



University

Community Coaching

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Empowering Communities and Their Development

The ultimate responsibility for a community's future vitality rests with the community itself. For those of us who work with communities as external resource providers, we have an ethical responsibility to empower communities to assume and effectively execute this responsibility. Over the years at e2, we have come to believe **community coaching** is an optimal approach to engaging with communities in support of their community economic development.

As this paper on community coaching is relatively brief, we encourage our readers to explore other resources listed later in this paper focusing on community coaching and particularly Mary Emery's book, [A Field Guide to Community Coaching](#). This is one of the most well recognized and respected community coaching resources in our practice today.

A Community's Responsibility

The United States is unique when compared to most mature developed economies and political systems. By design and rooted in the U.S. Constitution, we have a very decentralized form of government and an empowered free-market economy. Fundamental to this decentralized system is the delegation of responsibility to local communities to assume leadership for their own development. While federal, state, and other interests maybe supportive of local development efforts, the primary job of ensuring a community's future rests with each and every community. Community coaching can help rural communities more effectively take on this all-important job in ensuring their prosperity.

Next we turn our attention to **why community coaching** is so foundational for those of us who work with communities as external resource providers and developers.

Why Community Coaching

4-H is one of the most widely employed youth development programs in the United States. Rooted in America's Land Grant Universities and Extension Services, 4-H embraces the following foundational value with respect to working with youth:

Never do to. Avoid doing for. Always do with.

Central to this value is the idea of empowerment. Appropriate and effecting coaching is founded upon this value of **doing with**. The following statement highlights this idea of "doing with":

The core distinction about coaching is that coaches help unlock what is already present in people and groups and help them frame their own solutions!

A Field Guide to Community Coaching

Community economic development engages with community leaders and residents and empowering them to discover their own development visions and pathways, and grow their community's capacity for effective, efficient, and impactful development. Our focus as a community coach is on helping the communities we are working with to:

1. Learn about their own community and its potential development opportunities.
2. Explore and discover development strategies that make sense to that community.
3. Engage the full community, including residents often left on the margins of community development, in visioning and developing their community.
4. Building the capacity of a community to lead itself and pursue its own preferences for development.
5. Assist communities through rough spots like conflicts and evolve working consensus on how to move forward.

Our experience is clear and there is compelling evidence from the field of community economic development that community coaching is a powerful community engagement model viable for multiple community engagement situations we will discuss later in this paper.

Value of External Help

While community coaching can be practiced by local leaders and residents, often external community coaching is valuable. A neutral and skilled community coach from the outside can bring great value in helping a community vision its future, focus on its assets and root its development agenda in genuine development opportunities. There are multiple community coaching resources in most states beginning with Extension Educators to private consultants.

What is Community Coaching

In our e2 **Organizing for Action Guide** we address foundational information relating to effective, efficient, and impactful community engagement. As a community coach, we encourage you to review this information as it can enhance your ability to coach a community.

Who is a Community Coach

Coaching is widely used in the United States from sports to executive development. We all know coaches. Chances are good we have used coaching in our work, families, and lives. Given the wide use of coaching, most of us have been coached at one time or another in our lives and work. In theory and practice, anyone can be a community coach including volunteers, board members, development agency staff, retirees, business owners, and the list goes on and on.

Community Coach Defined

A person who empowers their community to understand and proactively deal with necessary change.

In this section of our paper on Community Coaching we will review the following topics:

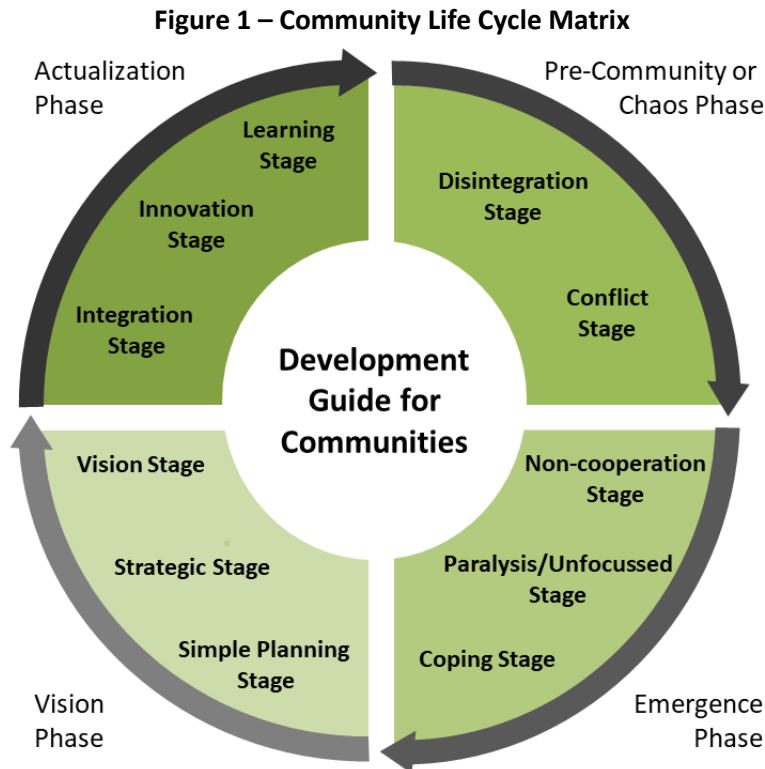
- A Community Development Life Cycle
- Community Players
- The Unique Role of Champions
- Empowering Community Change Agents
- Empowering Versus Marginalizing
- Attributes of Effective Community Coaches

Other Community Engagement Models

There are other community engagement models including expert, consultant, convener, facilitator, trainer, and moderator. In many ways, these other community engagement models are more similar to community coaching than different, even though they employ unique names. The primary difference in many of these models is how **directive** the coach is in working with the community. For example, within the expert model, the coach is much more directive in telling the community what and how to do things. In the convener, moderator, and facilitator models, the coach is minimally directive and is focused on helping the community, without advice, to find its own way. Within our community coaching model, we strike a balance between providing advice based on our field experience while respecting the ultimate role of the community in deciding its own priorities and directions.

