

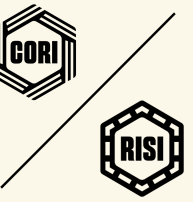
RURAL INNOVATION STRATEGIES, INC.

Supporting tech entrepreneurship in rural America



September 2021

Our tech entrepreneurship team



Molly Pyle

Entrepreneurial Ecosystem
Development Lead



Rose Vieland

Entrepreneurship
Programs Specialist

Disclaimer



This content was prepared by Rural Innovation Strategies, Inc. using Federal funds under award ED20HDQ3120070 from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Economic Development Administration or the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Agenda

Part 1: What are we talking about?

- Introducing key terms and phases
- Illustrating a tech entrepreneur's journey and systems of support with examples from rural communities

Part 2: How to support this work?

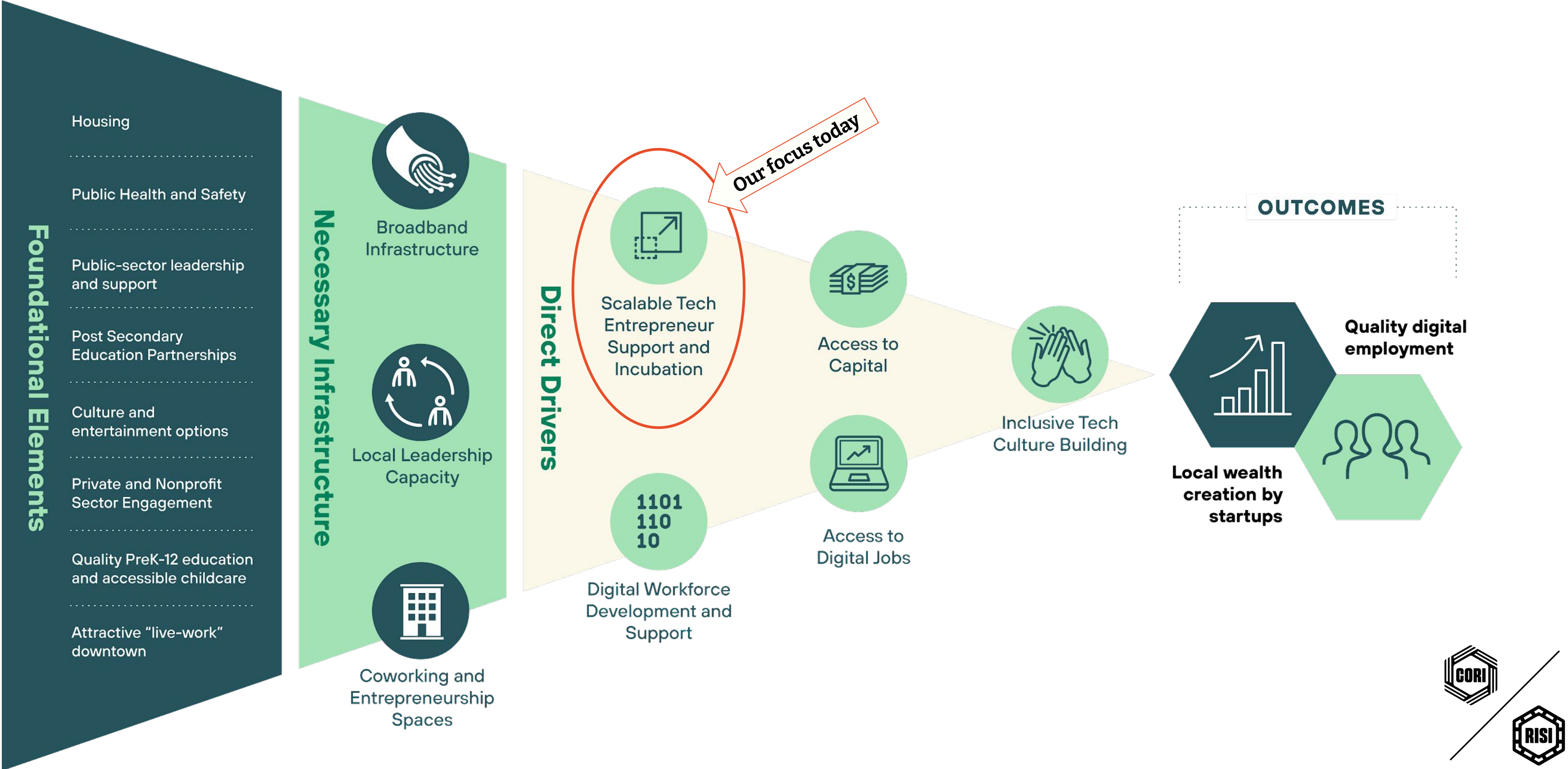
- Overview of the activities, assets, and resources critical to this work
- Actionable ways to apply and uplift this work in your region





Part 1: What are we talking about?

Elements to enable digital economies in rural America



Who are scalable tech entrepreneurs?

