



Paths and Partners: Mapping Value Chains and Mobilizing Assets to Solve Problems

2026 EDD Wealth Creation Summit

Carrie Kissel, NADO

Melissa Levy, NADO



Objectives



Get to know each other



Learn about wealth creation



Map a value chain



Play a wealth creation game



Wealth creation is an approach to economic development that

- connects a region's **assets** to market **demand** in ways that build **rooted wealth** for local people, places and firms.
- brings together a range of public, private and non-profit sector partners who have **self-interest** in the outcomes and an openness to discovering **shared or common interests**.
- focuses on building a **sector** rather than individual and unrelated businesses.



Principles of Wealth Creation



#1 – **Create wealth**, broadly defined, and aspire to do no harm.

#2 – **Root wealth** in local people, places and firms through local ownership, control and influence.



#3 – Build **lasting livelihoods** by intentionally including people and firms on the economic margins.



Sector Collaboration Strategy

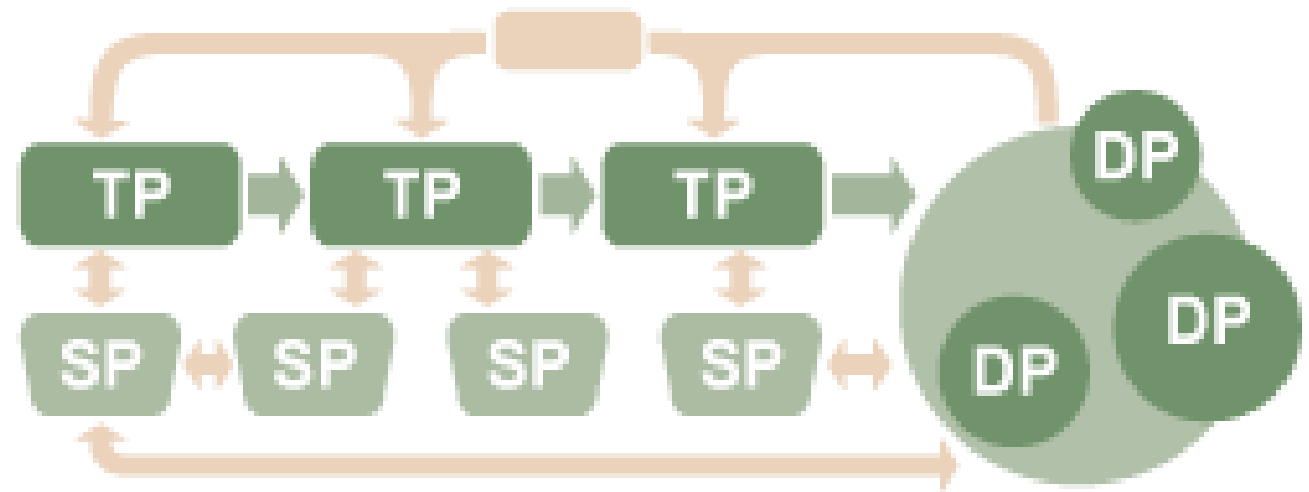
- Bringing industry sector groups together to cooperate.
- Clearwater EDA facilitated collaboration in the Idaho wine industry, health care, manufacturing.
- Outcomes: social and political capital, cooperative purchasing, workforce development collaboration, etc.



Value Chains: Tie wealth to place and connect regionally

Wealth creation value chains connect local production to regional demand to bring fresh money into rural communities, defined as:

A network of people, businesses, institutions, and non-profits who collaborate to meet market demand for specific products or services – each advancing individual self-interest while together creating greater local wealth.



Sector

Agriculture

Energy

Health care

Subsector

Dairy

Solar energy

Maternal health
care

Market opportunity

Fortified milk
powder

Household solar
panels in remote
areas

Prenatal care

Connecting a Value Chain



Demand: Final consumers/end market - Buyers



Functions: Those things that have to happen to deliver the product or service



Transactional partners: Those people, businesses, or organizations that play a direct role in sourcing, aggregating, distributing, processing, purchasing the product, etc.