A Community Development Life Cycle

Every community, particularly smaller communities, move through life cycles just as our national economy moves through periods of economic expansion and then contraction. As a community coach, understanding where a community is in within its life cycle can greatly enhance your ability to help the community you are working with to move forward. We have long employed this simple but sophisticated graphic:



Source: Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurial Leadership

Within the Centre’s community life cycle framework, communities move through four basic phases:

- Pre-Community or Chaos Phase
- Emergence Phase
- Vision Phase
- Actualization Phase

In understanding which phase a community is in and moving towards can inform you as a community coach to framing your engagement strategy to be more appropriate and impactful.

Community Players

It is important for a community coach to understand the community players likely central to impactful progress and community engagement. In our **Organizing for Action Guide** we explore the basic community players, including:

- Scouts – The folks who found you and likely engaged you in the community.

- Stakeholders – Those individuals and organizations with vested interest in the process.
- Champions – Community leaders advocating for community building.
- Challengers – Community leaders who question what the community is trying to do.
- Rainmakers – Likely funders for the community engagement process.
- Community Builders – Civic minded leaders and residents who quickly engage in the process.
- Unengaged Majority – The majority of residents who are hard to engage.
- Residents on the Margin – Residents who are often excluded from community engagement.
- Check out our [Leaders Are Key](#) paper for more information.

As a community coach, engaging the full range of community residents and organizations is vital. Community power structures are often uneven and may even discriminate against certain community segments and residents (either intentionally or through subtle biases). You cannot force a community to commit to fuller community engagement, but in your role as a community coach you can encourage the merits of broad community engagement and help communities through smart strategies and tactics to help the community realize fuller resident and organizational participation.

Young Adult Engagement Challenge

We often hear community leaders, who tend to be older (e.g., Silent, Baby Boomer, and older Gen-X generational groups) talk about the challenge of engaging younger adults in community building processes. As a community coach, you can help these community leaders understand the engagement preferences of different generational cohorts (or other elements of diversity within the community). For younger families with young children, finding the right time, providing a meal with safe childcare, and employing a fun and quick engagement process can greatly enhance participation and ultimately buy-in.

As outlined above, one key category of community players is **champions**. Let's explore this unique form of community leadership and why it is so important to your community coaching success.

Community Champion – Robert Stowell

For nearly 40 years, we have had the opportunity and honor to work with the community of Ord, located in North Central Nebraska. This community of just over 2,000 residents is like so many other rural communities in the Great Plain Region experiencing the challenges of chronic and severe depopulation. With support from the [Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation](#), we are curating a 50-year development case study of Ord and the Valley County Region. Ord and its region are a success story in the making. Central to why Ord is succeeding while so many other similar Great Plains communities are not are champions like Bob Stowell. Bob grew up in Ord on a farm. He was not advantaged with wealth but had ambition and excelled in school and other pursuits. He attended the Military Academy at West Point and became an officer in the U.S. Army, serving in Vietnam with distinction. He became an attorney and returned home to find Ord challenged and in decline. Bob emerged, along with others in Ord, to become a community champion, a type of community leader able to motivate, engage, and empower others to undertake the all-important work of community building.

Watch for our release of future stories on Ord, Bob Stowell, and others from this remarkable community later in 2020. To ensure you receive future updates and stories, [sign up](#) for our e2 newsletter.

The Unique Role of Champions

Community champions are a unique form of community leadership. Community champions, based on our observations, have the following attributes:

- They take ownership for their community and the work they are committed to.
- They have great passion and are willing to always make the extra effort.
- They are willing to sacrifice personal interest for community interests.
- They embrace empowering leadership within the community.
- They recruit and engage others to become leaders and join betterment teams.
- They are effective change agents helping their communities embrace change as an opportunity.
- They are often community coaches themselves.

Liked? Respected!

As community champions, these community leaders are often engaged in really tough community issues where there is community conflict and even discord. As change agents, champions are often disliked and even hated by some opposed to the change they are addressing. But over time, champions gain deep and broad community respect based on their selfless service to the community. Community champions often pay deep prices for their leadership (e.g., loss of business, friends, and sleep) but eventually create and leave a legacy of good works through their empowering form of community leadership.

Many community leaders do their civic duty, which is great. They serve as mayors, on committees, lead new projects, and contribute greatly to community betterment. Some of these more transactional community leaders are or have the capacity to become community champions. But community champions have a deeper commitment and are often focused on the longer-term success of the hometowns they love. As community coaches, finding and supporting community champions can be key to energize a community to fuller resident engagement and success.

Who is a Coach?

Employing a sports analogy, we can answer, “Who is a coach?” as someone who typically knows the game, has played the game, and most importantly can teach the game. In community coaching, understanding the communities you are coaching is important, but as is the case with all coaching, it is your ability to teach in an empowering and experiential way that is most important. Cultural awareness and sensitivity are critically important.

