



RURAL ENTREPRENEURIAL VENTURE
WISCONSIN
DISCOVER | IGNITE | GROW



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Today's Presentation:

- Business Development Challenges Faced by Rural Communities
- Entrepreneurship's Effects on Rural Prosperity
- WI REV Program – How it Works
- Outcomes of WI REV
- Panel Discussion with WI REV Leadership Team Leads:
 - **Renea Frederick:** Merrill, Co-Owner of FreMarq Innovations
 - **Damon Schopen:** Jefferson, Founder of Porchlight Technology and Co-Founder of Focus Coworking

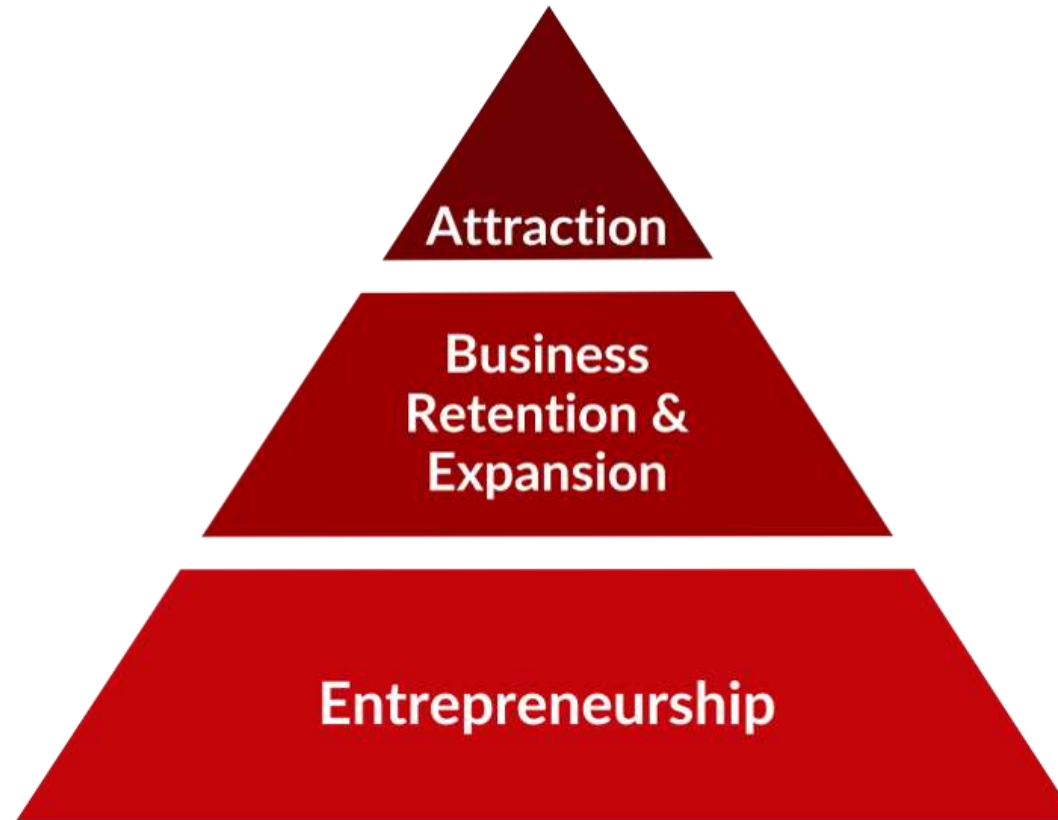


Rural Economic Development Picture

- Lack of industry sector diversity
- Transition plans not always in place for existing businesses
- Lack of capacity.....
- Leading to same people serving on multiple community committees



Rural Economic Development



*Brian Dabson, Rural Policy Analyst
and Researcher, Rural Economic
Development Thought-Leader*



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Advancing Entrepreneur-Focused Economic Development

"Effective communities design comprehensive strategies rather than doing 'one off' projects. Economic development is a long-term process; community change does not happen overnight.... It is very much a process and not a project."

