

**Abstract.** *The economic development process is as complicated as the diverse economies it is trying to impact. Historically, and even today, economic development in rural America has been dominated by industrial attraction and natural resource related promotion (e.g., farm commodity programs, forest development, mineral extraction.) There are a bewildering array of agencies, programs and strategies from which the local development community can choose. While some of these efforts can help entrepreneurs, few are intentionally focused on energizing entrepreneurs. This paper, Energizing Entrepreneurs – The Practice, represents lessons from the field. We believe we are on the verge of a key discovery. While forms of economic development may range widely, the practice within these successful forms appears rooted in key elements central to energizing entrepreneurs.*

## Forms of Assistance

If we focus only on those forms of economic development with the potential to help entrepreneurs realize their dreams, we discover a diversity of programs and strategies. These many programs and strategies reflect the creativity within the economic development community. The forms originate from agencies, funders or communities of development interests. Most are not intentionally focused on energizing and supporting entrepreneurs. By intentional, we mean a clear focus on entrepreneurs (not necessarily the ventures) with growth orientation and potential. Sometimes strategic, often organic, each of these forms of intervention has a history of both success and failure from which we can draw insights. Figure 1 on Page 2 highlights the forms of assistance potentially helpful to entrepreneurs. Following are short descriptions of each form.

**Incubators.** Business incubators are an established business assistance form in many regions of the country. Incubators are often housed within a physical facility where space, support services and technical assistance are provided. In recent years *incubators without walls* have taken root. In these settings, services are provided using the elements of an incubator model but without housing these elements within a physical facility. Incubators often have a sectoral focus such as technology or food processing.

**Micro Enterprise Development.** Micro enterprise development, with origins including the Bangladesh model, has become widespread throughout urban and rural America. Micro enterprises are often described as businesses with five or fewer employees. Micro strategies are a mainstay among economic empowerment groups targeting distressed communities and populations. The practice of micro enterprise development has diversified over the past 20 years providing a rich venue of experiences.

**SBA/SBDC.** The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) through its Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) delivers a package of services targeting small business (defined by the SBA as firms with 500 or fewer employees). SBDCs provide generalized assistance including business planning, feasibility studies and skill development workshops. Some SBDC counselors have evolved a form of entrepreneurial facilitation that is customized and high impact.

**Project Led.** A number of development interests including Cooperative Extension, Development Districts, Cooperative Development Centers, Councils of Government, and Resource Conservation and Development Areas often engage in “project led” development. This assistance is often customized and geared to completing a project such as the creation of a marketing cooperative.

**Capital Led.** Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and other development entities (e.g., revolving loan funds, SBA programs, CDBG programs & local/state financing programs) often provide entrepreneurial assistance as part of their efforts to support deal flow development and deal polishing activities necessary for packaging financing for a client.

**Training Led.** There has been considerable growth in *training led* programs including FastTrac, REAL, NxLevel, SBDC programs and others. These programs provide generalized and customized assistance to entrepreneurs seeking to create a competitive business. Training led programs with strong coaches and extensive resource networks often connect entrepreneurs to additional customized services that are most helpful.

## ***Energizing Entrepreneurs - The Practice***

**Enterprise Facilitation** <sup>TM</sup> **Ernesto Sirolli.** *Enterprise Facilitation* is a concept articulated by Ernesto Sirolli and the Sirolli Institute. Sirolli has taken a widely successful, but largely organic practice, and packaged it into a program communities can readily adopt. There has been considerable experimentation with Enterprise Facilitation and Sirolli has even trademarked the concept.

**Informal Customized Assistance.** From local chamber executives to state agencies, there is considerable informal customized assistance being provided to entrepreneurs in rural settings across the United States each day. There is little research on this practice. We assume some of the assistance is helpful, while other assistance results in little impact.

Unfortunately, this practice is highly dependent upon the experience, orientation and approach of the individual providing the assistance. But the widespread nature of this practice strongly suggests that at a grassroots level, customized assistance makes sense and has impact.