Empowering Community Change Agents

In the previous section, we explored the attributes of community champions, including their role as effective community change agents. Community change agents help their community identify, understand, and thrive with change. Change agents often can see the “bigger picture” and envision how the world is changing. A great example are those community change agents that understood how the emergence of big box stores like Walmart both could devastate and enrich retailing and service businesses in their communities. Adapting to change versus ignoring it or even trying to fight forces greater than the community become critically important to growing prosperous communities.

Change and Community Economic Development

Our world is constantly changing – economically, socially, environmentally, governmentally, and the list goes on. This dynamic of an everchanging world creates an environment for community economic development. Every community and region must first work to better understand the change impacting their community and then embrace development strategies to ensure economic and social relevancy, competitiveness, and resiliency with respect to change. This is hard and why identifying, developing, and supporting community change agents is so important. Community change agents become the navigators helping their communities understand emerging change and how the community can adapt and optimize give the change impacting them. As a community coach, one of your roles is to work with community change agents helping them to help their community thrive with change. For more information on change check out our paper, [Mega Trends Influencing the Future of America's Rural Communities](#).

In your role as a community coach, working with and supporting community change agents is foundational as these change agents become essential for helping their communities find a new and better future. For example, possibly one of the biggest change challenges is helping a community move from traditional economic development rooted in business attraction to an entrepreneur-focused development approach.

Here are some key community change agent roles you can support:

- Change agents help their community understand their unique status quo.
- Change agents play a key role in helping others in their community not only define change but also gain deeper insight into how necessary and desired change can occur in their community.
- For greater community success, moving from reaction to intentional change is empowering, and community change agents help their communities make this shift.
- Finally, as a community coach, you can help your community's change agents become better teachers and mentors of the change process that works best in their community.

In asset-based development (addressed later in this paper), we learn that every community asset is important to growing more successful communities. Within this approach to community development embracing the power of diversity and inclusion become obvious. In our next section, we explore how community coaches can help the communities they are working with to empower community diversity breaking away from legacies of marginalization.

Defining Community

A central role of being a community coach is to help the community you are working with to better understand itself. At the beginning, the community may be defined as a municipality or county based on legal constructs. Through analytics, the actual socioeconomic community is typically much larger given commuting, shopping, and other patterns. This discovery process is important as the community is the basis for entrepreneurial talent engagement and ecosystem building. For more information, check out our e2 [Defining Your Community](#) paper.

Empowering Versus Marginalizing

Envisioning and growing more prosperous communities where all residents have greater personal opportunities and there is increased collective community wealth and wellbeing is hard work. As a

community coach, one of your roles as you work with community champions and change agents is to embrace the **empowering** assets of diversity and inclusion where every member of the community can bring value to this process. Check out [Building Entrepreneurial Ecosystems in Communities of Color](#) for additional insight.

The Power of the Status Quo or Like Me

Frank and Kimberlee Spillers with [Rural Community Solutions](#) are master community coaches and highly effective working with rural communities across the United States. One of the exercises they employ when community leaders and residents identify new resident attraction as important illustrates this concept of empowering versus marginalizing community behavior. In this exercise, Frank and Kim ask each workshop participant to profile the ideal person they would like to attract to their community and then share their views with the larger group. In America, we are increasingly segregated based on socioeconomic characteristics. For rural communities that have been historically very homogenous, embracing diversity can be hard and even threatening. This Rural Community Solutions exercise can help communities begin constructive conversations on diversity and inclusion.

Embracing diversity and inclusion as a development asset begins with making good on the commitment to more fully and equitably engage current residents who reside on the margins of a community (e.g., women, minorities, new residents, youth, etc.). As a community coach, you can advise community leaders and residents of the positive power of diversity and inclusion while providing strategies and tactics that engage the fuller diversity of a community into community visioning and building.

Attributes of Effective Community Coaches

Based on our rural community development work across North America, we have worked with and mentored a wide range of community coaches, ranging from those who do community coaching as a professional pursuit to those like Bob Stowell in Ord who are volunteers within their own hometown. Based on these experiences, we have identified the following attributes of effective coaches:

- Community coaches are more than facilitators and are aggressive in helping their communities pursue community visioning and engagement.
- Community coaches are persistent, driven by their passion for hometown or professional commitment to stay the course until progress is realized.
- Community coaches are responsive; they listen first and talk later. They take the time to learn about their hometown or the community they are working with. They are willing to start with where the community is and then help it pursue a path to greater success.
- Community coaches spend time reflecting on their community engagement and are organized to bring their “A” game to community engagement.

Community-Centered and Relationship-Based Approaches

Highly successful community coaches understand and embrace as values that this work must be community centered and relationship based. By **community centered** we mean the people living in a community must ultimately own and drive their own development. By **relationship based** we mean that this work only progresses and sustains when there are deep and trusting relationships among the community coach and the community and within the community itself. Even community coaches who are more aggressive, direct, and employing a more expert model of coaching recognize that these two values and approaches are both ethically important and central to real success.

- Community coaches are also flexible. This kind of work is not a “stepped process” but requires flexibility as the community development process evolves.
- With community economic development, as is also the case in entrepreneur-focused development, coaches are working with human beings and their full range of talents and fears. Successful community coaches bring empathy and support to the champions, community change agents, and others in the community they are working with.
- Community building is hard work, often challenging where the community’s hope for a better future seems dimmed. Seasoned and excellent community coaches are positive, providing both strong technical assistance (via coaching) and encouragement when the road becomes challenging.
- While being flexible strategically, community coaches are consistent in their work with communities.

