ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM STRATEGY

2022 - 2031
GREATER FORT WAYNE
After conversations with the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne and its Everyone’s Economy Pillar Committee, we began to develop a roadmap for an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Strategy. We launched a survey to collect demographic information about entrepreneurs and to better understand their perceived access to resources to start and support their businesses. Interviews and focus groups followed, providing a deep awareness of what local entrepreneurs need to thrive.

A strong understanding of the entrepreneurial community is key to our success as an organization here at Start Fort Wayne, our commitment to the community’s growth, and the attraction and retention of top talent.

This natural interest was reinforced by the impact of a global pandemic and a new societal interest in equality and inclusion. We needed to know how local entrepreneurs were faring, and if entrepreneurship was truly accessible to everyone.

At the end of the day, this is no time to shy away from these tough conversations. To continue our current growth, we need to act now, fearlessly. Our hope is that this strategy will elevate the importance of entrepreneurship in economic development conversations, and provide actionable solutions to grow our entrepreneurial ecosystem in Greater Fort Wayne.

— Dan Swartz, Executive Director, Start Fort Wayne
"The best way to predict the future is to create it."

— Peter Drucker
Start Fort Wayne is a nonprofit organization that helps entrepreneurs turn ideas into growth-oriented businesses with the vision of a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem in Northeast Indiana that attracts and retains innovators and investors. The organization was founded in March 2015 as a rag-tag band of entrepreneurs and educators dedicated to building a lasting community and culture of entrepreneurship and innovation in Greater Fort Wayne. The Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Strategy takes us back to our roots and asks us to consider what entrepreneurs today need to thrive. Learn more at www.startfortwayne.com.

“
A healthy entrepreneurial ecosystem is so vital to the success of young founders and new ventures. I look forward to seeing the new opportunity this brings to the entire community.”
— Sherry Early-Aden, Executive Director, Incremental Development Alliance

“
We are so optimistic to see our community’s leaders focus on the value and need of a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem. It is the future of our workforce, our wealth, and the brand of our community.”
— Dan Swartz, Executive Director, Start Fort Wayne

CFGFW: Everyone’s Economy Pillar Committee

The Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne (CFGFW) embarked on constructing a strategic vision plan in 2019. The Community Foundation’s vision includes six pillars which will focus its efforts to affect positive momentum in our community, including: Connected Community, Inspiring Places, Everyone’s Economy, Lifelong Learning, Healthy Mind and Body, and Organizational Excellence.

Unfortunately, the completion of the strategic vision plan and its pillars coincided with the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Determined to push forward, CFGFW established its “Everyone’s Economy Pillar” committee in late 2020, with the goal of creating “an economy where every citizen has the opportunity for upward mobility and increased security”.

It was determined that creating a healthy entrepreneurial ecosystem was this committee’s first priority.

Committee members include:
- Brad Little, President & CEO, Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne
- Sherry Early-Aden, Executive Director, Incremental Development Alliance
- Jim Cook, Market Executive, Chase Bank
- Kristin Marcuccilli, EVP Chief Operating Officer, STAR Financial Bank
- Nick Arnett, Principal, 1517 Fund
- Dan Swartz, Executive Director, Start Fort Wayne
The Community Foundation is excited and proud to support the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Strategy for Allen County. We are also pleased to announce that this study will be partially funded by the Don Wood Foundation. Entrepreneurialism was important to Don Wood and is one of the strategic focus areas of his Foundation. It is also a key element in our own Vision Plan and we appreciate the opportunity to partner on this initiative. The findings from this survey will be important in determining the areas we can improve for supporting entrepreneurs in our community.”

– Brad Little, President & CEO, Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne

We would like to thank our project funders, the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne and the Don Wood Foundation. Their unique vision, collaboration, and championship of entrepreneurship is remarkable.

The Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne has been a public charitable foundation serving Allen County since 1922. The Community Foundation had assets of approximately $183 million at December 31, 2020 and awarded more than $7.9 million in charitable grants and scholarships in that year. The Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne does three things: help people make their charitable giving more impactful, connect funding to nonprofits through effective grantmaking, and provide leadership to address community needs to improve quality of life. Every day they connect people and resources to build a more vibrant community. More information can be found at www.cfgfw.org.

