



# ENERGIZING ENTREPRENEURIAL COMMUNITIES

*A Pathway to Prosperity*



## Becoming an Entrepreneurial Community: Logan, Ohio's Journey

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### Grounding in the Place

The work of building a more entrepreneurial community happens in place. It builds on the existing entrepreneurial ecosystem, whether robust or nascent. It is influenced by the local economy, history, and even culture of the place. To provide a snapshot of Logan and Nelsonville, Ohio – and some context for their journey – explore their Community Profiles.

*Logan | Nelsonville*



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### Entrepreneurial Communities Project Background

In 2016, the national Center for Rural Entrepreneurship (now LOCUS Impact Investing) began conversations with organizations in central Appalachia about launching a rural community entrepreneurship initiative with funding from the then-new ARC Power initiative. POWER (Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization) is a federally funded initiative **“to create a more vibrant economic future for coal-impacted communities by cultivating economic diversity, enhancing job training and re-employment opportunities, creating jobs in existing or new industries, and attracting new sources of investment.”** Since 2016, POWER has invested over \$195 million in 242 projects touching 350 coal-impacted communities. The Center, the Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky, the West Virginia HUB, and Rural Action (Ohio) joined forces to develop, propose and receive a three-year grant to launch the Entrepreneurial Communities initiative in November 2016, one of the early rounds of the POWER initiative.

The successful transition of Appalachian communities requires a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem. At its most effective, that ecosystem is grounded in a community with the commitment and capacity to identify and support entrepreneurs, contributing an essential element of an entrepreneurial ecosystem. Especially in more isolated rural communities, both start-up and even more experienced entrepreneurs often do not know where to turn to access the resources they need, when they need them. When community stakeholders are engaged in entrepreneurial development, however, they can provide the connective tissue between the entrepreneurs and the network of resource providers that work locally, at the state level, regionally, and even nationally. This project was designed to build the capacity of three place-based community development organizations – Rural Action, the West Virginia Hub and the Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky – to help targeted communities in coal-impacted parts of their regions build the capacity to engage in entrepreneurial development, using the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship’s Entrepreneurial Communities’ framework. The goal was to create



communities that are engaged partners with entrepreneurs and service providers, working at the local level to lift up entrepreneurs and connect them to the help they need to create jobs, build their businesses and contribute to an economic transition in Appalachia. The E Communities (e2) Framework, built and field-tested over two decades, along with coaching support for the regional partners, was a key to the overall success of the initiative. The history of the framework is documented [HERE](#).

The initiative began with a three-part training for community coaches designed and facilitated by Don Macke and Deb Markley in early 2017. Community work was fully launched in the three states in spring 2017 and continued, with a no-cost extension, through June 2020. The two national partners to the initiative – **LOCUS Impact Investing** and **e2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems** – provided content, coaching support, peer learning facilitation and learning capture over the course of the initiative. Each state partner identified ready and willing communities to implement the program and provided on-the-ground coaching support and resource connections needed for success. Across the three states, 16 communities were engaged in the effort, achieving varying degrees of success and sustainability.

In each state, we identified one “deep dive” story to document the timeline and evolution of their Entrepreneurial Communities journey. These stories are designed to illustrate the learning themes identified through this work and to demonstrate the core elements of success. They are written as timelines so that the journey – and the major turning points and roadblocks along the way – becomes clear and can serve as an example for other communities.

## Entrepreneurial Communities in Ohio

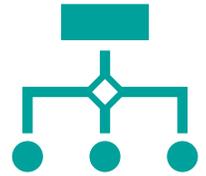
The Rural Action made the decision to hire new staff to lead the E Communities work. As a result, the startup process in Ohio was delayed as Rural Action went through the search and hiring process. Ultimately, the organization found a strong match for the position and hired Dan Vorisek in May 2017. With onboarding and training for the new coach, the E Communities work began in earnest in the second half of 2017. In July 2017, Dan Vorisek began work as lead community coach, ably supported by a series of AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers over the life of the initiative.

