field-based experience is clear: consistent and committed support staff accelerates progress. Staff capacity does not replace leaders and volunteers, but it can increase effectiveness and efficiency of community engagement.	Little invested and little accomplished, so goes the saying. Community betterment takes dollars and appropriate funding to support staff, action plan implementation and other costs.

Part 3 – Organizing Resources and Tools

You have determined your community is ready and energized to become an entrepreneurial community and now it is time to get organized for action. For most communities, this will be your first real try at launching an entrepreneurship initiative. You might think of your community as being akin to an entrepreneurial startup. Our **Organizing for Action Guide** primarily focuses on start-up initiatives. However, our field experience, insights and the resources in this package are also relevant if your community has an existing entrepreneurship initiative that you want to grow or even if you are ready to become a breakout or high-performing Entrepreneurial Development System.

TIP: Pace Yourself!

Pacing	Campaigns	Pushes
Creating and sustaining a fast-moving pace within your initiative is highly recommended. Robust pacing ensures momentum is sustained. But sustaining such rapid pacing can be a challenge.	One way to sustain rapid pacing is the use of calendar-based campaigns. We can learn a lot from the organization and pacing of electoral campaigns. Annual campaigns are a good place to start.	Pushes typically last one to six months and are used to break campaigns into even more focused goals, actions, and outcomes. We employ three-four month pushes within our year-long campaigns.

Why Organizing is Important

Many things will contribute to your community's development success including such things as a smart game plan, strong execution, and sustained effort including funding and staffing. Organizing within your community is central to being smart and effective with all elements of your development game plan.

Your community may have a more limited genuine opportunity or a constrained budget. Effective and efficient organizing of your partners and resources can empower your community to get the most from your entrepreneur-focused development efforts. Being smart revolves around wisely using whatever opportunity and resources you have. Sound organizing is a key to being smart.

TIP: Challenge the Turf!

Over our 40 plus years of working in economic development, we have witnessed the rise and fall of many initiatives. Some of North America's best economic developers have been part of these rollercoaster rides. There are many reasons why good and promising initiatives do not survive, let alone reach high performing status. But a common theme from the field is the challenge of turf. Congressional dysfunction illustrates how hard it is for people to work constructively with each other over the long periods of time necessary for meaningful progress. Time and time again, turf issues and competition emerge that undermine progress, drive good talent away and even derail proven strategies. War between two critical stakeholder groups (e.g., the chamber and the city) is all it takes. Managing turf challenges through effective organization must be a priority.

What You Need to Organize

There are four primary areas of focus for organizing:

1. Right Stakeholders
2. Smart Process
3. Strategic Actions
4. Accelerators

Stakeholders

Understanding the meaning of "stakeholders" is very important as you organize to grow your entrepreneurial community. Stakeholders are those public and private organizations in your community

that have a "stake" in your community's development. They have a deep self-interest and may even have a tradition of engagement in development activities. Within each stakeholder group, there are specific leaders who will shape and determine their group's engagement.

Right Stakeholders. Becoming an entrepreneurial community is a team sport. Ernesto Sirolli (i.e., Enterprise Facilitation) makes this argument with his Trinity of Management. Successful entrepreneurs build effective and efficient teams with passion for and competence in the critical business areas of production, finance, and marketing. Being entrepreneurial, your community must build a strong team of the *right* stakeholders. Who are the *right* stakeholders? Here are some criteria to help you answer this important question:

- Are they currently active in your community's development?
- Do they have a strong self-interest (e.g., entrepreneurs) in your community's development but have not been part of your community's formal development efforts?
- Can they bring resources to support your initiative?
- Are they in a position to undermine or even block your initiative?
- Do they provide programs or services potentially valuable to entrepreneurs?

Using these five criteria, you can generate a list of potential stakeholder groups and their leaders; these are the *right* stakeholder to invite into your initiative. Ultimately, your initial stakeholders will be those who are willing and able to engage. In this guide, we provide a stakeholder mapping tool that is a useful starting place. Among your right stakeholders will be those who actually want to invest in your initiative. Cultivating these funders is a necessary part of stakeholder engagement. To help you think about the connection between stakeholders and sustainability for your initiative, we have included the **Metrics, Stories and Sustainability Guide** in this resource package.

Smart Process. Too often, when we are planning a new initiative or implementing a growth strategy, we do not give enough attention to the *process*. Selecting the right change process is important and you may need some help. Often, outside, and compensated facilitation is a very smart investment. Our experience suggests that often when a stakeholder disengages, it is because they find the process (or lack of process) ineffective and a waste of their time; it is not that they fail to believe in the initiative. Your most valuable stakeholders want to get something important done and they will only allocate time to those initiatives they believe have a reasonable chance of going somewhere and succeeding.

Strategic Actions. Earlier in this guide (page 10) we introduced the idea of using "campaigns" and "pushes." This approach is very promising based on our field experience and observations from other arenas. Use of a campaign and push approach requires discipline and strategic planning where you set specific goals, both short-term and long-term. This approach provides an action roadmap and progress tracking. It allocates and focuses stakeholder effort on creating peer accountability and impact. Later in this guide, we share suggested progress benchmarks that you can employ in moving your initiative from dream to reality, whatever your starting point.

Accelerators. Finally, you and your community have choices. There are clear decisions and commitments you can make or not make. Depending upon the commitments you make, you can accelerate your progress. Two key accelerators include pacing and investments:

Figure 2 – Accelerator Decisions

Pacing	Investments
Developing and launching a new initiative (whether a startup or expansion) can drag on when your pacing is very slow. And there is often a price to pay for such slow pacing: some stakeholders drop out and those still engaged have trouble keeping track of where they are going. While aggressive pacing requires real commitment and may strain your resources, it can also accelerate progress.	Many new initiatives are under-capitalized or bootstrapped. For example, your team may be unwilling to invest in a facilitator or an initiative coordinator. Under-capitalization is a primary reason why initiatives move too slowly, have ineffective change processes and result in either grudging progress or outright failure. Smart and adequate investment makes a difference.

In our deep and long-term engagement work in Kansas, we have identified five specific accelerators that warrant investment consideration:

1. Community Coaching
2. Opportunity Analysis
3. Focusing on the Right Entrepreneurs
4. Entrepreneur or Business Coaching
5. Right Entrepreneurial Infrastructure

The table below provides a short description of each of these five accelerators. We share them now so that they can become part of your organizing process as your stakeholders begin to make key decisions and commitments. e2 can be a resource for you in all of these areas. In this Resource Package, we have included a short paper we prepared for NetWork Kansas on the topic of accelerators, Accelerating E Communities in Kansas. This paper will provide you with deeper insights into why you might want to address these topics early in your organizing work.

Figure 3 - Accelerators

Community Coaching	A community coach works with community leaders to better leverage resources for development. When the community has embraced entrepreneur-focused economic development, the coach works to guide the local team and to help hold everyone accountable for progress. The coach can help you put to work each of the four other accelerators to increase the pace of progress and the impact of your initiative.
Opportunity Analysis	Successful economic and business development must be rooted in genuine opportunities. Investing in assessment and analysis of your community's unique development opportunities is a way to accelerate the start-up and progress of your initiative. In Kansas and other places, e2 has provided such independent assessment. This analysis becomes a powerful tool in the hands of a community coach or leadership team; you can ground truth this analysis and craft a refined set of development opportunities to provide strategic focus for your entrepreneurial community efforts.
Focusing on the Right Entrepreneurs	Every successful business owner knows that you must match your products and services with customers who really want to buy them. The same is true for communities working with entrepreneurs. You need to map your entrepreneurial talent and target development efforts to achieve strategic economic development goals. Such market and customer engagement can reduce assumptions and allow you and your team to focus on real opportunities to support entrepreneurs, demonstrate the value of your initiative and begin realizing development impacts.

Entrepreneur Coaching	Communities that provide entrepreneurial coaching to their targeted businesses can dramatically increase development activity and ensure better matches for financing and other assistance. An entrepreneur coach can help your community increase outreach, visitation, intake and screening and referral to assistance for targeted businesses. Hiring and supporting an entrepreneur coach requires investment but is a real key to accelerating impact.
Entrepreneurial Infrastructure	Your community needs to develop a robust infrastructure for entrepreneurs that includes local as well as resources outside your community. Building this infrastructure is a process of identifying what you have and what you can connect to through your networks, and then working to fill gaps through investment and collaboration. The ultimate goal is to grow an entrepreneurial ecosystem that stimulates and supports increased entrepreneurial activity throughout your community.

