

e2's Entrepreneurial Talent Typology

By Don Macke

There is no one entrepreneurial type. Entrepreneurial talent (eTalent) is diverse based on stage of development, growth expectations, sector and market alignment and the people behind these entrepreneurial ventures. Employing an entrepreneurial talent typology can help your community identify the kinds of eTalent you have and grow entrepreneurial ecosystems that optimize support.

Introduction

In the late 1990s and early 2000s e2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems (formerly known as the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship) was engaged in the **Rural Entrepreneurship Discovery State's Initiative** funded by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and the Rural Policy Research Institute. One of our discovery states was Maine. At that time Bob Ho was the executive director of the Maine Rural Development Council. Bob was a remarkable rural community economic developer. The Council was our partner organization in this work and Bob was our key leader. As part of this work Bob began to articulate our first entrepreneurial talent typology that has been refined over time and finetuned by Dr. Deborah Markley. This paper focuses on the latest entrepreneurial talent typology thinking and frameworks. There is no one right answer, and your community can employ this paper to select the right typology framework relative to your entrepreneurial initiative.

This paper is organized into the following sections:

- What are eTalent Typologies?
- Why are eTalent Typologies Important?
- Selected Typology Frameworks
- Conclusion

Entrepreneurs at different stages of development require different capital and services from community ecosystems. Employing an entrepreneurial talent typology can help your community optimized your entrepreneurial development.

Next let's explore what we mean by eTalent or entrepreneurial talent typologies.

Discovery State Initiative

Before there was a national Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, let alone e2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems, there was an initiative funded by the Kauffman Foundation and RUPRI. There were two parts to this initiative. First, we conducted a national search of those places in rural America employing entrepreneur-led development to learn from. Second, there were our Discovery States where we applied what we had learned through a national search to begin growing entrepreneur-led strategies and systems. Six states were part of this multi-year engagement including Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, West Virginia, Texas, and Colorado. This work was foundational in shaping our eTalent typologies over time.

A typology provides a comprehensive framework for better understanding something. With entrepreneur-led development an entrepreneurial talent typology provides a framework for understanding the kinds of entrepreneurs and their unique needs informing the resources your community should have in its ecosystem.

What are eTalent Typologies?

eTalent Defined

Within our Entrepreneurial Development Framework, we intentionally employ **entrepreneurial talent (eTalent)**. Compared to more traditional economic development like business attraction, entrepreneur-led development focuses as much on **human talent development** as on venture development. Our opportunity to grow stronger economics and communities is rooted in the idea that we can evolve entrepreneurial ecosystems to stimulate and support the development of available eTalent.

Typology is defined by Oxford Definitions as “...a classification according to a general type...” Another way to think about eTalent Typologies is in marketing terms or market segments. For example, Esri (www.esri.com) generates 65 household Tapestry groups to help companies explore market opportunities associated with the actual and likely spending habits and capabilities within each Tapestry group. Employing these concepts, we know eTalent Typologies are foundational to meeting the unique development needs and wants of special groups of eTalent. The entrepreneurial ecosystem needs and wants of a startup are very different from a high-growth entrepreneurial venture. We employ our basic e2 eTalent Typology and Pipeline to help a community map, target and smartly engage in outreach and networking to very relevant assistance. This approach results in optimized economic development outcomes and impacts.

Rural Focused Typologies

At e2 our primary field work and experience has been in rural America ranging from smaller metropolitan areas like Missoula that anchors a vast rural region in Western Montana to very rural communities along the coast of Maine and all places in between. Our eTalent Typologies are rural relevant. With that said, we do believe these typologies are more universal and can be employed in urban to very large metropolitan areas like New York or Los Angeles.

Now let's explore why eTalent typologies are so important in your entrepreneur-led development and ecosystem building.

As a general rule, entrepreneurs are skeptical as to whether our communities can help them in their development. This is particularly true for growth-oriented, technology-led and high growth entrepreneurs. Often we only get one, maybe two opportunities to bring assistance and value to an entrepreneur. Employing a solid eTalent typology can ensure your community's ecosystem provides the right resources enabling a productive relationship to develop.