The Don Wood Foundation is an extraordinary gift to the educational community in our region. This foundation was created by Don Wood as a means to generate opportunities for individuals and institutions to support training and education in the areas of industrial technology, machine tool technology, engineering technology, sales, and entrepreneurship leadership. The Don Wood Foundation embraces working relationships with all regional educational institutions that offer programs in the above-mentioned fields of study. Learn more at www.donwoodfoundation.org.

Additional thanks to: Fort Wayne’s Entrepreneurial Support Organizations (ESOs), Jason Swing, Jennifer Hunter/Gensyn Design, Adam Parrot/Excell Color Graphics, and the entrepreneurs and community members that participated in our survey, focus groups, and strategy development sessions.
Where are we now?

The Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Strategy has been informed by our survey results (622 entrepreneurs, representing 705 specific businesses) as well as over 500 conversations with our entrepreneurial community. These included one-on-one interviews, small groups, and larger virtual and in-person focus groups. Our goal was to center on entrepreneurs, entrepreneur support organizations (ESOs), economic development and support professionals, and engaged institutions.

The results of our survey corroborate the extreme value of entrepreneurship in the growth of our community. Our entrepreneurs are more educated, have higher income, and are likely not native to northeast Indiana. This confirms that investments made into the entrepreneurial ecosystem result in a “multiple birds, one stone” approach to accomplish our regional Vision 2030 goals of increased per capita income, increased population (attracting talent), and increased degree attainment.
This is the first in-depth study of the Greater Fort Wayne entrepreneurial ecosystem, with a focus on Allen County, its cities, towns, and unincorporated areas within. The importance of this work cannot be understated in appreciating local wealth production.

By focusing on the construction of an inclusive and healthy Greater Fort Wayne entrepreneurial ecosystem, we can better support the development and growth of ventures which will produce wealth, jobs, and carry our community into the future.

However, one aspect is clear: Entrepreneurs are not getting the resources or support that they need. We must turn our full attention, and intention, toward the development of strong entrepreneurial supports, as well as strong entrepreneurs and ventures, if we hope to turn the needle, and truly compete and outperform at a global level.

51% of entrepreneurs surveyed are either unaware, or lack the appropriate financial capital to sustain and grow their ventures.

85.7% of entrepreneurs surveyed are either unaware of, or do not find value in our current ESO community.
“Fort Wayne has a rich history of innovation and entrepreneurship, but it’s time to take both to the next level. We have most of the components an entrepreneurial ecosystem requires, and now is the time for all to work together in a strategic, collaborative, and coordinated manner. We must do everything we can to embrace our entrepreneur community and make available all of the resources needed to thrive.”

— Jim Cook, Market Executive/Executive Director, JPMorgan Chase
Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Strategy Defined

To many, the term “entrepreneurial ecosystem” may be foreign. While the structure and reality of entrepreneurial ecosystems has existed since the first cities, multiple millennia ago, the concerted effort to understand them is only a few decades old.

Coined by James Moore in his now famous Harvard Business Review article of 1993, he emphasized “businesses don’t evolve in a ‘vacuum’ and noted the relationally embedded nature of how firms interact with suppliers, customers and financiers”. From there, the concept of entrepreneurial ecosystems has been further defined and grown into a cottage industry and in-depth field of study.

One expert within this field is Daniel Isenberg, founding executive director of the Babson Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Platform, Associate at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and Adjunct Professor at Columbia Business School. Isenberg’s work is particularly interesting and applicable to our community as it recursively translates entrepreneurial activity and traditional economic development effortlessly.

Isenberg’s work centers around the primary concept that a healthy entrepreneurial ecosystem can be described as the complex interplay between six core areas. These areas are: Policy, Finance, Culture, Supports, Human Capital, and Markets.

The extension of Isenberg’s model can be seen as the backbone of our Asset Map (pages 12-13), which we have composed diligently in an online version to include all of our ecosystem’s organizations, individuals, and key components.

Exploring the “Policy” area of Isenberg’s model further, one finds “Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Strategy” within the Leadership category. Upon early reflection, the CFGFW Everyone’s Economy committee was clear that our community’s lack of a coherent strategy was a significant reason for our lagging entrepreneurial impact.

The Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Strategy (EES) is composed of an asset map, primary qualitative and quantitative data sets (survey and focus groups), and an ecosystem plan; a matrix of recommendations to implement over the next decade (2022 - 2031).