Local small business owners

- Focused on small-scale sale of products or services
- Sole proprietors or employ a small number of people
- Likely do not have plans to expand, sell off, or exit their business
- Goal is to sustain a certain revenue and small number of employees

Scalable tech entrepreneurs

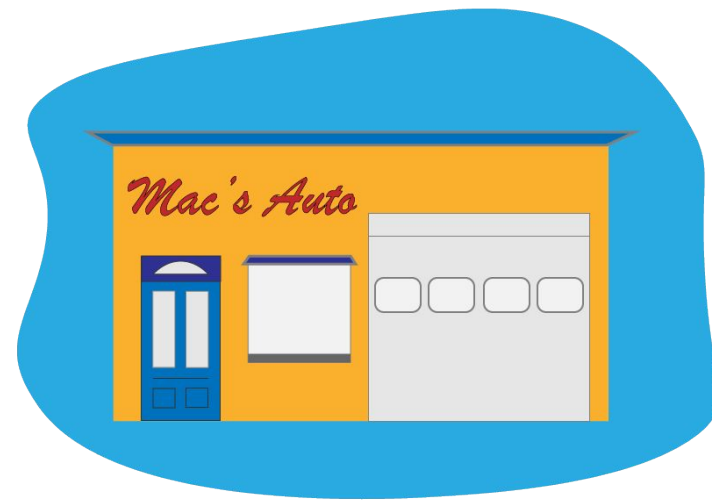
- Company may generate intellectual property (“IP”)
- Aim is to grow their customer base and scale their company — often nationally or globally
- Goal is often an exit or acquisition

What does scalable tech entrepreneurship look like?

Small businesses

The local auto shop — if it's tech-enabled, it has a website with their number to call and book an appointment

- *Small local businesses are invaluable community assets, but not the focus of this work*



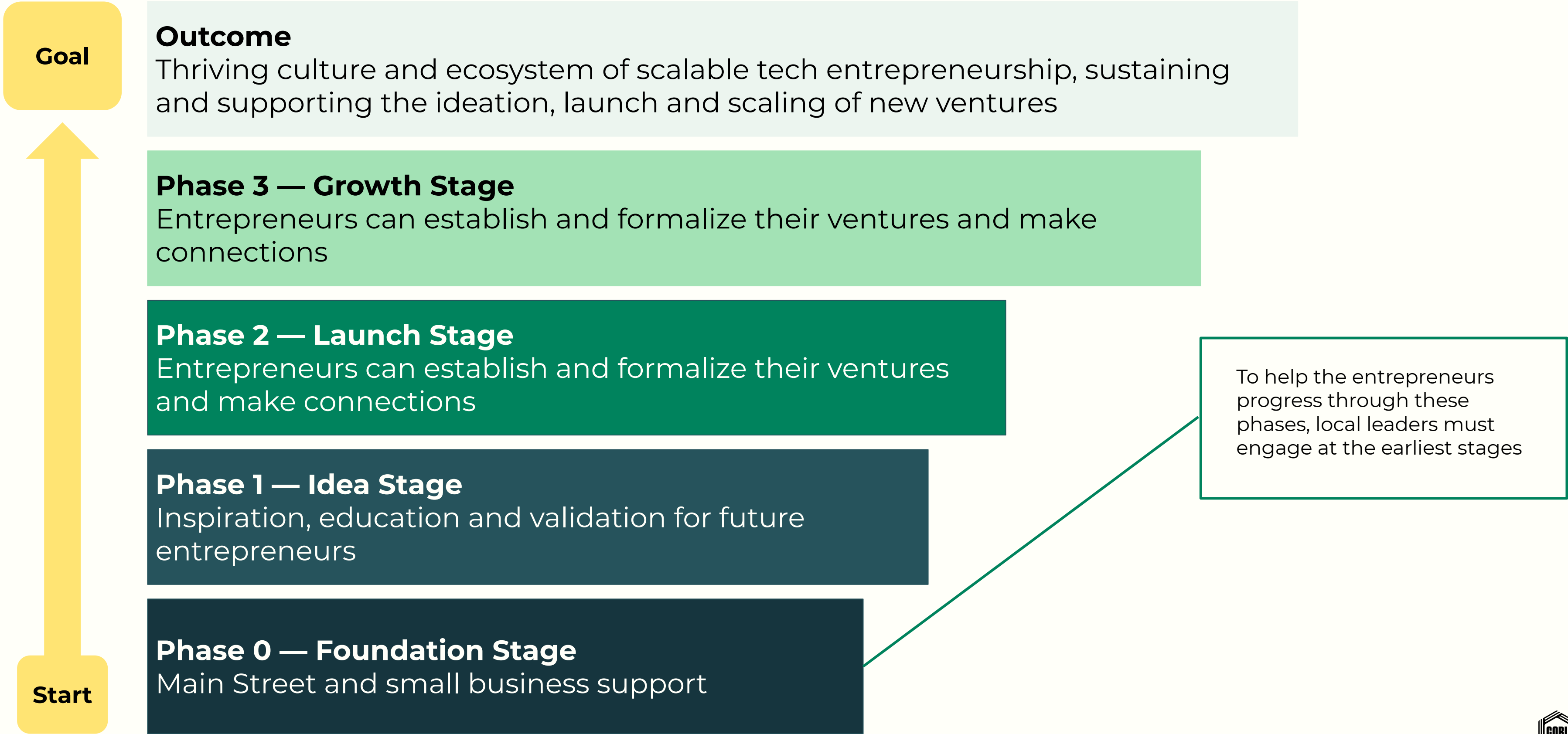
Scalable tech startups

The platform that powers and enables the auto shop to schedule appointments and track service and payments digitally