Don Macke, e2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems, e2's Rural Community Prosperity Development Framework, March 2020



WI REV – Advancing Rural Community Prosperity



*Rural Community
Prosperity Model, Don
Macke, e2*





WI Rural Entrepreneurial Venture (WI REV)

Designed to boost the innovative capacity of individuals and organizations to build thriving, collaborative, entrepreneurial-driven rural communities.



Wisconsin Rural Entrepreneurial Venture

WI REV – A Framework with Flexibility

- Duplicatable framework with community goal customization
- Starts with community assets ("asset driven"), not what a community is lacking
- Led by a community REV team
- Industry sector diversity
- Expands capacity

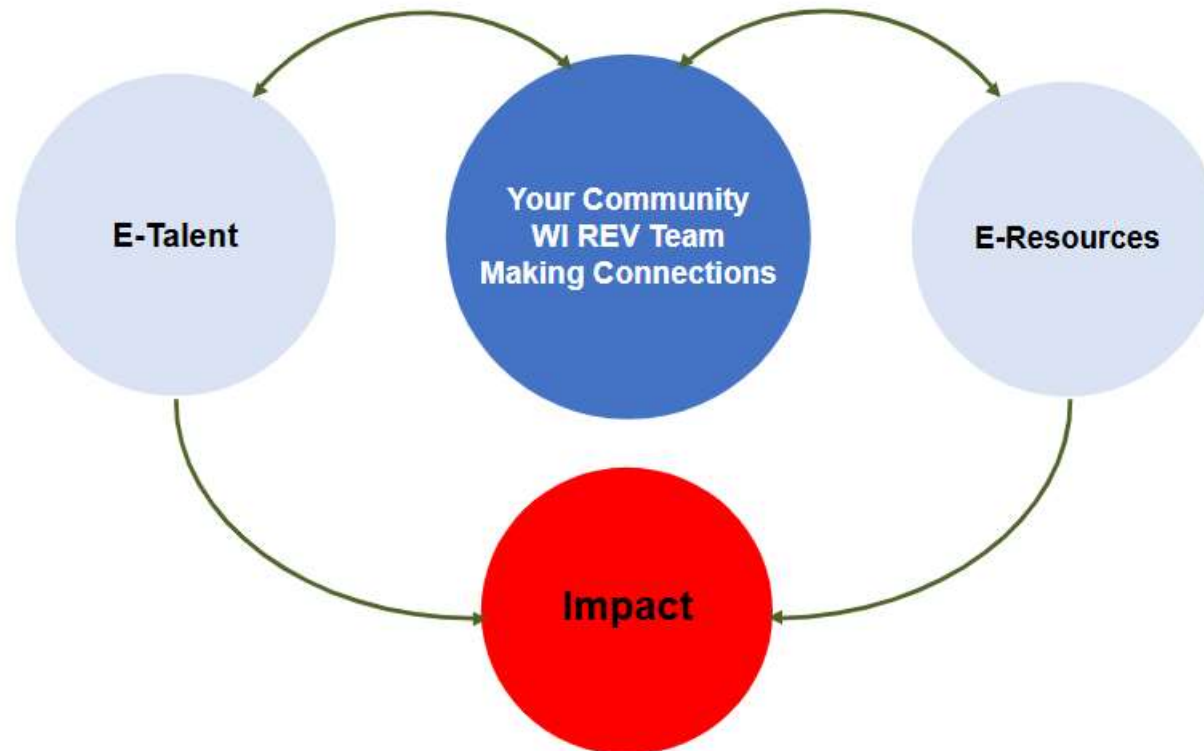


WI REV's "North Star"

***Finding, Engaging &
Developing
Entrepreneurial
Talent
In The
Community***



WI REV's "Ground Game"