Rural Action hosted their kick-off gathering and training for 14 participants from five communities in September 2017 in Nelsonville, OH. Logan was not included as a potential E Community in the original grant proposal. However, Eric Smith, Rural Action staffer, lived in Logan and had been attending community meetings hosted by Logan Up, the Hocking Hills Chamber of Commerce, and Main Street. He witnessed the energy and enthusiasm in the community and invited them to participate in the initiative and attend the first gathering. Logan brought a strong team, organized by Andy Good, recently hired by the Hocking Hills Chamber of Commerce to bring a focus on business engagement, entrepreneurship, and economic development. The team’s active engagement in the first training marked the beginning of their journey to becoming an entrepreneurial community.



### September - November: Organizing & Startup

Following the Nelsonville gathering, there was strong engagement in Logan. The E Communities core team was formed, and they worked with Dan Vorisek to learn more about the E Communities framework. They also did early action planning for the work ahead. Logan is often referred to as the “gateway” to the Hocking Hills Region and, by Thanksgiving, most of the E Communities work had been set aside as the community redirected energy, time, and action to the holidays and related seasonal activities.



#### **A Coach's Journey**

*Dan Vorisek came to the E Communities initiative with a strong history and background in rural community development. He was not new to this type of on-the-ground work with community leaders and residents. And, he had past experience in the region. The E Communities framework and process, however, was new to him. While he was busy introducing the work to the Logan team and others, Dan was also learning more about the work and building his skills as a community coach. (To read more about how Dan introduced the framework into communities, follow the links under **Learning Theme 4**).*



*One important characteristic that Dan brought to this work – and that defines an effective community coach – was a learning attitude. He embraced the E Communities framework and process and committed extra time and energy to understanding it so that he could coach it, using the electronic library materials and bringing questions and concerns to Don Macke and Deb Markley. He also raised discussion topics with his fellow coaches, seeking their input and advice on the challenges and opportunities he was encountering. This hard work paid off, particularly in Logan, where Andy Good “bought into” the framework and process.*

*A second important characteristic Dan brought to this work was flexibility. At the outset, Dan stayed true to the framework and process, pushing the community teams to commit to the process, especially related to entrepreneur visitation and survey work. However, there was some frustration with the process – for Dan and the community teams – that required a more flexible approach. To build comfort with the process, Dan participated in entrepreneur outreach activities with the community teams, visiting with businesses and demonstrating how the survey work could be done. At one of the cross-community gatherings, he arranged advising sessions where survey results were reviewed with Rural Action and Center staff and follow-up opportunities were identified. These innovative approaches helped the teams see this outreach as valuable and not just burdensome.*

*Dan also recognized the power of peer learning and engagement early on in this process. He organized quarterly cross-community gatherings to share learnings, identify challenges, explore new content, and celebrate success. This regular practice was valued by the community teams and helped establish connections across the teams that might not have existed otherwise.*

*Over the course of the E Communities initiative, Dan honed his coaching skills and served as a valuable mentor to the AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers who worked with him in the communities. He demonstrated the appropriate balance between “coaching” and “doing” in the E Communities, providing support as needed but also establishing firm expectations that this work must be owned and driven by the communities. This belief resulted in some difficult decisions to step away from coaching a community when the local will and capacity were*



*lacking, while always maintaining strong ties and an open door to re-engaging when community leaders were ready.*

*Dan's consistent leadership and commitment to the process helped to build strong coaching capacity within Rural Action – capacity that is now being directed to new communities through a partnership with Cooperative Extension in Ohio. His evolution as a community coach and the value he brought to the communities was reflected well in Logan's entrepreneurial journey. Learn more about Dan Vorisek's coaching journey [here](#).*

2018

Many rural communities have natural cycles or rhythms often associated with tourism or farm-related activities. These cycles sometimes require the community to step away from E Community activities and take a break, as was seen in Logan. As the new year dawned, the coaching strategy focused on re-engagement with all the communities, including Logan, in order to refocus and re-energize the work. In **March 2018**, Rural Action hosted a **cross-community gathering**. Logan brought a team of four to the gathering and it served as a high point for engagement and enthusiasm.

