Growing Wealth From the Ground Up: Rethinking Food Systems for Shared Prosperity

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Wealth Creation

What is a Food System?

Wealth Creation…

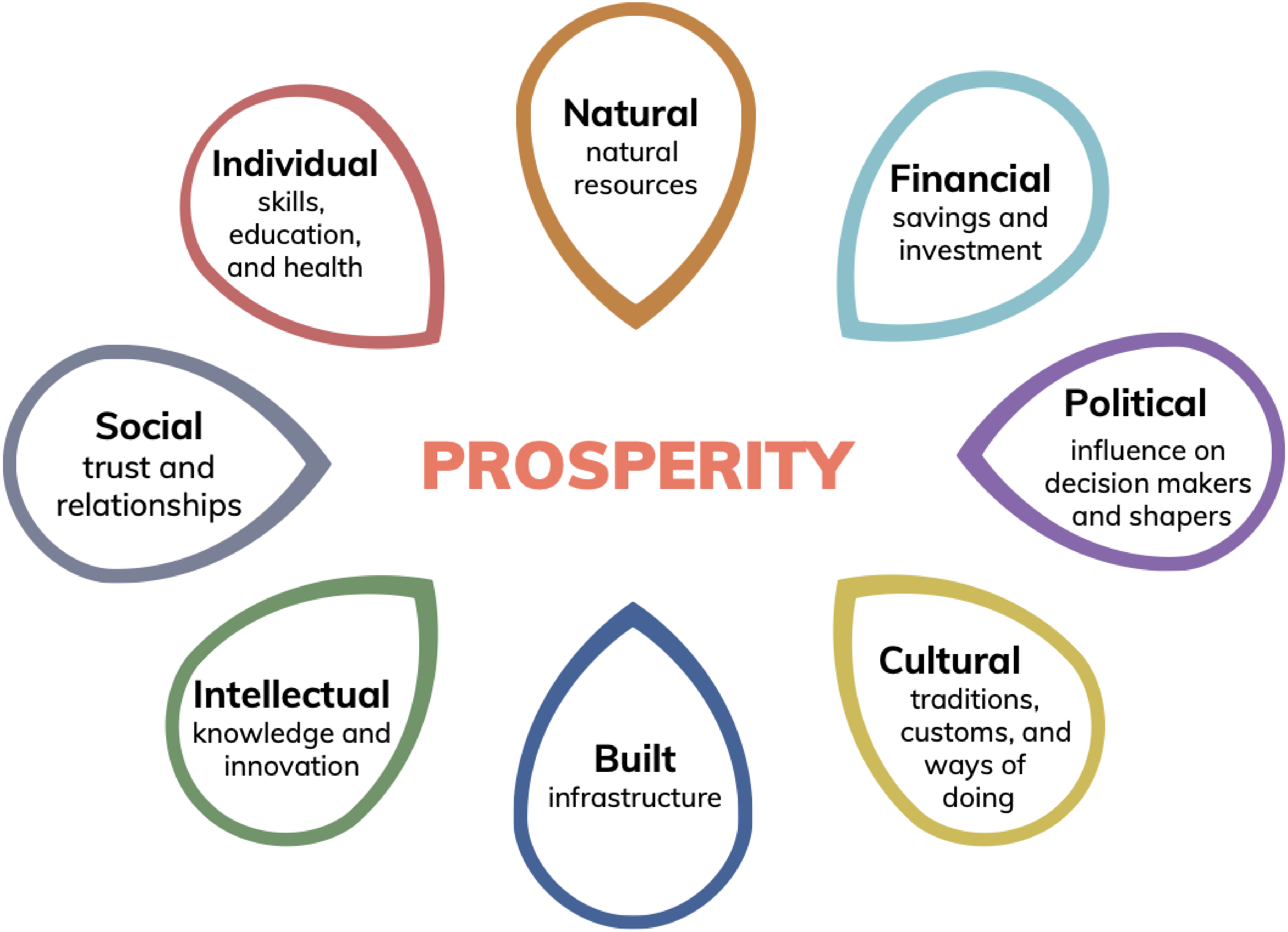
- Connects a region's **assets** to **market demand**
- Builds **rooted wealth** for local people, places and firms
- Brings together a range of public, private and nonprofit sector partners who have **self-interest** in the outcomes and an openness to discovering **shared or common interests.**
- Focuses 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.