Support partners: Those people, businesses, or organizations that provide the infrastructure, technical assistance and support that helps the transactional partners to produce

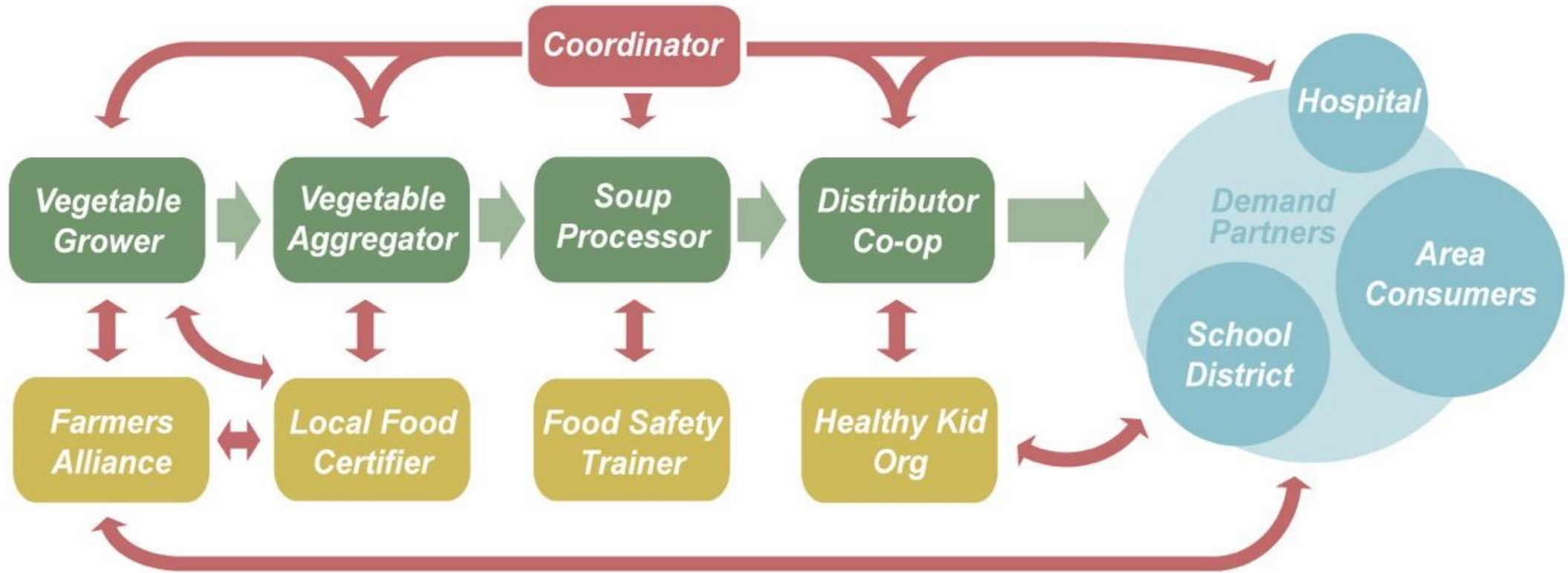


Beneficiaries/Investors are the groups, businesses, and organizations that will benefit from a fully functional and successful value chain. All beneficiaries are potential investors!