The Many Stages of Organizing

If your community wants to support entrepreneurs as part of your overall development strategy, you must become entrepreneurial yourself. So, when thinking and behaving like an entrepreneur, consider this continuum of organizing based on your progress toward becoming an entrepreneurial community.

New Start-Up Initiative. You are new to this game. There is a core group of community leaders who believe that entrepreneur-focused economic development is the way to go. But like a budding entrepreneur who has never really started a business, you and your community have never really launched an entrepreneurship initiative. Startups are always risky and the potential for failure is real. Doing everything you can do to increase the chances for success is paramount. Just as with a newborn fawn, what happens in the early days and months could determine whether your initiative lives or dies.

Assuming aggressive pacing, here are the progress benchmarks you might expect to achieve in your first year:

Figure 4 – New Start-Up Initiative

First Year as an Entrepreneurial Initiative Startup		
New Year Push (Jan-Apr)	**Summer Push (May-Aug)**	**Fall Push (Sept-Dec)**
Early Organizing	Regular Entrepreneur Visitation	Expanded Outreach
Visioning & Development Preferences Identified	Client Intake & Enrollment	Expanded Intake and Coaching
Assessment – Particularly Targeting	Coaching Provided to Es	Repeat Clients
Early Strategy Development	Referrals to Resource Providers	A Portfolio Based on Targeting
Begin Entrepreneur Outreach	Assistance Being Provided	Refined Resource Network
Business Coach Hired	Stories of Early Impact Captured	Go-To Resources We Trust
Area Resource Team Established	External Resource Network Formed	Impact Stories & Numbers

This aggressive pacing ensures that there is a story of success to share with your funding stakeholders by the end of your first year. Adequate success helps you make a stronger case to continue and *expand* funding for your initiative based on demonstrated opportunity and a strategy that is getting results.

While your community has not been transformed, you have "proven up" and earned the right to pursue year two of your start-up initiative.

<div align="center">**Lessons from Walmart**</div>

Everyone knows some version of the Walmart story. For those of you who are younger, it seems as if Walmart has been with us forever. A closer look at the world's largest retailer is informative in setting your community's expectations for progress and success.

1950. Sam Walton buys a store in the Arkansas Ozark community of Bentonville (2,900) from Luther E. Harrison. For nearly a decade, there has been only one Walton's 5 and 10.

1960s. Decision to grow using THE low-cost pricing strategy; the Wal-Mart Stores brand emerges.

1967 – 24 Stores Across Arkansas
1968 – First Store Outside Arkansas
1975 – 125 Stores

1980s. Walmart is a generation old (25 years) and has not yet become the well-known retail powerhouse it is now.

1985 – 882 Stores
1988 – Sam Walton steps down
1990s – Breakout is Achieved
1995 – Nearly 3,000 Stores Globally
1996 – First Walmart in China

It took two generations (50 years) to achieve breakout status and world recognition. Setting aggressive but realistic stakeholder expectations is recommended as you start and grow your entrepreneurial efforts.

Existing Initiative Wishing to Expand. We know from research on small business startups that failure is more common than survival. What is less well known is that there are also profound risks associated with growth or expansion. Struggling to grow and growing too fast can undermine earlier success and even put your initiative at risk of failure. Your organizing strategy must grow and strengthen to enable your initiative to grow. What are some of the progress benchmarks associated with an initiative growth plan?

Year 1:	System Assessment
	Growth Analysis & Plan
	3-5 Year Capital Campaign Devised
Year 2:	Conduct Capital Campaign
	New 3-5 Year Capitalization & Budget
	Operational Plan & Staffing
Year 3:	Launch Expansion

More sophisticated organizing will be required to grow your initiative. Taking this important step will also require more time. You want a process with strong pacing but one that allows you to assess your situation and opportunities well, engage your community and particularly your stakeholders in the

process and liberate the funding commitments necessary to capitalize your next three to five years of work.

Breakout Initiative. You have been engaged in entrepreneur-focused development for some time. You have learned a lot. Your community has a good game plan and resource support system. You are getting impact and there is support for becoming a "high performing" entrepreneurial ecosystem. You want to make a breakout to the next and highest level of performance. Few businesses achieve breakout like Walmart, Google, Microsoft, or Southwest Airlines. The same is true for communities and their development. Growing a world-class environment for entrepreneurs demands a lot. We will not spend much time on achieving breakout. If this is where you are headed, we can connect you to the folks in those relatively few places where breakouts have been achieved so that you can learn from the field.

<div align="center">

Being Entrepreneurial

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In North America, a typical community with 25,000 to 30,000 residents will generate a billion dollar plus economy. By any standard, a billion dollars is a significant level of economic activity. If our hypothetical community were a corporation, it would be on a short list of many state's important businesses. Source: e2 analysis using IMPLAN data.

In 1955, *Fortune Magazine* created the Fortune 500 list of America's most important corporations. Since its founding, over 2,000 businesses have made the list. Even among America's biggest and most success businesses, there is churn. Less than one in five original Fortune 500 companies are still on this remarkable list. Source: *History of the Fortune 500* by Emily Beach with eHow.

The lesson is clear: being competitive, successful, large, and important today is no guarantee for being in that same position tomorrow. We exist in a very competitive global environment. Whether we are focused on a Fortune 500 company or a community of 30,000, smart and intentional action is required to ensure future success and economic relevance.

So, how does a business or a community ensure sustainable success and prosperity? The answer lies, in part, in being entrepreneurial. A key attribute of an entrepreneur is the ability to perceive strategic change and opportunities. Entrepreneurs act to ensure they remain competitive. Bottom line, entrepreneurs spend time growing their business versus simply running their business. The same must be true for communities.

Communities that are successful over generations must be entrepreneurial. Communities, like people, tend to become less entrepreneurial when they are successful. They may rest on their laurels and lose motivation to be entrepreneurial and compete aggressively. Unfortunately, the world economy and society continue to change. As we are enjoying our prosperity, we miss the turns in the road and plant the seeds of our own decline. A key to successful organizing is developing and sustaining a culture of entrepreneurial attitudes and behavior.

Getting Organized

In this guide, you will find a **Getting Started Checklist** to use as a resource for getting organized. Our checklist can provide your team with context, a stepped process, and worksheets you can adapt and use to target your early stakeholder meetings around some key decision points. Please note that this resource assumes that a business coach is part of the overall strategy. Regardless of whether you

employ a business coach, this resource can help you focus your meetings on critical topics that will move you to key decisions, commitments, and a game plan for action.

Framework

Every promising or best practice is specific to a particular community, situation, and application. When we abstract the core elements of a promising or best practice, we create a framework that is informative to other communities and their unique circumstances. Building your capacity to learn and adapt practices from other communities can be very valuable to growing a smarter strategy more quickly. Remember the old saying about not re-creating the wheel!

Every community and situation is unique. All of our tools are based on actual field experience and, therefore, reflect the unique circumstances of that time and situation. View the resources included here as providing a "framework" that you can customize to your needs. Of course, if you feel you need some help customizing our framework and tools to your needs, our team is available to contract with you to provide specialized assistance.

There are five considerations we offer as you are getting organized:

1. Defining Your Community
2. Early Stakeholder Candidates
3. Clarifying and Setting Expectations
4. Making and Keeping Commitments
5. Organization, Staffing and Governance

Defining Your Community. What is your community? This may seem like a foolish question, but we continue to find that it is not. Different stakeholders may come to your initiative's table with varying community definitions. For example:

- The Mayor may only be thinking about the area served by municipal government.
- County Commissioners are thinking county-wide.
- The Chamber may define itself as an "area" chamber including other places.
- An entrepreneurial service provider might serve an even broader collection of communities or even regions in the state.

While defining community may not be a huge challenge, it is helpful to agree to a working definition among your stakeholder groups. This definition will be used to define the geography for opportunity assessment, entrepreneur and resource mapping, and other targeted activities. Remember as your strategy evolves, you can evolve your definition of community by either narrowing it or expanding it. Today your focus may be just the city; in three years, you may have partners wanting to expand your initiative to a neighboring community and all the rural entrepreneurs within your county. Remember to be entrepreneurial and make changes in your game plan when they make sense.

After you define your community, we suggest you establish a baseline by gathering information from entrepreneurs and community leaders about your community's support for entrepreneurs. The **Entrepreneurial Community Survey** included in this package is a good place to start. You might use it with your early stakeholder candidates (see below) or have partner organizations (e.g., the Chamber)

share with their members. It is a useful tool to gather information quickly about your community's starting point.