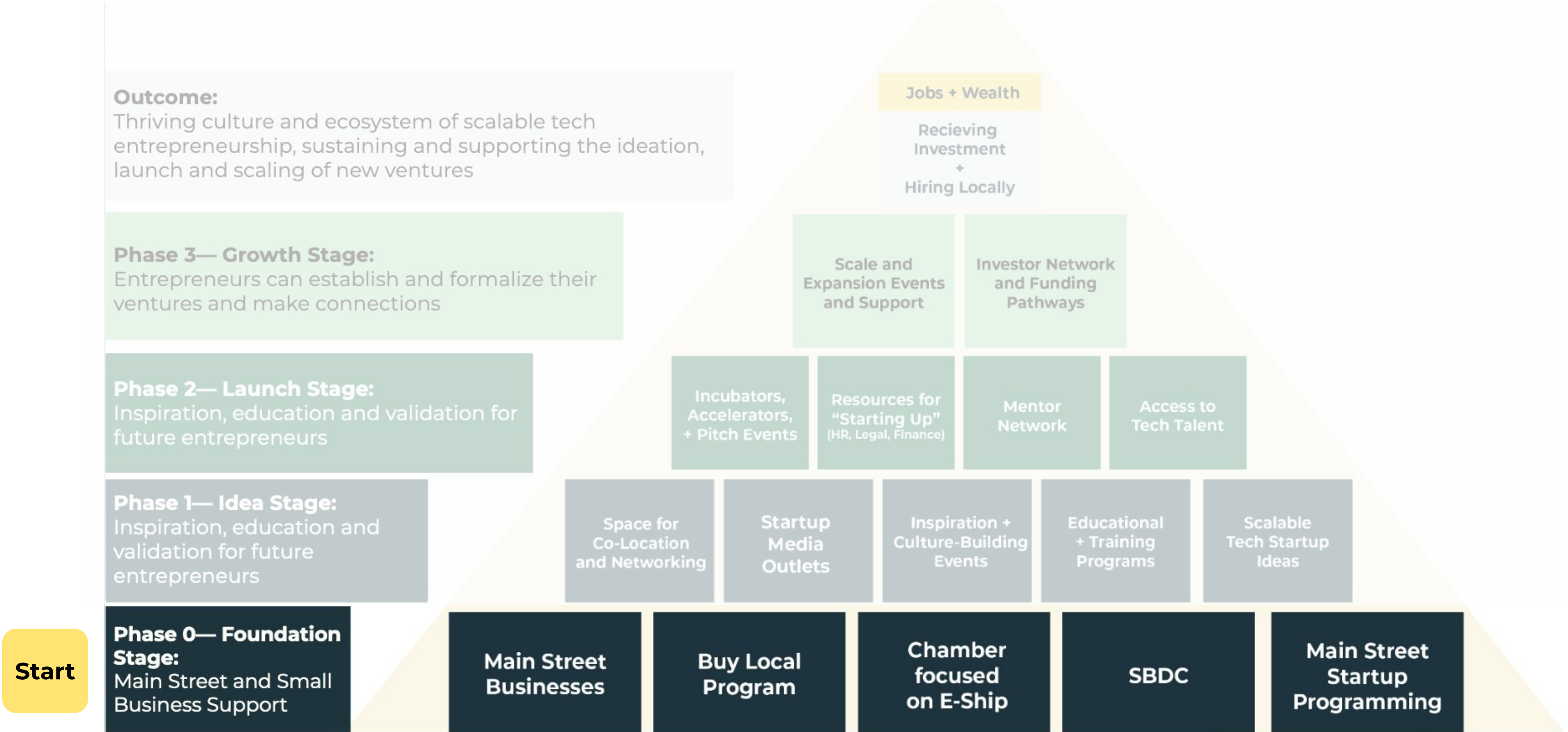
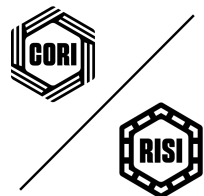
- *Focusing on scalable tech entrepreneurship inspires a culture of innovation and creates high-paying jobs*



The entrepreneur's journey: from foundation to growth



Phase 0: Focus on Main Street businesses



Phase 0: Focus on Main Street businesses

Areas of focus in this phase

Assets

- Chamber focused on entrepreneurship
- Small Business Development Center (SBDC)

Programs

- Main Street business support
- “Buy local” program
- Startup programming/pitch competition for Main Street businesses

Phase 0: Examples from the Rural Innovation Network



Women Founders CO.STARTERS Cohort

Pikeville, KY

Cohort for aspiring women entrepreneurs throughout Appalachia facilitated by four women entrepreneurs