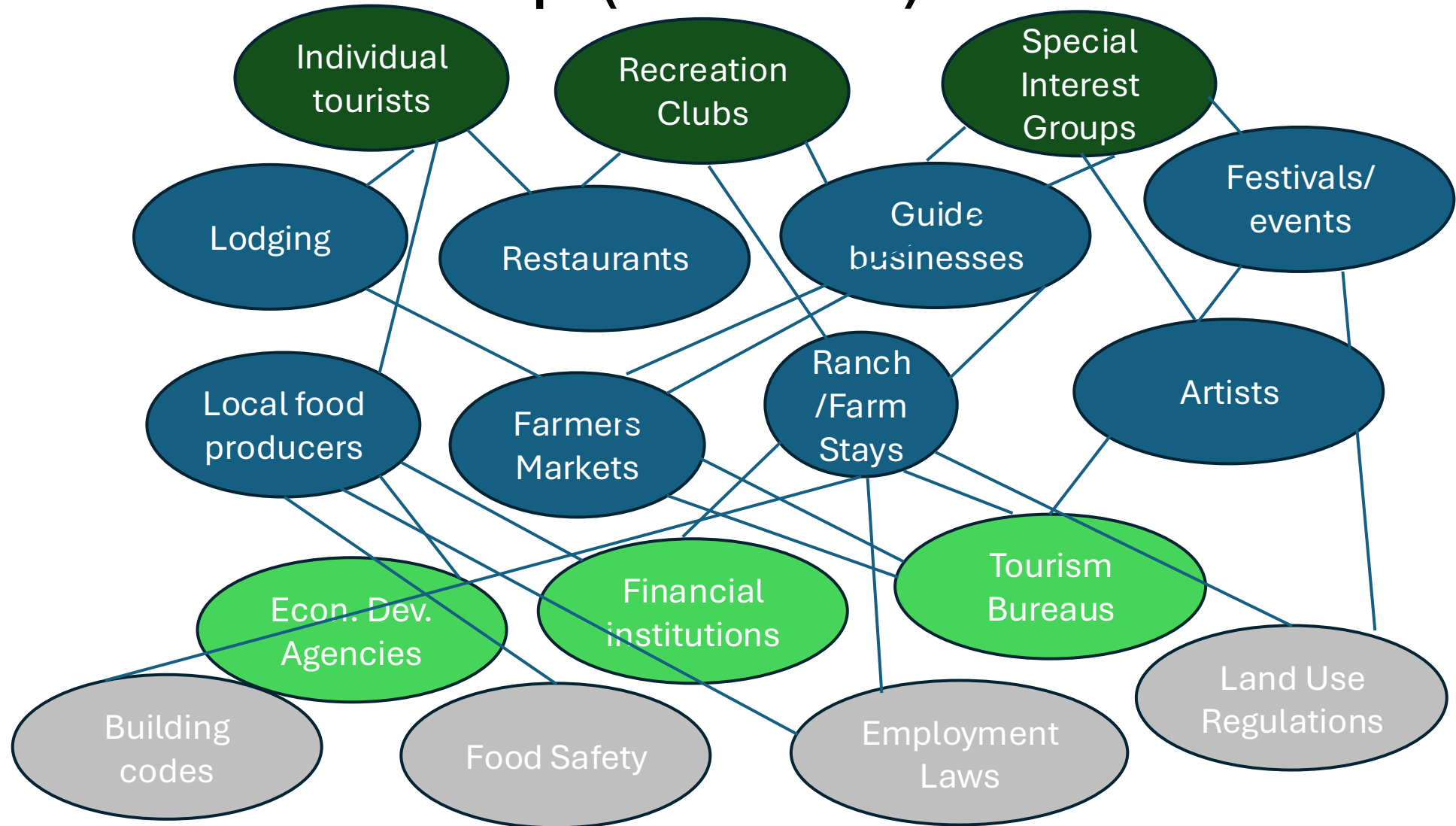


We are really talking about a Value Chain System!

Value Chain Example



Network Map (Tourism)



Value Propositions: Uncovering Motivation for Engaging

**What is their self-interest in engaging further?
What benefits can we/the product offer that they value?
This is their “value proposition.”**

Three levels of Interests:

Self: What’s in it for me?

Shared: What’s in it for us?

Common: What’s in it for other
people/the region?



Exercise: Starting with Demand

What are demand partners

- Final consumers/end market. Connect with aggregators of demand.

Identify the key demand partners.

- Find the relevant cards.
- Write on blank cards

Consider the value proposition for each.

- Write on a stickie note for each partner.

Exercise: Transactional Partners

Transactional partners: Those people, businesses, or organizations that play a direct role in sourcing, aggregating, distributing, processing, purchasing the product, etc.

- Using the pre-written cards or blank cards, identify the key transactional functions. What needs to happen to get the product or service from supply to the end consumers?
- What are their value propositions?



Exercise: Support Partners

Support partners: Those people, businesses, or organizations that provide the infrastructure, technical assistance and support that helps the transactional partners to produce

Using the pre-written cards or starting from scratch, identify the key support functions. What kinds of support partners would engage with transactional partners along the chain?



Value Chain Coordinator

A value chain coordinator is an organization with the capacity to convene, connect, and facilitate the formation and growth of a value chain. It requires more than a single individual.
Coordinators:

hold and communicate the vision of the value chain

build relationships with all the partners in the value chain

help the partners form relationships with each other.

scout for innovative approaches to production and consumption that build multiple forms of wealth

promote ownership models that keep wealth in place

coordinate investments in the value chain.

Often, coordinators play another role in the value chain as well, perhaps as a transactional or support partner.

Gaps and Opportunities



Gaps represent opportunities for local businesses to expand or new businesses to fill a function.

What gaps, if addressed, will have the most impact?

Which challenges if addressed will have the greatest ripple through the chain?

Which gaps/opportunities are feasible to address?

Where is the energy/excitement?