Early Stakeholder Candidates. There can be angst in deciding which potential stakeholders to engage early in your organizing efforts. You may be uncertain about who should be invited and concerned that leaving someone out may create a problem down the road. In **Leaders are Key** you will find a list that you can use with your team to begin to think about the likely suspects to involve. If you can, look for stakeholders who are also business owners and entrepreneurs; this will help keep your group's size manageable and, most importantly, begin the task of engaging entrepreneurs.

We recommend that you adopt an open-door policy that allows folks to become engaged when they are serious about supporting your initiative. Stakeholders may come and go, but ultimately you want a core group of stakeholders who are committed and willing to support the initiative long enough for it to bear fruit.

Clarifying and Setting Expectations. A quick way to determine early on which stakeholders are genuinely interested in being part of your initiative is to clarify and set expectations. We have included in this guide a simple worksheet and exercise, **Initiative Expectations: Stakeholders Survey**. We recommend you complete this exercise in one of your early stakeholder meetings. Have everyone complete it and then use the results to inform a facilitated discussion to help you find common ground upon which to build your initiative and identify where and how various stakeholders might fit.

Making and Keeping Commitments. Chances are good that you will have both "action" and "process" oriented personalities within your stakeholders' group. You need both types of personalities on your team. Their respective approaches to this work will result in a better initiative, but there will be tension between the more extreme personality types. Ultra-action-oriented people want to make decisions quickly and get on with implementation. Ultra-process-oriented people can study, talk, and review your game plan forever (at least it seems that way). Process-folks slow things down, leading to a potentially more thoughtful course of action. Action folks push to get moving with the work, potentially building needed momentum. Managing this tension well can result in a more optimal game plan. But ultimately decisions to act must be made. These decisions must be accompanied by specific commitments, such as:

- I will talk to the banks and raise the necessary funds for the assessment.
- I will reach out to the area university to see if they want to become part of the initiative.
- I will chair a working group to begin the process of hiring a business coach.
- My organization is willing to serve as the fiscal agent for this initiative.
- We will commit to monthly working group meetings to keep our initiative moving forward.

Every meeting you have during the early organizing phase and continuing through implementation should have specific and important business to cover, actionable items and a way to ensure you have specific commitments to get the agreed-to work done.

Organizational Structure, Staffing and Governance. Eventually as you move from early organizing to building a solid foundation under your initiative, you will need to address three next stage organizing topics: organizational structure, staffing, and governance. As your initiative begins to pick up steam, you will need to move from an organic and informal collaboration to one with more structure. There will need to be a more permanent organization, funding, staffing, and a governance structure that allows all your stakeholder groups to remain engaged and supportive, but entrepreneurial in your ability to make

decisions and get the work done. *Our entrepreneurial communities' team can help you find the right answer when you get close to this stage.*

Final Thoughts…

Too often, our communities are driven to action out of fear and/or crisis, including:

- Natural disasters
- Consistently bad community image (e.g., "murder capital")
- Chronic and severe unemployment, poverty and/or depopulation
- Loss of a major industry or employer

Lesson of Venice

Venice, Italy, provides a remarkable and relevant lesson. It emerged from the swamps as a refuge from the violence of Europe's Dark Ages. Venice was early to the Enlightenment and became a political, economic, and military powerhouse dominating the Mediterranean Sea. For centuries, it grew in power and status. It had the best minds, capital, and opportunities. But in its prosperity, it lost its entrepreneurial and competitive edge. It missed the importance of the discovery of the New World and the shift in development opportunity. Its fortunes declined. For several centuries, it continued to live off of its legacy wealth and assets. Eventually it declined in profound ways. Today, Venice is a shadow of its former self. Tourism and subsidies sustain its economy.

These events unsettle the status quo and spur community leaders into action. When times are good, even if not great (e.g., community still ranks in the bottom third of communities in the state), we tend to become complacent. We call this the **prosperity trap.** On a personal level, first-generation affluent parents run the risk of spoiling their kids. Mom and Dad are always able to provide, and their kids have not learned the lessons that come with economic struggle. This next generation may become more complacent and may be less motivated to become successful in their own right.

The same is true for communities. For decades, Detroit was a world-class city thriving on the success of the auto industry. As this industry began to struggle, Detroit failed to reinvent itself and now faces the worst crisis. At first the decline was slow and there was the belief that the auto industry in Detroit would come back. It did, but not in a way that repopulated Detroit's many struggling neighborhoods with thriving middle-class families. Events that move us to action may be short-lived, so an organizational key is to keep the fires stoked so that your stakeholder group remains engaged, active, and committed to making trend-line changes in your community.

Now that we have explored some of the resources and tools your community can use to get organized for action, we want to spend some time in Part 4 focused on stakeholders and sustainability. We will address this topic more in our **Metrics, Stories and Sustainability Guide**. But it is important to consider the role of stakeholders in early organizing. Engaged and committed stakeholders (e.g., likely development partners such as chambers, development corporations, main street programs, cities, counties, school districts, community colleges, etc.) are key to effective early organizing, initial success with your e2 strategy, and ultimately with initiative sustainability.

Part 4 – Working with Stakeholders and Getting Started Checklist

Sustainability

Every year, e2 is approached by various communities, organizations, individuals, and regions exploring the creation of entrepreneurial initiatives. These startups find us through our newsletters, talks at conferences, referrals and via our website. They reach out looking for help. Based on our own non-scientific tracking of these inquiries, we find that the majority…

- Never actually launch.
- Launch, but do not survive the startup phase or year one; or
- Survive the startup phase, but do not mature and last to year three.

This pattern is similar to that of new business startups and leads us to ask the question, "Why does this happen?" Our field work suggests the following answer to this very important question:

*These entrepreneurial community startups do not establish a strong initiative stakeholder group that enables them to continue to work **long enough** to demonstrate economic development impacts. Without such a strong supporting stakeholder group, the odds are good that the entrepreneurship initiative will not be successful.*

Who Are Initiative Stakeholders?

Potential initiative stakeholders are those individuals, organizations, businesses, agencies, and institutions working in your geographic or field of interest service area that could have mission alignment with your initiative. Actual initiative stakeholders are those who decide they want to engage and support your initiative.

As is the case with a private business venture, your community's entrepreneurial initiative cannot be successful without enough support, over time, to evolve and implement a game plan that can generate desired impacts. Poorly designed game plans, under-capitalization, poor execution, and bad luck can all contribute to failure. Engaging the right stakeholders in developing, executing, and funding your initiative is foundational to both startup and long-term success.

In this guide, we provide a framework and process for assessing your potential initiative stakeholders that will enable you to engage and grow a set of optimal stakeholder partners.

The Players

Working with different players in any community is both a science and an art form. Whenever you work with people directly, experiences can be rich and rewarding, as well as challenging and painful. For those of us who work with communities, a framework for understanding all the players who are likely to be part of a particular engagement is helpful. The following table provides a quick summary of the likely community players you will encounter, including players that will be a joy to work with and those who will create stress as you try to build an entrepreneurial community.

Figure 5 – Players in the Community

Scouts	Interest Stakeholders	Champions
These are the people who often are actively looking to bring new ideas into the community. They are connected to news and resources with a focus on opportunities. They may be the community partners who first see the value that an organization, like e2, can bring to the community and issue an invitation to engage.	Interest stakeholders are those who represent vested interests in your community. They can be stewards of the community's interests and they may also act as gatekeepers. These are people who need to be engaged to ensure that those they are representing have the opportunity to become engaged and supportive of your entrepreneurial initiative.	Champions are critical to your success. This small group of people plays a central role in helping the community at large understand the importance of becoming an entrepreneurial community. They play a key role in encouraging others to become committed to your work. Identifying your champions, who may differ from the scouts, is a key first step in getting started.
Challengers	**Rainmakers**	**Community Builders**
Every community has them and often they are part of critically important interest groups. Challengers are not necessarily mean spirited, but they can be gatekeepers and must be managed and respected or your work can be slowed or derailed.	Rainmakers are those few people (often quiet behind-the-scenes leaders) who can make things happen. They can raise money, get interest groups involved and help you manage challengers. It is important that they understand your goals and how those goals relate to their own interests.	Community builders are those who actively engage. They care and are the doers, but not necessarily the leaders. They are critical to achieving wider community engagement and impact. You will want to figure out ways to empower them as your initiative unfolds.
Unengaged Majority	**Community Coordinator**	**Technology Helper**
Even with high profile community projects, the majority of residents will remain unengaged or marginally engaged. What is critical to further engagement is a mass of champions, interest stakeholders, rainmakers and community builders to enable action, progress and impact.	For your work to be most efficient, you will need one or more community leaders to coordinate your initiative's efforts (a team approach can work.) They will be the "go to" people to get a meeting arranged or raise awareness about the important work you are undertaking.	Any initiative today must use technology to establish a strong presence in the community; you will have a hard time reaching some groups, such as young people, without it. Identify one or more resources to help manage the virtual work of the initiative including social media.