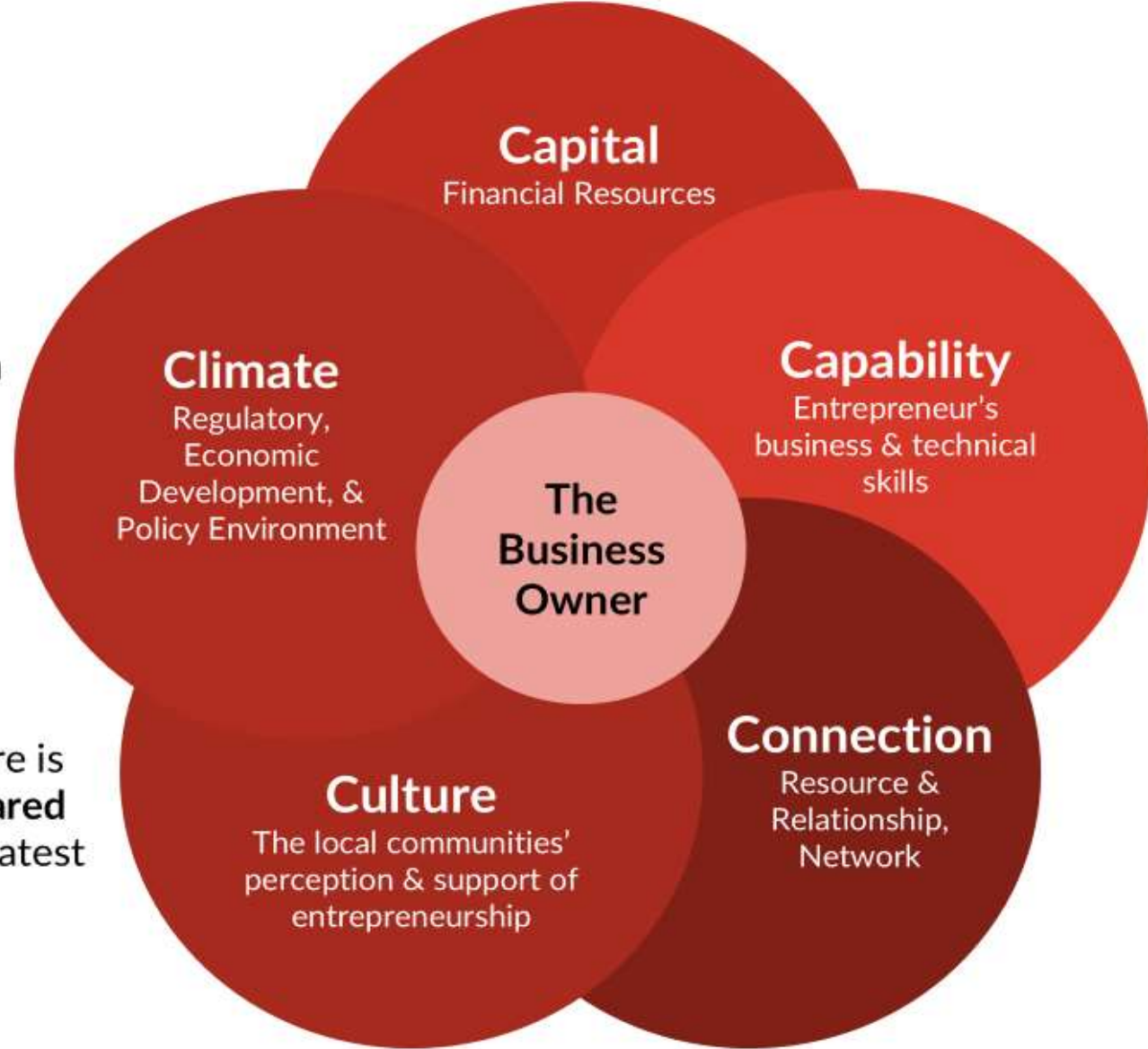


Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

“The organizations, institutions, formal and informal relationships, policies and cultures that **support or hinder** the creation of entrepreneurship and small business growth of all sizes and types in a specific community or region.” (*Grow Your Own-Kansas City Fed*)