Why are eTalent Typologies Important?

Our field experience is clear... generic or one-size-fits-all entrepreneurial assistance is less impactful than when we focus on specific kinds of eTalent where we can provide assistance better matched to these entrepreneurs' needs and wants. We can best illustrate the case of employing eTalent Typologies in your community's work with a story from Jackson County, Kentucky.

AirBNB Development in Jackson County, Kentucky

Jackson County is located in Appalachian Kentucky. This part of Kentucky, best known for coal production, is now a growing recreational tourism destination for the tens of millions of urbanites from East Coast cities. Jackson County has strong recreational trail development and assets. But it lacks lodging, which erodes the economic development impacts with increased numbers of trail users. Jackson County has evolved a very targeted mini-cluster entrepreneurial ecosystem focused on supporting AirBNBs in this very rural area. This ecosystem has grown the number of AirBNBs from a few to dozens within a year's time. For more information check out www.visitjacksoncountyky.org/lodging.

Bottom line, we recommend rural communities grow universal entrepreneurial ecosystems capable of meeting the wide range of eTalent needs and wants. Growing these ecosystems should be defined by learning about the needs and wants of your community's unique eTalent including micro-clusters like Jackson County's AirBNBs. This is the smart way to go optimizing the use of your community's available resources driving desired development outcomes and impacts sooner.

Lessons from Technical Assistance Provision

Often rural communities engaging in entrepreneur-led development offer business planning classes. Whether Fasttrac, NexLevel or some other class-based business planning technical assistance, these approaches work best with aspiring, startup and many main street type entrepreneurs. Classes are not a good fit for existing ventures seeking to grow. These entrepreneurs need higher order assistance and generally want one-on-one assistance. Providing the right resource, at the right time and at the right cost fitting the needs and wants of entrepreneurs based on their development stage is important.

Our next stop in our journey exploring eTalent typologies is a review of selected typology frameworks.

There are many entrepreneurial talent typologies being employed in America. At e2 and the national Center for Rural Entrepreneurship before it, we have employed an evolving eTalent typology for decades. What is foundational is taking the time to map the kinds of eTalent present in your community, and based on your outreach targeting, employ a typology that matches up with the eTalent you are trying to assist.

Selected Typology Frameworks

There are many eTalent Typologies in use throughout the United States and the world. In this paper we share our favorite top 10 typology frameworks and considerations:

1. Necessity and Opportunity Entrepreneurs
2. The Kinds of Community Ventures
3. e2 eTalent Pyramid
4. e2 eTalent Pipeline
5. Essential and Amenity Entrepreneurial Ventures (eVentures)
6. Basic and Secondary Entrepreneurial Ventures (eVentures)
7. SourceLink's Four Entrepreneurial Talent Segments
8. Entrepreneurial League Framework
9. YourEconomy
10. Micro-Clusters

Necessity and Opportunity Entrepreneurs

Jay Kayne, formerly with the Ewing Marion Kauffman, first shared with us the concept of **necessity** and **opportunity** entrepreneurs. We have found these concepts helpful and have employed them in our e2 **eTalent Pipeline** visual. For rural America, necessity and opportunity entrepreneurs are particularly important given the kinds of eTalent we typically have. This framework is also very important given our more volatile economy with two major economic crashes in just a decade: The Great Recession (2007-2009) and now The Pandemic Recession (2020 to ?). Economic crashes are driving necessity entrepreneurship and increasing the base of opportunity entrepreneurs. For more on economic crashes, please read our paper [Economic Crashes, Mini-Case Studies](#). The following provides quick definitions of necessity and opportunity entrepreneurs.

