

Opportunity Hunting 101

Day 1 Takeaways

A New Way to Think About Opportunities

Most people are taught to start with an idea.

Entrepreneurs often ask:

- What should I build?
- What business should I start?
- What product can I sell?

Opportunity Hunters start somewhere different. They begin by identifying:

- Problems that already exist
- Organizations responsible for solving those problems
- Budgets allocated to address those problems
- Partnerships needed to create solutions

Core shift

Instead of chasing ideas, Opportunity Hunters follow evidence. Instead of guessing what people need, they investigate what communities are already investing in.

This approach reduces risk and increases the likelihood that your solution will create real value.

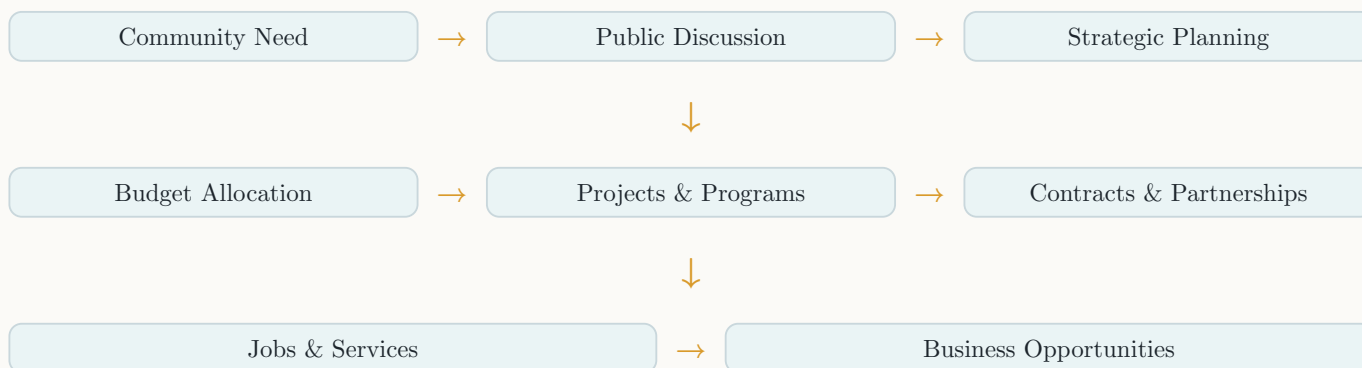
Opportunities Follow Demand

Demand is the foundation of every opportunity. When a community experiences a challenge, leaders begin discussing solutions.

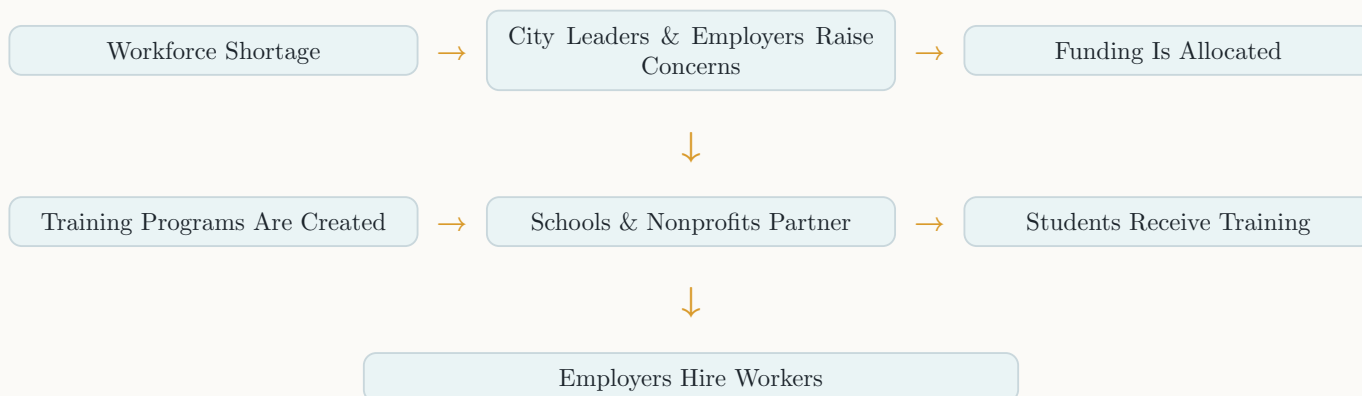
Those discussions often lead to:

Stage	What Happens
1	Research
2	Planning
3	Budget allocations
4	Programs
5	Contracts
6	Jobs
7	New businesses and services

Opportunity Flow



Example: Workforce Shortage



Important distinction

The opportunity was not the training program. The opportunity began when the workforce shortage was identified.

The Budget Is the Map

A city budget is one of the most valuable documents available to researchers, entrepreneurs, consultants, nonprofits, and community leaders.