Remember our Goal

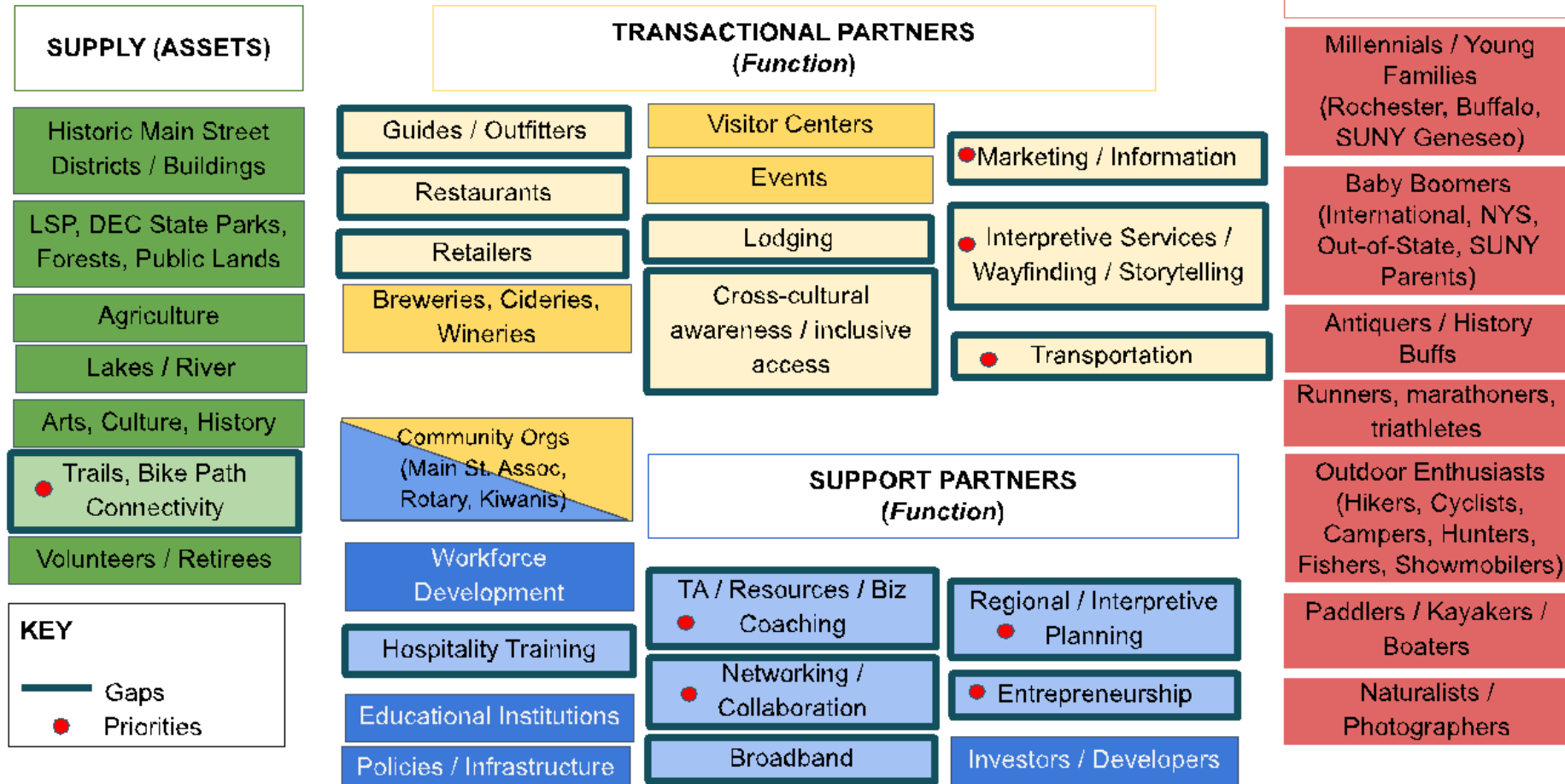
- **Build rooted wealth, community prosperity, lasting livelihoods.**
- Look for ways to build wealth by...
- **Filling a gap** in the value chain (e.g., creating a waste oil recycling business)
- **Removing a barrier** (e.g., providing GAP certification to small farmers)
- Building multiple capitals that are **rooted in place** (e.g., creating a more efficient building program at the community college)
- Finding ways to **include residents on the economic margins** in the activity (e.g., providing entrepreneurial training to self-employed, low income contractors to build energy efficient houses)