Necessity Entrepreneurs. A typical necessity entrepreneur is someone who has lost their wage and salary job and moves into self-employment as an economic survival strategy. As the old saying goes if you do not have a job hang out your shingle and become a consultant. For rural America and those who do not want to leave their hometowns, in the absence of sufficient wage and salary jobs, necessity entrepreneurship becomes a strategy. For these entrepreneurs, they may be engaged in multiple activities such as lawn care in the summer, providing firewood in the fall, snow removal in the winter and yard cleanup in the spring. For some driven into necessity entrepreneurship, they discover they are good at being an entrepreneur. They find a competitive niche area and evolve into an opportunity entrepreneur. This transformation from necessity to opportunity entrepreneur is very important in rural entrepreneur-led development.

Opportunity Entrepreneurs. Opportunity entrepreneurs are those who intentionally choose entrepreneurship as a career track. Often these entrepreneurs are engaged in main street or lifestyle ventures and sometimes are growth oriented. Opportunity entrepreneurs perceive a market need and work to fill that need. Check out our [story](#) about **Allo Communications** (www.allocommunications.com) for a great example of opportunity entrepreneurship.

The Kinds of Community Ventures

In entrepreneur-led development we tend to focus on for-profit business entrepreneurs. For rural America, we believe this narrow definition of our entrepreneurial talent is too narrow. Within our [e2 Entrepreneurial Development Framework](#) we identify three sources of entrepreneurial talent foundational to a community's socio-economic vitality and success:

- For-Profit Businesses
- Nonprofit Organizations
- Governmental Enterprises

For-Profit Businesses. Clearly, for-profit businesses are part of the eTalent pool. Whether a main street startup like [Utopia Spa](#) or a growing telecom company like Allo Communications, evolving entrepreneurial ecosystems to stimulate and support these for-profit businesses is foundational.

Nonprofit Organizations. America's nonprofit sector is among the fastest growing parts of the American economy. Nonprofits provide a wide range of goods and services including health care, social services, education, workforce development and tourist attractions. Nonprofits generate revenues and spending, create jobs, and contribute to overall economic base of every community. Checkout GuideStar's report [Nine Things You Might Not Know about U.S. Nonprofits](#).

Governmental Enterprises. There is this insane debate in America that government does not generate jobs or economic activity. Government – federal, state, local and special purpose – agencies are significant in the U.S. generating millions of jobs and generating billions of dollars in spending. A public hospital or K-12 school system are major enterprises in most rural communities. Often, they are the largest providers of jobs/careers and more importantly, living wage and benefited jobs in a wide range of career fields. For example, think about how a National Park drives economic development activity in the region where it is located. Would communities like Estes Park even exist if it were not for Rocky Mountain National Park?

The point we are making in this section of our paper is your community should consider including nonprofits and governmental enterprises as development targets within your eStrategy.