The typology shared here can help you create a **big picture** of likely and potential players. Creating a **lay of the land** will help you design, implement, and manage a more strategic and successful community engagement game plan.

Scouts Open the Door but May Not be Your Champions
Stakeholders Must be Engaged and Cultivated
Champions Must be Found and Empowered
Challengers Must be Managed
Rainmakers Must be Identified and Motivated
Community Builders Must be Given Work to Do
The Door Must Remain Open for Everyone and Anyone

Remember, realizing success with your initiative is rooted in part in your ability to engage the broader community as you work with each of these key players. Ultimately, growing a very committed group of

initiative stakeholders will position you and your initiative for success and sustainability. Committed initiative stakeholders can open doors, engage rainmakers, help manage challengers and motivate community builders to become involved. This process of focused and strategic community engagement is important to your overall success.

Likely Initiative Stakeholders

Included in this package, you will find an **Initiative Stakeholder Mapping Tool** that will help you identify key people who might fall into the **player** categories shared above. Before you start the initiative stakeholder assessment process, you will want to bring your core leadership group together and do some mapping of all your likely players and then drill down into stakeholder assessment, engagement, and development.

Most communities have a group of **likely suspects** who support and/or direct economic development. If possible, you want these likely suspects to become committed stakeholders in support of your entrepreneurship work. While business attraction is inherently competitive and secretive, entrepreneur-focused economic development provides many opportunities for collaborative and more transparent approaches. This can be a selling point as you begin to identify and engage these potential stakeholders. Use this **Initiative Stakeholder Identification Checklist** to begin brainstorming with your leadership team about your community's potential initiative stakeholders.

Figure 6 - Initiative Stakeholder Identification Checklist

Likely Partners		Reaching Outside the Box		Successful Entrepreneurs	
	Development Corporations		Regional Organizations		Main Street Business Owners
	Chambers of Commerce		Area Schools		Creative Entrepreneurs
	Local Governments		Other Communities		Social Entrepreneurs (e.g., running non-profits)
	Tourism Organizations		Area Colleges		Retired Entrepreneurs
	Main Street Organizations		Others? *Be Creative!*		Former Resident Entrepreneurs

We all face the challenge of too much to do with too little time and money to cover all the bases. All entrepreneurial ventures, large and small, face this challenge. We encourage you to be strategic and focused so that you get the most out of the time and resources you have at any given point in the development of your initiative. Working with your core team, take the time to prioritize your list of potential stakeholders. If you only have time to contact three potential stakeholders, choose wisely. For example, if the Chamber of Commerce in your community is well respected, the Chamber should be a high priority target. If the Chamber executive and members of the board commit to support your initiative, their commitment could encourage the city and the development corporation to become more interested and engaged. Think in terms of a **layered** or **sequenced** approach where you grow your stakeholders over time, thus growing your initiative's support, reputation, and community reach. Each stakeholder you effectively engage brings new networks and relationships that can help you go to scale.

An overlooked but extremely important stakeholder group is existing, successful entrepreneurs. Every community has them and engaging successful entrepreneurs in visioning your strategy can help you

build a better and smarter game plan. Their engagement can provide a genuine and supportive voice within the community for what you are trying to accomplish. As a first step, look for successful entrepreneurs who are also civically engaged in your targeted stakeholder organizations. These individuals can be a pathway or bridge to other successful entrepreneurs who are not active in the chamber or other organizations. If they believe in what you are doing, they can bring stakeholder organizations to the funding table and create an opportunity for private business pledges. Ultimately, successful entrepreneurs have wealth and often motivation to make legacy gifts that could endow part or all of your initiative.

Engaging Your Entrepreneurs

In some ways, including entrepreneurs at the start of your initiative is akin to doing market research. After all, it is entrepreneurs who your initiative is designed to serve. If you can identify and engage some of these entrepreneurs as stakeholders, they can contribute their insights and perhaps even their resources to support your efforts over time. But remember that you will need to provide different pathways for engagement to these entrepreneurs. An entrepreneur may not want to become part of your leadership team, taking part in numerous planning meetings. Instead, she may be interested in working directly to engage other entrepreneurs or supporting a mentoring program. Another entrepreneur may want to anonymously contribute financial resources to support your efforts. Providing many avenues for engagement is a key to getting entrepreneurs to become part of your initiative stakeholder group. Use the **Entrepreneur Stakeholder Mapping Worksheet** as a starting point for identifying these potential entrepreneurs.

As part of this package, we have included a set of **Initial Stakeholder Engagement Questions** that will be useful as you begin to identify and understand your potential initiative stakeholders. The list is long, but we encourage you to choose a subset of these questions that you can have on hand in any conversation with a potential stakeholder. Think about which questions are most relevant for your community and your initiative, and then use those over and over again.

Stakeholder Commitment and Organizational Alignment

Until you have achieved demonstrated success with your entrepreneurial community work, it is unlikely that you will be able to influence or change the priorities of initiative stakeholders. Over time, and with real success, changing stakeholder priorities may occur organically as they see success and begin to evolve their own missions to support it. However, early on, it is best to explore where your mission and potential stakeholders' missions might align. If the community's entrepreneurship strategy can help an initiative stakeholder better realize their mission, you have the classic WIN – WIN situation. Understanding the interests of your potential stakeholders through an assessment process is critically important to short- and long-term success.

In our e2 Hierarchy for Community Impacts paper (the framework we use to guide and track progress with the e2 development process) there are five levels of impact:

- Level 1 – Smart Actions (e.g., getting organized, assessment, etc.)
- Level 2 – Outputs (e.g., completed assessments, entrepreneur targeting, visitation teams, etc.)
- **Level 3 – Commitments and Commitments Fulfilled (e.g., focus on this section)**

- Level 4 – Outcomes (e.g., entrepreneurs visited, resources networked, etc.)
- Level 5 – Indicators of Desired Transformative Change (e.g., more vibrant business community, economic development impacts – jobs, investments, taxes.

Collaborative Approach Eship is a Team Sport

Business attraction by its very nature is competitive. Different organizations and communities are competing with others. Secrecy is part of the attraction game. With entrepreneur-led development, the underlying environment is very different. In the vast majority of cases, with entrepreneurs, they are already rooted and part of the community. This kind of development lends itself and works best with a collaborative approach. Entrepreneurship is a team sport where all the stakeholders and even multiple communities can band together to provide outreach, assistance and ecosystem building support.

Stakeholder commitments are foundational to growing a robust community entrepreneurial ecosystem. First, let's review possible eEcosystem stakeholders for a typical community:

Economic Development Corporation (EDC). Most EDCs in the United State are primarily focused on two missions. The first mission is attracting new businesses into the community. The second mission typically focused on existing larger employer retention and growth. In some cases, "small business" development is also a minor priority.

Chamber of Commerce. Historically chambers of commerce are the locus of the area business community. In the past, chambers focused on business advocacy and business climate development (e.g., taxes, financing, regulation, etc.). We have produced a paper on the role of chambers of commerce and entrepreneurial development that might be helpful to you. Chambers are membership organizations, and by re-engaging in eEcosystem building and direct assistance, chambers can fulfill this historic mission and position themselves for expanded membership.

Tourism, Visitor or Convention Bureau. Most communities have either an independent organization or a division within the chamber or EDC for a tourism, visitor, or convention bureau. For many communities, there is a cluster of area businesses, nonprofits (e.g., local historical society) and government agencies (e.g., an area state park) focused on visitor attraction. Building a stronger community center eEcosystem could support the mission of tourism related groups.

Farm Groups. For many rural communities, farm groups (or other specialty focused sector groups) are also a potential partner in your Eship work. If these groups are focused on "farm to table" or "value-added" initiatives, they have strong potential connections to your Eship initiative.

Main Street Programs. For most communities, both large and small, downtowns or main streets continue to be an important development priority. Many communities have a main street revitalization program or initiative. Having this potential stakeholder at the table can ensure your eEcosystem supports ventures central to main street revitalization.