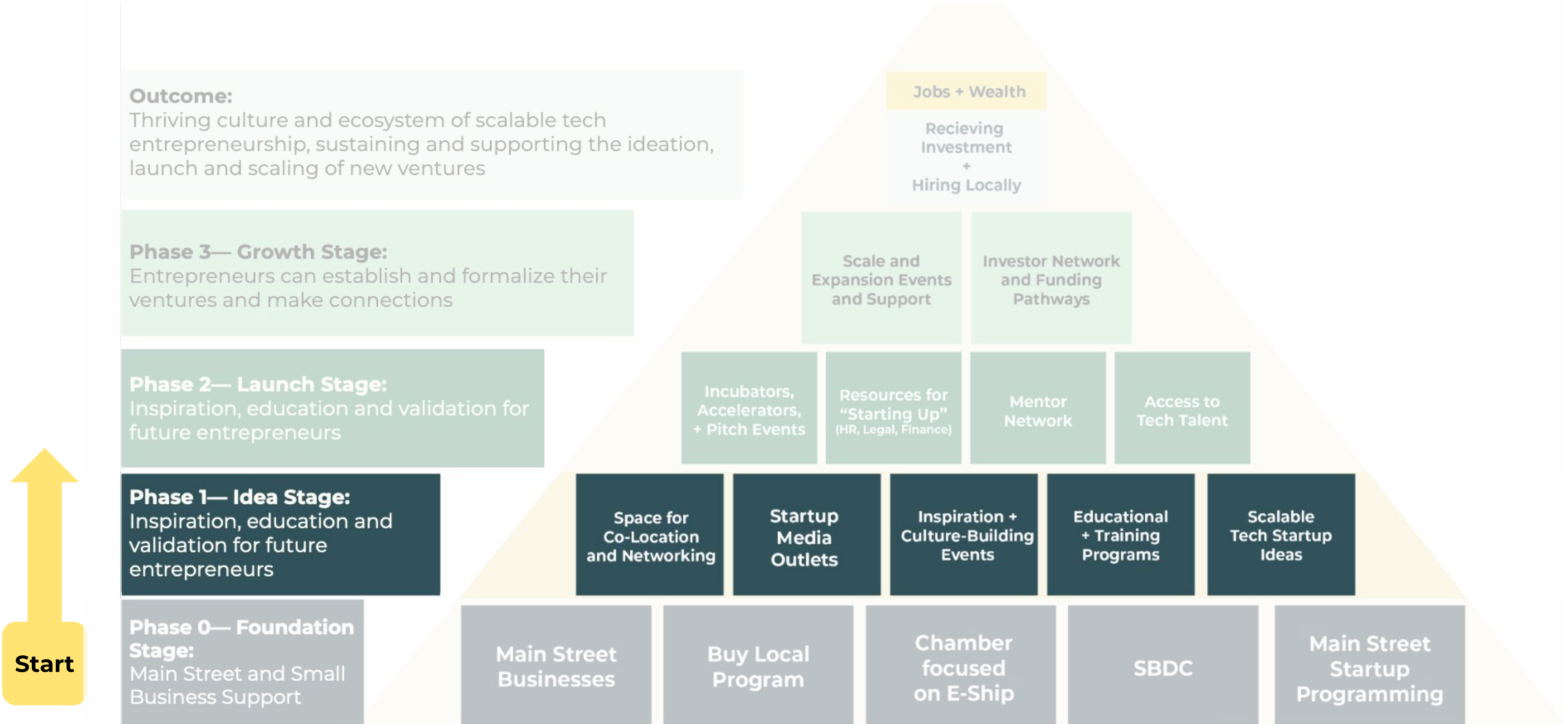
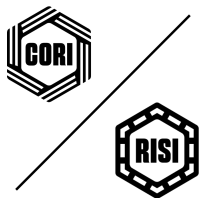


Gentrepreneurship: Creating a Business Program

Pine Bluff, AR

Lean Startup support for local innovators and entrepreneurs with a focus on BIPOC founders

Phase 1: Inspire new ideas focused on scalable tech



Phase 1: Inspire new ideas focused on scalable tech

Areas of focus in this phase

Assets

- A space for co-location, networking, and hosting events and programs
- Access to a technically skilled workforce
- Media outlets to raise awareness of the entrepreneurship community
- Source to connect ideas with entrepreneurs (e.g., university research)

Programs

- Inspirational events and educational programs, including:
 - Tech entrepreneurship meetups
 - “How I built this” talks
 - Ideation workshops or bootcamps
 - Hackathons and startup weekends

Phase 1: Examples from the Rural Innovation Network



Talk Series: Stories of the Journey to Starting and Growing a Business

Red Wing, MN

Talks from successful local tech entrepreneurs to emphasize what is possible in rural.



Startup Ada Bootcamp

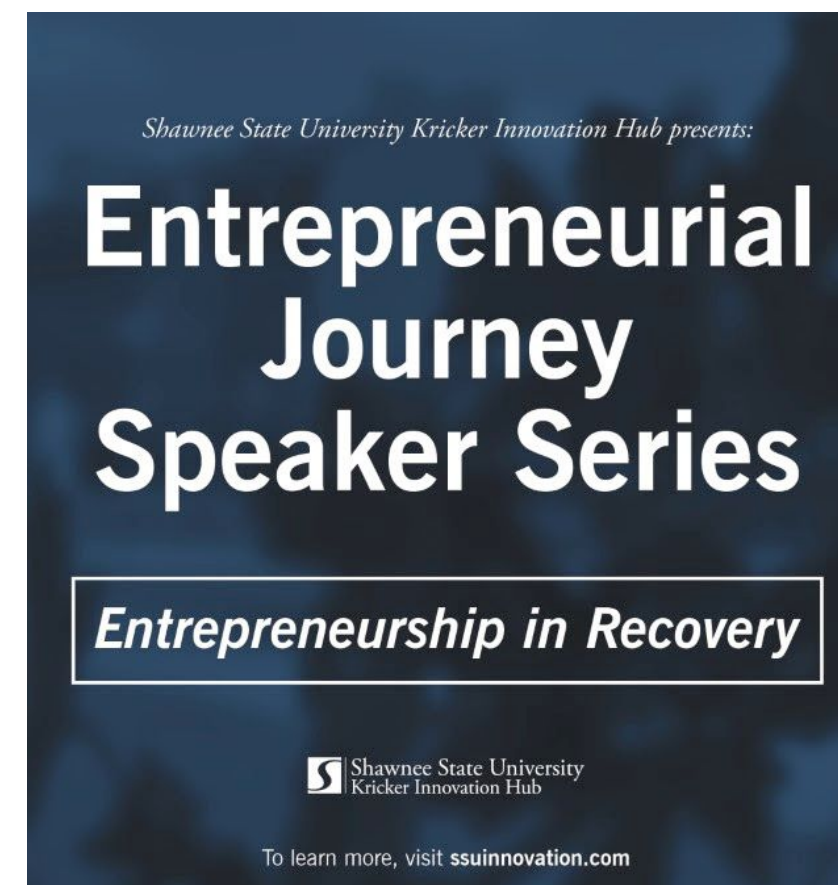
Ada, OK

Bootcamp teaching small business owners and aspiring tech entrepreneurs startup basics.