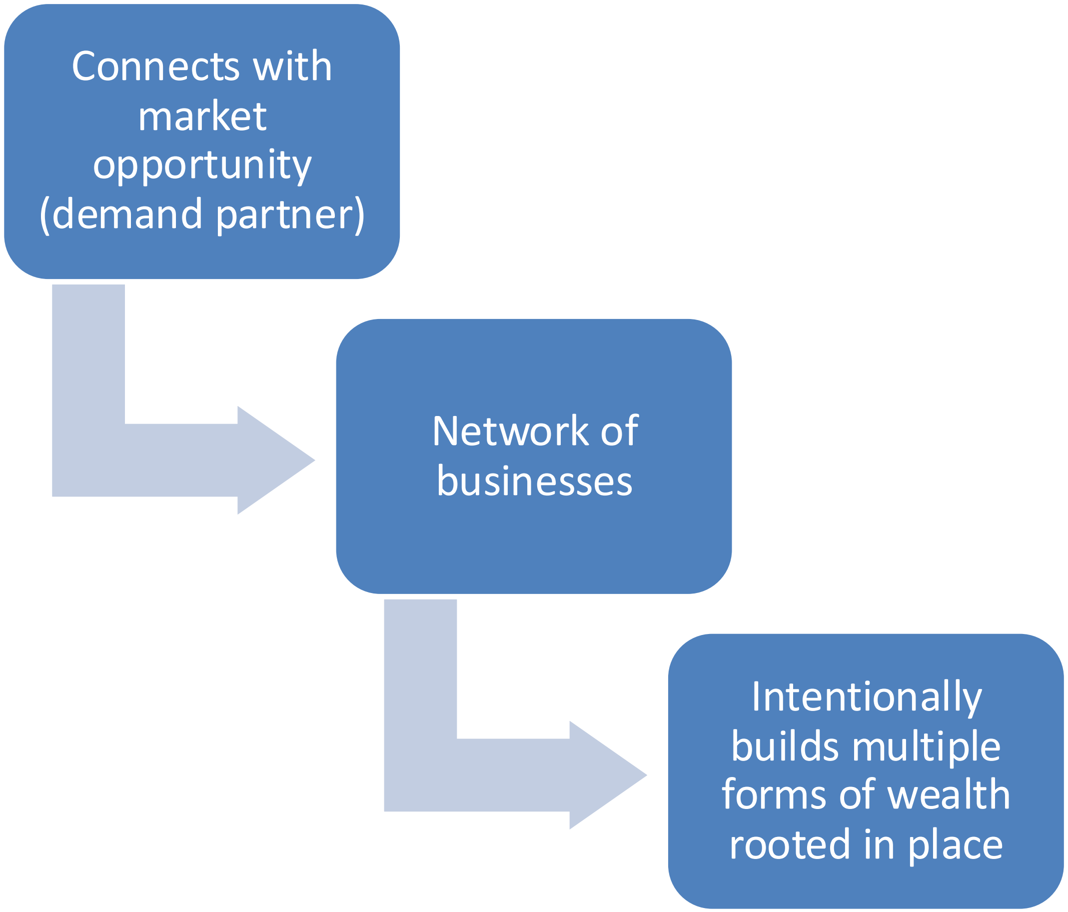

Natural
natural resources
Financial
savings and investment
Political
influence on decision makers and shapers
Cultural
traditions, customs, and ways of doing
Built
infrastructure
Intellectual
knowledge and innovation
Social
trust and relationships
Individual
skills, education, and health
PROSPERITY

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.

Three Parts to a Wealth Creation Value Chain



All 3 parts are necessary.

Sector	Subsector	Market opportunity
Agriculture	Dairy	Fortified milk powder
Energy	Solar energy	Household solar panels in remote areas
Health care	Maternal health care	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