Economic Inclusion

“...an inclusive economy is one in which there is **expanded opportunity** for more broadly **shared prosperity** especially for those facing the greatest barriers to advancing their well-being.”
(*Rockefeller Foundation*)



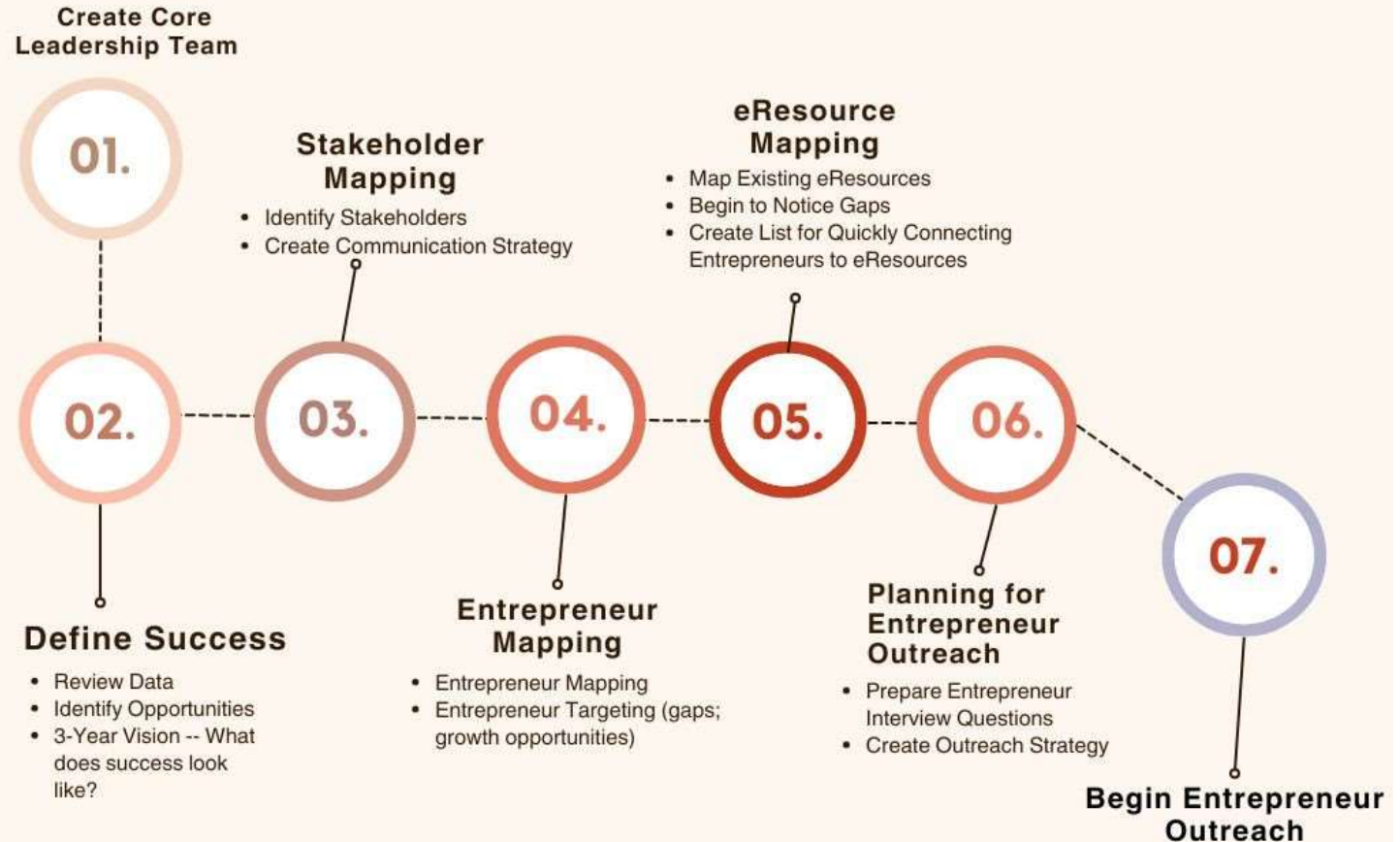
5 C's of the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem



Year 1 Organizing for Impact

WI REV Year 1: Organizing for Impact

Progress: Opportunities Identified ~ Stakeholders Mapped ~ eResources Mapped ~ Entrepreneurs Mapped & Outreach Started



Wisconsin Rural Entrepreneurial Venture

Years 2-3+

WI REV Years 2 & 3: Progress Toward Goals

Year 2 becomes more non-linear as activities are carried out in parallel. Outreach continues as follow-up visits occur while matching entrepreneurs to eResources and identifying missing eResources. Data is gathered continuously. Community outreach and engagement accelerate to further amplify WI REV and to create a community culture that empowers entrepreneurship.

Match Entrepreneurs to eResources for Economic Impact!

Track Metrics/Gather Data

- Gather Data/Track Goal-Related Metrics
- Adjust Goals or Community Roadmap
- Share Success Stories with Community

Entrepreneur Follow-Up

- Follow-Up Visits for Ongoing Support

Peer Learning

- Learn from other REV communities

Community Engagement

- Form and Train Working Groups
- eChampion Commitments

Evaluate Capital Investment

eResource Deployment

- Fill Gaps in eResource Ecosystem
- Deploy Capital; Collaborate with Funding Entities

Entrepreneur Outreach

- Target and Interview Entrepreneurs
- Document Needs
- Connect to Appropriate eResources



What does UW-Madison Extension Bring to WI REV?

- WI REV Framework: Duplicatable, proven framework for entrepreneur-focused economic development
- Community Coach -- usually Community Development Educator for that county
- Rural Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Resources (RWEI program)
- Three-year commitment
- Community data and access to additional data



Cohort 1 Communities (*started June 2024*):

- Merrill (Lincoln county)
- Hillsboro (Vernon county)
- Amery (Polk county)
- Spooner/Shell Lake (Washburn county)
- Green County (Monroe)
- Jefferson (Jefferson county)



Cohort 2 Communities (*started June 2025*):

- White Lake-Wolf River Territory (school district; Langlade county)
- Hurley (Iron county)
- Baldwin-Woodville (school district; St. Croix county)
- Medary (La Crosse county)
- Three Lakes (Oneida county)



Cohort 3 Planning: September 2025



Wisconsin Rural Entrepreneurial Venture

WI REV Outcomes: What are REV communities experiencing?

WI REV Cohort 1 Communities (*very short term, <1 year*)

- Organized into leadership teams
- Working with a coach
- Mapping community assets
- Have defined the vision for their community
- Have already expanded capacity
- Some have identified sources of capital for future projects as they now have a proven framework and a team with a 3-year commitment
- Created an initial business resource directory for their community



WI REV Outcomes: What are other REV communities experiencing?

MN REV Alumni Communities (*medium-term, 3-6 years working with REV*)

- Spring Grove, MN (1,219 pop): Created a Chamber of Commerce; created an Entrepreneur Hub in their downtown area
- Blue Earth, MN (3,100 pop): Created youth entrepreneurship programming; REV served as a foundation for speaking with new entrepreneurs coming into the area
- Spring Valley, MN (2,500 pop): Over \$125,000 revolving loan funds distributed to businesses; child care microgrant program created for local in-home care providers; growth and expansion in several businesses including butchery, café, coffee shop, vet clinic, floral shop and two auto repair shops.



Ord, NE (2,078 pop): Long-Term Case Study

2000-2020 Transformative Change

- \$250 Million of Private/Public Investment (ie. Hospital)
- Diversified – 2 to 7 Sector Economy
- Quality of Life Enhancement (other community projects for livability developed)
- New Residents – 50% Gain in 30 Year-Olds
- Embracing Diversity
- Expanded Community Leadership
- Community Resident Agency

e2 Energizing Entrepreneurs



WI REV Questions?



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