### **Elements of Successful Practice**

We have observed that there are a number of elements associated with more successful programs designed to assist entrepreneurs. These elements may be found within any one of the forms of economic development described above.

**Entrepreneurial Focus.** The philosophy of Energizing Entrepreneurs (E<sup>2</sup>) rests on the belief that within most, if not all communities, there are persons with the passion and capacity to create successful ventures if only they are supported by entrepreneurial assistance programs that focus on the entrepreneur not the business. Our fieldwork strongly supports this belief.

**Strategy.** Our fieldwork also suggests that there is a range of entrepreneurial talent within communities. Many business assistance providers have broad and general missions such as serving all small businesses (often defined as any firm with 500 or fewer employees.) In most states, that includes 95% of all enterprises. Assuming most communities have limited capacity to engage in E<sup>2</sup>, then strategic choices must be made. Focusing on growth-oriented entrepreneurs offers the greatest opportunity for initial success.

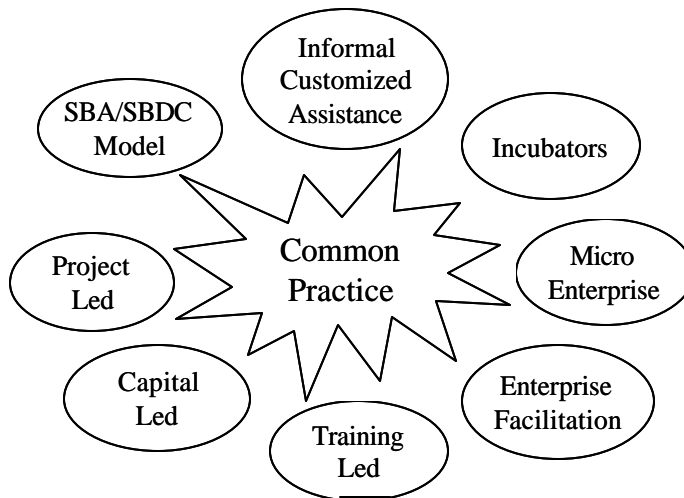
Growth-oriented entrepreneurs are those who have a solid background in business but are open to and actively engaged in evolving a stronger venture model. Many have already figured out how to reach new markets and grow their venture to meet expanded demand. Focusing energy on this relatively small group of entrepreneurs potentially offers the greatest immediate impact. As confidence and capacity in the E<sup>2</sup> strategy build, it becomes both feasible and effective to reach more broadly to potential and aspiring entrepreneurs.

It takes longer and requires greater investments of time, talent and resources to take a potential or aspiring entrepreneur to successful venture status.

**The Right Geography.** We have observed that development efforts work best within the appropriate geography. There is no formula or body of research that can answer what is the “right size.” Generally speaking, development landscapes are multi-community and often multi-county in size. Our observations suggest that optimal development landscapes are determined by three considerations:

- The ability to effectively build and sustain relationships requires a geography small enough that travel time does not undermine the ability to maintain personal contact.

**Figure 1 – Many Forms, Common Practice**



## ***Energizing Entrepreneurs - The Practice***

- The geography must be large enough to provide a critical pool of entrepreneurial talent to engage in an effective E<sup>2</sup> approach.
- The geography must be larger than a single rural community to escape from the limitations of insular community culture.

**Facilitator Driven Customization.** One stop centers and services are popular in economic development circles. This focus recognizes the challenges the entrepreneur faces in patching together help in meaningful ways. A critical attribute of successful practice is the use of business coaches, counselors, and facilitators who work one on one with the entrepreneur and rationalize assistance one need at a time. Interventions that provide customized versus general assistance tend to be more valuable to entrepreneurs. The more effective services provide this assistance over time, ensuring continuity of engagement and assistance. However, customized, long-term assistance, when done right, tends to be more expensive and complex for service providers as compared to generalized assistance.

**Use of Networks, Peers and Mentors.** Customized assistance takes many forms, but we have observed that some of the most promising practices shy away from the model where experts lecture in a workshop setting and instead employ more organic forms such as networks, peers and mentors. These approaches assume that other entrepreneurs represent the best assistance an entrepreneur can receive. One tool is to provide access to robust networks that connect entrepreneurs to expertise, services and insights. Peer groups and mentors provide other ways in which entrepreneurs with experience (mentors) and those struggling with the same issues (peers) can provide mutual assistance.