Building on this energy, Dan Vorisek and Andy Good began a series of conversations that took place throughout **Spring 2018**. Together they explored the idea that the E Communities framework applied to more than startup businesses; the principles and process were equally applicable to existing businesses in the community. Given the Chamber's focus on existing businesses in Logan, they began to explore what it might mean to have the Chamber serve as the champion and host for the E Communities work in Logan.

Dan Vorisek was not alone in considering how Chambers might play a larger role in the E Communities work. The other coaches were also interested in exploring this potential role. Don Macke prepared a **thought piece** that explored the historic role that local chambers of commerce have played in stimulating and supporting entrepreneurship. This piece formed the fodder for a tri-state coaching call where the coaches, Don Macke and Deb Markley explored this topic. This conversation helped to affirm the direction that conversations in Logan were taking.

In **May 2018**, Rural Action hosted another cross-community gathering. In an attempt to energize entrepreneur outreach, each team was challenged to complete five entrepreneur surveys and bring the results to the gathering. Staff from Rural Action and Deb Markley met one-on-one with each team at the gathering to review the results and identify ways that the team might connect the entrepreneur to resources or otherwise follow up. In some ways, this event marked a turning point for Logan. It demonstrated the potential for development that existed in the city. The team began to identify potential resources that might provide support for local businesses. Both Dan Vorisek and Andy Good began to see the potential behind the E Communities framework and the value of entrepreneur outreach. However, Andy recognized the need for additional capacity before Logan could move forward in a systematic and more robust way.

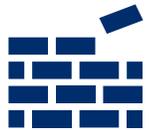
With the summer tourist season, the work slowed down once again. However, conversations continued and both Andy Good and Dan Vorisek kept the E Communities team informed. It was at this point that additional thought about the Chamber's role began to emerge, including the idea of a "business outreach coordinator". They also explored what it might mean to assign the Chamber's Ambassadors – newer members who take on projects to support the Chamber's mission – with the task of entrepreneur outreach and surveying.



The **Fall 2018** tourism season once again diverted attention away from E Communities work – especially any further outreach and follow up. The Logan team was unable to participate in the **September 2018** cross-community gathering. However, Andy Good was convinced that Logan needed an entrepreneurship strategy that included basic outreach and surveying of entrepreneurs and follow-up networking to resources. He was struggling with the fact that, despite the best intentions, the Logan team had not effectively followed up with previously visited and surveyed entrepreneurs. He was motivated by this missed opportunity to find a solution. This frustration and motivation resulted in the further development of the idea of a “business outreach coordinator” and engagement of the Chamber’s ambassadors.

### ***The Transformation of a Chamber of Commerce: Logan’s Story***

*Like most Chambers, the Hocking Hills Chamber of Commerce embraced a traditional agenda of advocacy and promotion of business and the community. Given the importance of Logan as both a hub city and center of tourism activity in the region, the Chamber’s efforts aligned with these development areas. However, Andy Good, in his capacity as the Chamber’s Executive Director and as a serial entrepreneur, envisioned moving the Chamber toward a strategy of providing more direct support to businesses. Through his participation in the E Communities initiative, he recognized the value that adopting a framework and process could bring to the Chamber’s ability to develop a focused effort around entrepreneurial support. He also recognized the need to make it someone’s job to guide that process and created the Business Outreach Coordinator position to take on that role. This vision and action helped to position the Hocking Hills Chamber of Commerce as an E Communities hub, with the commitment and capacity to support entrepreneurs as a core strategy for the Chamber.*