Phase 1: Examples from the Rural Innovation Network

The Kricker Innovation Hub

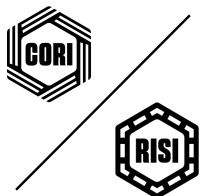
- Portsmouth is a community impacted by the opioid epidemic
- Hub hosted an Entrepreneurship In Recovery event highlighting entrepreneurs who recovered from opioid addiction and became entrepreneurs during their recovery
- Panel spoke about the challenges and opportunities they faced to inspire others and help shift the narrative



Thursday, February 18
5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Attend this virtual event by visiting 'Shawnee State University Kricker Innovation Hub' on Facebook.

Phase 2: Support the launch of tech entrepreneurship



Phase 2: Support the launch of tech entrepreneurship

Areas of focus in this phase

Assets

- Incubator focused on educating founders and creating scalable tech startups
- Operational resources and a talent pool for startups to grow
- Active investor community

Programs

- Accelerator program to prepare scalable tech startups for growth and investment
- Active mentor network

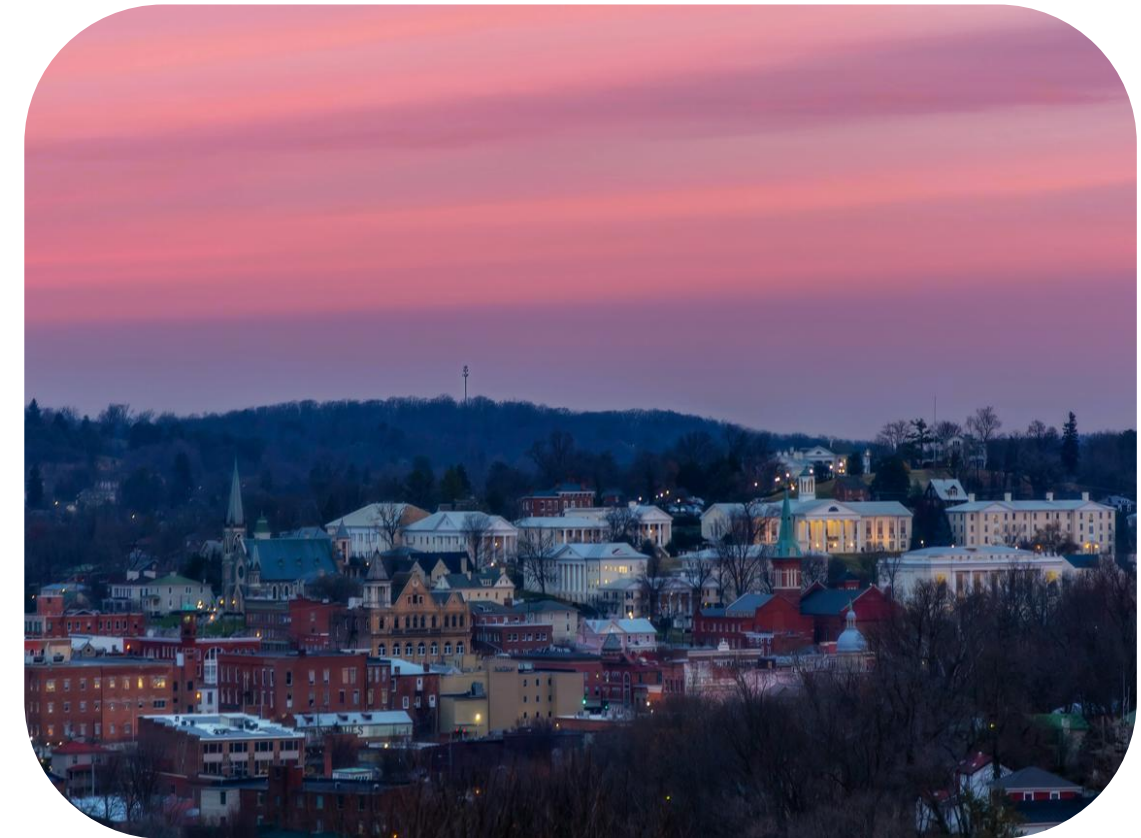
Phase 2: Examples from the Rural Innovation Network



MIT Venture Mentoring Service

North Iowa

Partnership with the MIT to train aspiring mentors interested in mentoring entrepreneurs