**Creation of a Portfolio.** Many economic development programs, particularly those supported with public dollars, tend to be politically risk intolerant. Ten success

stories are often not enough to overcome the concern created by one deal gone wrong. As is the case with investing, programs that embrace a portfolio approach tend to create appropriate expectations around the performance of the portfolio rather than the success or failure of individual deals.

### **The Staffer**

*The venture coach, business counselor, mentor or facilitator is a key human resource central to the practice of energizing entrepreneurs. In fact one could argue that it is the cornerstone of the practice. We are actively engaged in learning about what enables such a key person to remain successful and effective over time. This is not a new issue, but one that has challenged chambers of commerce, main street programs, development corporations and most organizations where success is dependent on one key person. Our field learning suggests the following design elements may help ensure the long-term retention and effectiveness of the staffer:*

- *Strong oversight and clear expectations regarding mission.*
- *Strong support that appropriately enables the staffer to work.*
- *Being part of a system with other colleagues and a corporate culture.*
- *Having a strong and active peer group.*
- *Career tracking.*
- *Realistic capitalization that ensures reasonable compensation.*
- *Performance-related compensation.*
- *Avoiding situations that create lone ranger or savior behavior.*

**Private Business Services.** Most public business assistance programs with finite budgets have difficulty developing and providing higher order value-added services. To overcome this limitation, successful public programs are willing and adept at engaging private sector business services into the practice. Often they build

### **Aurora Colorado SBDC**

*The Aurora Colorado Small Business Development Center (affiliated with the SBA Program) has a remarkable program that engages private sector business service providers with clients early in the assistance process. The program is called ABAT for Aurora Business Advisors Team. ABAT members include attorneys, accountants, marketing specialists, production analysts and other types of business service providers. ABAT is a well-developed program with sound protocols and a proven track record. ABAT is a good model for creating private sector engagement and growing entrepreneurs into clients for higher order business service providers. For more information about the Aurora SBDC and its ABAT Program contact Randy Johnson at [asbdc@rmi.net](mailto:asbdc@rmi.net) or 303.341.4849.*

## *Energizing Entrepreneurs - The Practice*

stronger venture teams by enabling entrepreneurs to access and work with private service providers early in the assistance process. These entrepreneurs then graduate into clients for these private service providers, receiving higher order services than they could receive from the public service providers alone (*see box on the Aurora Colorado SBDC on Page 3.*) Public programs often limit themselves from building such relationships to avoid giving preference to one private vendor over another. Successful practices overcome this barrier and are able to leverage a wider and richer set of resources for entrepreneurs.

**Local Resource Network.** Economic development is a community process where every resident has a stake in its success or failure. The ED process should be transparent to the members of the community, not a mystery. Creation of a local resource network is an important step in the right direction in keeping faith with this ED concept. It is also a critically important tactical step as well. Creating a robust local resource network mobilizes the community to support the customized assistance program by engaging in mentoring, peer groups, networks and other assistance venues.

**Systems Approach with Higher Order Services.** We believe E<sup>2</sup> can work most effectively within a systems approach. It is one element of a multi-element program approach that is both sophisticated and comprehensive. Local E<sup>2</sup> initiatives will likely prove more sustainable and effective if they connect with broader development infrastructure. The facilitator can only broker assistance to the extent that rich, appropriate and affordable development infrastructure is available. Furthermore, it may be desirable organizationally to connect E<sup>2</sup> with a regional development corporation to ensure optimal value to the entrepreneur. In fact, E<sup>2</sup> may be one of the more effective ways for high performing regional development organizations to partner with local practitioners, generating better deal flow for their investment and technical assistance portfolios.

**Performance Driven.** Sustained and effective economic development can often mean the difference in the future of a community. Much is at stake, however, and the intervention must be performance driven. Focusing clearly on the goals to be achieved, crafting a relevant strategy, and executing it effectively are fundamental to realiz-

ing successful performance. Too often goals are unclear, tracking is weak, and performance is not attained.

