



## Updates from the Office of Economic Development

### Registration Now Open for NextGen Skilled Trades Day - Discover Your Future in the Trades!



Mark your calendars! The Office of Economic Development is proud to announce - NextGen Skilled Trades Day is coming to Piedmont Virginia Community College on Saturday, October 4, 2025, from 10 AM to 2 PM – and registration is officially open. This free, community-wide event invites high school students, families, educators, and anyone curious about a future in the skilled trades to enjoy a day of hands-on fun, live demonstrations, and career exploration.

From building and engineering to manufacturing and other in-demand trades, attendees can try out real tools, engage with interactive exhibits, and speak directly with local employers and school staff about open positions, training programs, and career pathways. Live music, food and a welcoming environment make this an event you won't want

to miss.

"NextGen Skilled Trades Day is all about safely exploring careers that are in high demand—while having fun doing it," says Todd Parks, Senior Director of Admissions at PVCC. "Whether you're curious about working with your hands, building our communities, or designing and creating, this event can help you see your future in a whole new way."

Skilled trades are essential to our economy and offer rewarding, well-paying careers. Don't miss your chance to see where your skills and interests might take you.

**When:** Saturday, October 4, 2025 – 10 AM to 2 PM

**Where:** Piedmont Virginia Community College, 501 College Drive, Charlottesville, VA

**Cost:** FREE

Watch our event video to see why this day matters, what to expect, and why you should attend:  
**NextGen Skilled Trades Day Video**

[Click here](#) to register and learn more.

### Entrepreneur Guide Available in Pashto

As part of its commitment to Equitable Entrepreneurship under the 2024-2028 Economic Development Strategic Plan, OED is proud to share that the

*Entrepreneur Resource Guide* is now available in Pashto. Primarily spoken in Afghanistan and portions of Pakistan, Pashto is one of the top five, non-English, native languages used by families with students in City of Charlottesville Schools. It is our hope that this resource facilitates more entrepreneurial opportunities within the local Pashto-speaking community.

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View or download this and other versions of the *Entrepreneur Resource Guide* on the **Office of Economic Development website** and hard copies are available for pick-up from the OED office. Watch for additional translations coming soon!

Special thanks to Rafi Duadzi, our summer graduate intern, for his help with translation of this document.

## Cville Match Program Makes an Impact



Started in 2019, the Office of Economic Development's **Cville Match** program primarily offers local matching grant assistance for companies receiving federal funding through the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs, or state funds through the Commonwealth Commercialization Fund (CCF) and Virginia Jobs Investment Program (VJIP). To date, 15 businesses in the City of Charlottesville have participated in the program, most of which are high growth

potential companies operating in the fields of life science, renewable energy, cross-sector technology advancement, cybersecurity, and information technology/artificial intelligence.

In only a few short years, Cville Match has demonstrated its ability to make an economic impact. Participating companies have created 104 new jobs, with an average wage increase over two years for those employees of nearly \$5 per hour. Beyond investing in their workforce, Cville Match businesses have added a total of 38,950 square feet of space to their operations and report almost \$41,750,000 in private capital investment.

Other companies have also been able to take advantage of Cville Match through the Economic Gardening Phase II portion of the program. Economic gardening is a way of working with local, traded-sector companies to help them identify ways to expand their product and service offerings outside of Virginia. Once a company is accepted to and completes the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) economic gardening program, it can apply for up to \$5,000 in matching grant funds to assist with implementation of growth strategies developed through the economic gardening process.

If you've been in business in the City of Charlottesville for at least six months, have 1 to 100 full-time positions, less than \$50 million in annual revenue, and have been awarded funding through one of the federal or state programs listed above, **contact our office** so we can determine if Cville Match might be a fit for your company!

## Business Spotlight: Spirit Lab Distilling

Charlottesville's first legal distillery, Spirit Lab Distilling, is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, and it's been a decade of collaboration, innovation, and grit. Owned and operated by Ivar Aass, Spirit Lab has grown from a bold idea into a community-rooted brand known for its incredible range of locally crafted spirits.



Originally from Norway and of Indonesian descent, Ivar and his wife were living in Hell's Kitchen, New York, when they decided to visit Charlottesville 12 years ago. Drawn by its energy and charm, they made the move just a month later. "Charlottesville is a cool city with a great community vibe," Ivar says. "It's a great place to raise a family and start a business."