Value chain development: Identifying Priorities



Regional Outdoor Recreation / Tourism Value Chain



Refining Your Value Chain Approach

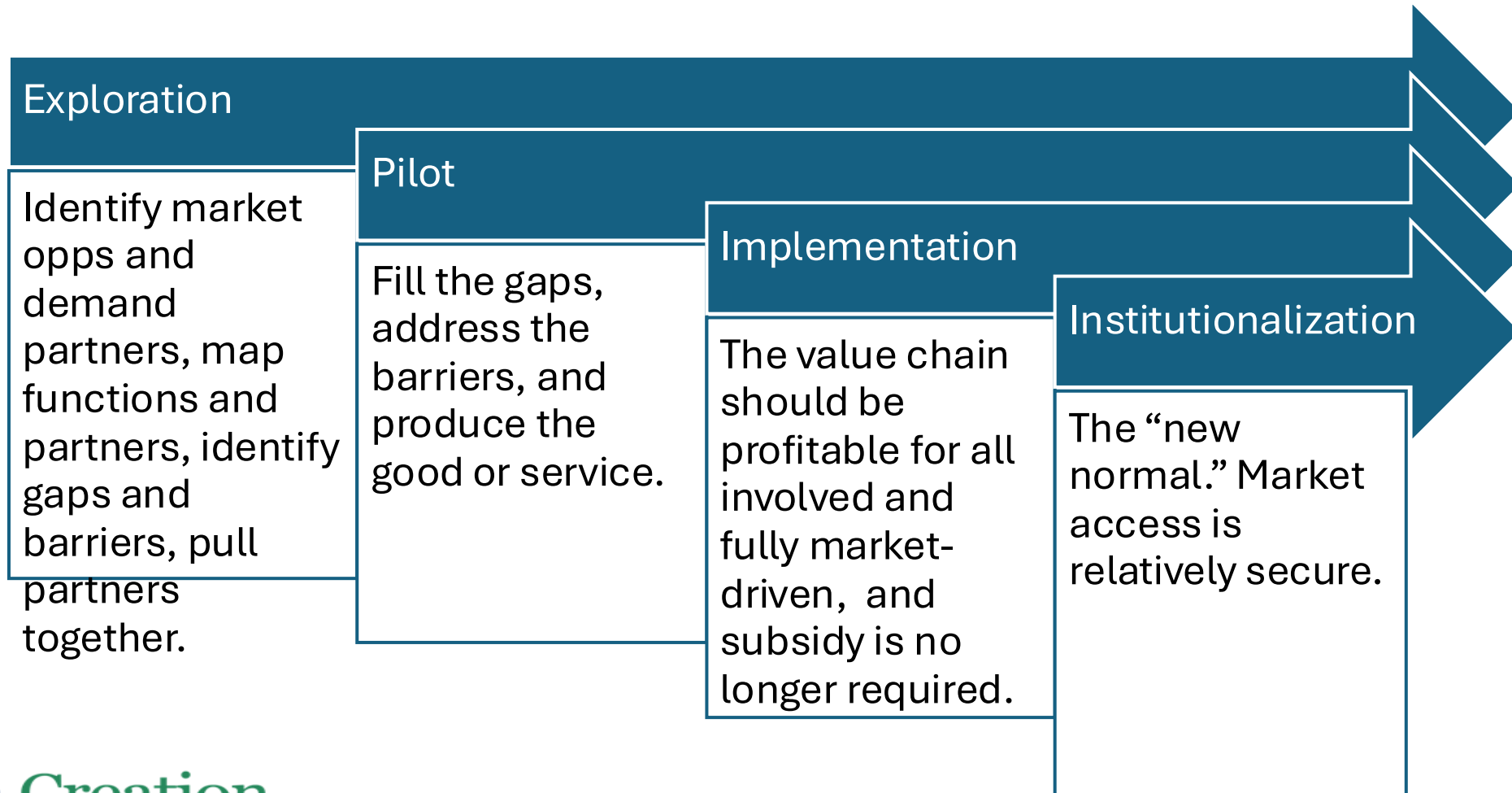
Understand demand.

Find on-the-ground partners and understand their value propositions.

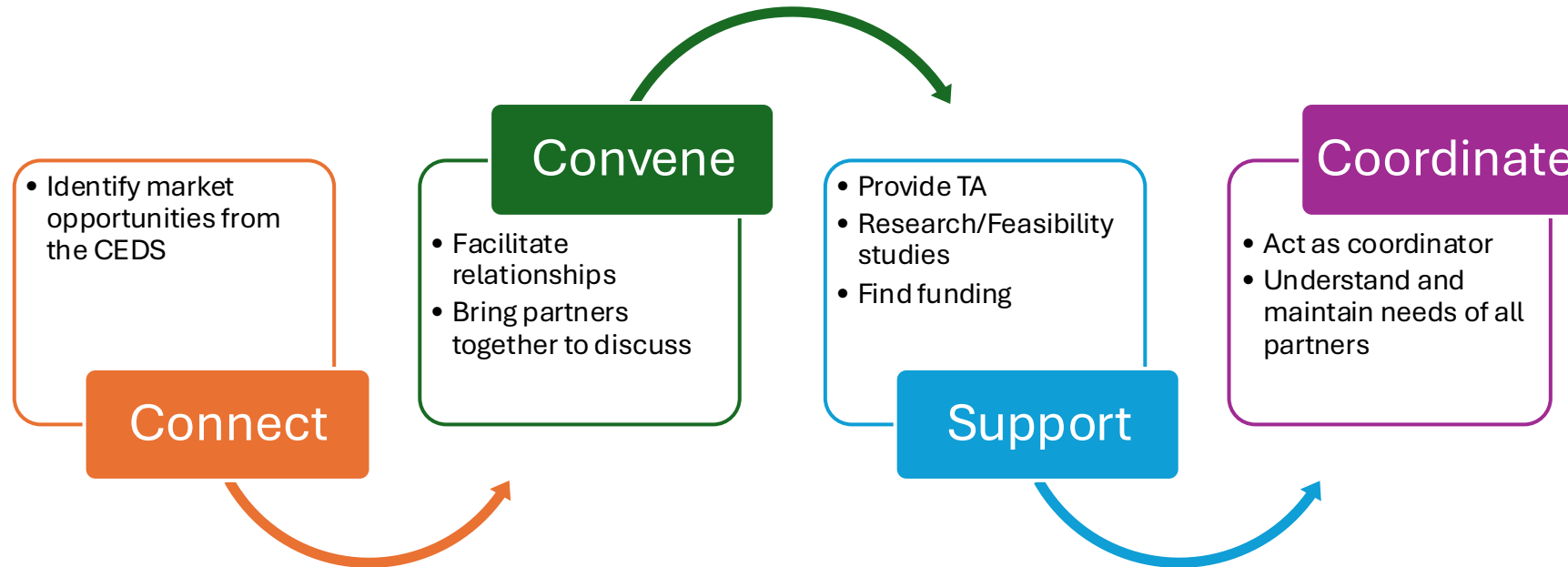
Convene partners to identify gaps and bottlenecks and consider next steps.