### **Kansas Model**

*The State of Kansas through its Community Development Block Grant Program has launched one of the more unique experiments focusing on EF. Partnering with the Sirolli Institute and three multi-county regions, Kansas offers an innovative approach worth watching. The National Commission on Entrepreneurship and the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship are teaming up to follow this initiative and capture its learning.*

**Accountability.** Successful entrepreneurship interventions have a strong commitment to accountability. The reasons for accountability are many, but at the core is the need to provide sound performance information to providers to ensure continuous learning and improvement and to supporters to ensure capitalization so the program continues. Solid systems of accountability begin with clear and reasonable expectations. When a community invests, is there clarity around what the investment is intended to do? How do we know whether progress is being made? There needs to be an effective and objective tracking system based on short, medium and long-term outcomes that can be measured. If public funds are involved, the system needs to be transparent and rooted in an agreed upon cost/benefit relationship.

### **Robust Capitalization.**

Very little can happen without capital. Capital is needed to fuel the development program and capital is needed to grow ventures. Successful places invest smartly and adequately in economic development programming that enables success. While traditional economic development activities enjoy core and stable funding through 50 years of evolved public and private programs, entrepreneurship development programs are generally on the outside of historic economic development funding systems. Entrepreneurially-focused programs often work with soft funding (e.g., grants) and they lack adequate and stable capitalization. Successful programs have secured the more adequate and stable funding that is necessary given the long-term nature of entrepreneurship development.

## ***Energizing Entrepreneurs - The Practice***

### **Sirolli's Enterprise Facilitation**

*Enterprise facilitation is garnering considerable attention within development circles these days. Most notably, Ernesto Sirolli and his Sirolli Institute are marketing enterprise facilitation as a proven and highly effective development approach. While Sirolli captured the term enterprise facilitation, the practice of customized support for entrepreneurs is wide and rooted among many development practitioners. Ernesto Sirolli has done what others practicing this form of development have not – he has created a programmatic approach that communities and developers can get their hands around and implement.*

*The Sirolli enterprise facilitation (EF) program is focused, direct, well thought out and includes enough field success to warrant serious consideration. EF as a development approach is not new; in our considerable field travels we have found many persons across rural America employing EF approaches ranging from Small Business Development Center counselors to extension educators to local chambers of commerce. Unlike the Sirolli Institute, these practitioners have not captured their methods into a program that can be readily shared with others.*

*The Sirolli Institute is organized as a private, not-for-profit consulting firm. The Institute is engaged in the business of selling its program to communities, states and others interested in adopting this programmatic approach. A good overview of the Sirolli model is provided in his 1999 book Ripples from the Zambezi, Passion, Entrepreneurship and the Rebirth of Local Economies (New Society Publishers, ISBN #0-86571-397-9, [www.new.society.com](http://www.new.society.com). Specific information on the Sirolli Institute can be obtained from Yvonne Fizer, Marketing Director for the Sirolli Institute at 1-877-SIROLLI or [www.sirolli.com](http://www.sirolli.com).)*

*As we have traveled rural America and explored development practices, we have consistently observed various forms of EF being pursued in many different venues. The following are emerging field observations related to EF as practiced within the Sirolli model and by others through their more personal models.*

***Sound Concept.*** *We believe that there is considerable field evidence to suggest that EF can be a highly effective development approach. We have also observed where EF has not been as effective and this learning contributes to our discussion of successful design elements found in the next section of this paper.*

***Trinity of Management.*** *The Sirolli Institute places great emphasis on its Trinity of Management – Production Skills, Ability to Market, and Financial Skills. We find this a reasonable and useful starting point. Clearly these three skill areas are critical to venture success. We also agree that most entrepreneurs do not have strength in all three areas and that weakness in one or more areas can undermine ultimate venture success. While this Trinity of Management offers a focused approach, it tends to oversimplify the challenges of creating robust growing ventures. Program deliverers should be sure to assume a more sophisticated approach particularly with catalyst and breakout ventures.*

