



# ENERGIZING ENTREPRENEURIAL COMMUNITIES

*A Pathway to Prosperity*



## Learning Theme 6 – One Size Does Not Fit All

Entrepreneurial ecosystem building is very place-based work. Some communities have experienced decades of capacity building support and have deeper “bench strength” with which to launch their entrepreneurial efforts. For example, the e2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems team has been working with the [Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation](#) (SMIF) to bring the e2 Framework and coaching approach to communities in their region – a program they call [REV](#) (Rural Entrepreneurial Venture). Minnesota is a place that has prioritized community capacity building over the years, with regional organizations like SMIF working to strengthen community leadership skills. This investment created a strong foundation of community capacity for the entrepreneurial ecosystem building work. Hear more about this work in this [podcast](#) from the University of Minnesota Extension.

The experience in Appalachia was varied. In Appalachian Ohio, a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem of support providers exists, built over years of network weaving and collaboration. The E Communities work was able to tap into and extend that network into some of the targeted communities. In West Virginia, the past work of the WV Hub in communities was an important differentiator in the time and effort needed for startup. The Grafton community was already organized, and the E Communities work was connected to those ongoing efforts. In contrast, communities in the southern part of the state struggled at the outset to identify the leaders and organizations with the capacity to move the work forward. In eastern Kentucky, geography creates a challenge for service providers whose limited capacity makes it hard to reach into all the hills and hollers. The challenge for the E Community team was to create a trusted bridge between resource providers and entrepreneurs.

All of this is to say that truly, one size does not fit all. There is as much art as science to entrepreneurial ecosystem building. For communities setting out on this journey, it is important to learn from those who have gone before, to network with peers to learn of their challenges and successes, and then to consider your unique place – assets, opportunities, challenges – and create a path that works well for you. The E Communities framework was never imagined to be a rigid “how to” manual as much as it is a road map for travelers to use as they build the right approach to serve their unique community and entrepreneurs.

Two good resources for connecting with other ecosystem builders are:

- [National e2 Network](#) – hosted by [e2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems](#) in collaboration with [NetWork Kansas](#)
- [The Kauffman Foundation](#) – hosts several supportive communities including the [ESHIP Summit](#)