Figure out your role as an EDD.

Phases in Developing a Wealth Creation Value Chain



How EDDs can Start Engaging in Value Chains

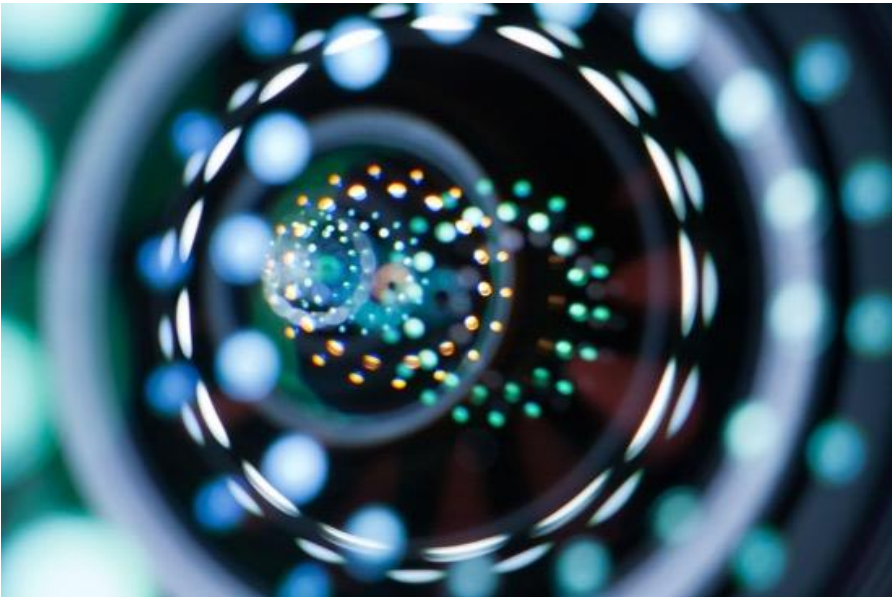


Looking Through a Wealth Creation Lens: What does this mean?



- Using the eight capitals in your CEDS – asset inventory, SWOT, strategy, metrics.
- Supporting sectors in your region to collaborate for mutual benefit.
- Building partnerships – engaging partners with strengths in different areas, different capitals – to build wealth and keep it local.
- Supporting market opportunities in your region, by bringing partners together to identify what the gaps are and how to fill them through entrepreneurship.
- Viewing all your work through this lens of building wealth, keeping it local and building livelihoods.

The Wealth Creation Lens



Regional planning and development

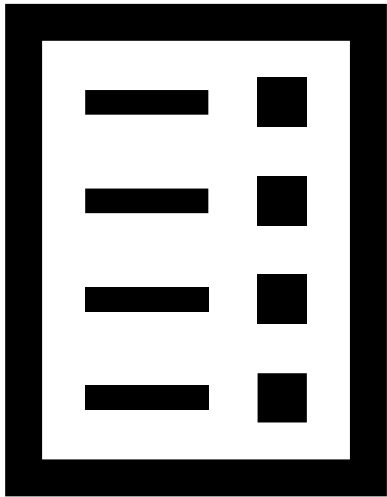
Value chain development

Organizational development and strategic planning

Project and program evaluation.