The budget reveals:

- What problems exist
- What priorities leaders have identified
- Which departments are responsible
- How much money is available
- Which projects are currently funded
- Which initiatives may need partners

Budget Information	What It Reveals
Large Spending Areas	Major community priorities
New Funding Requests	Emerging challenges
Multi-Year Projects	Long-term opportunities
Grants Received	External funding sources
Department Goals	Desired outcomes
Capital Projects	Infrastructure investments

Budget Intelligence Map



The budget is not just a financial document. It is a roadmap of community priorities.

Follow the Money

Many people begin by asking:

“What should we build?”

Opportunity Hunters ask:

“What is already being funded?”

Funding indicates that:

- A problem has been recognized
- Decision-makers care about it
- Resources have been allocated
- Organizations are actively working on solutions

Opportunity Discovery Process



Research goal

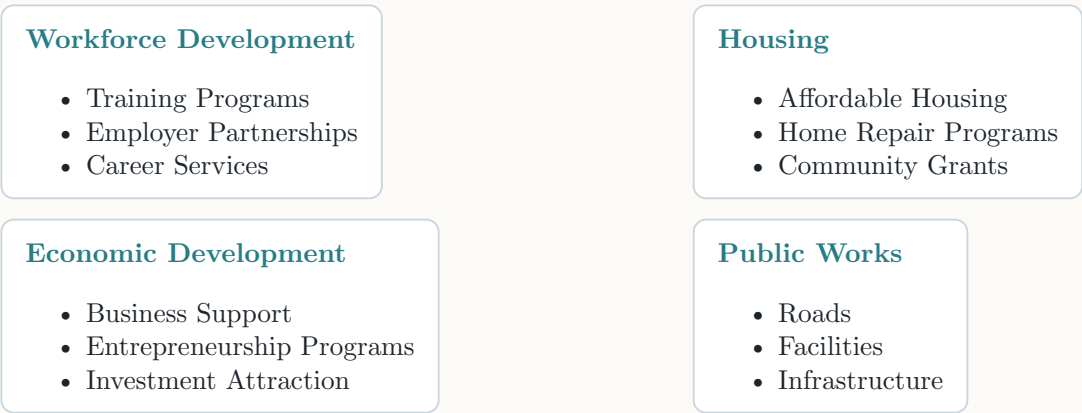
The goal is not to invent a problem. The goal is to understand existing problems deeply enough to contribute meaningful solutions.

Departments Are Opportunity Centers

Every department exists because a community has ongoing needs. Each department manages specific challenges and opportunities.

Department	Typical Focus Areas
Workforce Development	Jobs, training, career pathways
Parks & Recreation	Community wellness, youth programs
Public Safety	Police, fire, emergency services
Public Works	Roads, infrastructure, maintenance
Transportation	Mobility, transit systems
Housing	Affordable housing, development
Utilities	Water, power, waste management
Economic Development	Business growth, investment
Community Development	Neighborhood improvement

Department Opportunity Map



Each branch represents potential projects, partnerships, and funding opportunities.

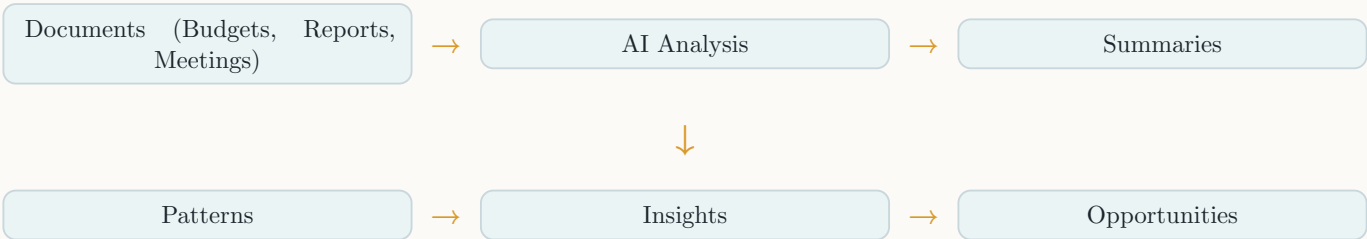
AI Is Your Research Assistant

Modern researchers have access to tools that previous generations never had. Artificial Intelligence can help you process large amounts of information quickly.

AI can help you:

- Read lengthy budgets
- Summarize annual reports
- Analyze meeting transcripts
- Compare spending trends
- Identify recurring challenges
- Discover potential partners
- Generate research questions
- Organize findings

