



ENERGIZING ENTREPRENEURIAL COMMUNITIES

A Pathway to Prosperity



Learning Theme 4 – Importance of a Framework

The E Communities initiative in Central Appalachia was built around the e2 Development Framework. This field-tested model provides a way for a community to create a vision for entrepreneurial development and then design and implement a strategy to make that vision a reality. You can learn more about the framework [here](#).

The e2 Development Framework – In Practice in Appalachia

The experience applying the framework in Central Appalachia provided some important lessons, particularly for smaller communities with thinner leadership and other capacities. From the outset, some communities found the framework to be abstract or academic. They wanted to jump into the work of connecting entrepreneurs to resources and were less willing to do the research and data gathering needed to understand their entrepreneurs. In Kentucky, the coach pivoted and used a Speed Dating approach to bring the leadership team, entrepreneurs, and resource providers together. These events created some momentum and helped the leadership team collect valuable insights in a more applied, real-time way. In Ohio, the coach used a peer learning event to encourage teams to conduct outreach to entrepreneurs via a survey. Each team was asked to complete 5 survey visits with entrepreneurs and bring the data to the gathering. Each team received coaching to analyze the data and brainstorm how best to respond. It created some energy around an element of the framework – entrepreneur surveys – that had proven challenging to that point.

Another important pivot was to put greater emphasis on “energy areas” – tying the E Communities work to ongoing efforts in the community focused on a particular sector or even a particular project. The focus on Outdoor Recreation and Tourism described in [Jackson County Kentucky’s Journey](#) was one example. Another was embedding the E Communities work in the existing All Aboard Grafton team in Grafton, West Virginia. Rather than stretch a thin leadership pool even thinner, the coach worked with the existing team to bring the focus on entrepreneurs to their community revitalization efforts. In Ohio, the coincident development associated with [Bailey’s Trail](#), an Outdoor Recreation and Tourism opportunity, helped to generate energy and bring added capacity to the E Communities efforts.

What made the framework an effective tool in this initiative was both the content of the framework itself and the flexibility the coaches brought to their work, recognizing when to push forward with an element of the framework – like entrepreneur surveys – and when to shift their approach to be more aligned with the needs and desires of their communities. We included several short stories about how the framework was introduced and applied to communities in Ohio for more information.