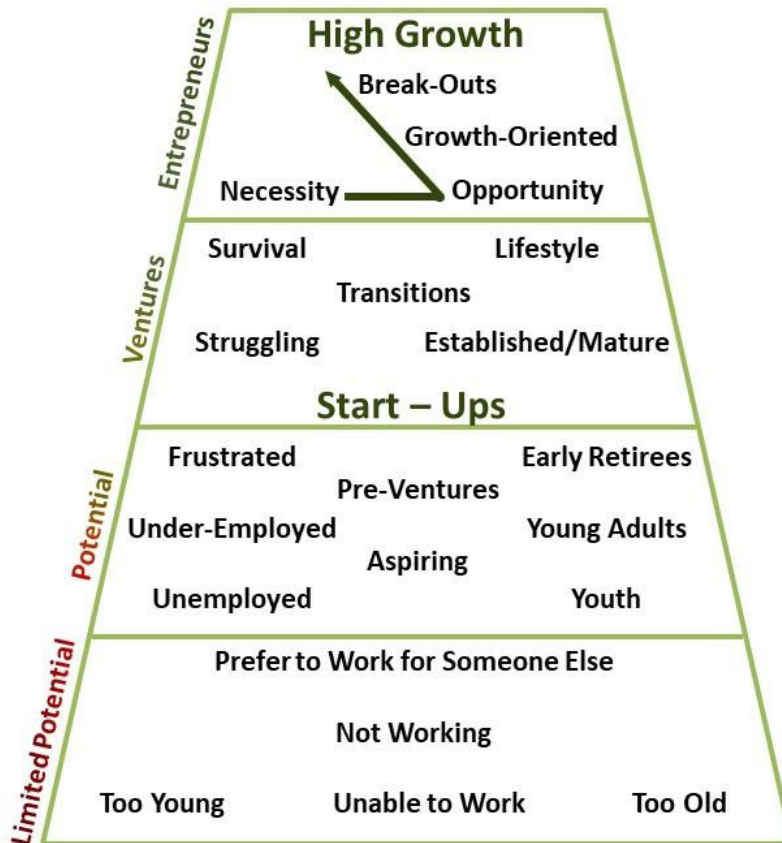
Entrepreneurial Venture Defined

In our e2 Development Framework we employ the term **venture** intentionally. In our use of venture, we are including for-profit businesses, nonprofits, and governmental enterprises. This is our inclusive term for all kinds of eTalent in rural communities.

e2 eTalent Pyramid

Inspired by Maine’s Bob Ho and refined by the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship’s Deborah Markley, the e2 eTalent Pyramid (Figure 1 on the next page) has been widely used for decades across North America. We have found this typology to be a quick and effective way to convey the varied kinds of eTalent in most communities. This pyramid is employed in our eTalent Assessment within our e2 Development Framework.

Figure 1 - e2's eTalent Pyramid



Source: e2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems – www.energizingentrepreneurs.org

Probably 90% of the residents of your rural community fall in the base of the pyramid with **limited** eTalent because they are too old, too young, not working, unable to work or really prefer working for someone else 9 to 5. The next cohort of eTalent are **potential** entrepreneurs who aspire for various reasons to engage in entrepreneurial ventures. SourceLink estimates that nationally there are 14.8 million Americans in this space thinking about starting a business. That represents 7.2% of all working age adult Americans. This is a huge eTalent opportunity set. Most never take that step into entrepreneurship. What we know from our field work is rural communities with robust entrepreneurial ecosystems (eEcosystems) generally have more of these **potential** entrepreneurs who actually move into entrepreneurship. Potential entrepreneurs, particularly those who are nascent or never engaged in this space, require a certain set of ecosystem supports not relevant to more established entrepreneurs.

Our next cohort level in the eTalent Pyramid are ventures. Possibly most are not engaged in active entrepreneurial behavior. They are spending nearly all their time running their venture and very little or no time and energy working on their venture. Entrepreneurship equates with **working on your venture**. There is a whole set of documented sub-cohorts within the Venture tier ranging from struggling necessity entrepreneurs to those who are more established and positioned for moving into the next tier or active entrepreneurship.

At the apex of e2 eTalent Pyramid are those actively engaged in entrepreneurial activities or are working on their ventures. Examples of entrepreneurial activities include:

- Exploring new markets and customers.
- Adding capacity with new key employees.
- Developing systems to increase efficiency and effectiveness enabling growth.
- This list goes on and on specific to eTalent segments.

Misko Sports – Ord, Nebraska

Ord is a community of just over 2,000 residents located in farming and ranching country in North Central Nebraska. Misko Sports began in the 1880s as a saddle and tack shop. Over time it evolved into a main street sporting goods store with a significant eCommerce business extending its customer reach to a multi-county and even multi-state region. When Misko's transitioned ownership in the 2010s, it was challenged with lots of dead inventory (e.g., inventory this is not being sold). It lacked point of sales technology and cash flow management systems. Ord's eEcosystem helped a younger couple acquire this business and provided local mentoring with respect to clearing out dead inventory and adopting modern systems contributing to this venture's success.