AI Research Workflow



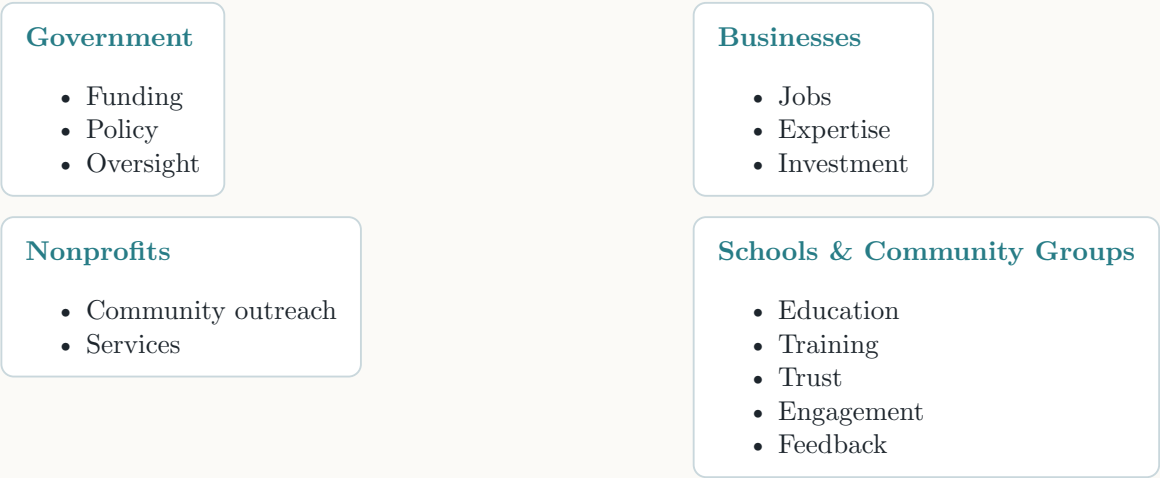
Important reminder

AI is a tool. AI does not make decisions for you, replace critical thinking, or understand local context perfectly. Your job is to evaluate the information and determine what matters.

Organizations Do Not Solve Problems Alone

Most community challenges are too large for one organization to solve independently. Successful programs often involve multiple partners working together.

Typical Partnership Network



All contribute to a shared solution.

Organization Type	Contribution
Government	Funding, policy, oversight
Businesses	Jobs, expertise, investment
Nonprofits	Community outreach, services
Schools	Education, training
Community Groups	Trust, engagement, feedback

The strongest solutions are usually collaborative.

Building an Opportunity Ecosystem

Opportunities rarely exist in isolation. They are connected through people, organizations, funding, and community needs.

Opportunity Ecosystem



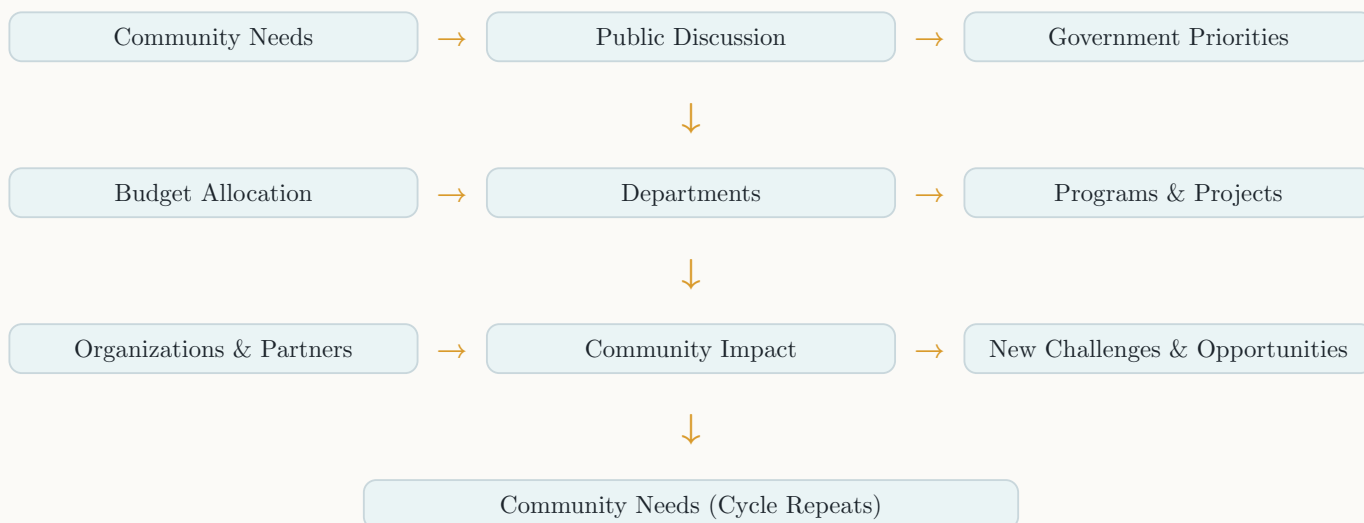
This cycle repeats continuously. As one problem is addressed, new opportunities emerge.

Traditional Thinking	Opportunity Hunter Thinking
What startup should I build?	What problem already has funding?
Who needs my idea?	Who is already investing in solving this problem?
How do I make money?	How do I create measurable value?
What can I sell?	What outcomes are stakeholders trying to achieve?

The Day 1 Framework

Everything learned today can be summarized in one interconnected system.

Day 1 Framework



Key lesson

Opportunities are not random. They leave clues.

Those clues can be found in:

- Budgets
- Annual reports
- Strategic plans
- Public meetings
- Community conversations
- Organizational partnerships

The best Opportunity Hunters learn how to connect these clues into a complete picture.

When you understand the system, you can identify opportunities before most people even realize they exist.