

Background and Introduction

Technology in its many forms is embedded in the ways we live, work and play. Technologies run from emerging smart devices and applications to more traditional paper-based tools and resources. Over the years through our extensive field work across North America, e2 has curated a number of key technologies that we have found highly useful in supporting community-centered, entrepreneur-led development initiatives and ecosystem building work. This paper summarizes the key technologies that are embedded in e2's development framework and process:

- e2 Road Map
- Action Planning
- e2 Progress Score Cards
- Video Conferencing
- Client Portfolio and Tracking Resource
- Documenter

Throughout this paper we highlight other technologies or resources your community should consider as you pursue your entrepreneurship strategy and ecosystem building work such as focusing on SourceLink, Economic Gardening, Resources & Tools for Business Success and YourEconomy. These resources are summarized through insets within this paper.

SourceLink

The first SourceLink platform was enabled by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation over 25 years ago and focused on Kansas City ([KC SourceLink](#)). Since then [SourceLink](#) has continued to innovate and create a more robust and field-tested resource working in states, regions, and communities across America. Typically, SourceLink is employed at a metropolitan, statewide, or regional level. SourceLink is probably not a solution for smaller rural communities. However, various SourceLink platforms like the Resource Navigator have been employed with smaller rural communities. Possibly one of the best models of how SourceLink is employed in rural America is with [NetWork Kansas](#). SourceLink can greatly contribute to entrepreneurial ecosystem building by creating access and transparency with statewide resources and partners, as well as with community-centered partners like development agencies.

e2 Road Map

A road map, whether an app or a traditional paper version, is a handy tool when planning a journey. In many ways, growing a more vibrant economy and community through entrepreneur-focused development is a journey. Our e2 Road Map can help your community vision where you want to go and chart how you are going to get there. Several sample road maps are included to provide examples. Check out the [West Virginia HUB](#) and the [Southern Minnesota REV](#) e2 Road Maps for ideas and inspiration. Remember, while e2 provides a framework for your journey, you have many choices to customize your e2 road map.

Economic Gardening

[Economic Gardening](#), first innovated by Chris Gibbons and his team in Littleton, Colorado provides high level market intelligence research and analysis for entrepreneurs. Economic Gardening has created a

national and even international movement. Across the country and world communities, regions and states or providences are using Economic Gardening to support growth focused on Stage 2 entrepreneurial ventures. Today there is a national Economic Gardening team that provides contract market intelligence research and analysis services and training.

Action Planning

A solid e2 road map provides you a smart development game plan or strategy. But having the right game plan is only half of achieving desired impact and success. Unless you can effectively and efficiently sustain strong execution over time, the best game plan in the world will not get you to your destination of a stronger economy and a more prosperous community. We recommend the use of annual action planning with four-month “action push periods.” We recommend that you use this simple [worksheet](#) when moving your vision and game plan into action. Be disciplined and DO IT! If you use this simple action planning worksheet regularly with your team, the odds of timely and impactful execution increase dramatically. We have also included a [completed sample](#) action planning worksheet to illustrate how this worksheet becomes a call to action and a way to make sure you have a strong execution plan. A final thought centers on the importance of “peer accountability” to high performing teams, strong game plan execution, and deeper partner buy-in. When there is transparency among partners (enabled by the Action Plans) peer accountability becomes possible. When there is peer accountability there are strong incentives by individual partners to do their work, do it well and on time.

Resources & Tools for Business Success

[Resources & Tools for Business Success](#) is a remarkable technology and resource. We have advocated to communities the consideration of employing Resources & Tools for Business Success to create a digital front door to their entrepreneurial ecosystems. It is also a very affordable resource that allows for underwriting through advertising. Resources & Tools is a robust web-based resource that can be part of various community websites ranging from the chamber of commerce to the city. It can be used to let your community, and particularly your entrepreneurs, know your community is **open for business** and how your community can support entrepreneurial development. Resources & Tools can also be used to highlight available entrepreneurial partners and resources.

e2 Progress Score Cards

Your e2 road map is your game plan. Your action plans translate your game plan into action, progress, and impact. However, to close this process, you need to have an [e2 Progress Score Card](#). This score card is a simple and powerful way to track your progress as you move through the e2 process of getting ready, organizing for action, opportunity assessment, strategy development, working with entrepreneurs, and tracking impact. We have shared our NetWork Kansas E-Communities progress [score cards](#) as an example of this tool. Finally, there will be change in your community’s e2 game plan driven by unanticipated challenges and opportunities. Use of our e2 Progress Score Card can enable your e2 team and community to be intentional about these changes by capturing them in your Progress Score Card.