*Taking on this role – becoming a true entrepreneurship champion – requires adopting the tools and processes needed to effectively engage entrepreneurs and network them to resources. As Andy Good discovered, making this commitment requires investing in the capacity of the Chamber to do two things exceptionally well:*

- 1. Outreach to entrepreneurs – Without intentional and consistent outreach to entrepreneurs, E Communities work will struggle. Outreach is the tool to identify entrepreneurial talent that exists in a community and to identify both opportunities and challenges that need to be addressed for those entrepreneurs – and, in turn, the community – to achieve their dreams. It is too late if the outreach happens after the “Going Out of Business” sign is posted on the front door.*
- 2. Mapping resources – Every community has a set of resources that businesses need to succeed. These range from formal organizations like a Small Business Development Center to informal resources like a local attorney willing to do some pro bono work or a retired businessperson. For the Chamber to be the hub of entrepreneurial support, the resource landscape of support providers should be mapped and relationships built to those support providers. These resource networks are a critically important tool for Chamber staff and volunteers who are conducting outreach and follow up.*

*The Business Outreach Coordinator was identified as the key to evolving the Hocking Hills Chamber into an entrepreneurial support organization. With dedicated capacity and the E Communities framework and tools, the transformation process could begin.*

In **October** and **November 2018**, Andy Good and Dan Vorisek held several conversations about these ideas, one that included Don Macke. The result was a position description for the Business Outreach Coordinator, drawing on similar positions adopted in other communities. The Coordinator would be a Chamber employee, charged with outreach and follow up with the city’s entrepreneurs. With a job description in hand – and a **commitment to adopt the E Communities business outreach process as part of the Chamber’s support activities** – Andy had to address the challenge of funding the position.



### **Investing in E Communities**

*When the E Communities work in Ohio was first conceived – and the ARC proposal developed – Michelle Decker, then CEO of Rural Action, recognized that targeted communities might develop good ideas over time that required resources which were all too scarce in Appalachian Ohio. She set aside project resources to support yet-to-be-defined “community investments”. In 2019, Dan Vorisek designed a one-year Community Investment Fund Program for Ohio’s E Communities. Each E Community could propose an investment of up to \$10,000 that was in support of their entrepreneurship work. Each community had to commit to continue their outreach to entrepreneurs and their participation in the regional peer learning gatherings hosted by Rural Action. Partnerships were encouraged, both to leverage dollars and capacity. (For two examples, click [here](#) and [here](#)) For Logan, the Community Investment Fund Program was well-timed and well-designed. It provided some seed capital that Andy Good could use to approach other partners as he sought to raise funds for the Business Outreach Coordinator position.*



In funding the Business Outreach Coordinator position, partnerships were key for Andy Good. Knowing that Logan could use a \$10,000 Community Investment Fund grant from Rural Action, Andy approached the Nelsonville Chamber about making a similar request of Rural Action and combining resources to support one position that would serve both communities. Nelsonville was one of the communities initially targeted by Rural Action for the E Communities program. A small team participated in the inaugural gathering (held in Nelsonville) in **September 2017**. While Nelsonville has some important community assets, the team struggled to identify a consistent group of champions for the E Communities work. The Nelsonville Chamber relies on volunteers and their capacity to serve as champion for this work was limited. However, Nelsonville remained committed to supporting entrepreneurs – they worked with Rural Action on a limited basis and created a page for the Nelsonville Entrepreneurial Support Team on their website – and the President of the Chamber Board, Bill L’Heureux, was open to the idea of partnering with Logan. The two Chambers agreed to partner to support the position with their Community Investment Fund resources.

At the same time, Andy Good approached the local school district with the idea that this new position could help support the district’s interest in arranging internships and job shadowing opportunities with local businesses for its students. The school career center needed to do outreach to local businesses in order to identify opportunities for its students and it was easy to propose that the Business Outreach Coordinator promote both the internship and other opportunities with the school district and the resources available to help the businesses grow. The school district agreed to support the position for one year, subsequently renewing their support because of the success of the program.