Doing for Versus Doing With

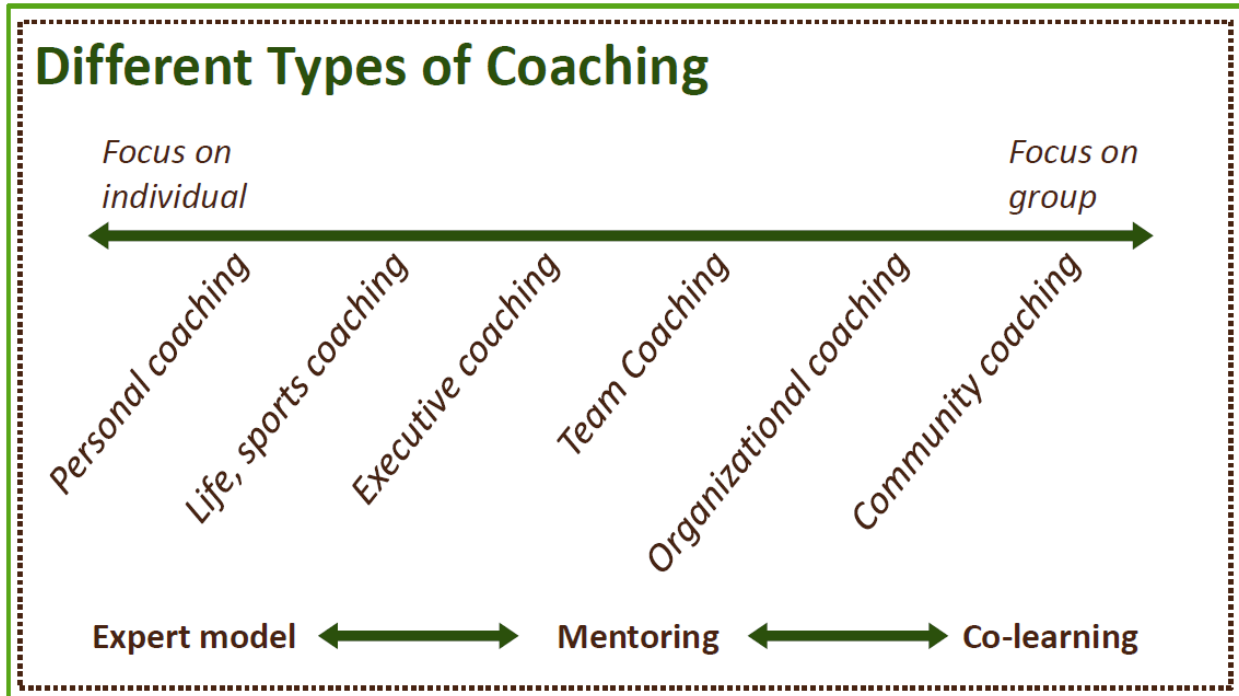
Earlier in this paper, we addressed the 4-H values of “doing to,” “doing for,” and “doing with.” Good community coaches never “do to.” But there is a tendency in the heat of a community engagement process to “do for” versus “do with.” In the heat of community engagement process, when champions and their communities are stressed (e.g., when progress stalls and the entire work is threatened), there may be a call for the community coach to take on too much ownership of the process and become too active as a leader. It is critically important to walk this fine line helping community leaders lead and ensuring the community process continues in a productive direction.

Art and Science of Community Coaching

We will only briefly address the **art and science of community coaching** in this paper. We refer our readers to the Resources section later in this paper for additional insights on the community coaching process. We particularly recommend **A Field Guide to Community Coaching**. This guide is research based, field tested, and one of the best resources on the art and science of community coaching we have found. In addition to the **Field Guide to Community Coaching**, there are several other resources that we will explore here that add insight to the art and science of community coaching.

The Continuum of Coaching Approaches. There is a continuum of coaching approaches (see Figure 3) ranging from personal coaching to community coaching. Chances are good that as a community coach, you may engage in many of these coaching types as part of your community engagement process. In your work with community leaders like champions, you will be engaging in personal coaching, helping a champion become better in their leadership role. At times you may be providing team coaching working with the community group to lead community betterment initiatives. As part of this work, you may also be called upon to work with a lead or host organization that is being empowered to be the home for certain development efforts.

Figure 3 – Continuum of Coaching Approaches



Bottomline, be prepared to engage in a wide range of coaching approaches as needed in your larger role as a community coach helping a community find its full potential.

Are We Coaching Communities or People?

As we explore the art and science of community coaching, it is possible to become confused on whether we are talking about coaching a community or specific people within a community. The fact is, it is both! Community economic development occurs because people in a community engage in the process of community building and betterment. Coaching individuals like champions or team leaders is foundational to the larger community coaching role. Your success as a community coach is rooted in empowering and supporting community residents who in turn are able to engage their larger community in the community economic development process.

Two Basic Coaching Models. Coaching is a form of teaching particularly within the 4-H value of “doing with.” There are two basic teaching models: **expert and experiential**. The traditional or expert model of teaching (or coaching) is well known and understood. The vast majority of us have experienced it extensively. Think about our formal educational experiences where teachers and professors were knowledge experts (e.g., science, sports, language, etc.) and employed lectures and test models of learning. The goal of the expert model was to transfer knowledge and equip learners with this knowledge. For youth and even with professional development, this form of learning has its merits and its place. But for most adult learners within the context of community coaching, this model is more limited, and the experiential learning model becomes more approachable and effective. For adult learners, the role of the coach involves facilitated discovery where the coach is more of moderator to mentor, guiding community leaders and residents to find their own vision and development path. As part of this engagement process, the coach will bring expertise to the process and at times be a content

expert or more likely engaging content experts. The experiential model to community coaching is empowering and deepens community ownership of the solutions, strategies, and tactics they cocreate with the coach's facilitation.