***Other Insight on EF.*** *Unfortunately, we have found little formal research and writing on EF (except for materials generated by the Sirolli Institute). There is a need for a more engaged and broader learning community focusing on EF as practiced by Sirolli and others. One research piece was prepared by Catherine Lane of C. Lange Consulting for the Credit Union Central of Ontario – “Research on the Role of Credit Unions in Community Economic Development and the Sirolli Institute Approach” (March 2001).*

*The Center in partnership with EntreWorks (formally with the National Commission on Entrepreneurship) is engaged in a two-pronged project to learn more about enterprise facilitation. One, we are conducting a long-term evaluation of the Kansas Sirolli Project. Two, we are seeking field learning from across North America.*

***Disclaimer.*** *The Center for Rural Entrepreneurship does not endorse specific programs. Our intent is to objectively share information about promising rural development strategies with a focus on entrepreneurship.*

## *Energizing Entrepreneurs - The Practice*

### **Why the Practice Fails**

There are incubators that become nothing more than marginally successful real estate deals. There are micro enterprise programs that create a culture of dependence versus empowering clients to become independent. There are endless SBDC-sponsored business workshops that provide enough knowledge to get an entrepreneur into real trouble. There are many examples of interventions that come up short. We often learn as much from these failed interventions as from the successes of other endeavors. Following are attributes that appear to most often contribute to failed interventions.

**Factory ED.** Numbers drive many programs, such as the number of business plans prepared, workshop attendees or manuals distributed. Often the accountability systems associated with these types of metrics do not track outcomes – what happens because of the business plan, workshop or manual. Factory type economic development is geared to mass production, not necessarily to the development and growth of entrepreneurs capable of creating and growing a new generation of ventures. Programs focused on or geared to factory ED tend to be ineffective in helping entrepreneurs grow.

**General vs. Specific.** The majority of resources being provided to entrepreneurs in rural settings are of a general nature. While rural entrepreneurs need access to general assistance, ultimately they need specific help to address those issues challenging their ability to grow their ventures. To build a robust support system for entrepreneurs, it is essential to create the capacity to provide customized and specialized assistance to rural entrepreneurs.

**Dependency.** Although formal documentation is limited, some economic development professionals become the center of assistance efforts. They create value and loyalty for themselves by creating dependency among those they serve. This self-serving strategy limits entrepreneurs to what the service provider can provide. This form of practice is counter to more successful practices that are rooted in building capacity within the entrepreneur to more independently get what they need to prosper.

**Continuity.** Growing a business is a long-term proposition. Programs and strategies that are short-lived will not be there as the entrepreneur continues to meet the challenges of creating and growing his venture. Lack of continuity of assistance is a major cause of failed interventions.

**Clarity.** The mission of many economic development efforts is so broad relative to capacity that the program cannot effectively serve any market segment. Creating clarity is fundamental to creating a more effective intervention, even if that means narrowing mission scope. However, many programs narrow the scope of services provided rather than the target audience they serve. They continue to serve everyone who meets a broad client definition (e.g., women seeking to create a business), but they only provide feasibility or business planning services. Programs that are more helpful to entrepreneurs focus more narrowly on which clients they serve, but provide a fuller continuum of services.

**Accountability.** We have found that programs struggle or are short-lived when performance goals are not clear and tracking of performance is lacking. Alternatively, programs with sharp performance goals and sound tracking systems tend to be more robust. This can be particularly true if performance tracking and goal setting are used to evolve the effectiveness of the practice over time.