Area eResources. In our **Working with Entrepreneurs Guide,** we have a series of resources focused on entrepreneurial resources (eResources). Most communities have lots of relevant resources, which we historically have called "business services." By engaging local businesses that provide services to entrepreneurs (e.g., attorneys, CPAs, libraries, banks, city government offices like codes, etc.), you can

bring a wide segment of your community into this work. More horsepower means more impact potential.

Area Entrepreneurs. Let's not forget that this is all about helping our community's entrepreneurs. Many entrepreneurs do not want to get distracted from their venture, but there are always those who are also community minded. Chances are good there are entrepreneurs already involved in other stakeholder groups who could bring a direct voice into your organizing work.

The various exercises and tools we share in this guide can help you and your potential stakeholders explore where this logical mission alignment is. Remember, you are the entrepreneur and you need to **sell** the benefits of your initiative to each stakeholder group you approach. You need to understand both the pain and passion points of your potential stakeholders so you can craft a stronger value case to them and get them involved. We like the **one metric approach** to aligning missions. In making your value case to potential stakeholders, you should identify how your entrepreneurial initiative will generate impacts on one key pain or passion point for each type of stakeholder as suggested below:

Figure 7 – Same Stakeholder Impacts

Municipal Governments	Increased sales tax base and sales tax revenues
County Governments	Increased commercial and industry property tax base and property tax revenues
Chambers of Commerce	More Chamber members as services increase or become more relevant to entrepreneurs
Development Corporations	Increase in basic industry and employment driven by growth entrepreneurs
Community Colleges	More opportunities to provide workforce training to new and expanding ventures
Major Employers	Increase in skilled, more entrepreneurial workforce and increase in supply chain companies
Main Streets & Downtowns	Revitalized downtown through Main Street entrepreneurs

Meaningful Commitments

Everyone wants to be supportive and contribute to an initiative that could make their community better. But too often we are weak in articulating commitments that are actionable and accountable. Stakeholders want to be part of teams where everyone is contributing and pulling their weight. A hallmark of high-performing organizations and particularly collaborative organizations is transparent commitments and peer-exercised accountability. When commitments are clear and measurable, no one wants to be on the shortlist of not living up to their commitments.

Keeping these potential eStakeholders in mind, now let's explore what we mean by commitments or Level 3 impacts in our e2 Hierarchy of Community Impacts framework.

- An initial commitment is to get involved and engage in organizing for action. This could include participating in stakeholder mapping and mission alignment assessments.

<p align="center">**Duration of Commitment**</p>

As is the case with any startup venture, commitments can be conditional. A stakeholder may commit to do certain things for a period of time (hopefully at least one year and preferably three years). This is okay. More permanent commitments can evolve as the initiative proves up and demonstrates valuable impact towards an organization's core mission accomplishment.

- If being part of the entrepreneurial initiative make sense, then stakeholders can make commitments to:
    - Provide specific outreach and resource networking support.
    - Provide dedicated staffing and volunteers where work aligns with missions.
    - Provide funding or secure funding.
    - Provide eResources into the network.
    - Employing their networks to connect entrepreneurs to relevant resources.
    - Provide entrepreneur and community impact metrics and stories.

<p align="center">**Importance of Host Organizations in Collaborations**</p>

Collaborative organizations are more complex and challenging to manage and sustain when compared to more corporate type organizations. Operating by open committee typically does not work long-term. We strongly recommend that one of your stakeholders commit to be the host organization. This additional commitment means this stakeholder is also focused on keeping the collaboration working providing basic management support.

- Serve as the host organization.

There can be other commitments, but you get the idea. Some commitments come sooner, and others follow; as stakeholders vest in your initiative and discover a more sophisticated understanding of both their self-interests and broader community benefits, deepening commitments will follow. With positive entrepreneur and community support, broader stakeholder support and commitments often materialize. Every organization has the capacity to realign their mission with a successful development initiative that is getting positive results.

<p align="center">**Lessons from Kansas**</p>

NetWork Kansas and its Entrepreneurial Communities Program has been around for over a decade. Kansas Entrepreneurial Communities, as a strategy, has reached scale and deep community commitments. We have observed that in eCommunities in Kansas that are realizing development success, we are seeing area development groups optimizing their missions and efforts toward entrepreneur-led development and ecosystem building. This has happened organically. Chances are good that founding documents still focus on business attraction, but more staff and volunteer time is going into what is working – growing local entrepreneurs.

Cultivating Stakeholders

Consider for a moment what a typical entrepreneur faces:

- They must offer a competitive good or service.
- They must find, keep, and grow a customer base.

- They must secure capital to start and grow their venture.
- They must execute consistently and smartly.
- They must do all these things, all the time, and still have a life.

Your entrepreneurship development initiative is like an entrepreneurial venture. You and your partners must do all these things consistently and well. Figuring out how to cultivate stakeholders is no different than an entrepreneurial venture learning to secure capital through customers, financers or the legendary three "Fs" – Family, Friends and Fools. Chances are good that your stakeholders are not among the "three Fs." Crafting a game plan to cultivate your stakeholder group is foundational to your ultimate success. Consider this simplified flow for cultivating stakeholders:

Mapping. First, you must take time and be smart about mapping your potential stakeholders given your landscape and relationships. You must consider whether you start small with a narrow group of higher potential stakeholders or reach out more widely to create a broader support network early on in your development.

Targeting. Mapping is followed by targeting or making tough decisions regarding which stakeholders you are going to reach out to and when. Within each stakeholder group, there are individuals who are **pathways** and **potential champions**. Pathways are people within a targeted group who can get you positioned for making your sales pitch. Potential champions are those who are more likely to connect to your message and advocate for becoming engaged in your initiative.

Engagement. Think ahead about what your stakeholder engagement game plan should include. Remember: do not over-design your engagement strategy. You have to execute it along with the 100 other things you need to be spending time and money on to be successful. The first step is understanding your targeted stakeholders, determining exactly what their engagement needs are and then crafting your plan accordingly. There is a right balance between too much and too little engagement:

- Your smaller core group, including the organizations most active in the execution of your game plan, should be engaged monthly.
- Your passive funder stakeholders should be engaged three times a year, organized around **four-month pushes**. For example, your first and second engagements with them (April/May and August/September) would be focused on sharing the progress, challenges, and status of work after your first two pushes. Use the third engagement (December/January) for an annual review and sharing plans for the coming year.

Mission Alignment. Early in the stakeholder recruitment process and continuing with each engagement check-in, be sure to affirm mission alignment. This is where your metrics (numbers and stories) are so helpful. Having a limited number of metrics that illustrate progress towards your stated outcomes and goals can strengthen and simplify this key activity. If your initiative is creating impact that is helping your stakeholders achieve their mission, you are in a much stronger position to sustain their engagement and support. We have included in this guide a **Stakeholders Survey** that you can use to get a quick sense of your stakeholders' expectations for the initiative. If you gather this information early, you will have a sense of initial alignment and where there is still work to be done. These insights may help you tailor your message to each stakeholder's preferences and goals.

Demonstrating Value. You must demonstrate that your initiative can create real value for your stakeholders. Again, this is where your metrics are so important. If you told the area development corporation that you were focused on helping growth-oriented entrepreneurs with the potential to sell outside of the area, then you must be able to document that you have identified and are working with such entrepreneurs. As time progresses, you can collect short stories or testimonials from these entrepreneurs that connect your initiative's help with their success. The use of testimonials allows your initiative to demonstrate cause (your assistance) and effect (their development). Otherwise, you can have data on new investment and job creation but not be able to make a compelling case that your initiative contributed in a meaningful way to these outcomes. Short stories and testimonies, when gathered together and presented clearly, help make the case for the value your initiative is bringing to local entrepreneurs and the broader community.

Expanding Your Stakeholders. Over time, with reasonable success, you can consider expanding your stakeholder group. By this point, you have demonstrated success and a core group of committed stakeholders. Nothing is more powerful than one stakeholder who believes in what you are doing approaching another potential stakeholder. We suggest that you annually review your stakeholder possibilities and appropriately target others.

Deepening Commitment. For years, we have talked about the idea of **return on investment** (ROI) in economic development. This is a great tool with for-profit businesses and relatively easy to calculate and track. It is much harder to do in economic development. By employing a system where you have well-established goals with associated performance benchmarks, you can position your initiative for a near ROI approach. If you are hitting and exceeding your performance targets and creating impacts that are aligned with the missions of your stakeholders, then you have a strong case for asking your stakeholders to provide additional support so you can expand your reach and your impact by serving more entrepreneurs.

Securing Champions. Ultimately, you want to create a diverse and robust group of stakeholders who are champions of your initiative. Champions understand and believe what you are doing is essential and highly valuable. They are willing to put their own reputations on the line and advocate for your initiative. These are **go-to** leaders and organizations with cachet in your community or region.