Key Coaching Considerations. Each community coach has their own style and preferences. However, we have found there are five key considerations to being a highly effective community coach:

1. Define clear expectations of our role as community coach and the roles of those you are coaching.
2. It is important to set boundaries in terms of when and how you work together.

Setting Boundaries

Coaching a community and individuals trying to move their hometowns forward is stressful work. Despite hard work and commitment, local leaders can be challenged, threatened, and unappreciated. You may want to offer yourself 24/7 to these leaders. But think of yourself, your other commitments, and your wellbeing. Be sure that you are willing to take the call at 9 PM on a weekday or mid-morning on a weekend. Setting boundaries or ground rules of how you are willing to work with the community people you are coaching is important for you and them.

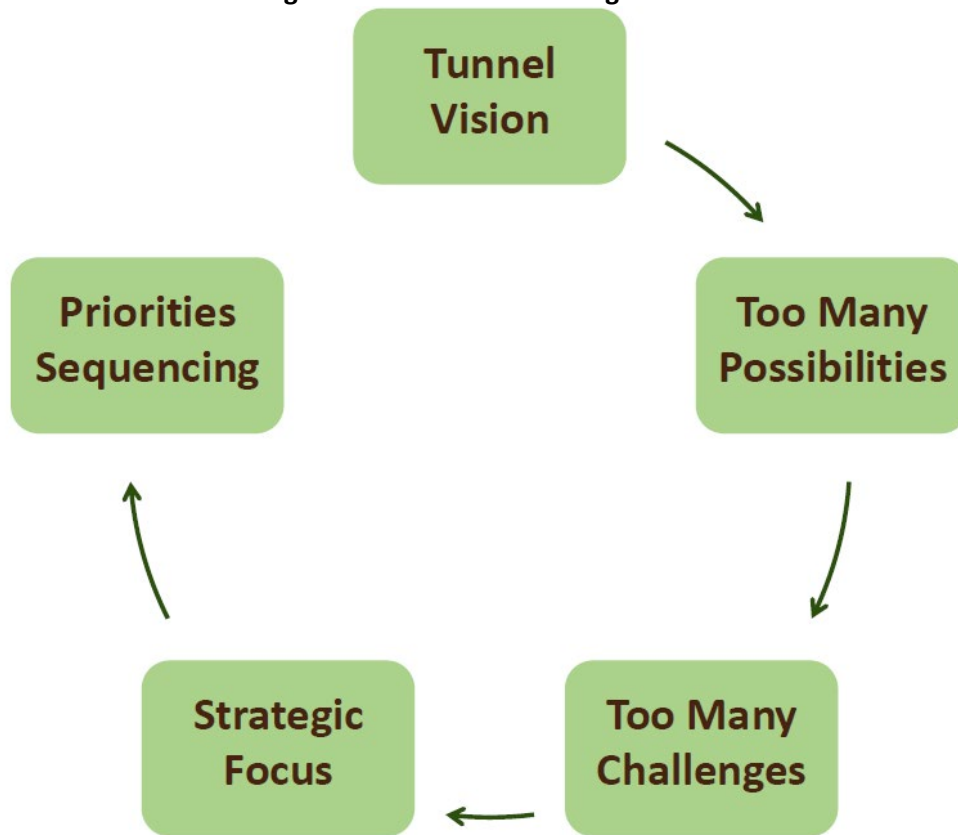
3. Clarifying the pacing and level of engagement is important and sets expectations.
4. Mutually define performance and what success looks like.
5. Ensure there is strong communication.

Be sure to check out the **Field Guide to Community Coaching** for additional insights and guidance.

Keys to Coaching Success. Highly effective community coaches maintain a degree of detachment, ensuring greater objectivity. They are reflective, spending time thinking through how they can more effectively coach a community or organization. Community coaching can be catalytic, inspiring community action. Community coaches are not formulaic but can engage based on context and circumstance. Highly effective community coaches empower leaders and residents in a community to find their own answers and solutions.

The Basic Coaching Process. At e2, we have been community coaches and coached community coaches. Every day, we continue to learn. While we are coaching a community, we are ultimately coaching individuals (e.g., leaders, change agents, and community builders). Oftentimes, we are helping a group break out of **tunnel vision**. For example, the singular focus is, "If only we could get that state grant, we could move forward." While a state grant might be important, it may not be the most important factor that could empower progress and success. Helping a community explore the bigger picture and alternatives can be powerful. The flip side of tunnel vision is **too many possibilities**. Community brainstorming can be great but also overwhelming, freezing a community's ability to commit and move into action. Another coaching process is helping a community narrow the possibilities and set priorities.

Figure 4 – The Basic Coaching Process



Finally, a community may feel they are facing **too many challenges** or headwinds to be able to make progress. For chronically and severely distressed communities, there may be eroded hope that things can get better. Central to the idea of asset-based development is focusing on what you have and what you can do to move forward. A community coach employing asset-based development techniques coupled with appreciative inquiry methods (more on asset-based development and appreciative inquiry later in this paper) can help a community overcome the lockdown effects of too many challenges.