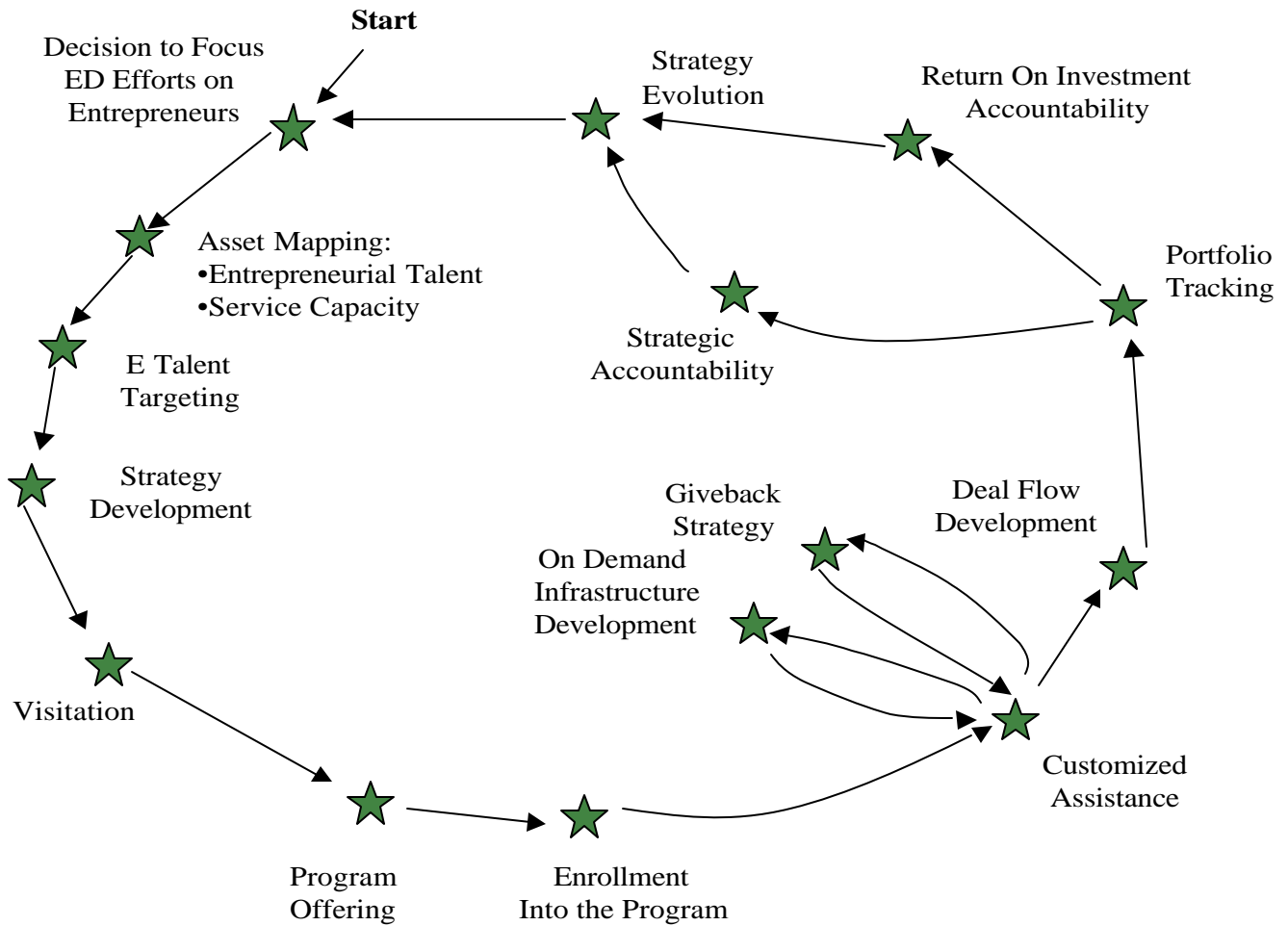
**Strategic.** There is so much need and so little capacity to serve it. Programs that fail to focus strategically tend to move towards intermediate outcomes such as helping an entrepreneur write a business plan, but do not actually help the business move towards the next level of performance. Lack of strategic thinking tends to keep the program from building the capacity to serve a defined market segment effectively, negating the opportunity for high impact.

**Execution.** A weak plan is a prescription for limited success. But even for programs with strong plans, poor execution often undermines both reach and impact. The causes of poor execution are many – unrealistic expectations, under capitalization, the wrong staff, a dysfunctional support system, or geography too small to enable success.