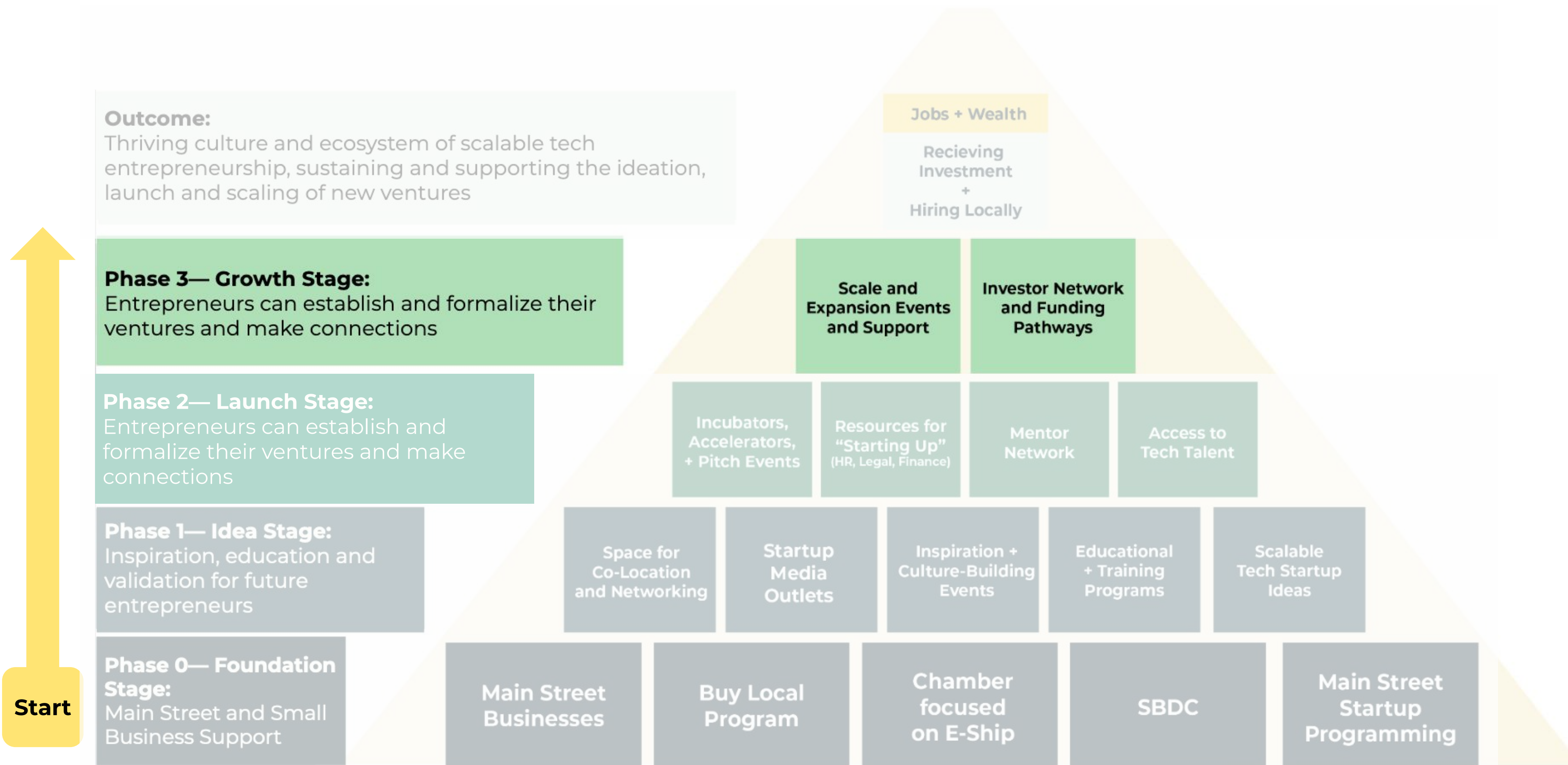
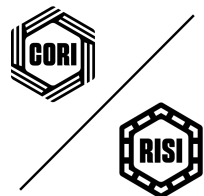


Startup Shenandoah Valley (S2V)

Shenandoah Valley, VA

Hybrid program combining accelerator and incubator models to meet regional needs

Phase 3: Enable entrepreneurs to grow their business



Phase 3: Enable entrepreneurs to grow their business

Areas of focus in this phase

Assets

- Angel Investor network
- Venture Capital fund
- Mentors with expertise in fundraising

Programs

- Post-Accelerator programs
- Workshops on accessing non-dilutive capital such as grant funding
- Introduction-making program / process for startups ready to scale to meet potential customers