e2 eTalent Pipeline

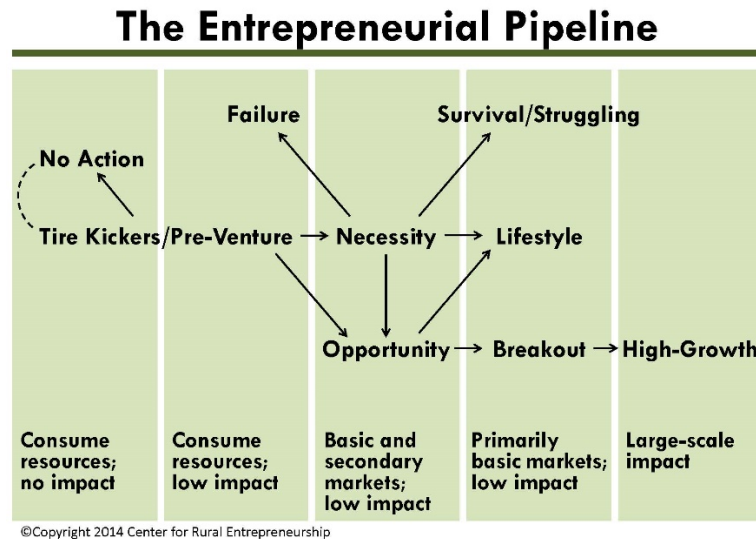
Tom Lyons and the Entrepreneurial League

Our friend, former board member and colleague is a leading entrepreneurship thought leader in the USA. He and his colleagues developed an entrepreneurial development system called the **Entrepreneurial League**. The Entrepreneurial League system uses baseball organization including a diversity of competitive youth baseball, through a series of minor league and semi-pro baseball to major league baseball or the **Show**. This baseball system curates and develops talent from T-Ball to those that fill major league stadiums during the summer. It creates a pipeline of expanded talent that ensures more higher level talent for this sporting activity. The same is true with entrepreneurial talent, if we start early with entrepreneurship-oriented youth and provide opportunities for development we can expand our eTalent pool empowering a range of positive development outcomes.

A second visualization we have developed at e2 is the **Entrepreneurial Pipeline**. We use this graphic in conjunction with our eTalent Pyramid. The whole point of the pipeline is to illustrate how a community can, through its eEcosystem, understand the flow of eTalent development starting with tire-kicker always exploring entrepreneurship but never moving to pre-venture, let alone startup phase. The

eEcosystem message is clear.... Increasing pre-venture, then startups drives opportunities to grow lifestyle or main street ventures and/or growth-oriented and even high growth ventures.

Figure 2 – The Entrepreneurial Pipeline



Essential and Amenity Entrepreneurial Ventures (eVentures)

For smaller rural communities we often employ a more simplified eTalent typology focusing on **essential** and **amenity** ventures. For smaller and more isolated rural communities, essential ventures are important and often include:

- Grocery Store
- Hardware and/or Lumberyard
- Medical Services like a community clinic with visiting medical practitioners
- Local Schools
- Trades... Plumber, Electrician, HVAC, etc.
- Café and/or Bar

The ability to access local health care, education for your children or buy a gallon of milk or gasoline is pretty foundational to people living in a rural community. But there are also desirable amenity eVentures, when available in the area, greatly enhance the quality-of-life offerings. Amenity ventures can include:

- Craft Brew Pub with associated food
- Flower and Gift Stores
- Haircut and/or Hairstyling Services
- Entertainment Venues Like Community Movie Theaters, Cultural Centers or Bars with Music
- Stores with Basic Clothing Items and Personal Care
- Indoor and Outdoor Exercise Options (e.g., trails, yoga studios)

Most essential and amenity ventures are focused on meeting area or local consumer needs and wants. However, some of these ventures have the potential for grow contributing to the base part of a community's economy. A progressive local plumbing business may perceive that there are other communities in the region needing such services. This plumbing business expands creating services in other communities with employees and shops located throughout the region. Another example comes from Appalachian Ohio where a local couple moved home and created a downtown coffee shop and eatery. Perceiving that other communities in the region wanted and could support such businesses, they created a form of franchise helping both new and existing entrepreneurs open these stores. Dutch Brothers Coffee (www.dutchbros.com) based out of rural Grants Pass, Oregon is an amazing case of a high-growth venture.