Securing Rainmakers. Champions have the commitment and the ability to either **be** rainmakers or **approach** rainmakers. For example, you may have a vice president from a regional bank who has become a champion. This VP can provide a certain level of support on her/his own, but as a champion, s/he has the ability to get before the president of the bank, its board of directors and owners to make the case for a larger and longer commitment.

The Metrics Connection

Metrics include both numbers and stories. Metrics are used to create a road map of where an entrepreneurship initiative is headed, track performance over time and provide a framework for sharing progress with stakeholders (funders) and the larger community. One way to think about metrics is as a bridge between your initiative and your core supporters. Metrics are used in three critical ways with stakeholders.

Defining Expectations. There needs to be clarity between stakeholders and the initiative with respect to what it is trying to do and the likely impacts it can create given the resources, time and talent being

invested by the stakeholder group. Part of defining expectations is a sound assessment of genuine opportunity (i.e., what can your community realistically expect to achieve given your assets, your location relative to other economic drivers, your entrepreneurial talent, etc.) Progress goals are defined within this context of genuine opportunity. For example, if there are no high growth entrepreneurs in your area, you should adjust expectations to focus on other development opportunities, such as growth-oriented entrepreneurs or Main Street business owners.

Managing Expectations. Stakeholder representatives change over time. They may forget the terms and conditions under which they are providing their support. Having a well-designed and consistently updated metrics system provides a continuous yardstick for measuring progress and explaining why progress is greater or lesser than expected at any given point. It also provides a way to quickly orient new stakeholder representatives regarding the deal between supporters and your initiative.

Documenting Return on Investment. For continued robust support, you must show a return on investment. Calculating an actual ROI is problematic and not recommended, but through the use of numbers and testimonial stories, you can document and demonstrate cause (your assistance) and effect (a growing or better business). Examples of numbers often include:

- Number of entrepreneurial clients supported
- Kinds of assistance being provided (e.g., hours of counseling, hours of classes offered)
- Dollars of new investment leveraged
- Number of jobs created or saved
- Dollars of tax revenues raised through local tax base expansion

Testimonial stories are essential. When an entrepreneur is feeling really positive about the help you are providing, the time is right to capture a quotable testimonial story. These stories are quick and easy to do, but the **right** timing is critical. You must strike while the entrepreneur wants to share their success and attribute credit to your help. These testimonial stories enable you to take partial credit for the numbers you are sharing. Good numbers and great stories close the deal. To help you build a more robust measurement system, please consult our **Metrics, Stories and Sustainability Guide.**

Stakeholders and Sustainability

Perhaps we have gone on too long on this topic of committed stakeholders and sustainability, but we continue to find that great initiatives fail at properly developing and sustaining their stakeholder groups, leading to underfunded or even defunded initiatives. Trying to play catch up with stakeholders once they have begun to lose interest or question the value of your initiative is often too little too late. The keystone to initiative sustainability and growth is the cultivation of stakeholders who become engaged and committed and eventually evolve into champions and rainmakers for your initiative. Spending quality time and effort on the development of stakeholders is as important as the work you are doing with entrepreneurs.

The very reason for engaging in entrepreneur-focused economic development is to create economic development impacts, such as new investment, businesses, jobs, and tax base. These impacts can only be realized if your strategy has two important things:

- **Enough Support.** There must be enough financial support initially to build an effective program. Too often, development strategies are so grossly undercapitalized that they are inherently limited in their potential for success.

- **Support over Time.** There must be adequate financial support over a long enough period to ensure the strategy has the time to prove up and achieve impact. We recommend a commitment of at least three years to demonstrate that the strategy can work. Then there must be stable and adequate funding to grow the strategy over time to reach levels of impact that actually develop a community's economy.

Chances are good that your community already has a tradition of supporting economic development. You need to make room in this space for your entrepreneur-focused economic development strategy. **Who among your current economic development stakeholders wants to come to the table and help create this entrepreneurship strategy?** Sorting that question out early on in strategy building is the foundation for your sustainability plan. But be sure to look beyond the organizations or agencies and identify those **specific leaders or possible champions** who will actively engage, support, and sustain your game plan. People do matter. Organizational support is only meaningful and sustainable if there are leaders within those organizations who are willing to use their reputation and personal capital to champion the entrepreneurship strategy.

Effective Communication

While stakeholders do not want to be harassed with too many communications, they do need to be kept informed about what you are doing and the impacts you are realizing. You should engage your stakeholders in selecting the set of metrics you will use to track progress. Then, provide clear and effective communication focused on those metrics so that you can build trust and confidence in your game plan and your ability to implement.

Part 5 – Organizing Assessments

System Stakeholders Worksheet

In the real world, the desire for an entrepreneurial economy must be supported politically, organizationally, and financially by a group of willing community and regional stakeholders. This assessment focuses specifically on these **system stakeholders**. But, as part of your entrepreneurial resource assessment, it's important to do a first cut at identifying potential stakeholders. Later on, you can get more focused on creating strategies for engaging those stakeholders.

Who is a Potential Stakeholder? A potential stakeholder is a person or organization that has a likely vested interest in the mission associated with a cause, movement, project, program, or initiative. In our case, a potential stakeholder is a person or organization that cares about a community or region and its economic development. They may or may not be engaged in or even care about entrepreneur-focused economic development. Moving them from a potential to an actual stakeholder involves clarifying or articulating their vested interest in entrepreneur-focused economic development.

Stakeholder Candidates. The chart below summarizes likely entrepreneurial ecosystem stakeholder candidates at a community level:

Business	Government/NGOs	Education
Financial Institutions	City Government	K-12 Education
Utilities	County Government	Private Area Colleges
Successful Entrepreneurs	Chambers of Commerce	Community Colleges
Main Street Businesses	Development Corporations	Regional Universities
Angel Investors	Main Street Programs	Land Grant Universities and
Cooperatives	Visitor & Convention Bureaus	Cooperative Extension Services

Mapping and Engaging EDS Stakeholders. As part of this assessment, we suggest you gather your leadership team to take a first pass at identifying relevant stakeholders in your community and region. Use this worksheet to list potential stakeholders and to note why they might have an interest in your initiative. Our e2 University provides additional mapping tools and also provides guidance on how to engage and sustain engagement by stakeholders.

Directions: Set aside 30-60 minutes at a meeting of your initiative's leadership or pull together a few of the key individuals who understand the economic and entrepreneurial development landscape in your community or region. Identify individuals and/or organizations who might be potential stakeholders. Remember, a stakeholder cares about your community and may also care about economic development. Use the table above for ideas. Take a few minutes to make note of the interest each particular stakeholder has in your initiative. For example, a community banker may be interested in entrepreneurial development because it means potential new bank customers; the mayor may be interested because of the potential growth in property taxes associated with new economic activity.

Name:	Entity:	Interest:

Entrepreneurs Stakeholder Mapping Worksheet

Identify stakeholders in your community that fall into the categories below.

Main Street Business Owners:

Creative Entrepreneurs:

Social Entrepreneurs:

Retired Entrepreneurs:

Former Resident Entrepreneurs:

Initiative Stakeholder Mapping Tool

Our initiative stakeholder mapping tool will help you cultivate broad-based community engagement and support. Give it a try!

Likely Community Players… Some will become Initiative Stakeholders
There is extensive research focused on why communities succeed and fail. As one might expect, there are numerous reasons that explain different community outcomes over time, but a common refrain surfaces time and time again in this vast research – the importance of leaders. The right people exercising empowering leadership are central to community success.

Because of this research-based finding, a central focus of our Entrepreneurial Communities work is identifying and empowering community leaders. Our success as community coaches is most dependent upon the ability of the community leaders with whom we work to help the community understand its entrepreneurial opportunity and act effectively on it.

The following framework can be used by your community to better understand both the "players" and "initiative stakeholders" within a community and the likely roles they may play in achieving success or creating the obstacles that might lead to failure.

