



**MAIN STREET
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ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS: SUPPORTING SMALL FOR GREATER IMPACT

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Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities 2025,
Kingman, KS

TODAY'S PRESENTATION

- + What is an entrepreneurial ecosystem?
- + Why is it important to build or strengthen an entrepreneurial ecosystem?
- + Why is this hard to do right
- + What are the factors of a successful EE



Credit: Duncan_Andison, iStock

WHAT IS AN ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM?



- + An Entrepreneurial Ecosystem is a **support system for entrepreneurs.**
- + It is a way for all the different business and entrepreneur support organizations (BSOs and ESOs) to come together with a shared vision that is aligned and responds to the needs of the entrepreneurs and small business owners.
- + Allows you to identify needs, current stakeholders and resources, as well as gaps and duplicative efforts.

ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS ARE ALIVE!

- + They are based on human relationships
- + The stakeholders in the ecosystem are dynamic and changing
- + Who is part of an entrepreneurial ecosystem?



Credit: Parradee Kietsirikul, iStock

MUST BE HIGHLY CUSTOMIZABLE & FLEXIBLE

- + Every small business needs something different
- + We can't meet those needs if we go in with a solutions-first mindset
- + It is important to establish a “No Wrong Door Policy” for small business owners and entrepreneurs in your community



BUILT ON TRUST & RELATIONSHIPS



Credit: yusnizam, iStock

- + *“Ecosystem building moves at the speed of trust”*
- + Ecosystem building is organic
- + Ecosystem building is deeply collaborative
- + Recognizes that each stakeholder involved provides value to the entrepreneurial ecosystem

THE CONCEPT OF “ECOSYSTEM BUILDING”

- + Different organizations in your community are supporting entrepreneurs and small business owners in their own way, based on their mandate, expertise, and resources.
- + While some people in your community may not be aware of the concept of “*entrepreneurial ecosystem building*”, the reality is your community may already have one. It’s just being called something else, or it’s not named.

PLACE MATTERS FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP



80%

The infographic features a large, bold '80%' in white text. Below it, the text 'of small business owners live in the communities where their business is located' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. The background is a semi-transparent orange-red overlay on a photograph of a historic street with multi-story brick buildings and arched windows.

**of small business owners
live in the communities
where their business is
located**

Source: Main Street America Small Business Survey 2023

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ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM



A PLACE FOR ENTREPRENEURS

Spaces of Entry + Ways to Transition

- + Pop-ups, Farmer's Markets, Artisan Events, Makers, Craft Industries
- + Incubator and Accelerator Spaces: Small individual spaces, Food Trucks
- + Shared Spaces: Multiple vendors
- + Online to Brick-and-Mortar, Online + Brick-and-mortar
- + It is never a *"one size fits all"*

Batavia, IL
Boardwalk Shops



**CHILDREN'S
ENTREPRENEUR
market**

A farmers' market...
run entirely by KIDS!

Started 3 in Utah: 24 States
Children's Entrepreneur Market

Lovington, NM
Food Accelerator

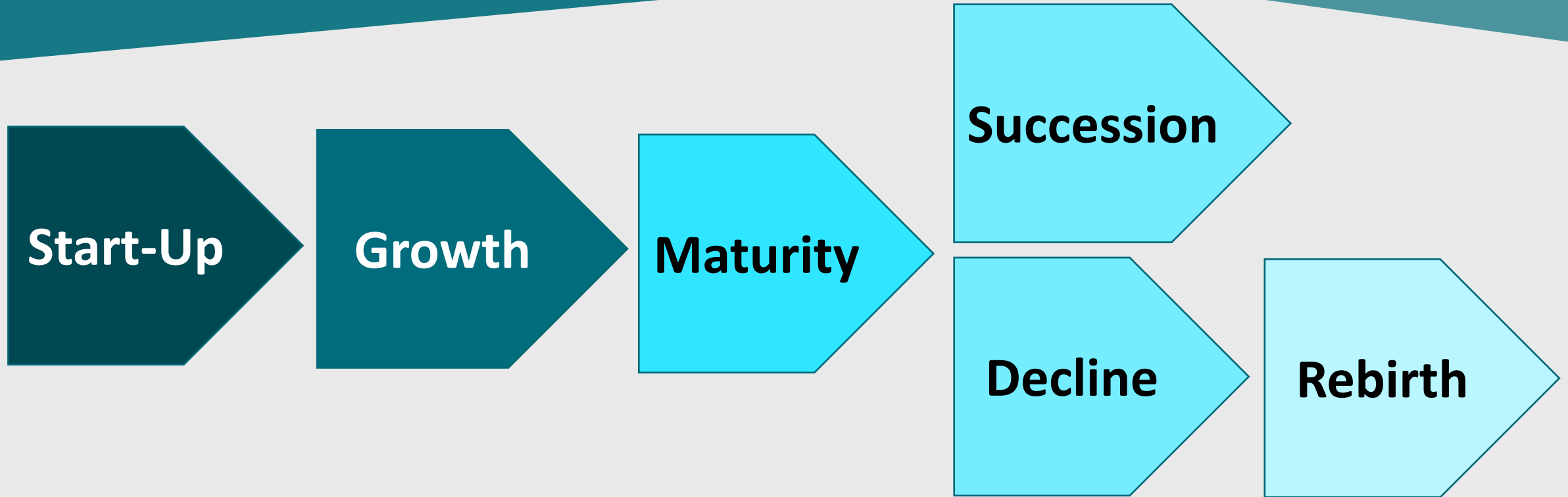
Kentucky



Green Township Aug 31
(11am-2pm) *booths sold
out*



SUPPORT BY STAGE OF BUSINESS LIFECYCLE



- Do we have resources in place to support entrepreneurs at all stages of their business life cycle?
- Is there a business life cycle stage that is under-served?

CULTIVATING ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR ALL AGES



Youth

Young Adults

Adults

TAKEAWAYS AND LESSONS LEARNED

- + Ecosystem building and sustaining is a long game
- + Identify and encourage ecosystem champions in your community to keep engagement and the conversations going
- + Establish a core team for planning and coordination
- + Find funding for sustainability: a mix of quick win projects and long-term support
 - Tap into local foundation and other philanthropy
- + Weave entrepreneurial ecosystems into your broader economic development strategy, “*not this or that, but instead **this AND that***”

A photograph of a historic main street with colorful buildings and parked cars, overlaid with a dark diagonal gradient.

Thank You!



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