**Capitalization.** Under capitalization of entrepreneurship development programs is a fundamental challenge that adversely impacts this practice. Soft dollars, too few dollars and resources that are not tied to performance and growth combine to starve this work and keep it at sub-robust levels.

## *Energizing Entrepreneurs - The Practice*

**Figure 2 - Process Around the Practice**



### ***New Promising Initiative – Home Town Competitiveness***

*A consortium based in Nebraska with support from the National Rural Funders Collaborative has created an innovative development approach. The consortium includes the Nebraska Community Foundation, RUPRI's Center for Rural Entrepreneurship and the Heartland Center for Leadership Development. HTC is a comprehensive, yet easily executed development approach for smaller rural communities (5,000 residents & smaller) in the Great Plains. Incorporating mobilization of resources, leadership development, entrepreneurial economic development and youth retention, this approach offers great promise.*

## *Energizing Entrepreneurs - The Practice*

### **Process Within the Practice**

In most rural areas, a focus on energizing entrepreneurs represents a significant departure from past economic development activities. Regardless of the form chosen to implement these programs (e.g., an incubator or an enterprise facilitator), our fieldwork suggests that the following process elements contribute to program success (see Figure 2 on Page 7).

**The Decision.** The first step in the process is making a conscious decision to focus development efforts on area entrepreneurs. This decision creates the context for evolving a programmatic approach that increases entrepreneurial energy within a landscape and spawns more successful enterprises.

**Asset Mapping.** Asset mapping has proven to be a successful way of approaching development. In this case, two types of asset mapping or assessment are needed. First, there must be a general assessment of the types and degrees of entrepreneurial talent residing within the development area. Second, there should be a candid assessment of the capacity of the community or area to support different kinds of entrepreneurial talent. This step in the process provides critical insight to targeting decisions.

**Entrepreneurial Talent Targeting.** It is unlikely that most communities have the capacity to engage with all forms of entrepreneurial talent initially. Choices must be made. Decisions around which segments of the entrepreneurial talent pool (reflecting relevant development capacity) should be served are strategically important to initial success and longer-term capacity building.

**Strategy Development.** With targeting decisions in hand, it is now possible to focus on those assistance strategies that make the most sense. Development of a direct and simple initial strategy that can be effectively executed is important. Sophistication can come, in time, as capacity and experience deepen.

**Portfolio Tracking Visitation.** It is likely that in most cases visitation will be part of the process. It is quite important to take time to get to know and build a relationship with those entrepreneurs targeted for assistance within this process. Visitation begins with insight learning and relationship building that must be nurtured long term.

**Program Offering.** Economic development can be very informal and organic. But within this process, the

decision to partner (the entrepreneur and the development effort) is deliberate. The program offering defines what the development group is proposing to provide and clarifies the responsibilities of the entrepreneur. This is a partnership not a retail transaction.

**Enrollment.** The flip side of the program offering is enrollment. Enrollment occurs when the entrepreneur says yes – that he or she is prepared to partner with the development organization.

**Customized Assistance.** A central element within this process is long-term customized assistance. This assistance can take many forms but generally is anchored in mentoring, peer groups, networking and mini-cluster development. Training, workshops and the like may be part of the assistance package, but the core technology is connecting the entrepreneur with expertise that can meet her immediate and long-term needs.

**Infrastructure.** As the portfolio of entrepreneurs emerges and visitation is undertaken, greater insight is realized about the broader infrastructure needs of individual entrepreneurs as well as the portfolio. Technology, workforce, capital and other needs will be defined in greater detail. This insight should be used by the development group to create an infrastructure that meets the immediate needs of the entrepreneurs today and over time builds a more robust climate.

**Giveback Strategy.** A possible process element is the creation of a giveback strategy. When entrepreneurs are hungry and wanting any help that might give them a better chance of success, the environment is ripe to create a *giveback culture*. The basis of this strategy is simple – we help you now and in the future when success is yours, you will help others so the process can continue. A giveback strategy often involves gifts of time, talent and treasure.