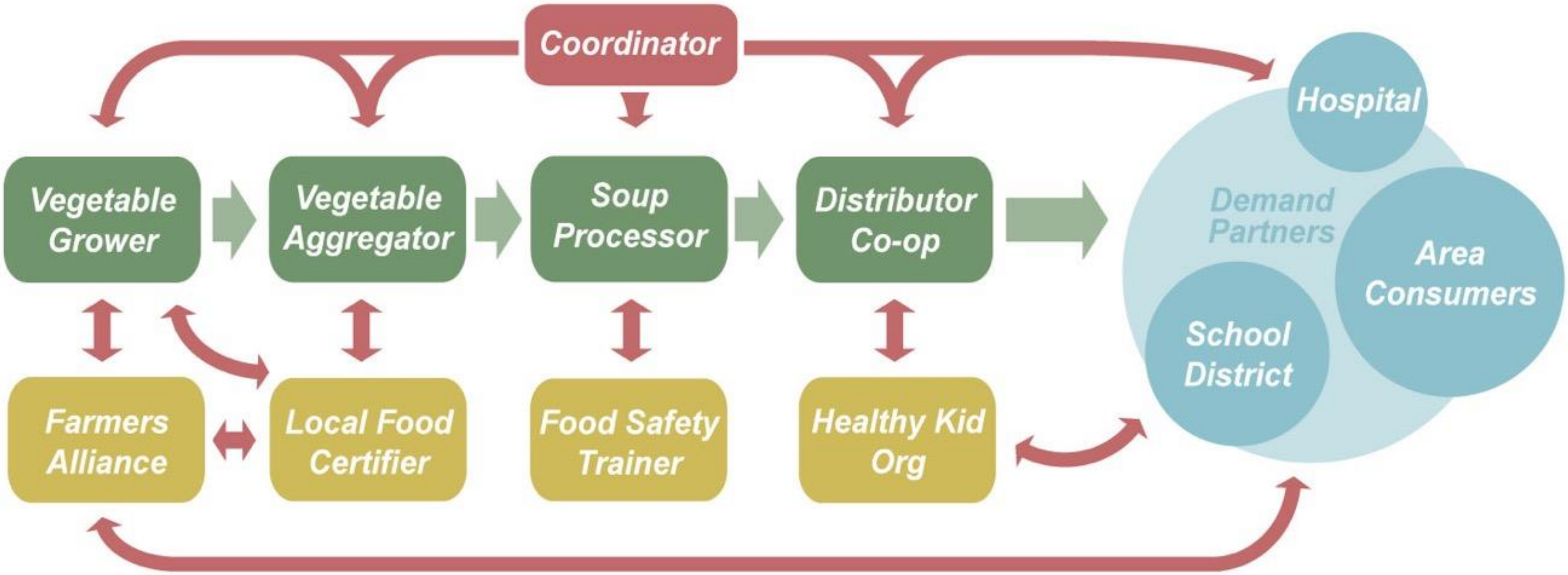
Transactional partners: Those people, businesses, or organizations that play a direct role in sourcing, aggregating, distributing, processing, purchasing the product, etc.

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



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?

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?

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.

How EDDs can Start Engaging in Value Chains

Connect
- Identify market opportunities from the CEDS

Convene
- Facilitate relationships
- Bring partners together to discuss

Support
- Provide TA
- Research/Feasibility studies
- Find funding

Coordinate
- Act as coordinator
- Understand and maintain needs of all partners

EDDs and Food

EDDs are regional experts in:

- Identifying regional issues and how they affect local communities.
- Identifying and prioritizing regional and local assets on the ground.
- Building and convening coalitions of interested stakeholders.
- Planning regional and local responses.
- Bringing funding to bear with federal, state, local, and private sources.
- Guiding partners in implementing solutions.

