

Getting Started

Congratulations! Your company has been accepted into an Economic Gardening® program certified by the National Center for Economic Gardening (NCEG), which helps second-stage companies grow larger by tackling strategic issues.

Timing

Engagements typically run from four to six weeks and require 10-12 hours of your time. Yet we work at your pace; if you need to slow things down, just let your team leader know.

What you get

In contrast to other types of business assistance, Economic Gardening has a laser-like focus on strategic issues, which means addressing challenges — and identifying opportunities for your company. NCEG’s National Strategic Research Team (NSRT) provides analysis and information on five key areas: your core strategy, market dynamics, qualified sales leads, innovation and temperament. Within this framework, the NSRT uses sophisticated, corporate-level tools such as:



- **Commercial databases** — This includes subscription-only data sets that are mined to find new markets, competitor intelligence, new products and industry trends, along with industry and government regulations. In addition, the NSRT does “deep Web” searches by tapping information sources that are buried in the Internet beyond the first few pages of search-engine results.
- **Geographic information systems (GIS)** — GIS specialists use computerized data mapping to spot densities of current customers and competitors, identify potential new clients and geographic markets, and produce qualified sales leads.
- **Search engine optimization (SEO) and Web marketing** — The NSRT first analyzes your website, looking for any problem areas that might be deterring traffic. Then the researchers identify key words and content to raise your visibility in search-engine rankings. We also track social interactions on other websites, blogs and online communities to see who’s talking about your products and services, determine key influencers in your market and help you connect better with customers. In addition, we’ve developed listening posts to scan news and blog sites and provide high-quality information on topics you select (think Google alerts on steroids).

What you don’t get

We don’t do primary research (e.g., surveys, telephone calls, focus groups), financial analysis, business plans or implementation. Unlike consultants, we don’t tell you what to do or implement a prescription for you. Instead, our role is one of a high-powered research staff. We leverage sophisticated research tools and provide you with information, data and conclusions to help you make decisions about current key issues. You know more about your company than anyone else; we simply give you a better view of the big picture so you can make necessary adjustments to perform better and grow larger.

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The process

Discovery Call: This takes about 1 to 1.5 hours, and the goal is to establish a baseline of information about your company. An NCEG team leader will ask you questions about your business, customers, industry, competitors — and any innovations you're working on.

Team Clarification Call: This takes about an hour and includes your team leader and the researchers assigned to your company. Call information is used to define specific research tasks. (After approval from you, the researchers will go to work immediately.) The team leader will also set up dates for biweekly check-in calls and a closeout call.

The Greenhouse: Our secure, collaborative website is where you'll communicate with the NSRT after the discovery call — and where researchers post their findings. You'll be notified by email whenever there is activity in your Greenhouse workspace, and the researchers will also contact you to discuss their findings and make sure the information is relevant. Team members will monitor your Greenhouse workspace for any information you post to make sure assignments have been completed, and they'll also contact you to make sure the research is useful or if assignments need to be adjusted.

Closeout Call: This typically takes 30 minutes and is held after the NSRT has completed all assignments. The team leader will review your business issues, research assignments and final work, and ask you to provide verbal feedback and complete a short, five-question survey about your experience. Once the NSRT has wrapped up your Economic Gardening engagement, your local host organization will follow up with you to see how they can continue to support your company's growth.

Working with the NSRT

The NSRT consists of private-sector contractors from around the country who are specialists in their designated research areas and have been certified in Economic Gardening principles and practices at NCEG. They function like high-powered staff members on loan to you for a few weeks. You'll get the most from the engagement if you provide them with your full attention and availability. Many CEOs like to include their senior management teams in the engagement, which is fine. What's most important is for the CEO to be involved in the Economic Gardening engagement from beginning to end. We estimate needing 10 to 12 hours of your time.



NCEG history

Economic Gardening was created by Chris Gibbons, NCEG's founder, in Littleton, Colorado. Over two decades Littleton's job base accelerated from 15,000 to 30,000 without recruiting a single company. The Littleton Economic Gardening program has received three national awards including being named a finalist in Harvard University's Innovations in Government program. Through a collaboration with Gibbons, the Edward Lowe Foundation began hosting the NCEG in 2011, and the center helps state and regional organizations get Economic Gardening networks up and running quickly. Currently NCEG is running programs in more than 25 states, where results have been impressive. For example, Florida added more than 4,000 jobs in three years through its Economic Gardening program. For Kansas participants, annual revenue increased more than 25 percent and job growth increased nearly 30 percent after their program engagement.