Lessons from ShopCo – Opportunity Driver Local Ventures

ShopCo (www.shopco.com) was at one time one of the fastest growing companies in rural America. It was opening stores in rural communities throughout the United States offering clothing, personal care and even optometry and pharmacy services (e.g., think mini-Walmart store). When ShopCo was acquired and ultimate contracted from rural markets many rural communities were left without these goods and services. When companies like ShopCo and Walmart enter rural markets and then leave, they often destroy locally owned competitors creating goods and services deserts. What we are observing is that remaining locally owned dry goods, optometry, and pharmacy services in one community are now expanding to create shops in communities that ShopCo vacated. These are forms of growth businesses that create rooted corporations. Check out our e2 paper on the importance of rooted corporations, [Rooted Corporations – Growing an Entrepreneurial Economy.](#)

Basic and Secondary Entrepreneurial Ventures

Economic development 101 training will talk about **basic** and **non-basic** or **secondary ventures**. These two kinds of ventures are foundational to thriving community and regional, even national economies.

Basic Ventures. Basic economic activities are located in a community producing goods and services that create employees and sell primarily to consumers outside of the community, region, or nation. In doing so these ventures bring outside income in a community contributing to its vitality and wealth.

Non-Basic or Secondary Ventures. Non-basic or secondary ventures are those essential and/or amenity ventures that are area based and sell primarily to area consumers capturing and recycling area spending. Both basic and secondary ventures are foundational to a community's economy. Often, secondary ventures, as illustrated in the previous section, can grow into basic ventures.

In today's rural economic development environment growing from within or what is often termed **Economic Gardening**, offers more development opportunities for rural communities to grow their base economy than was the case with attraction-focused development.

SourceLink's Four Entrepreneurial Talent Segments

Maria Meyers and Kate Pope Hodel in their book, *Beyond Collisions: How to Build Your Entrepreneurial Infrastructure* (2017, Wavesource LLC), identify five key types of entrepreneurial talent including:

1. Innovation-Led
2. Second Stage
3. Main Street
4. Microenterprise
5. Start-Ups

On page 35 of their book, Maria and Kate share national statistics on these groups shown in Figure 3:

Figure 3 – SourceLink’s eTalent Typology Profile

eTalent Group	Numbers	% of Total	Churn
Microenterprises	23,836,937	77%	High
Main Street	6,822,074	21%	Moderate
Innovation-Led	289,817	1%	Low
Second Stage	280,540	1%	Low
Total	31,229,368	100%	
Thinking About Starting a Business	14,806,479		
Big Business (more than 100 workers)	170,653		

The following are some short descriptions of each of these typology groups:

Innovation-Led. Innovation-led ventures, as defined by SourceLink relate to any venture that employs research to generate an innovative product or service. Generally, we associate innovation-led entrepreneurs with information technology, biotechnology, and other sophisticated technology-based ventures. Often, innovation-led ventures are also part of the **second stage** group.

Second Stage. Second stage growth entrepreneurial ventures are increasingly important in entrepreneur-led development. The Edward Lowe Foundation (www.edwardlowe.org) defines a second stage venture as firms with 10 to 99 employees and/or \$1 to \$50 million in revenues. Supporting second stage ventures with advanced market research is the focus of the growing Economic Gardening (www.economicgardening.org) movement.

Main Street. Main street is an important identity in the United States. Main street ventures are often those non-farm proprietorships (www.bea.gov) that have owner/operators with a few employees. The ventures include everything from local grocery stores to cafes. Main street business are rooted, and their owners and employees are often very engaged in their communities chambers of commerce, leadership roles and community philanthropy.