**Deal Flow Development.** For the development group, a critical bottom line is deal flow development. More and better deal flow means investment, job creation and tax base expansion. The goal is to energize entrepreneurial talent that creates viable deal flow.

**Portfolio Tracking.** Like any other investment group, tracking is fundamental to success. Tracking the challenges and performance of the portfolio should follow many of the same rules employed by a funds manager. The only exception is the staples of this portfolio are entrepreneurs and their ventures.

## *Energizing Entrepreneurs - The Practice*

**Accountability.** Accountability is a critical step in the process and it involves two elements. First, there should be regular accounting around the portfolio's performance with respect to strategic goals. For example, is the portfolio creating jobs with career tracks appealing to younger persons? Second, there should be return on investment (ROI) accounting. Any development program, whether private or public, must account for the returns it is realizing over time relative to its investment. Strong performance is central to ensuring continued program investment.

**Strategy Evolution.** Some would suggest that economic development is more art form than science. We believe that entrepreneurial development as an ED strategy is clearly an art form. The process we have visualized and described is composed of effective practice drawn from across the Americas. Intentionally assessing and evolving the strategy over time can optimize long-term success with this strategy.

### **Conclusion**

We hope this information is helpful to those interested in and considering energizing entrepreneurs as a development strategy. This is an exciting and dynamic time with multiple experiments employing various forms to *energize entrepreneurs*. We are committed to tracking these initiatives and urge you to share your ideas, experiences, concerns and suggestions. Together we can evolve the practice of supporting entrepreneurship in rural America. *Please share your insight with us by contacting Don Macke at (402) 323-7339.*

### **Finding the Resources**

*Ensuring long-term and adequate capitalization to sustain interventions that energize entrepreneurs is a fundamental challenge. New and inventive strategies are emerging worth watching. Here are three we are tracking.*

**Ohio.** *ACENet, a non-profit development organization based in Athens, Ohio (located in Appalachian Ohio) is evolving a strategy with the entrepreneurs supported through its customized assistance and incubator program. ACENet is developing a dual strategy involving "giveback" and "royalties" to generate future resources for its programs. The giveback premise is simple, direct and powerful – if we help you, then you as an entrepreneur are obligated to help others in the ACENet program via mentoring and other venues. The royalty concept involves ACENet receiving an equity position with the companies it is helping.*

**Nebraska.** *The Nebraska Community Foundation, the Heartland Center and RUPRI are teaming in Nebraska to build a more effective economic development strategy. Central to this strategy is community investment and giveback. The Nebraska team is piloting programmatic approaches that leverage philanthropic giving to support enhanced ED efforts.*

**Michigan.** *A third organization developing an innovative give back strategy is Northern Initiatives, Inc. located in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Northern Initiatives is exploring a royalty arrangement with ventures it is assisting.*

### **E<sup>2</sup>Process & Tool Guide**

*The Center for Rural Entrepreneurship is developing an entire line of processes and tools to support the practice of energizing entrepreneurs in rural America. Take a look at these resources located on the Center's web site at [www.ruraleship.org](http://www.ruraleship.org).*

- ➔ *Understanding Entrepreneurial Talent*
- ➔ *Outcome Measurement*
- ➔ *Assessing Community Readiness*
- ➔ *Clarifying Community Development Goals (under construction)*
- ➔ *A Community's Guide to Energizing Entrepreneurs (under construction)*
- ➔ *Entrepreneur & Community Surveys/Questions*
- ➔ *Protocols for Conducting Entrepreneurial Visits*

## About the Center

The Center for Rural Entrepreneurship is a RUPRI or Rural Policy Research Institute national research and policy center with founding support from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation of Kansas City, Missouri. Our mission is to *enable every rural resident to achieve his or her full entrepreneurial potential*. This mission will be achieved by collaborating with individuals and organizations engaged in the study, practice and policy of rural entrepreneurship. The Center supports research, field work, and policy development through collaborations with national, state and community interests. For more information on the **Center for Rural Entrepreneurship** contact Taina Radenslaben at 402-323-7336 or [taina@ruraleship.org](mailto:taina@ruraleship.org).