The EES plan is broken into 3, 7, and 10 year strategies, tactics, and key metrics to provide consistent guidance, while also designed to keep in mind the iterative and ever-evolving nature of an active and vibrant ecosystem.

Start Fort Wayne is confident that the EES will provide our local entrepreneurial and economic development communities the necessary tools to be competitive in a global struggle for global talent to achieve and maintain an upper hand, culturally and economically.

The EES is designed to be an open-source and engaging aid for a large variety of actors within our community beyond the most highly visible entrepreneurs and policy leaders. We hope that the EES will be incorporated in the conversations and future plans of neighborhoods, public institutions, PTAs, grassroots nonprofits, etc.

The EES was not designed for white gloves. We will all need to get our hands dirty as we build a healthy entrepreneurial ecosystem from the bottom up.
As the Greater Fort Wayne ecosystem develops, we need a bold, audacious vision to propel and inspire our entrepreneurial talent to build globally competitive ventures. To this end, we see the entrepreneurial community of 2030 and beyond as one rich in diverse talent, producing intellectual property at a rate competitive with communities far larger, and being the chosen and native home to dozens of successful Fortune 500 and Inc 5000 businesses. Because of these successes, the culture of our community will change to be more open, less risk averse, and one craving new ideas, new flavors, and new experiences.

This success and quick growth will undoubtedly attract the attention of others. We see the leaders of other communities, large and small, visiting regularly to understand how we have achieved this growth, and what best practices can be adopted. Additionally, we see a much more open and attractive narrative about our community drawing the regular attention of regional, national, and international media — the culmination will make our community an entrepreneurial destination.

By casting our vision wide and far, we will naturally build and attract the talent necessary to create it. These assets will be vital to the sustainability of a growing and vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem.
As part of the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Strategy, we have constructed a comprehensive ecosystem asset map. This asset map defines our current individual and organizational entities in six key areas: policy, finance, culture, supports, human capital, and markets.

These areas can be further explored and defined. For instance, Isenberg’s model describes “Supports” as being composed of Infrastructure, Support Professionals, and Non-Governmental Institutions. These can again be further defined. Like any biological ecosystem, entrepreneurial spaces quickly become complex relationships between multiple entities, each of which performs a variety of functions.

In addition, the asset map highlights what assets our community is missing and the strength of each asset.

To find an interactive version of the asset map, see the QR code below.
In addition to the map shown here, which is true to Isenberg’s universal model, we’ve also included a few additional components native to our unique ecosystem. These include:

- The Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC)
- The Indiana Innovation and Technology Association (IITA)
- The Indiana Venture Club
- Elevate Ventures

These unique statewide entities broadly define Indiana’s capacity for entrepreneurial support in specific ways. While all of these entities are capable of impacting our ecosystem, and do regularly, they primarily exist outside of our influence and are thus not the primary characters of our entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Detailed asset map available at startfortwayne.com/ees
STRATEGY

- Establish networks for ESOs and entrepreneurs to be more civically engaged.
- Amend Region 3A’s CEDS document in regards to regional entrepreneurship and develop an EDD for Allen, Adams, Wells, and Dekalb counties.
- Establish a Fort Wayne brand of innovation, ingenuity, and a celebration of new ideas at cultural and institutional levels, lead by public executive and fiscal bodies.
- Develop a globally competitive brand, making the Greater Fort Wayne area known for its support of entrepreneurship, its innovative ventures, and strong established brands.
- Celebrate our community and its leadership globally, for being a hub for innovation: World Economic Forum (WEF), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship within the Economic Development Administration (EDA), Ford Foundation, Kauffman Foundation, Knight Foundation, United Nations, etc.

TACTICS

- Support the merger of local ESOs: consolidating resources, making entrepreneurial support clearer for end users, funders, and policymakers.
- Establish inter-governmental support for the entrepreneurial ecosystem, particularly engaging Allen County, the City of Fort Wayne, and other municipalities.
- Advocate for pro-entrepreneurial policy at the local, regional, state, and federal level through an annual legislative agenda.
- Organize local assets into a coherent and intelligible entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Celebrate our community and its leadership globally, for being a hub for innovation: World Economic Forum (WEF), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship within the Economic Development Administration (EDA), Ford Foundation, Kauffman Foundation, Knight Foundation, United Nations, etc.