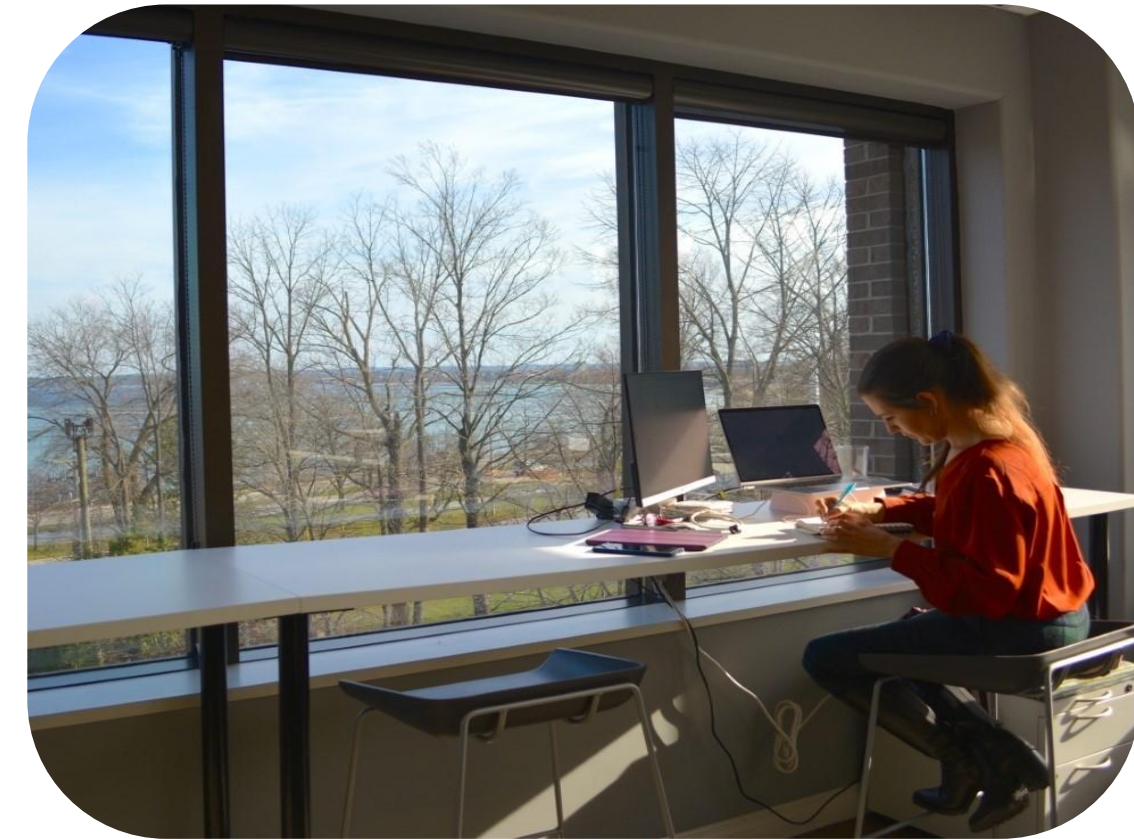
Phase 3: Examples from the Rural Innovation Network



1st50K

Cape Girardeau, MO

Incentive program for startups to relocate to the community, providing cash and local connections

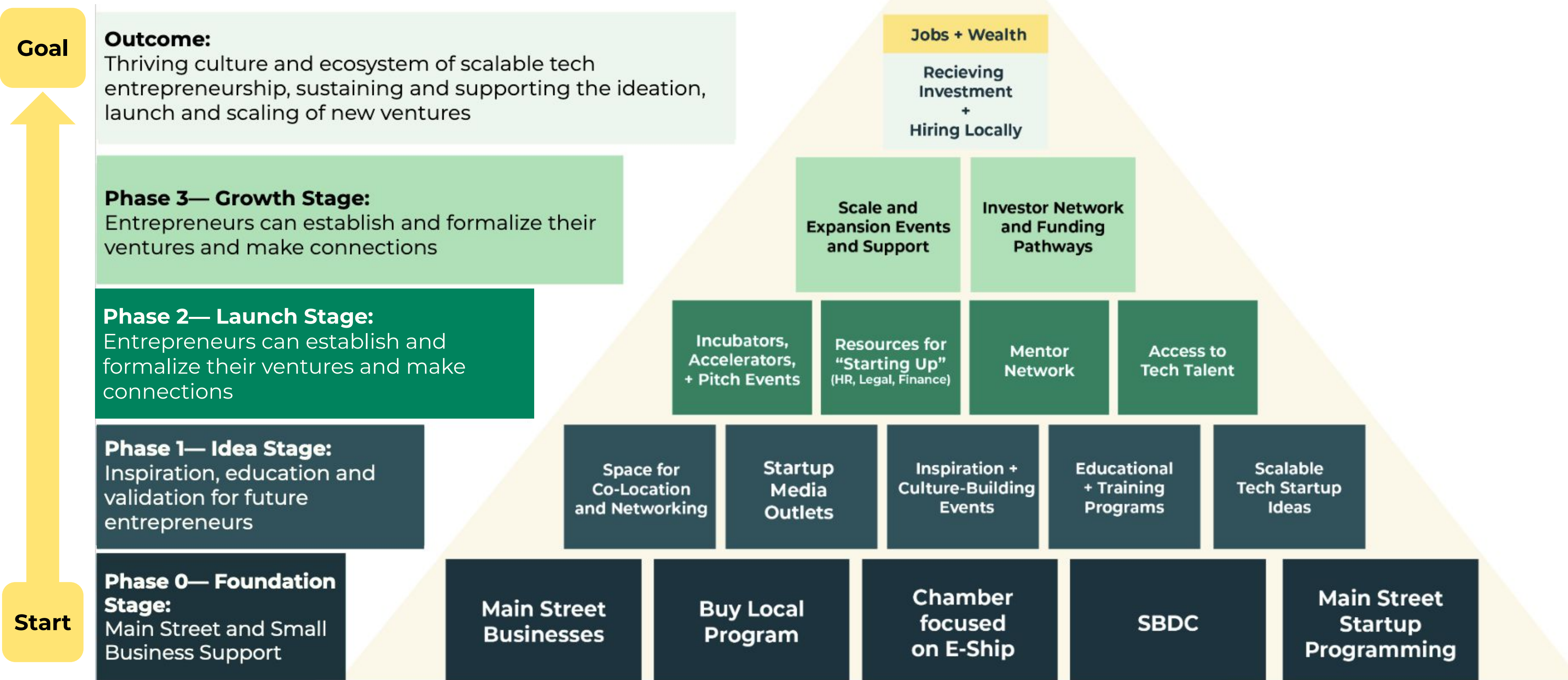
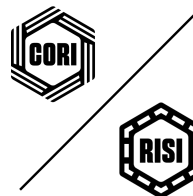