Through collaboration, the funding for a part-time position was secured. The goal was to create a meaningful position – three days per week. Each collaborative partner would fund roughly one-third or one day a week of this position. Work supported by the two chambers would focus on entrepreneur outreach and networking to resources and the work supported by the school district would focus on placing students into local businesses.



In **January 2019**, Dan Vorisek provided orientation training for ten Hocking Hills Chamber Ambassadors about the E Communities framework and process. A particular focus was training on surveying entrepreneurs. In **February 2019**, the Chamber Board approved the Business Outreach Coordinator position. Andy Good, with support from Dan Vorisek as the community coach, began to market the position and seek good candidates. In **March 2019**, the Chamber interviewed – and ultimately hired – Autumn Warthman, a native of Logan who brought years of experience at a local bank to the position. Autumn’s past experience and local networks allowed her to “hit the road running”.

In **April 2019**, Autumn began her work as the Business Outreach Coordinator, stepping into the role of Entrepreneur Coach. (For more on Entrepreneur Coaching, read our **Working with Entrepreneurs Guide** in the Resource Library.) For the first month, Autumn and Dan Vorisek identified and met with entrepreneurial resource providers both locally and in the region. The decision to “map resources” at the front end proved to be smart – it enabled Autumn to understand what resources were available **and** to educate providers about the work she was doing and build personal relationships with these resources. Despite her experience in the region, this mapping process was informative – she was “shocked” that there were so many resources available to help entrepreneurs. This foundational work served her well as she turned her attention to visiting entrepreneurs.

In **May and June 2019**, Autumn focused on outreach to local entrepreneurs. She completed 23 surveys (18 in Logan and 5 in Nelsonville) and made 40 resource referrals. Moving into **Summer 2019**, entrepreneurs were beginning to reach out to Autumn, a sign that the Chamber’s approach to entrepreneur support was becoming part of the community’s culture and entrepreneurial ecosystem.



#### **Accelerating E Communities Efforts**

*The Chamber’s commitment to entrepreneur outreach and support – and Autumn’s embrace of the E Communities framework and tools – helped to accelerate the E Communities work in Logan in ways that were not seen in other communities. There were several features of these “accelerators”:*

- *Although the Logan team was consistently enthusiastic about the E Communities initiative, the pacing of the work over the first two years was slow. The commitment and added capacity by the Chamber were key accelerants of the work. Someone was waking up each morning asking, “What can I do to support entrepreneurs today?”*
- *Autumn’s investment of time to discover and build relationships with resource providers enabled her to immediately network entrepreneurs to appropriate resources after her visitation. This accelerated the business support and potential value that entrepreneurs were getting from the Chamber’s new efforts. It likely contributed to “word of mouth advertising” by entrepreneurs about Autumn’s work with the Chamber.*
- *Autumn took a “high touch” approach to working with entrepreneurs – even offering to go along with the entrepreneur to meet with a resource provider. But she also made smart choices about how to spend her time with entrepreneurs, focusing her energies where they offered the best opportunity for impact. This skill enabled her to make productive connections more quickly for entrepreneurs with the interest and capacity to improve their businesses.*

*These acceleration efforts served Logan well and provide important lessons learned for other communities. Particularly in smaller communities, finding the right partner organization – a place to institutionalize and root the work – is a key to success. Over-reliance on volunteers can derail momentum when a key volunteer steps away; having someone whose job it is to coordinate E Communities activities provides the consistency needed to make – and keep making – progress.*



One of the creative features of the Hocking Hills Chamber's approach to funding Autumn's position was collaboration with the Nelsonville Chamber. The two communities are in close proximity, separated by 12 miles, which made it feasible to have one person working across both communities. The communities are of similar size and demographics, although Logan has a larger business community and Nelsonville serves as more of a bedroom community to the larger city of Athens. However, effectively acting on this collaboration beyond funding was not without its challenges:

- Autumn was rooted in Logan and had personal and business networks she could use to facilitate her access to local businesses. As a result, those connections came readily, and she built momentum quickly. In Nelsonville, she was more reliant on entrepreneur champions to make these introductions and connections. The Nelsonville Chamber did not have the robust leadership capacity to support her efforts and it was more difficult to gain traction.
- The Hocking Hills Chamber, by supporting this new position, made a significant commitment to entrepreneur support, adopting entrepreneur outreach as a key part of its strategy. The Nelsonville Chamber was not in a position to make the same level of commitment, depriving the community of the "champion" needed to effectively support Autumn's efforts.
- Without that champion's support, other opportunities including trail development drew attention and effort away from entrepreneur visitation toward these other activities. It was difficult to maintain the focus on E communities work that Autumn needed to make her efforts in Nelsonville successful.

Through the second half of 2019, Autumn Warthman continued her work as the Business Outreach Coordinator, working in both Logan and Nelsonville. Ellie Dudding, Rural Action staffer, had connections in Nelsonville and began providing extra coaching to the Nelsonville team to support the E communities work. There was optimism that these efforts would result in more effective engagement with entrepreneurs by the Nelsonville team and Autumn Warthman.

One story related by Autumn captures the importance of communities like Logan and Nelsonville prioritizing outreach to and support for existing and startup businesses.

*Autumn did a "drop by" visit to a business owner she knew from her days with a local bank. She asked how he was doing, and he shared that he was struggling and was glad she dropped by. He said he was planning to close his business and get a job. When she asked why, he said that business was good, but he was not good at handling the financials. His books were a mess, and he was falling behind on his taxes. His solution was to just give up. Autumn's solution was to connect him to a CPA, a Small Business Development Center QuickBooks class, a marketing specialist, and other resources. She also provided confidence-building coaching and hand-holding support. He made the decision to hire a part-time person to handle business financials. He remained in business, hired additional staff, got current with his taxes, and took steps to buy his building.*

Rather than another "out of business" sign, Logan had another thriving business and a supported business owner. The Chamber's commitment to the E Communities framework and to outreach and support for the community's entrepreneurs has had a real impact, measured in stronger businesses that are creating jobs and wealth in the community.





## Reflections on the Journey

Like many journeys, Logan’s journey toward becoming an entrepreneurial community benefitted from good timing. The E Communities initiative was launched – and Dan Vorisek hired by Rural Action – around the same time as Andy Good started with the Hocking Hills Chamber. Dan’s commitment to honing his community coaching skills and sharing the E

Communities framework was matched by Andy’s entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to leading the Chamber into a new role in entrepreneurial development. The Community Investment Fund program was launched by Rural Action just as fundraising for the Business Outreach Coordinator was beginning. Good timing combined with two committed champions for the work resulted in momentum, action and, ultimately, positive results.

Most of targets chosen for the E Communities work in Appalachia were counties rather than individual communities. Rural Action focused on smaller communities knowing that their capacity constraints would make the work challenging. The instinct to combine forces between Nelsonville and Logan was a good one. Collaboration would help to address the issue of scale and limited capacity. However, collaboration is, by its very nature, challenging. It proved of limited success with other smaller communities initially targeted for this initiative. With Nelsonville and Logan, combining financial resources via the Community Investment Fund grants proved to be the easy part. Moving forward the actual entrepreneur outreach and networking to resources proved more challenging. Success was eventually due, in part, to additional coaching resources allocated by Rural Action suggesting, once again, that it takes resources and investment to make collaboration truly work.