Whether it is tunnel vision, too many possibilities, or too many challenges, a good community coach helps a community realize **strategic focus** and uses **priority sequencing** to help a community create an aggressive but doable strategy and development agenda.

Dr. Ed Nelson

Personally, Dr. Ed Nelson was one of my favorite mentors and inspirations. When I first met him, he was the President of [Chadron State College](#) in extreme northwestern Nebraska. Ed understood that the future of this regional institution of higher education was rooted in the success of the communities within its service area. First, as a college president and then into retirement, Ed evolved into a highly practical and impactful rural community coach. He was particularly good at helping communities deal with the issues of tunnel vision, too many possibilities, or too many challenges. His process was simple and straightforward – gather community residents together to share their pain and passion points. But when it came time to move to commitment and action, Ed would have tables labeled with possible community development initiatives. People would vote with their feet by committing to be members of

working teams. Some tables with proposals well discussed went empty and failed to become action priorities. Ed was remarkable and was working with communities several days before he died.

Coaching the Whole Person. In talking with all kinds of coaches (from sports teams to executive coaches), there is a choice you must make as a community coach regarding coaching the whole person. This topic relates to setting boundaries. Clearly, as a community coach, you are likely helping a community vision, gain consensus, explore options, find resources, and work through logistics. These activities involve the standard community aspects of community coaching. But once again, you are also coaching leaders, change agents, and community builders at a personal level. As a community coach, you have a choice in whether you are going to also coach at a personal level as part of your community coaching engagement. Make sure you are prepared and intentional if you are willing to provide personal coaching addressing issues of personal goals, ethics, life balance, family, and health. Remember one crossover coaching issue is helping build community teams that can in turn empower their community to move forward with meaningful development.

Why Coaches Fail and Some Red Flag Warnings Revisited. Despite the best intentions and even with seasoned community coaches, failure or underperformance is always on the horizon. There are numerous causes for failure we have observed both personally and with the community coaches we have mentored. Here are some answers to **why community coaches fail**:

- Community coaches can become too engaged, taking on personal responsibility for a community's success, evolving into a savior and losing objectivity and necessary detachment. This mistake grows enabling relationships that violates the basic value of **doing with**.
- Some coaches fail because they are too passive and unwilling to challenge their communities when challenging is appropriate.
- Other community coaches fail because they really want to be the expert constantly telling the community what they should do versus helping the community find their own solutions. It is easy to begin to judge both people and ideas, particularly when you as a coach see the road forward with such clarity. When judging becomes too common, it undermines the very role of a coach.
- Some coaches are in too much of a hurry to get the job done and fail to create sufficient trusting relationships. Lack of trust and mutual respect undermines the effectiveness of community coaching.
- Sometimes your coaching is just an issue of personality difference and style conflicts. With good communication, you can often work through these issues.
- Strong, honest, and consistent communication is foundational, and when it is lacking, chances are your coaching effectiveness will be undermined.

Reciprocal Accountability

Highly effective coaching creates trusting and reciprocal relationships. With reciprocal accountability, both parties – you as the community coach and the community you are coaching (i.e., the people engaged from the community) – make commitments for which both parties agree to hold each other accountable. Ensuring first a clear social compact and then a commitment to adhere to reciprocal accountability is very important to overall success.

The Art of Anticipation. A seasoned coach develops sensitivity or intuition anticipating what might come next based on the flow of the coaching experience. While anticipation can never be precise it does

create an opportunity to be better prepared should events develop as anticipated. It takes reflection and time to employ the art of anticipation, but this back-office time can be well spent in being more intentional and impactful as a community coach.

e2's Four Stages of Coaching Engagement. One way to view your community coaching involvement is through the lens of the four stages of community coaching engagement:

1 – Due Diligence. In the very early stages of community engagement you need to undertake your own due diligence of the community and the people you are likely to be working with. It is best that this due diligence is done in an open and transparent way with the community you are coaching. Our [Community Readiness Assessments](#) and the **Community Life Cycle Matrix** (Figure 1) can be helpful.

2 – Initial Engagement. In Stage 2, you are now engaging with the community and groups of community leaders and residents. During initial engagement, you are able to begin identifying empowering leaders, potential change agents, and committed community builders. Be strategic and not too quick to judge. Remember you are beginning to build relationships that are foundational to longer-term success.

3 – Proving Up. You cannot force your community to live up to its commitments, but you can do two important things that ensure you are proving up. First, you can fulfill your commitments as promised and on time. Second, you can be honest and challenge those you are working with to honor their commitments. In a worst-case scenario, you can elect to disengage if the reciprocal relationship is breaking down or broken.

4 – Deeper Engagement. Over time, with early success you will have the opportunity to go deeper and potentially help your community address thornier issues. Ultimately, this is where you want to be with deep trusting relationships and the opportunity to help the community really move forward in transformative ways. Be patient and work hard to reach Stage 4.

If you don't know where you are going, you might end up somewhere else.

Yogi Berra

Community Coaching within the e2 Development Framework

Entrepreneurial Coaching

Within e2, we also employ coaching when working one-on-one with entrepreneurs and their teams. We call this Entrepreneurial Coaching or eCoaching for short. For more information on eCoaching, check out our [eCoaching Paper](#) or, for a broader perspective, our **Working with Entrepreneurs Guide**.