METRICS

- $5M+ leveraged public dollars entering our entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- 500+ entrepreneurs included in ecosystem CRM (eCRM)
- $10M+ leveraged public dollars entering our entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- 1000+ entrepreneurs included in eCRM.
- $25M+ leveraged public dollars entering our entrepreneurial ecosystem, specifically from global funding sources.
- 5000+ entrepreneurs included in eCRM.
- 100+ mentions in global press.
OECD and GFLEC financial literacy benchmarks

Targeting $250M+ in total financial capital access (including $10M+ CDFI/CDVC Fund)

TACTICS

Establish financial literacy benchmarks in an eCRM for all entrepreneurs and ESOs

Establish $5M+ CDFI/CDVC Fund as part of Fort Wayne’s strategy with CDFI Friendly America

Develop a regular presentation of scalable ventures throughout the ecosystem in search of funding

METRICS

OECD and GFLEC financial literacy benchmarks

Targeting $250M+ in total financial capital access (including $10M+ CDFI/CDVC Fund)

TARGETING $250M+ IN TOTAL FINANCIAL CAPITAL ACCESS (INCLUDING $10M+ CDFI/CDVC FUND)

Establish robust financial capital streams; both native products, and extra-regional funds

Fully fund a $25M+ Community Venture Fund, grow CDFI/CDVC fund to $25M

Establish relationships with local, state, and national private equity funds, with assessed deal flow needs and points of entry into our ecosystem

TARGETING $1B+ IN TOTAL FINANCIAL CAPITAL ACCESS

Nurture the construction of multiple private equity pools native to our ecosystem with regular deal flow of $1B+ in total fund size (from local founders, SFOs, and public and private institutions)

TARGETING $1B+ IN TOTAL FINANCIAL CAPITAL ACCESS

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TARGETING $250M+ IN TOTAL FINANCIAL CAPITAL ACCESS (INCLUDING $10M+ CDFI/CDVC FUND)
**STRATEGY**

Promote “Failing Forward” with common language and responses; make opportunity accessible, coupled with merit-based access to resources

Challenge the status quo with a rejection of risk averse attitudes and a celebration of innovative thought

Be recognized as an ecosystem that nurtures new ideas, provides opportunity to all, and is capable of sourcing talent and capital to grow globally competitive ventures

**TACTICS**

Re-establish “Startup Week Fort Wayne” to celebrate entrepreneurship in our community in a collaborative, ecosystem-wide, inclusive way

Establish consistent MOUs with all ESOs in the ecosystem, particularly in reference to coaching, access to capital, and public relations

Secure earned media by major national and international media sources validating a globally competitive brand

Promote and implement industry agnostic intrapreneurial programming designed for public institutions and private companies

Establish an equitable validation process within eCRM

Extend “the Fort Wayne experience” of entrepreneurship (culture, curriculum, brand) outside of the region and into global markets

Infuse entrepreneurialism into the entire community, as a core aspect of NE IN’s lived experience

Promote “Failing Forward” with common language and responses; make opportunity accessible, coupled with merit-based access to resources

Skillful programmatic events

Re-establish “Startup Week Fort Wayne” to celebrate entrepreneurship in our community in a collaborative, ecosystem-wide, inclusive way

Establish consistent MOUs with all ESOs in the ecosystem, particularly in reference to coaching, access to capital, and public relations

Secure earned media by major national and international media sources validating a globally competitive brand

**METRICS**

1000+ local press mentions for entrepreneurs

3000+ of ESO providers and referrals to them in eCRM

100+ global press mentions for local ventures and the Greater Fort Wayne entrepreneurial ecosystem

52+ intrapreneurial programmatic events

1000+ entrepreneurs connected to eCRM

Be included in the top 15 of Midwest Startups ranking of midwest entrepreneurial ecosystems (currently #29)

2000+ attendees of events

$100M+ garnered by entrepreneurs after using eCRM
**STRATEGY**

- Build a lead organization to steward and organize the Greater Fort Wayne entrepreneurial ecosystem

**TACTICS**

- Develop an ecosystem-wide Customer Relationship Manager for Entrepreneurs (eCRM)
- Build capacity and merge multiple ESOs together to make a more efficient and capable support network
- Establish MOUs with all remaining ESOs that contain clear deliverables

**METRICS**

- 500+ entrepreneurs included in eCRM
- 1000+ referrals between entrepreneurs and ESOs

- Increased MBEs tracked via eCRM and IEDC PTAC program
- 1000+ entrepreneurs included in eCRM
- 3000+ referrals between entrepreneurs and ESOs

**3 YEAR**

- Develop relationships with national and international private equity (PE, VC, etc.)