Autumn Warthman was the right woman for the Business Outreach Coordinator position. She got off to a strong start and generated real impact. It is not clear, however, how long she will choose to play this role. With both community coaches and entrepreneur coaches, turnover can be a real challenge and can even derail E Communities work. Successfully replacing a coach like Autumn may well be the key to sustainability in Logan or other communities. One way to address turnover is to make these “better” positions – full time with opportunities for career advancement. Professionalizing community and entrepreneur coaching may be critical to sustaining a high performing E Communities initiative over time, beyond the tenure of an ideal candidate like Autumn. One of the lessons learned from Ord, Nebraska came from their ability to sustain strong staffing in the entrepreneurial coach role. Ord is now on their fourth entrepreneurial coach, a position that is rooted in the culture and practice of economic development in the community. To learn more about Ord’s experience, read the story [HERE](#).



## Connections to the Learning Themes

The E Communities work in Logan, Ohio has indeed been a journey. It has exemplified several of the learning themes from the E Communities work overall.

- **Community Readiness** – Logan had a number of readiness factors that contributed to success. They had a strong champion for entrepreneurship in Andy Good combined with his willingness to move the Chamber into a new economic development role focused on entrepreneurship. The Chamber leadership’s support for – and investment in – the Business Outreach Coordinator position was also key to creating the capacity to realize the vision for entrepreneurial support in Logan. This additional capacity proved to be a turning point for the city in connecting with and supporting entrepreneurs, capacity that was lacking in other Appalachian E Communities.



- **Community Coaching** – Logan, spurred on by Andy Good’s leadership, was an excellent candidate for community coaching. And Dan Vorisek invested coaching time to guiding and encouraging Logan’s efforts. Andy had an openness to learning the E Communities framework and to applying the outreach tools that contributed to their success. Dan recognized this commitment to and ownership for the process and provided the coaching needed to support their work – connecting them to resources, providing training for Ambassadors, helping Autumn with the resource mapping, allocating time and energy to facilitating the collaboration with Nelsonville. This community coaching partnership shows what can be accomplished when the right coaching is combined with effective community leadership.
- **Importance of a Framework** – Logan’s adoption and use of the E Communities framework and process was unprecedented among the E Communities involved in the initiative in Central Appalachia. Too often, community efforts to conduct entrepreneur outreach, resource mapping, and then the “transaction” of connecting entrepreneurs to the resources needed to succeed were inconsistent. The result was often failure to demonstrate success and build momentum to sustain the work longer term. In Logan, Autumn’s commitment and approach to applying the framework were evident from the outset – she deployed the outreach and tracking tools to good advantage and ensured that no entrepreneur fell between the cracks when it came to follow up and referrals. She built the infrastructure for a robust outreach effort and got really good at the “transaction” of entrepreneur referrals and support.
- **Momentum, Momentum, Momentum** – Related to Logan’s adoption of the E Communities framework, Autumn’s early success in connecting entrepreneurs to resources was a key to success. Part of the frustration that led Andy Good to create the outreach coordinator position was knowing that entrepreneurs were not getting the follow up they needed. That changed with Autumn. She built relationships with resource providers so that she could add value to entrepreneurs right away, making referrals and providing her own coaching support. She created momentum – entrepreneurs who were receiving help from the Chamber in ways they had not before; entrepreneurs who were willing to share their positive experience and help to change the way the Chamber was viewed as a resource for local businesses. This momentum was reflected in the fact that two months into her outreach, entrepreneurs were reaching out to Autumn rather than vice versa.
- **Finding the right intermediaries** – Logan provides a positive story about the role of a Chamber of Commerce in serving as the E Communities hub. In this case, the Chamber had a number of characteristics that made it the “right intermediary” for this work: a strong champion in Andy Good; a Board willing to support a new body of work for the Chamber; commitment to building the internal capacity to do the work through a new position; selection of the right person in Autumn Warthman to serve as the entrepreneur coach. The Chamber created the institutional home for the E Communities work, providing the structure and capacity needed for success. Having the Chamber serve as hub also created a sustainability strategy for the work that did not exist in many other communities. While a Chamber of Commerce will not always be the “right intermediary for the job,” the Hocking Hills Chamber of Commerce proved to have the right leadership and commitment to lead the E Communities work into the future.

