

## Engaging Stakeholders

The following questions are designed to help you start a conversation with a range of current and potential stakeholders who might be interested in supporting your entrepreneur-focused economic development efforts. Remember, their support may be with resources of all types: services, staff, infrastructure, dollars. We encourage you to pick the ten or so questions that are most important and relevant in your community and have them at the ready when you meet with people in your community and beyond.

1. What do you believe are the most important goals of economic development efforts in your community?
2. How important do you believe it is for the community to actively support entrepreneurs as part of an economic development strategy?
3. How important do you think most community residents feel it is for your community to support entrepreneurs?
4. How committed to entrepreneur-focused economic development is your community?
5. Do you think most entrepreneurs in this community feel they are being actively supported? If no, why not?
6. What role(s) do you and your organization play in supporting entrepreneurs in your community?
7. What services, if any, do you provide to help entrepreneurs start and grow their businesses?
8. What challenges do you face in serving entrepreneurs and what partners might help you address these challenges?
9. Who do you believe are the most critically important partners in supporting entrepreneurs in your community?
10. Do you believe there are entrepreneurs in your community who have the desire and the market opportunity to grow their businesses?
11. What do you think is holding these entrepreneurs back from realizing their dreams of growth?

12. What do you think is the biggest gap in the services available in your community to help entrepreneurs?
13. What infrastructure (e.g., flexible space, broadband) does your community need to create to be more supportive of entrepreneurs?
14. How important do you think it is for entrepreneur /business service providers and economic developers to work together to meet the needs of entrepreneurs?
15. What have been the most rewarding partnerships you have formed with other organizations in the community? What made those partnerships so rewarding?
16. What is the biggest obstacle you face in working more collaboratively with other service providers and economic development professionals in your community?
17. How strong is your network of both public and private business service providers in your community? If you need to refer an entrepreneur to someone else in your community, how easy is that for you to do?
18. How strong is your network of both public and private business service providers outside of your community (e.g., regional or state)? If you need to refer an entrepreneur to someone outside your community, how easy is that for you to do?
19. How well informed are you about sources of government support for entrepreneurs (e.g., state and federal grant programs)?
20. How well informed are you about sources of capital for entrepreneurs?
21. How interested are you in being part of an effort to build a support system for entrepreneurs in your community?
22. What would it take for you to be engaged?
23. What is the most important thing you and your organization would bring to a support system for entrepreneurs?
24. Is there an organization in your community now that is considered the “go to” place for entrepreneurs interested in starting and growing a business? If yes, what organization is it?
25. What other organizations and individuals would make a valuable contributor to a support system for entrepreneurs?