**7 YEAR**

- Fully deploy a $25M+ pre-seed/seed fund on local/regional ventures
- 100+ private equity pitches by local entrepreneurs
- 20+ completed investments made with local ventures by extra-regional funders (pre-seed, seed, series+)

**10 YEAR**

- Establish a globally competitive brand for building ventures in Northeast Indiana
- Identification of 60-80 investable local ventures ($50K-$200K investments)

- Year 1 Priority
**STRATEGY**

Build a world class talent pool in Northeast Indiana, from technical skill to entrepreneurial will

**TACTICS**

- Identify immediate and emerging growth job areas with specificity and growth capacity
- Develop campaigns to target potential entrepreneurial populations, and an ecosystem-wide eCRM to identify, track, and develop entrepreneurial talent
- Develop unique assets, and establish consistent engagement throughout the education spectrum and make entrepreneurialism a core aspect of NE IN’s talent pipeline
- Develop remote work study and pilot incentive programs
- Partner with Labor Unions, Education, and Workforce Development to cross channel talent into skilled labor positions
- Develop and implement entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial programming throughout public and private institutions
- Build an ecosystem that produces the most Fortune 500, and Inc 5000 companies in the state of Indiana
- Fully activate a VC fund to grow and scale local ventures

**METRICS**

- Grow our talent pool by 0.25% (550+)
- Grow our entrepreneurial talent by 0.75% (250+)
- Grow our talent pool by 1.5% (3300+)
- Grow our entrepreneurial talent by 1.5% (500+)
- Grow our talent pool by 3% (6600+)
- Grow our entrepreneurial talent by 3% (1000+)
Establish a strong network of founders, serial entrepreneurs, and early adopters at home and abroad

**TACTICS**

Develop NE IN’s diaspora network of entrepreneurs and top talent in an eCRM

Develop a regional network of serial entrepreneurs in an eCRM

Develop a regional network of first users (people, institutions) in an eCRM

Utilize the eCRM to coordinate with IEDC and NEIRP to support more international business connections in our entrepreneurial ecosystem

Coordinate with national/international firms with a local presence (HQ or branch), to establish stronger relationships abroad

Validate this through recognition by international accreditation and celebration

**METRICS**

500+ entrepreneurs and top talent in eCRM database

100+ serial entrepreneurs in eCRM database

500+ first users in eCRM database

100+ net new local ventures with established international clients

250+ net new local ventures with established international clients

1,000+ international press mentions for local ventures

$5M+ international funding for local cultural and business programming (not including direct business investment from international firms)
These Are Some Of Our Favorite Things People

It is important to remember that all of this work is, ultimately, centered around the individuals and teams of entrepreneurs that allow our ecosystem to exist.

Developing a culture of exploration, curiosity, and risk is vital for our current and future entrepreneurs to thrive, become rooted here, and reinvest into our community. It is equally important to make sure that our ecosystem is an open space for all forms of entrepreneurs — both the demographics of the individuals, as well as the categories of the businesses being created.

Like many things, the best way to inspire people to take the leap into entrepreneurship is to show them what it looks like, what the rewards are, and that they will not be alone.

With all of this being said, we would like to introduce you to a handful of members of our Greater Fort Wayne entrepreneurial ecosystem...

Julie Wall, The HEDGE

Julie Wall is an independent artist and owner of The HEDGE, a print studio based in downtown Fort Wayne. With a background in printmaking and metals, she assembles pieces while layering imagery and texture. She is continually inspired by our environment, insects, women, and pattern.

“As a (very) small business owner, a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem would mean that there are continually more opportunities for growth. When the rest of the city’s small businesses are prospering, it creates a feeling of community. And it allows us to refer goods and services to one another with confidence, knowing that we are all in this together.”
Justin Sheehan, Crown Jewel Marketing
crownjewelmarketing.com

Crown Jewel Marketing was created by Justin Sheehan in 2011 while still in high school. This led Sheehan to a non-traditional path, not pursuing a college degree. Sheehan has been an active and engaged member of our community ever since. After bootstrapping Crown Jewel Marketing from day one, Sheehan has gained an intuitive and intimate understanding of the needs of entrepreneurs and other innovative ventures.