Regional planning/development



Map regional assets across the eight capitals with partners

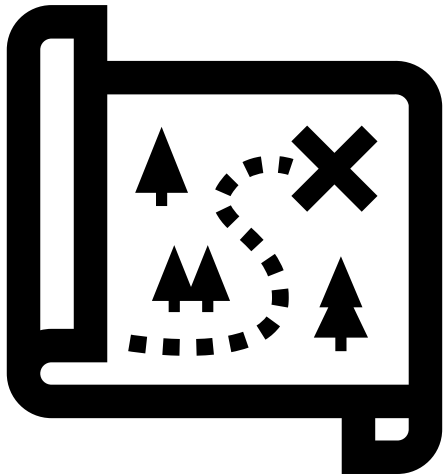
Identify and reduce economic and other leakage from the region

Build strategies around increasing local ownership

Align planning resources and investments around real market opportunities

Formalize relationship-building as part of regional and municipal strategy

development



Identify and validate real market opportunities that benefit multiple communities/counties

Map the full value chain with partners

Appoint or support a value chain coordinator

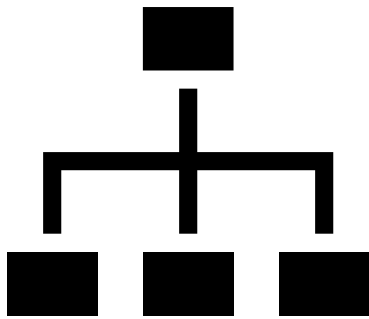
Build pathways for expanded participation of underrepresented groups

Plug leaks and keep more value in the region

Strengthen multiple forms of wealth in the chain.



Organizational development – strategic planning



Use wealth creation as the strategic lens in comprehensive and strategic planning



Assess your organization's strengths and opportunities across the eight capitals.



Align programs to long-term, asset-building outcomes



Prioritize initiatives that create or grow multiple forms of wealth



Build cross-sector partnerships as an asset strategy



Strengthen internal culture around long-term collaboration and asset-based thinking

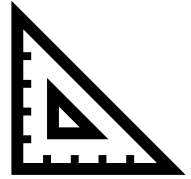


Program and project evaluation



Build a "multiple forms of wealth" dashboard

Measure benefit distribution, not just totals



Evaluate system change, not just project outputs



Use feedback loops or continuous learning cycles to adjust strategy in real time.

Measure how much value stays in the region.

BU  WEALTH BUILDERS



WealthBuilders - Components

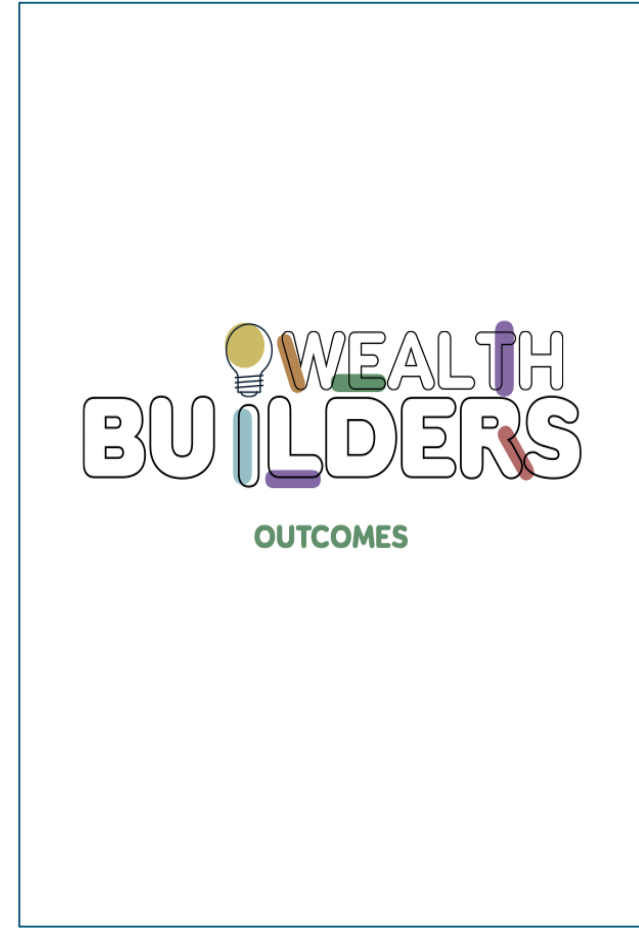
Wealth Cards



Partner Cards



Outcomes Cards



WealthBuilders - Instructions



Outcome cards – Flip over one for the table.



Each person draws a Wealth card and a Partner card.



Each person will speak to what they could contribute to the outcome based on their wealth type and/or partner card.



WealthBuilders - Questions



What does your form of wealth look like in this place?



How can this form of wealth be used to contribute to the outcome?