Ivar shared that his goal was and still is to create quality spirits using local, high-quality ingredients without the gimmicks. "We're not trying to be trendy," Ivar explains. "We're trying to be excellent. Over the years, Spirit Lab has collaborated with local cideries, wineries, breweries, maple syrup producers, coffee roasters, and even a local malter. These partnerships have helped shape unique and exciting products, many of which were requested by customers and co-created with the community.

"Our success is the result of an organic ecosystem," Ivar shares. "People talk about us, share our products, and bring us ideas. The community has contributed ingredients, feedback, and inspiration. It's a self-feeding snowball."

As they celebrate 10 years in business, Spirit Lab will be re-releasing fan favorites and debuting entirely new creations, including a 10-year rum. Also, be on the lookout for first-of-their-kind product in Virginia. Expansion is also in the works.

For Ivar, the experience as an entrepreneur has been equal parts hustle and fulfillment. "I can't believe I get to do this. I'm living a dream, even if 50% of the work is frustrating, it's the other 50% that makes it all worth it."

His advice to fellow entrepreneurs: "Do all your homework. Talk to zoning, talk to the city, talk to everyone. Charlottesville has its challenges, but the resources are here. You don't have to take every piece of advice, but listen. Stay open-minded." And above all, "Stick to your original goal. Don't compromise your values. You can cut corners, but it's not sustainable. Be who you are, and the right people will find you."

Despite the demands of running a distillery with his family, Ivar is learning to celebrate the small wins, especially the countless positive encounters with customers and community partners that continue to fuel the journey.

To learn more or explore their growing lineup of locally made spirits, visit the [website](#) and [Instagram](#)

## Career Essentials Workshop - Enroll Now



Join us for the Career Essentials Workshop on Friday, August 22, from 10:00 AM – Noon at Culinary Concepts AB, 2041 Barracks Road, Charlottesville.

This professional training workshop is designed to help participants start, change, or advance their careers by building confidence, improving soft skills, and unlocking their full potential. Whether you're re-entering the workforce, looking

for your next opportunity, or aiming for a promotion, this workshop will give you the tools to succeed.

Benefits include:

- Tuition assistance may be available for eligible participants
- Increased confidence in job searching and interviewing
- Improved soft skills – the #1 hiring factor

Date: Friday, August 22

Time: 10:00 AM – Noon

Location: Culinary Concepts AB, 2041 Barracks Road, Charlottesville

Contact: [ami@culinaryconceptsab.com](mailto:ami@culinaryconceptsab.com) for more information and to enroll.

Space is limited – register today!

## Free Pitch Practice for Local Startups

Virginia's early-stage entrepreneurs now have a valuable opportunity to sharpen their skills before stepping onto the big stage. **Charlottesville Angel Network (CAN)** and the **Central Virginia Small Business Development Center (CVSBDC)** have partnered to host "Pitch Preview" sessions.

Designed to help founders perfect their presentations, each session connects three selected startups with accredited angel investors who will provide actionable, real-time feedback at no cost to participants. Pitchers will have 5 minutes for introductions, a 15-minute pitch, and 10 minutes of investor feedback.

Upcoming Pitch Preview Dates (12-2 PM, via Zoom)

- Thursday, September 4, 2025 – Apply by Monday, August 18th
- Thursday, November 6, 2025 – Apply by Monday, October 20th
- Thursday, February 5, 2026 – Apply by Monday, January 19th

Organizers stress that these sessions are not for investment purposes, but rather a way to refine messaging, gain insight from seasoned investors, and prepare for future funding opportunities.

Interested entrepreneurs can review qualifications and **apply** at the CVSBDC website. Those unsure about readiness request a confidential **counseling session** with a CVSBDC business advisor.

Established in 2004, August is Black Business Month which recognizes the contributions of Black-owned businesses and aims to support their growth. In Charlottesville, this month is highlighted through initiatives like Discover Black Cville , and the 5th Annual Soul of Cville Festival which will be held at IX Art Park this Saturday, August 16th. This is a free, family-friendly festival!

## Free Business Resources



The Central Virginia Small Business Development Center is a team of business and technical experts available to advise and assist entrepreneurs, confidentially and free of charge. They offer 1:1 assistance, curated research, access to technical experts and professionals, and timely events/training. To see upcoming SBDC events, click [here!](#)

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