We recommend the use of community coaching within our [e2 Development Framework](#). Community coaches trained and supported in the e2 Development Framework can help communities better navigate this process and more quickly begin working with entrepreneurs and generating early impacts. There is no question that a highly motivated group of community leaders can effectively employ the e2 Development Framework without coaching or mentoring. However, having an engaged e2 community

coach has proven to be an e2 accelerator. Over the years, e2 has provided e2 community coaching training and mentoring services. e2 can arrange for training and mentoring services in support of your entrepreneurship initiative.

e2 Community Coaching Training and Mentoring

For years, e2 (as the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship previously) provided **e2 Energizing Entrepreneurs Institutes**. These week-long training events provided a rich environment for exploring the e2 Development Framework with peers from other states, regions, and communities. We have also perfected video conference-based training that can be customized to the particular needs and preferences of a community or organization. Finally, e2 can provide one-on-one e2 community coach training and mentoring. *There are costs associated with accessing these resources.*

Technologies – Tactics and Techniques

We must be practical when working with communities. There are always time and cost constraints that shape what we can do within our work. Over the past 25 years, we have constantly explored how we can become more effective, efficient, and impactful in our work with communities. The appropriate use of technologies, tactics, and techniques can strengthen your coaching adding value to your community engagement. For more information on the topic, check out our paper, [Key e2 Technologies](#).

Specific to community coaching, we believe the following technologies, tactics, and techniques can be particularly relevant in your community work:

Social Compacts. A social compact is typically a non-legally binding agreement between two parties. In this situation, the social compact is between leaders representing their community and you as their community coach. The social compact should be brief and clear providing the mutually-agreed-to commitment each party is making as part of an e2 initiative. We believe it should be signed by both parties. While this agreement is not generally legally enforceable, it does force community leaders to better vet the commitment they are making on behalf of their community and development organizations. It also provides you, as a community coach, the opportunity to establish some ground rules and define expectations. *Check out our University of Nebraska Community Vitality Community Prosperity Initiative [sample social compact](#) for possible language.*

Asset-Based Development. Within e2, we embrace community-centered and asset-based development. Asset-based development was developed by John McKnight with Northwest University years ago, focusing on development in poorer core city neighborhoods in Chicago. Today the [Asset-Based Community Development \(ABCD\) Institute](#) at DePaul University in Chicago continues this work.

Through asset-based development, we focus on **what a community has** versus what it does not. We have found this asset-focused approach to development to be highly effective and an accelerator within e2. For example, when working with a very small rural community, we can wish we had lots of high-growth entrepreneurs, but chances are good we do not have this kind of asset. Rather we find there are growth-oriented entrepreneurs who have unique development needs and opportunities. Focusing on these growth-oriented entrepreneurs can move our work forward more quickly generating greater impacts.

Action Planning. Community economic development work, driven by volunteers, is often informal and organic. Meetings can lack smart agendas as process-oriented members desire to spend time talking things through and action-oriented members just want to get to the work (sometimes before a smart plan is agreed to). As a community coach, you can employ **action planning** tools and processes with your community groups to strike a balance between processing things to death and moving to action too quickly. Action planning can bring focus to the work to be undertaken and ensure peer accountability leading to high performing teams. For years, we have used Janet Topolsky's (Community Strategies Group, The Aspen Institute) [action planning worksheet](#) with clients. It is simple and easy to use. We have also included a [sample](#) completed action planning form to illustrate a smart action item within e2.

Appreciative Inquiry. Appreciative inquiry (AI), like asset-based development, is a tremendous addition to our tools and approaches within community coaching. Appreciative inquiry is a way of framing discussions focusing on the positive or constructive. There are widely available appreciative inquiry training and certification programs. As a community coach, we would encourage you to add this to your professional development. If community coaching is not your career, consider reaching out to area resources like private consultants or public extension services that employ appreciative inquiry. A simple web search can generate additional resources and information on appreciative inquiry. Using AI can greatly enhance the ability of a community to remain constructive, positive, and focused on its assets.

Ripple Effect Mapping. Ripple Effect Mapping (REM) is a powerful tool that can be used to help a community document and celebrate their progress within e2 or any community economic development process. REM is completed in a workshop process and literally creates a visual map of both intentional and unintentional outcomes and impacts associated with development work. REM requires a trained facilitator. As a professional community coach, we recommend that you become trained and certified in the use of REM. If you are a volunteer community coach, consider finding a REM-certified moderator who can help you employ REM in your work. Check out private consultants and extension educators for possible REM certified moderators. Consider making REM part of your year-end activities, providing an opportunity to step back and discover all the progress realized and setting the stage for next year goal setting. REM, like asset-based development, is empowering and helping communities stay committed to their e2 development efforts. To access a public domain book on REM, check out [A Field Guide to Ripple Effect Mapping](#).

Use of Videoconferencing. Effective community coaching requires building trusting relationships. In-person engagement, particularly early on in a community engagement, is foundational. However, in rural areas, travel distances can be large and demanding. Weather is always a consideration. During my career in working with communities, I can remember those winter nights where we wrapped up at 9 PM and I had a two- or three-hour drive home with snow flying. There are also those quick conversations to troubleshoot issues that can be done by email or phone but where seeing each other is so much more impactful. Once an in-person set of relationships is firmly formed, actively consider employing videoconferencing to reduce wear and tear on you, keep costs lower, and ensure the work continues regardless of weather and other constraints. Be sure you have adequate broadband to support robust videoconferencing and work with your community to ensure it has multiple meeting locations with not only strong broadband and videoconferencing technologies, (banks, libraries, government offices, healthcare conference rooms, etc. are great candidates) but resource people who can help ensure it is working. Nothing is more frustrating than trying to use video conferencing when the audio or video is not working well.