What role could the partner play in moving toward the outcome?



What else is needed to make progress?



Does your partner or wealth card remind you of any assets within your own community?

WealthBuilders - Debrief

How did it go?

What was easy? What was hard?

Is there anything you'd change?

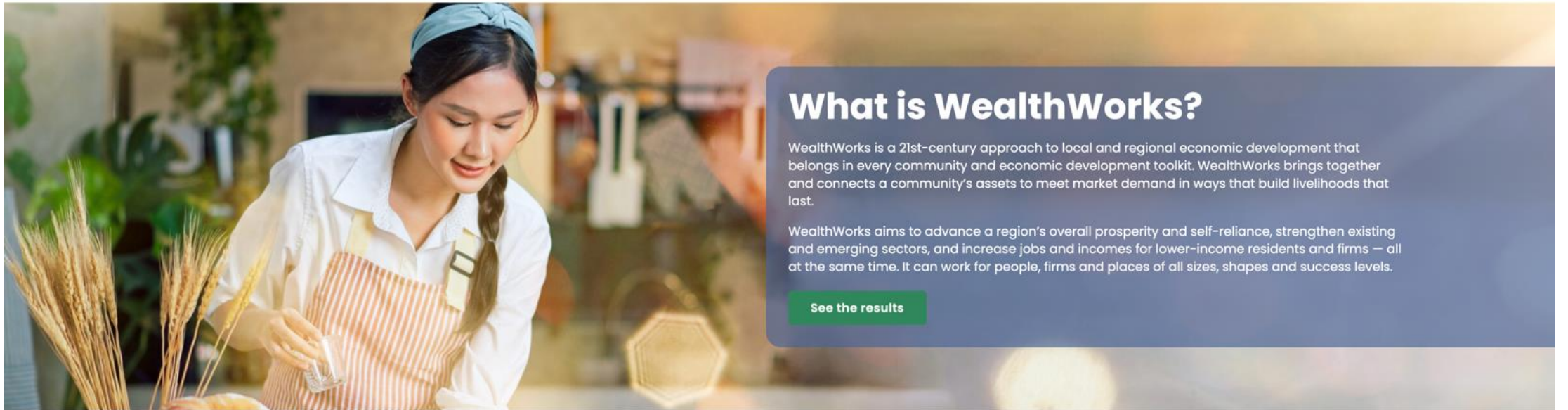


WealthWorks Website - www.wealthworks.org

Connecting community assets to market demand to build lasting livelihoods.



[About](#) [The Basics](#) [Success Stories](#) [Resources](#) [Connect](#)



What is WealthWorks?

WealthWorks is a 21st-century approach to local and regional economic development that belongs in every community and economic development toolkit. WealthWorks brings together and connects a community's assets to meet market demand in ways that build livelihoods that last.

WealthWorks aims to advance a region's overall prosperity and self-reliance, strengthen existing and emerging sectors, and increase jobs and incomes for lower-income residents and firms — all at the same time. It can work for people, firms and places of all sizes, shapes and success levels.

[See the results](#)



NADO Wealth Creation Site

www.nado.org/wealthcreation

Wealth Creation



Wealth Creation Home

Wealth Creation Reports

Blog ▾

Training Materials and Resources

For several years, the NADO Research Foundation has trained EDD staff and partners on a wealth creation framework known as *WealthWorks* that seeks to build multiple types of capitals or assets in a community or region. This approach, recognized as a best practice in EDA's CEDS Content Guidelines, emphasizes support for local ownership and control of businesses and assets in order to root wealth in a region. It is also intentionally inclusive, seeking ways to incorporate a variety of voices as planners and owners, not only as intended beneficiaries or consumers. A handful of EDDs are using wealth creation in CEDS and other EDD regional planning efforts, demonstrating that this approach can influence EDD operations, including improving consideration of equity and access when designing stakeholder participation or even procurement and hiring. Through the Economic Development District Community of Practice (EDD CoP), made possible through an award from the Economic Development Administration, the NADO Research Foundation is coordinating with EDD practitioners and other rural and regional development practitioners to incorporate this wealth creation model where appropriate.

Wealth creation is an approach to economic development that connects a region's assets to market demand in ways that build rooted wealth for local people, places and firms. It brings together a range of public, private and non-profit sector partners who have self-interest in the outcomes and an openness to discovering shared or common interests.

WealthWorks Regional Hubs



2026 NADO Annual Training Conference

Monday, October 26 – Thursday, October 29, 2026

Peppermill Resort Spa Casino
2707 S Virginia Street
Reno, NV 89502



For More Information

Carrie Kissel
NADO

ckissel@nado.org
www.nado.org

Melissa Levy
NADO

mlevy@nado.org
www.nado.org