Community Players	
Scouts	In every community, there are scouts. These are the folks who go to conferences, follow newsletters and track opportunities that could help their hometowns. Scouts are often the first folks to engage a new program or resource.
Champions	Champions are those kinds of leaders who see real merit in an opportunity and advocate engagement. Champions are very important to us and become our primary partners within a community. Growing an ever larger and effective "champions group" is a primary development activity for our coaching.
Challengers	Most communities have challengers. Challengers are those community members who watch for potential risks and mistakes. They can be well-intentioned or simply negative in their general attitude. Divining between those "constructive" and "just negative" challenges is important.
Rainmakers	Rainmakers become very important over time. Rainmakers may not come to meetings or become directly involved in an initiative. Often, we have to engage them privately and even discreetly, but they can make things happen such as raising money, getting the city on board, and the like.
Community Builders	Every community has well-intended citizens who volunteer. Often, they do not see themselves as leaders, but they are willing to give of their time, talent, and treasure. A core group of champion leaders and community builders is an optimal setup for success.
Rest of the Community	Reality is that most residents in a community do not become directly engaged. We will explore strategies to create easy and fun ways to increase community member engagement, but most of the time we will be working with a smaller subset of the community's residents.

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Community Stakeholder Groups	
Local Government	Local government typically includes municipalities, counties, and school districts.
Development Groups	Development groups can include chambers of commerce, development corporations, main street programs, and tourism/convention groups.
Major Employers	Major employers often include manufacturers, health care, cooperatives, and other ventures with significant employment in the community.
Non-Profit Organizations	Non-profit organizations ranging from youth baseball to social service agencies fall into this stakeholder category.
Civic Groups	Civic groups range from Rotary to Extension Circles. Civic groups often have important community members and leaders among their numbers.
Faith Community	Each community is different but, for many communities, inclusion of the faith community is important.
Others	Other potential community stakeholder groups include farm organizations, area community colleges, regional universities and the like.

Use the mapping sheet below to identify the PLAYERS and the potential INITIATIVE STAKEHOLDERS for your community. Remember that you want to identify individuals in each of the "player" categories described above. Try to get down to individual names as much as you can. If there is an organization that you believe is key to engage but you have no contacts there, mark it down so you can begin to build those relationships.

Player and Initiative Stakeholder Mapping Sheet
Players:
Targeted Stakeholders:

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Stakeholder Mission Alignment Tool

Developing entrepreneurs in your community is a team sport. Your community has a range of entrepreneurial talent running from aspiring and startup entrepreneurs to those that have been in business a long time and wanting to grow. Your community also has a number of organizations and groups that are interested in business development. Our **Mission Alignment Exercise** allows those in your community who want to support business development as an economic development strategy to find their **niche** within your business development system.

Exercise Steps
Employ the following stepped process to conduct your community's Mission Alignment exercise:

Step 1 – Gather Your Business Development Players. Use the Initiative Stakeholder Mapping Tool to identify potential stakeholders to invite to your session to complete this exercise. Optimal time commitment to complete this exercise is 60 to 120 minutes. We strongly recommend a 90-minute commitment.

Step 2 – Review the Kinds of Entrepreneurs Present in Your Community. In Step 2, it is important you review your previously completed entrepreneurial talent mapping and targeting work with those gathered for this exercise. Plan to spend 30 minutes or so reviewing this earlier work and providing those gathered a better idea of the kinds of entrepreneurial talent present in your community.

Step 3 – Discuss how Various Entrepreneurs Contribute to Development Outcomes. As part of your review of mapped entrepreneurial talent, discuss how developing different kinds of entrepreneurs at different stages of development contribute to economic development outcomes. This process step is important in identifying potential mission alignment areas. See our guide on the next page.

Step 4 – Have Development Players Identify Where They Have Mission Alignment. Use the Before Action Stakeholder Review as a guide to facilitate sharing by each stakeholder group as to those areas of business development that align with their mission. Capture this information on a flip chart.

Step 5 – Compile the Exercise Information and Share Back. Identify potential areas of mission alignment with your community's entrepreneurial talent. Compile this information and share it back with those who gathered for this meeting. Use this mapping in your next stakeholders' meeting to explore next steps where your entrepreneurial talent pool has been divided into segments for assistance.

Mission-Alignment Hints

Potential Partner - Potential Area of Mission Alignment

Chamber of Commerce Traded Business – Retail & Service Businesses

Development Corporation – Major Employers, Growth-Oriented Entrepreneurs

Tourism Council – Tourism and Convention Related Entrepreneurs

Main Street Program – Main Street Entrepreneurs

Community College – Young Adult and Retiree Entrepreneurs

School District – Youth Entrepreneurs

Farm Groups – Agri-Entrepreneurs

Women's Chamber – Female Owned & Operated Ventures

City – Entrepreneurs that Grow the Sales Tax Base

County – Entrepreneurs located in the County but outside of the City.

Remember these are likely illustrations but do not represent the unique missions and preferences of specific potential stakeholder groups.

Initiative Expectations: Stakeholders Survey

You have expressed interest in supporting an economic development initiative focused on growing area entrepreneurs. We are using the e2's Entrepreneur Coaching development framework and process. As part of that process, we would like to take stock of your expectations for this initiative. Please share your definition of the success that you hope this initiative can realize for each of the following periods.

By the end of this year, I hope we have achieved the following impact outcomes:

1

2

3

By the end of three years, I hope we have achieved the following impact outcomes:

1

2

3

Your individual responses are confidential. If you are willing, please share your name so we can follow up and clarify any questions.

NAME:

Getting Started Checklist

For the past decade, e2 (www.energizingentrepreneurs.org) has been developing and field testing various strategies and tactics related to entrepreneur-focused economic development. Our **Entrepreneurial Communities framework** couples use of *entrepreneur or business coaches* with the construction of a healthy *entrepreneurial ecosystem*. Together, these critical components can accelerate development impacts in a wide range of communities throughout North America.

This document provides a comprehensive checklist for "getting started" with the e2's **Entrepreneur Communities Framework**. We hope this "checklist" will enable your community to get organized to move forward with this promising economic development strategy. Our **Getting Started Checklist** comprises the following steps in creating, implementing, and sustaining your community's E-Community initiative.

Readiness The first step is getting your community ready for entrepreneur-focused economic development. In most communities, ensuring readiness is foundational to ensuring success. Failure has a severe price and should be avoided at all costs. (Our *Readiness Package* can help you assess your community's readiness.)	**Organizing** The second step is for the community to organize itself to create, launch and sustain your entrepreneurial community initiative. Organizing can be challenging but creates the foundation for moving forward.
Assessment The third step is assessment to clarify opportunities, assets, and preferences. This process provides the information necessary for strategy building.	**Strategy Building** The fourth step is strategy building. Making smart choices about where to focus finite energy and resources is critical to building a successful program.
Implementation The fifth step is going to implementation. At some point, your community needs to go live and begin growing your economy by growing your entrepreneurs.	**Sustainability** For your entrepreneurial community initiative to achieve meaningful impact, it must be sustained. Real progress comes with time and continued effort. The final step is building a multi-year sustainability plan.

Before we visit each of the major E-Community program steps, we share a possible timeline for your initiative.

Possible Timeline for Your Entrepreneurial Community Initiative.
The following tables provide a comprehensive timeline highlighting key activities and benchmarks. This timeline is intended to provide a framework for building customized "action" roadmaps in each "E Community."

Detailed Quarterly Timelines. The following tables provide a summary of likely key activities and progress benchmarks for year one:

1st Quarter of Year One		
Month	Key Activities	Progress Benchmarks
January	**Program Organizing** Stakeholders' Group Established Area Resource Team(s) Recruited Coach(s) Identified or Hired Program Orientation Training	*Basic organizational infrastructure for the program is organized and initial training is provided.*
February	**Assessment** E Talent Identified & Visitation Resource Mapping Community Preferences Identified E Targeting & Portfolio Developed	*Completion of the assessment provides critical information for strategy and system building.*
March	**Strategy Development** Strategy Development Support System Development Initial Outreach First Services Provided	*Strategy Developed* *System Developed* *Program Launched!*

Every community moves at a different pace, but our goal would be to have completed organizing, assessment and strategy development by the end of March with initial outreach and service provision beginning in March.