What can EDDs do to support food systems development in their regions

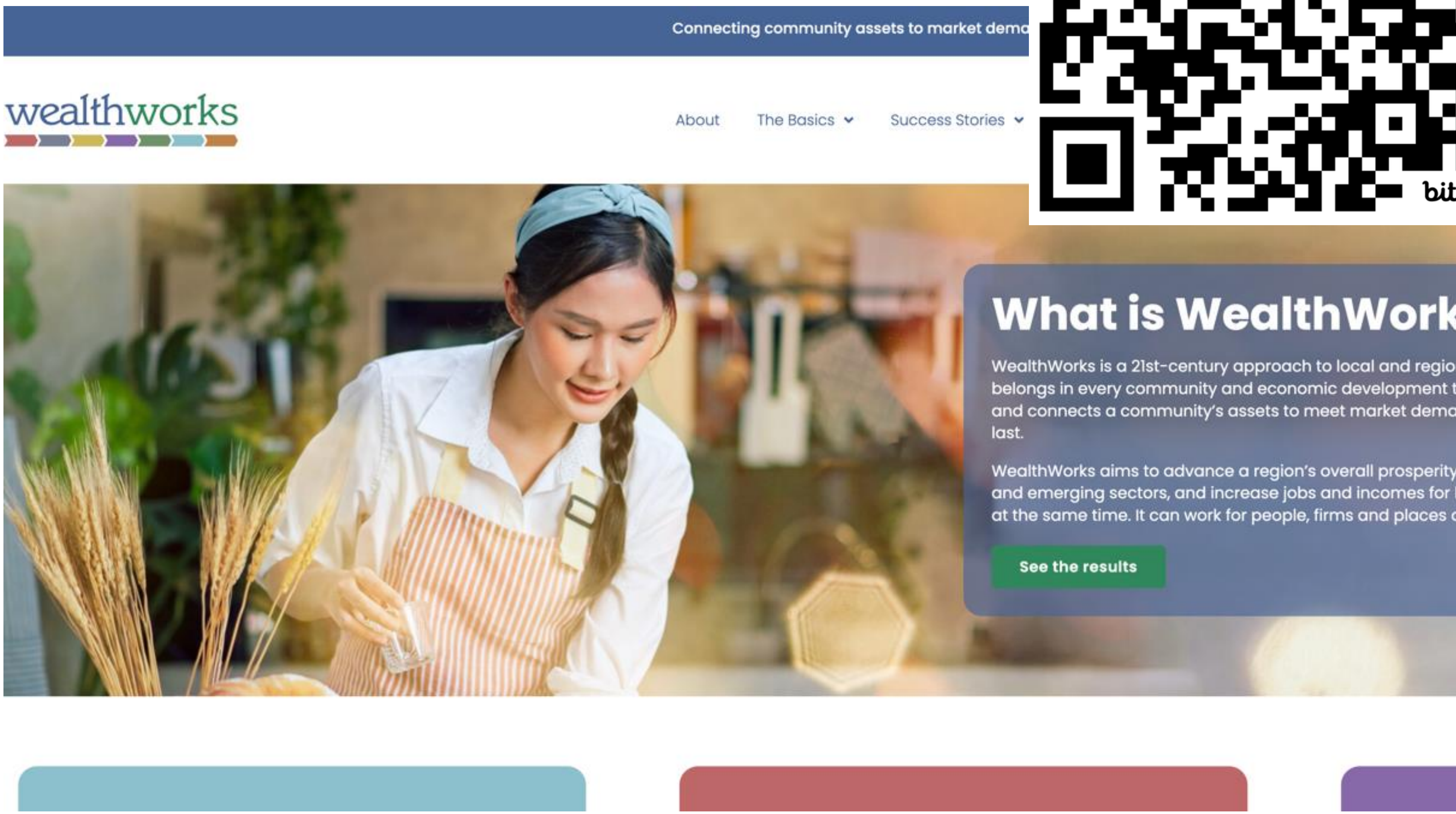
- Apply for or help others apply for EDA and USDA funding
- Entrepreneur support
- Convene stakeholders in food hub development
- Planning support for communities
- Include food systems in the CEDS

https://www.nado.org/sowing-success/

SOWING SUCCESS:

The Role of Economic Development Districts in Strengthening Regional Food Systems

Scan me!


Connecting community assets to market dema
wealthworks
About
The Basics
Success Stories
What is WealthWorks
WealthWorks is a 21st-century approach to local and region
belongs in every community and economic development to
and connects a community's assets to meet market deman
last.
WealthWorks aims to advance a region's overall prosperity
and emerging sectors, and increase jobs and incomes for lo
at the same time. It can work for people, firms and places of
See the results

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NADO Wealth Creation Site

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.

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2026 NADO Annual Training Conference

Monday, October 19 – Thursday, October 22, 2026

Peppermill Resort Spa Casino
Reno, NV

EDD CoP

Economic Development District
Community of Practice

NADO Research Foundation

EDA
U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

More info at: www.nado.org/EDDCoP

The EDD CoP is made possible through an award from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce (ED22HDQ3070106). The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the participants, trainers, and authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Economic Development Administration or the U.S. Department of Commerce.

NADO Research Foundation

EDD CoP
Economic Development District
Community of Practice

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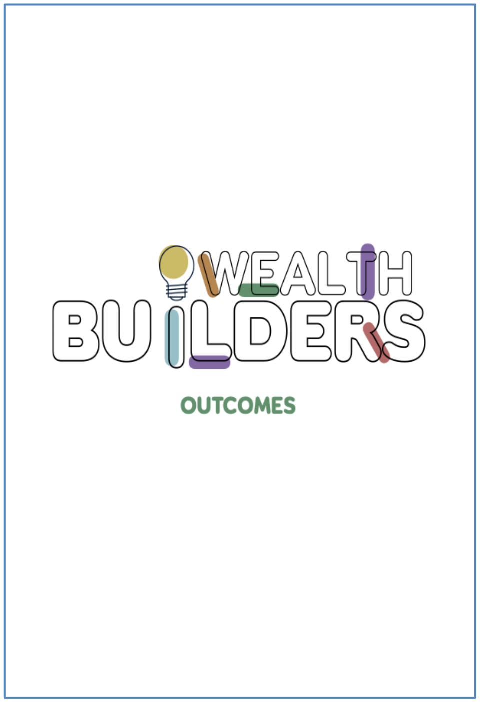
WEALTH BUILDERS

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?