Northern Michigan Angels

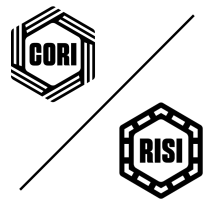
Traverse City, MI

Local investors aiming to have a positive impact on the economy and quality of life in Michigan who are focusing on scalable companies

Goal: A pathway to high-paying jobs and wealth creation

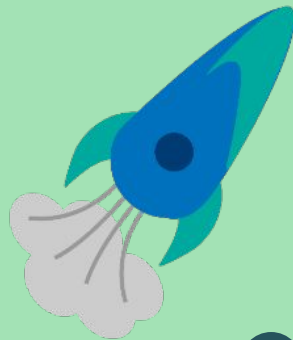


A rural tech entrepreneur's journey: *Cara of Core4Parenting*



PHASE 3:
Growth

Goal



Working with strategic advisors to secure angel investment

Hired a team and launched MVP

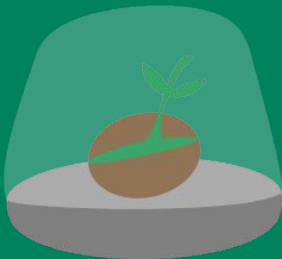


PHASE 2:
Launch



Introduced to mentors

Conducted market research and product beta testing in Incubator



PHASE 1:
Idea

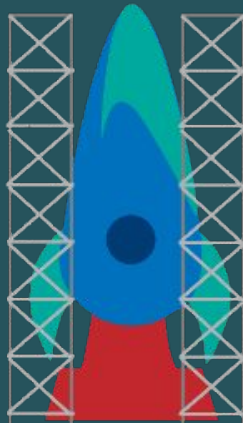
Start

Attended digital skills bootcamp through local coworking space



Joined the coworking space as a member

Signed up for the Incubator program



Rural startup community examples

Phase 3



Cape Girardeau, Missouri Codefi

- Accelerator program that prepares companies for investment
- 1st50k funding incentive program providing \$50,000 to companies that relocate there
- Launched 50 companies which have raised a combined \$30+ million dollars contributing to creating 180 local jobs

Phase 2



Platteville, Wisconsin UW-Platteville and the IDEA Hub Accelerator

- Hybrid Incubator/Accelerator for scalable startups in the region
- Mentor network
- Partnership with UW-Platteville

Phase 1



Independence, Oregon City of Independence, SEDCOR, and Indy Idea Hub

- Incubator for food truck entrepreneurs with industrial kitchen
- Historical focus on Main Street, small non-tech business
- Have a coworking space and have held one Startup Weekend



Part 2: How do we support this work?

Supporting rural entrepreneurs in your community

- Determine which phase your region is in regarding tech entrepreneurship supports, and encourage leaders to connect and engage with local entrepreneurs to understand what startups need — and how they can meet them where they are
- Promote inclusive regional connectivity to offset geographic isolation, encourage collaboration, and engage nearby strategic partners
- Accept that this evolution will take generations, not quarters, and remind your communities you believe in the long-view



Applying this to your work

1. Get familiar with the local tech entrepreneurs and their support systems in your region
2. Learn about potential support for your region
3. Stay up to date with EDA funding opportunities for entrepreneurship and innovation
4. Encourage regional collaboration and support local leaders in creating a culture of tech entrepreneurship by:
 - Amplifying and increasing visibility of local entrepreneurs
 - Funding programmatic journeys for tech entrepreneurs — from idea-stage to scale
 - Creating mechanisms of connection among entrepreneurs mentors, investors and other supports

Thank you!



We'd love to connect with you.

www.ruralinnovation.us

kaitlin.klaustermeier@ruralinnovation.us

EDDs: have additional questions?

[Reach out to your EDR](#)



Communities, Startups, and Programs Referenced

Rural Scalable Tech Startup Examples:

- [Shyft Auto](#) - Wilson, NC
- [Pluralsight](#) - Durango, CO
- [Yost Labs](#) - Portsmouth, OH
- [Core4Parenting](#) - Springfield, VT

Build to Scale Awardee Community Examples:

- [IDEA Hub](#) - Independence, OR
- [IDEA Hub Accelerator](#) - Platteville, WI
- [Codefi](#) - Cape Girardeau, MO

Program Examples:

- Phase 0:
 - [Gentrepreneurship: Creating a Business Program](#) - Pine Bluff, AR
 - [Women Founders CO.STARTERS Cohort](#) - Pikeville, KY
- Phase 1:
 - [Tech Talks](#) - Red Wing, MN
 - [Startup Ada Bootcamp](#) - Ada, OK
 - [Entrepreneurial Journey Speaker Series](#) - Portsmouth, OH
- Phase 2:
 - [MIT Venture Mentoring Service](#) - North Iowa
 - [Startup Shenandoah Valley](#) - Shenandoah Valley, VA
 - [Actuator by BRIC](#) - Springfield, VT
 - [RIoT Accelerator](#) - Wilson, NC
 - [HealthSpark Accelerator](#) - Traverse City, MI
- Phase 3:
 - [1ST50K](#) - Cape Girardeau, MO and Paducah, KY
 - [Northern Michigan Angels](#) - Traverse City, MI
 - [SCAPE Fund](#) - Durango, CO
 - [CORI Innovation Fund](#) - Nationwide