2nd Quarter of Year One		
Month	Key Activities	Progress Benchmarks
April	**Program Outreach & Gear Up** Scale Up of Outreach Area Resource Team Functioning Fine Tuning the Portfolio Troubleshooting Services	*The E Community Program moves to full implementation with scaled up outreach and coaching services.*
May	**Resource System Development** Program Implementation Continues Area Resource System Built Out	*Expanded Portfolio* *ARN in Place*
June	**External Resource System Development** Program Implementation Continues Begin Sustainability Planning Build Out External Resource Network	*External Resource Network in Place* *Quarterly Progress Review*

3rd Quarter of Year One		
Month	Key Activities	Progress Benchmarks
July	**Program Growth** Portfolio Expansion System Gap Analysis External Resource Network Build Out	*By July we hope the Program is growing and reaching its stride.*
August	**Program at Scale** Portfolio is Full Increasing Impacts*	*By the end of July, the Program should be well established and working effectively.*
September	**Sustainability Strategy** Program Continues Operation A Sustainability Strategy is Defined	*Program at Scale.* *Quarterly Progress Review*
* In the first quarter, the stakeholders' group would define performance metrics to measure progress and success. We recommend that this system is simple and includes both data and stories.		

e2 has supported initiatives in communities and regions across North America. We often provide regular mentoring with the Entrepreneur Coaches or Coaching Teams throughout the first year. These mentoring calls typically occur every 7 to 10 days initially and then stretch out as the coach becomes more comfortable with her mission and role. e2 also offers an "E Coaching Network" to enable communities and their Entrepreneur Coaches to connect with other communities following a similar pathway to prosperity. We facilitate this networking by providing the communication infrastructure needed to connect communities and coaches practicing entrepreneur-focused development. Entrepreneur coaching is both science and art form and becoming effective requires experience. Networking with other communities and coaches can provide a rich environment for learning and sharing. We believe that other coaches and communities ultimately offer the greatest potential for growing your community's most effective initiative.

By the start of the fourth quarter of the first year, your Entrepreneurial Community initiative should be well established, and your community should be well on its way to creating a "system" of support for your targeted entrepreneurs. In the communities we are supporting, e2 typically begins to wind down its engagement at this point and your community needs to step up to ensure your program's on-going success and sustainability.

4th Quarter of Year One		
Month	Key Activities	Progress Benchmarks
October	Program Continues Increasing Impacts Assess Program	*Year 2 Go or No-Go Decision* *Stakeholder Commitments*
November	Program Continues Increasing Impacts Program Adjustments for Year 2	*Year 2 Game Plan Defined*
December	Program Continues Increasing Impacts Annual Recognition & Celebration Begin Implementing Year 2 Strategy	***Celebrate Progress!*** *e2 Support Ends* *Annual Progress Review*

Checklists for Key Steps. Becoming an entrepreneurial community is a complicated effort. We have found that checklists provide one way to keep your focus on the specific activities that need to be accomplished to know you are making progress. The tables below provide checklists for each step in this process.

Readiness		
✔ Met	**Readiness Checklist Item**	**Answer:**
	Is this initiative a good fit for the community?	
	Is the timing right?	
	Are there community champions who will lead?	
	Are there community institutions that will support?	
	Does your community have designated funding?	
	Does the community have a coach candidate?	
	Are there people to serve on the Area Resource Team?	
	If you are planning to work with the e2, are you willing to use technology including teleconferences, webinars etc.?	
	Is there potential opposition to this initiative?	
	Overall Readiness?	

*(You might want to review the information in e2's **Readiness Package** if you are having trouble answering these questions.)*

Worksheet:

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

_____

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_____

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Organizing		
Done	**Organizing Checklist Item**	**Status**
	If you are working with e2: Complete agreement with e2.	
	Identify possible stakeholders. Engage stakeholder partners in the program.	
	Identify and appoint a project lead person. Identify and hire the Entrepreneur coach.	
	Identify and recruit members to the Area Resource Team (ART).	
	Orientation training for stakeholders, coach, and ART.	
	Determine communication and media strategy.	
	Baseline training.	
	Begin assessment.	
	Identify additional stakeholders. Engage additional stakeholder partners in the program.	

Worksheet:

Assessment		
Done	**Assessment Checklist Item**	**Status**
	Define & Finalize Assessment Strategy	
	Opportunities. First, we need to identify the entrepreneurial talent within your community including the following actions: Area Economic Opportunity Analysis Entrepreneur Talent Mapping Session Strategic Targeting Entrepreneur Visitation Define Portfolio	
	Assets. Second, we need to inventory the development assets you have available locally and regionally that can support targeted entrepreneur development: Local Asset Mapping Regional Asset Mapping Partner Targeting Recruitment & Engagement	
	Assessment Report	
	Preferences. Once your preliminary "opportunities" and "assets" assessment work is complete, it is important to share the report with your stakeholders and ensure it conforms to community preferences for development.	

Worksheet:

These checklists focus on the first three action steps of readiness, organizing, and assessment. The remaining three action steps–strategy development, implementation, and sustainability–build on the information gained and decisions made during this first series of steps. Since these final three action steps are driven by the unique circumstances and desires in each community, we highlight some general ideas based on our work across many communities.

Strategy Development. The organizing and assessment work greatly informs and shapes your entrepreneurial community strategy. Every community is unique. While there is a framework to guide you, the strategies you select must be customized to the unique circumstances and preferences of your community.

Implementation. We encourage you to create an initial three-year implementation plan based on the strategy developed by your community, including progress benchmarks for each quarter. Based on our field experience, we anticipate the following progress in most communities:

Year 1:	Organizing	Months 1 & 2
	Assessment	Months 3 & 4
	Strategy Building	Months 3 & 4
	Implementation	Months 5 and beyond
	Coach – ART – Outreach	
	Initial Impacts	
Year 2:	Sustainability Strategy	Early in Year 2
	Implementation	Early stage impacts
Year 3:	Implementation	Expanding impacts
	Sustainability Strategy	Finalized and implemented

Sustainability. As you set out to become an Entrepreneurial Community, it is essential to plan for sustainability from the outset. In a time of constrained development resources, no community can assume the funding available at startup will be there year after year to sustain your efforts over time. The **Metrics, Stories and Sustainability Guide** included in this resource package offers useful insights into creating a strategy for sustaining this important work so that you can achieve the development impacts you desire.

Access and Use of e2 University Materials

Single Party Users. Our entire e2 University is available free of charge to selected users. If you and your community are interested in any or all of these resources, contact info@e2mail.org.

Compensated Users. For those users wanting to use e2 University in their compensated work, e2 is happy to explore licensing options. Contact Don Macke at don@e2mail.org.

Nonprofit Users. If your organization is a charitable non-profit that works with multiple communities, e2 is open to non-compensated licensing options. Contact Don Macke at don@e2mail.org.

International Users. If your organization is located in or focused on non-U.S. locations, we are open to collaborative efforts to translate our work into other languages and cultures for possible use. Contact Don Macke at don@e2mail.org to explore options.

Kansas and Nebraska Users. Nebraska and Kansas have played an extraordinary role in evolving our e2 development framework. Access to e2 University resources is available free of charge to end users through NetWork Kansas and Nebraska Extension in Nebraska.

A Condition for Access and Use of e2 University Resources

In all cases e2 asks users to execute a **use agreement.** As part of this agreement*,* we require a commitment from you to share your learning back with e2. We need user feedback to continue our learning so that e2 can support entrepreneurship ecosystem building and future resources for users yet to come.

Additional Help

Don Macke is not currently accepting new advising and consulting work. However, based on scheduling availability, Don is willing to do an exploratory call to better understand your needs and expectations, and recommend pathways forward. Contact him at don@e2mail.org.

How e2 Can Help

e2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems helps communities increase prosperity through entrepreneur-focused economic development and ecosystem building. Led by **Don Macke,** e2 has a national team of practitioners who bring research, coaching, incubation, market intelligence and other expertise to this work.

What We Do

✓ **Mentoring.** We mentor and coach new practitioners seeking to pursue entrepreneur-led development. We provide advice and support for building eEcosystem strategies that work.

✓ **Analytics Support.** e2 helps communities and regions understand their entrepreneurial potential through research and data. Explore some of our research tools and reports here.

✓ **e2 University (e2U)** is our platform for sharing guides, papers, stories, tools, and resources with communities wanting a deep dive into eEcosystem building. Don Macke leads the e2U team with analytics support from **Cathy Kottwitz** and report preparation from **Ann Chaffin.** Special recognition for their e2U legacy contributions goes to **Dana Williams** and **Deb Markley,** LOCUS Impacting Investing.

✓ **Fostering the eMovement.** We support the national entrepreneurship movement along with our partners including the **Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City**, **SourceLink**, **Edward Lowe Foundation**, **Kauffman Foundation**, and **NetWork Kansas**. We are a founding member of Start Us Up: America's New Business Plan, a coalition dedicated to strengthening entrepreneurship across America. Together, we continue to advance the foundational ideas of building entrepreneurial ecosystems and entrepreneurship-led economic development.

Contact Us

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NetWork Kansas, a 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to developing an entrepreneurial ecosystem in Kansas, is the home for e2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems. NetWork Kansas connects aspiring entrepreneurs, emerging and established businesses, to a deep network of business building resource organizations across the state.