Lessons from Indiana and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Beginning in 2019 and continuing into 2020 e2 has been a resource to many Indiana community foundations and their communities associated with the [Lilly Endowment Foundation’s GIFT VII Initiative](#).

Our e2 team was based in Nebraska and Iowa and the work was throughout Indiana. While our e2 team made trips to Indiana, on numerous occasions we could not cost effectively sustain high engagement without the extensive use of emails, conference calls and video conferencing employing the Zoom platform. For the vast majority of community foundations and communities we are working with, e2 introduced the use of Zoom to them for the first time. Video conferencing became common in our Indiana work and since then we have heard how Zoom is helping these foundations and communities remain engaged using Zoom and other video conferencing platforms given the isolation challenges caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Use of Video Conferencing

My childhood home was Mullen, Nebraska in the heart of the vast ranching region we call the Sandhills. Mullen is 70 miles from the nearest traffic light and isolated even by rural American standards. Rural communities pay a price for being isolated. It is harder to seek help when distance and availability drive up costs and reduce access.

However, with broadband, every community can reduce isolation and increase access to worldwide resources with the use of conferencing calling, video conferencing, and webinars. We recommend you locate sites in your community where there is good broadband access, conference calling, and video conferencing resources, and access to technical help in the use of these technologies. Commit to using this technology regularly. Save your external partners some travel time, and work with external partners in using this technology. With a little practice, this technology will become comfortable, more effective, and greatly increase your access to resources to help and the capacity of those helping.

YourEconomy

For over a decade e2 has worked with Mark Lange and his team with www.YourEconomy.org first with the [Edward Lowe Foundation](#) and now with the University of Wisconsin-Madison. For those readers unfamiliar with YourEconomy, this is a remarkable resource. YourEconomy is possibly one of the best public sector data resources in the United States that can be used to better understand a community's ventures, employment, and associated sales. We have employed YourEconomy analytics in our Development Opportunity Profiles and other analytic work across America.

Client Portfolio and Tracking Resource

At the end of the day our entrepreneurial ecosystems are focused on helping individual entrepreneurs and their ventures connect with resources that can help them become more successful. Our communities focused on entrepreneur-led development have customers – the entrepreneurs we are trying to help! Customer Relations Management (CRM) systems are very important to our work. There are a wide range of CRMs available through the marketplace like Salesforce, Zoho CRM and others. Some of these systems are very sophisticated, have tremendous capacity and associated costs, but may be more complex than most rural communities need to track their entrepreneurial clients. e2 has developed a very basic [CRM resource](#) highly suited for most rural communities. It can allow your community to log, track and prioritize the entrepreneurs you are working with as part of your e2 strategy. Additionally, our e2 CRM can help your community create a portfolio.

Use of a Portfolio Approach

We strongly recommend the use of a **portfolio approach**. At any given time, every community will be working with a group of entrepreneurs. This group of entrepreneurs can be viewed as a portfolio. Within a portfolio some of our entrepreneurial clients will achieve tremendous success while others will not. From an initiative perspective, continued support from key stakeholders and the community is foundational. Focusing on the performance of the portfolio is a much better performance metric than focusing on individual wins and losses. Just as any financial advisor will recommend a diversified portfolio approach to retirement funds investments, these same underlying attributes apply to employing a portfolio approach with your community's entrepreneurial clients.

Documenter

Finally, economic development has always had a “smoke and mirrors” challenge. Entrepreneur-focused development can only strengthen your community and economy if you sustain and grow your e2 efforts. Capturing your progress, impact stories, and metrics is foundational to sustaining and growing your entrepreneurial development. Your e2 scorecard is a start, but it is primarily for your own internal use. As you build your eTeam, think about partners and individuals who would work with your coach to capture your story and impacts. We call this function or person the “documenter.” We have a [job description](#) for the documenter, but the main role of this person or group is to help you capture the story around your journey – particularly testimonials from entrepreneurs, resource providers, and community leaders as to how your work is making a difference.

Conclusion

It is our sincere hope that your community will consider employing these technologies in support of your entrepreneur-led and ecosystem building work. They should not be the focus of your work, but tools that can enhance and empower your work. Using these tools will take commitment and some time, but in the end their use can greatly increase your initiative's efficiency and effectiveness. Let us know how these tools are beneficial, your innovations, and even your suggestions on how we can make them more helpful.

Questions and Additional Information

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