“At the time when I started, there was no ecosystem, and the funny thing is that it didn’t matter. I was just gonna do it. I didn’t think about an ecosystem. We committed to doing it. I don’t even know what the definition of an ecosystem is, but I would hope it would be something not so rigid or corporate because entrepreneurs really don’t care about that structure.”

Esther Andrews, Esther Andrews Bridal
estherandrews.com

Esther Andrews is the founder and designer of Esther Andrews Bridal, a sustainable clothing brand that makes warm accessories for winter brides. With over six years experience working in NYC’s fashion industry, Andrews has developed knitwear for various luxury design labels including Diane Von Furstenberg, Victor Glemaud, and Morgan Lane. Andrews’ goal is to grow so all of her knitwear production is done in-house in Fort Wayne.

As a new founder, Andrews has been surprised by how supportive and welcoming the Fort Wayne entrepreneurial community has been. “This was a huge gift since everything is new and overwhelming, especially during that first year.”
Weston Cutter, Haven Watches

Haven Watches builds supremely well-made watches that can take whatever you are up for: century rides, date nights, playing in the rain, and skating with friends. Their watches are unfussily excellent, beautiful without needing to be protected. Haven assembles, adjusts, and repairs their watches right here, and they believe the midwest is the best place in the world.

Weston is a full-time English professor and part poet that is also a full-time watch making entrepreneur. In his words, “Like everyone involved with Haven, I’m a misfit, finding myself far afield of anything I imagined.”

Councilwoman Sharon Tucker

Project Action Southeast (P.A.S.E.) is the newest tool in the Greater Fort Wayne entrepreneurial ecosystem. Its focus on a historically under-invested quadrant of the City of Fort Wayne is an example of how entrepreneurship is a community development tool as well. Our community is excited to see this project take place.

“Entrepreneurship is so important to build wealth and sustainability in a community. P.A.S.E. is focused on providing a foundation on which an entrepreneur can grow and thrive by providing access and opportunity — two things that are necessary for success. Southeast Fort Wayne is ripe for entrepreneurial investment and in ensuring access to support services, we can guide success and an ongoing community commitment to Southeast Fort Wayne.”
Thao Le is an owner and founder of Banh Mi Pho Shop, located on Fairfield Ave., and is a part of the Banh Mi Group. With an expanded menu including pho, ramen, fried rice, banh mi sandwiches, and occasional off-menu specials such as parasite noodles and drunken noodles. Additionally, they offer a full bar and outside seating on their beautiful patio. Visit Banh Mi Pho Shop for a phenomenal experience!

(Editor's note: Do yourself a favor and get a Korean BBQ sandwich and an avocado bubble tea smoothie... and pork belly pho... as one meal. Don’t judge!)

Jason Patel, Blue Flame Hospitality

Blue Flame Hospitality, founded in 2013, is a second-generation family business. In 1988, Dipak Patel established the business in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Over the years, he successfully built, operated, and sold several branded hotels.

In 2012, Jason took over the helm of the business from Dipak. He formed Blue Flame Hospitality in 2013. In Spring 2018, Blue Flame Hospitality was approved by Hilton as a management company for both Full-Service and Select-Service Hotels.

Today, Blue Flame’s scope extends beyond hotel development and management. From value-added renovation to purchasing undeveloped land, Blue Flame consults and coordinates each detail.
The Content Creators of Color Project provides professional development to underrepresented voices within the digital marketing industry. This locally lead organization has already developed a national membership, and does not plan to stop anytime soon.

CCC is open to all content creators of color, regardless of gender, but sees the vital need for leadership opportunities for women of color, and has created their leadership committee to reflect this.

L-R: RasAmen Oladuwa (top), Cassey Hurtado Suthers, Olivia Torres, Shanel Turner, Thein Aye, and Lyndy Bazile
This is only the beginning...

We have created this Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Strategy with its completion truly being a starting point. Now that we have identified the components, and laid out a course, we can now begin this endeavor.

We are confident that this strategy will provide our local and regional policy makers, entrepreneurs, and community leaders with the tools necessary to move efficiently toward a healthy entrepreneurial ecosystem. As we pivot and coalesce around specific strategies and tactics, participants may change, but this strategy will carry on.

How will you participate in the future of our ecosystem? We would love to hear from you.

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