Coaching Certifications

Coaching is widely used in the U.S. and across the globe. There are multiple coaching applications from sports to executives. If coaching is part of your professional development track, seriously consider seeking out appropriate academic and professional education and training opportunities. There are certification programs that can enhance your credentials in the coaching field. Community coaching, while widely employed does not have the same kind of professional development certification avenues. But consider certification in basic coaching with community-centered training and mentoring resources that will help you as a community coach. Consider joining the [Community Development Society](#) as a professional trade group where community coaching is commonplace.

Resources

There are a massive number of resources available on **coaching**, but specific to **community coaching** there are more limited resources. e2 recommends the following selected resources:

[A Field Guide to Community Coaching](#), by Mary Emery, Ken Hubbell, and Becky Miles-Polka. 2011.

[Community Coaching: Answering the Call for Innovative Approaches to Community-Based Development Initiatives](#) by Kenneth Cohen, Lori Higgins, Nick Sanyai and Charles Harris. 2008.

[HomeTown Competitiveness Site Coach Considerations](#) by Don Macke, 2008.

[Community Coaching, Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque](#) by Don Macke. Power Point. 2014.

Community Coaching Research

In 2015, we employed Dayna Larreau from rural Arnold, Nebraska, to complete a comprehensive literature review focused on [Resources Related to Business Resources](#). At the time, Dayna was a senior at the University of Nebraska - Kearney and participating in the Ogallala Commons internship program. Ogallala Commons at that time was committed to helping rural young adults explore careers in rural communities throughout America's vast Great Plains Region and that part of this region associated with the Ogallala Aquifer. While the focus of Dayna's literature search was business coaching, she uncovered broader coaching resources applicable to community coaching.

Conclusion

Returning to the Yogi Berra quote,

If you don't know where you are going, you might end up somewhere else.

We believe that community coaches can help communities stay on course. It is for this reason we strongly recommend the use of community coaches within our e2 Development Framework. This work is hard enough and the potential to stray or lose momentum is always present. A community coach can provide that added asset to ensure a community maintains focus and momentum until early impact is realized and a culture of entrepreneurship is rooting in a community.

Access and Use of e2 University Materials

Single Party Users. Our entire e2 University is available free of charge to selected users. If you and your community are interested in any or all of these resources, contact info@e2mail.org.

Compensated Users. For those users wanting to use e2 University in their compensated work, e2 is happy to explore licensing options. Contact Don Macke at don@e2mail.org.

Nonprofit Users. If your organization is a charitable non-profit that works with multiple communities, e2 is open to non-compensated licensing options. Contact Don Macke at don@e2mail.org.

International Users. If your organization is located in or focused on non-U.S. locations, we are open to collaborative efforts to translate our work into other languages and cultures for possible use. Contact Don Macke at don@e2mail.org to explore options.

Kansas and Nebraska Users. Nebraska and Kansas have played an extraordinary role in evolving our e2 development framework. Access to e2 University resources is available free of charge to end users through [NetWork Kansas](#) and Nebraska Extension in Nebraska.

A Condition for Access and Use of e2 University Resources

In all cases e2 asks users to execute a **use agreement**. As part of this agreement, we require a commitment from you to share your learning back with e2. We need user feedback to continue our learning so that e2 can support entrepreneurship ecosystem building and future resources for users yet to come.

Additional Help

Don Macke is not currently accepting new advising and consulting work. However, based on scheduling availability, Don is willing to do an exploratory call to better understand your needs and expectations, and recommend pathways forward. Contact him at don@e2mail.org.

How e2 Can Help



e2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems helps communities increase prosperity through entrepreneur-focused economic development and ecosystem building. Led by [Don Macke](#), e2 has a national team of practitioners who bring research, coaching, incubation, market intelligence and other expertise to this work.

What We Do

- ✓ **Mentoring.** We mentor and coach new practitioners seeking to pursue entrepreneur-led development. We provide advice and support for building eEcosystem strategies that work.
- ✓ **Analytics Support.** e2 helps communities and regions understand their entrepreneurial potential through research and data. Explore some of our research tools and reports [here](#).
- ✓ **e2 University (e2U)** is our platform for sharing guides, papers, stories, tools, and resources with communities wanting a deep dive into eEcosystem building. Don Macke leads the e2U team with analytics support from **Cathy Kottwitz** and report preparation from **Ann Chaffin**. Special recognition for their e2U legacy contributions goes to **Dana Williams** and **Deb Markley**, LOCUS Impacting Investing.
- ✓ **Fostering the eMovement.** We support the national entrepreneurship movement along with our partners including the **Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City**, **SourceLink**, **Edward Lowe Foundation**, **Kauffman Foundation**, and **NetWork Kansas**. We are a founding member of [Start Us Up: America's New Business Plan](#), a coalition dedicated to strengthening entrepreneurship across America. Together, we continue to advance the foundational ideas of building entrepreneurial ecosystems and entrepreneurship-led economic development.

Contact Us

don@e2mail.org

(402) 323-7336

www.energizingentrepreneurs.org

[NetWork Kansas](#), a 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to developing an entrepreneurial ecosystem in Kansas, is the home for e2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems. NetWork Kansas connects aspiring entrepreneurs, emerging and established businesses, to a deep network of business building resource organizations across the state.

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