



certified  
entrepreneurial  
community®

# every door leads to opportunity



The Certified Entrepreneurial Community (CEC®) program is an economic development strategy that equips communities to become entrepreneur-ready. The designation means every door leads to opportunity.

The overall business climate, leadership, policies, and resources to grow are simple to find and access. It also indicates there's an enthusiastic attitude and growth-oriented outlook driving the local business culture.

Certified communities make a commitment to ongoing action planning and implementation of entrepreneur initiatives. Their proven dedication to local economic opportunity serves as a beacon, attracting even more innovative ventures into the region.

A Certified Entrepreneurial Community® signifies this is a place where entrepreneurs succeed.



# a place where entrepreneurs succeed

## Ecosystem Assessment

- Baseline research
- Develop a leadership team
- Entrepreneur resource directory
- Engaging the entrepreneur community

## Action Plan with a Scorecard

- Identify two entrepreneur activities for action planning
- Track and measure progress with a Score Card

## Coaching of Two Task Teams for 6 months

- The CEC® provides coaching to support Action Plan implementation
- Access to entrepreneur development training and content

## Evaluation and Certification

- The community is certified after completing the Ecosystem Assessment and making progress on the Action Plan documented by the Score Card

## Action Plan for Year 2

- The process concludes with an Action Plan for Year 2

## Ongoing Coaching and Training

- Ongoing training, support, and coaching is available for engaged communities in Year 2

## How to Apply

The CEC® application and guidelines are available on the new CEC® website, [creativecec.com](http://creativecec.com). We accept communities in two cohorts each year, January and July. The CEC® Team has resources to support educating communities on entrepreneurship and applying for funding. Contact us to learn more about how we can help you get started.

## Who we are

The Certified Entrepreneurial Communities® Program has been empowering both rural and up-and-coming communities since 2007. It is a proven model and a pioneering initiative for driving the success of entrepreneurial ecosystems. The Certified Entrepreneurial Community® Program is a joint, entrepreneurial venture between Creative EDC, Entrepreneurial Places, and Innovative Economies.

Crystal Morphis, Founder and CEO, Creative Economic Development Consulting  
With 20 years' experience in economic development, Crystal believes that communities share similar challenges. What sets us apart is how we address our challenges. CEC® is an innovative tool to address economic challenges.

Leslie Scott, Founder and Principal, Entrepreneurial Places LLC  
Leslie has studied and witnessed community and regional economic development for 20 years. She knows the pitfalls to avoid as well as the ingredients of a strong ecosystem for business startup and growth.

Emily Breedlove, Co-Founder and Partner, Innovative Economies, LLC  
Having spent the past 13 years working in regional economic and community development, Emily has been fortunate enough to have experienced this space from both the entrepreneurial approach and the resource provider perspective.

"Since we received CEC® certification we've talked to many businesses who ask us about it, and when they learn more they are very excited. We are definitely business friendly; we've cut back on restrictions and everything is streamlined now. Businesses now see more easily how supportive we are."  
Former Mayor Carl Bartlett.

"We all figured out that if we operate in a silo it just doesn't work," said Jason Triplett, CEC® team member. "But when we partner we spur all of us on, and we use all our strengths. The result is more awareness of how we value entrepreneurs and more passion for this in the community."

That entrepreneurial spirit helped the CEC® leadership team complete the certification process. "We were already doing it, so this was just a natural next step," said Joe. "We knew we could learn and share ideas, and doing this further emphasized our desire to sustain that entrepreneurial culture."  
Joe Furman, Watauga County CEC® team leader.