Microenterprise. There are a range of definitions employed around the world with respect to what is a microenterprise. But microenterprises do share some very common characteristics similar to startups. The concept has strong roots with the Grameen Bank created by Nobel Prize winner Muhammad Yunus in Bangladesh in 1983. Yunus has published a number of books on the

Grameen Bank and microenterprise development. These ventures according to the Association for Enterprise Opportunity (AEO – www.aeo.works) require less than \$35,000 in capitalization, have one or a few employees and are often **lifestyle** ventures.

Start-Ups. Oxford Languages defines **nascent** as “...just coming into existence to display signs of future potential...” Startup ventures are often referred to as nascent ventures. As the words imply these are new ventures beginning their entrepreneurial journey. Most often they are small with respect to both capitalization and employees. Typically, there is a sole entrepreneur, couple or small team driving the venture’s startup.

Churn Defined

In entrepreneurial development the concept of **churn** is important. Churn relates to net changes in ventures and/or associated employees or gross increases in ventures less closed ventures. There is a very high churn rate among startup ventures and microenterprises. Main Street ventures have lower churn primarily associated with the inability to transition ventures from current owner/operators to new ownership. Churn rates are not well established with the exception of the work of YourEconomy www.youreconomy.org. More on YourEconomy later in this paper.

Entrepreneurial League Framework

Years ago, Tom Lyons and others created the [Entrepreneurial League System](#). This framework employs a baseball league architecture as its eTalent Typology. American baseball is organized into seven inter-related leagues that provide talent ultimately for higher-level performing leagues and ultimately the “Majors.” Minor Leagues or feeder clubs range from AAA (closest to the majors) to Rookie Leagues. Lyons organizes entrepreneurial talent using this league architecture, where high-growth entrepreneurs would correspond to the Majors and nascent startups with the Rookie Leagues. For each league of eTalent there are customized micro-entrepreneurial ecosystems with resources to match where these entrepreneurs are in their development journey. One of the neat aspects of the Entrepreneurial League typology is both the search for entrepreneurial talent (e.g., in baseball there are scouts constantly looking for new talent beginning with youth baseball) and the development of that talent through the Minor League system.

YourEconomy

YourEconomy was created by the Edward Lowe Foundation (www.edwardlowe.org) and is now operated by the University of Wisconsin at Madison. It is one of the most robust databases publicly available in the United States. YourEconomy provides detailed and longitudinal data that can be valuable in entrepreneur-led development. YourEconomy’s typology includes for-profit businesses, nonprofits and governmental agencies and enterprises.

It employs its own typology that can be used in combination with other typologies to match actual trend and performance data (including ventures, employees, and sales) for a community.

Elements of the YourEconomy typology include four lenses:

- **Lens 1 – Type of Traded Ventures:**
 - Locally Traded (e.g., non-basic or secondary venture activity)
 - Externally Traded (e.g., basic economic activity)
 - Non-Traded (e.g., health care for example)

- **Lens 2 – Employment Size:**
 - Self-Employment
 - Stage 1 with 2-9 employees
 - Stage 2 with 10 to 99 employees
 - Stage 3 with 100 to 499 employees
 - Stage 4 with 500 or more employees

- **Lens 3 – Venture Dynamics Categories:**
 - Job Creation:
 - New Starts
 - Spin-Offs
 - Move-Ins
 - Expansions
 - Job Destruction Categories:
 - Closes
 - Move-Outs
 - Contractions

- **Lens 4 – Ownership:**
 - Locally Owned
 - Externally Owned

All of the lenses can be used to create data crosscuts providing very sophisticated profiling. While YourEconomy provides a public and free website to access certain data, it also undertakes contractual work to perform more complicated and customized analysis.

Figure 4 provides an application of how the YourEconomy data can profile entrepreneurial talent in a community.



Figure 4 – A YourEconomy Application

→ Startup to Mature Ventures →				
S E C O N D A R Y V E N T U R E S	<p>Stage 1 Ventures Under 10 Employees Local Market Focused Lots of Them Growth-Oriented Potential</p>	<p>Stage 2 Strategies Customized Assistance ECoaching Mentors & Peer Groups Growth Capital</p>	<p>Jobs & Careers <i>Larger employers tend to provide more full-time, higher paying and with benefits employment.</i></p>	B A S I C V E N T U R E S
	<p>Stage 1 Strategies Classes Gap Financing Commercial Lending Mentoring Team Building</p>	<p>Stage 2 Ventures 10 to 99 Employees Prime Development Area Local Market Focused Considering External Markets Growth-Oriented & Growth Es</p>	<p><i>Larger Employer Retention and Expansion Strategies are optimal eStrategies for Stage 3 and Stage 4 ventures.</i></p>	
	<p><i>Stage 1 ventures provide both essential and amenity goods and services locally. Venture transition is critically important with this group.</i></p>	<p>Growth <i>Growth-oriented and growth ventures move from local markets to external markets building the base part of the economy.</i></p>	<p>Stage 3 Ventures Regionally Owned to Externally Owned Local and External Markets 100-499 Employees</p>	
<p>Stage 4 Ventures National and Internal Corporations, Some Nonprofits and Governmental Agencies 500+ Employees Big Business by U.S. Small Business Administration Definition External Markets – Part of the Base Economy</p>				

Micro-Clusters

Michael Porter is the leading American thought leader on cluster-related economic development. For more information on traditional economic cluster development check out the following resource... <https://icma.org/articles/cluster-based-economic-development-strategies>. For rural America, traditional cluster theory remains very important relative to mainstream economic sectors like agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, and transportation. At a more local level the concept of micro-clusters is an important eTalent typology consideration. The best way to define micro-clusters is through illustration:

Red Cloud’s Heritage Tourism. Red Cloud is a community of just over 1,000 residents. Its primary industry is production agriculture. But Red Cloud is also the home of Willa Cather, an American writer. Even though her works are now over a century old, Cather continues to enjoy both U.S. and International following. Many of her books and writings are located in Catherland or sites in and around Red Cloud. Catherland is a destination for thousands of visitors each year who want to

experience these sites. The community of Red Cloud and the Willa Cather Foundation (www.willacather.org) are committed to not only promoting and preserving Cather and these settings for her books but creating genuine destination tourism economic activity. They are growing an increasingly sophisticated micro-cluster including attractions, services, lodging, food and drink and other allied services supporting this micro-cluster. For example, within the historic Moon Block where the Cather Center and opera house are located, there is an upscale wine bar.

Local Food Systems. Local foods systems or what are often called **farm-to-table** food systems are increasingly important in America. Local foods are attracting an increasingly larger diversity of consumers including eating establishments, grocery stores, institutions (from health care to education) and of course households. Local foods systems are a form of entrepreneurial ecosystem development employing a micro-cluster approach.

Main Streets. Before there were shopping malls there were one-stop main streets. Strip malls, shopping malls, eCommerce sites and box stores have undermined the original purpose of too many rural community downtowns or main streets. But these commercial districts continue to be asset rich in many communities with historic structures, embedded infrastructure, and community identity.

WealthWorks and Value Chains

WealthWorks (www.wealthworks.org) is an intentional economic development strategy primarily employed with distressed communities, both urban and rural. The concept is simple in identifying community needs that can be provided by local mini clusters empowering local entrepreneurs to improve their economic status and even reach larger regional and national markets through collaborative production and distribution strategies.

Conclusion

Our **eTalent Typology** paper is a technical document for those practitioners looking for different typologies or wanting to customize their own employing the design features of the typologies we have shared in this paper. For most we recommend that you employ the basic e2 typology in conjunction with our e2 [Assessments to Strategy Guide](#). It is our hope that this paper brings value to your work and that your community will actively consider employing an eTalent typology to grow a more relevant and impactful entrepreneurial ecosystem to optimize the eTalent present in your community or region.

Questions and Additional Information

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