

A photograph of two young women standing in a modern office or co-working space with large windows in the background. The woman on the left is wearing a dark blue turtleneck sweater and has her arms crossed. The woman on the right is wearing a white turtleneck sweater under a dark blue blazer. The text 'ATTN: ENTREPRENEURS' is written vertically on the left side of the image.

**ATTN:  
ENTREPRENEURS**

**2025**

**FROM MAIN STREET  
TO OUTER SPACE**

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**THE MERCER COUNTY, PA  
RESOURCE GUIDE  
FOR ENTREPRENEURS**

# INDEX

2- Shenango LaunchBox

3 - Gannon University Small Business Development Center

4 - Entrepreneurs Forever

5 - Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at Grove City College

6 - Ben Franklin Technology Partners

7 - eCenter@Lindenpointe Business Incubator

8 - Hermitage Community and Economic Development Department

9 - Sharon Community Development Corporation

9 - Greenville Area Economic Development Corporation

9 - Penn-Northwest Development Corporation

10 - Resource Directory

**On front cover:** Local entrepreneurs Ava and Anna Kavulla, sisters and co-owners of *A Pastel Petal*. The business specializes in watercolor, calligraphy, photography and graphic design products and services.

# SHENANGO LAUNCHBOX

## About Us

The Shenango LaunchBox powered by the Greater Sharon Community was created in 2022. Community leaders in the City of Sharon had a unique opportunity to grant \$14.7 million in American Rescue Plan Act money to support COVID-19 response efforts, replace lost revenue, and support economic stabilization for households and businesses. Their vision was to invest a portion of the funds to fuel entrepreneurs and economic development for the future.

Through trusted relationships and collaboration, the City placed \$2 million into two distinct endowments of \$1 million each at the Shenango Valley Foundation, an affiliate of the Community Foundation of Western PA and Eastern OH. Penn State University agreed to match those \$2 million funds. One endowment exists to support Shenango LaunchBox and the other is intended to support economic development grants in the City of Sharon. Both endowments create a culture of innovation and drive economic development by leveraging the regional

ecosystem and resources throughout the statewide LaunchBox network.

LaunchBox is a signature program of the Invent Penn State Initiative, a commonwealth-wide system to spur economic development, job creation, and student career success. Thanks to collaborative community relationships and a desire to impact the greater good, generations of entrepreneurs will benefit from the combined creative investment and vision that brought this project together.

## Services We Offer

The Shenango LaunchBox powered by the Greater Sharon Community blends entrepreneurship-focused programming, business startup training, and community collaborations to facilitate the process of turning ideas into viable products and services. We offer programs such as:

- E-ship 1:1 - Meetings with entrepreneurs of all types to connect them to the regional ecosystem.
- Idea Test Lab / Design Lab - helping entrepreneurs define and refine their ideas.
- Social Impact Accelerator – State-wide program for businesses with a social and environmental vision.
- Free legal advice - We connect entrepreneurs to partners with Penn State Law.
- Support in business planning with the SBDC.
- Ensuring the fundamentals of a new business venture have support from regional professional services including insurance, accounting, etc.



**shenango**  
**launchbox™**

powered by the Greater Sharon Community

# GANNON UNIVERSITY SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

## About Us

The Gannon University Small Business Development Center's (SBDC) has assisted entrepreneurs and small businesses in Northwest Pennsylvania for 44 years. Since 1996, the SBDC has served Mercer County with a full time outreach office currently located at the Greenville Chamber of Commerce. The SBDC is the only nationally accredited economic development agency assuring high quality professional assistance. As part of the largest statewide provider of entrepreneurial services, Gannon SBDC plays a unique and vital role in the Commonwealth's economic development initiatives as the only organization that assists entrepreneurs in all stages of business and across all industry sectors. Funding support from the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Gannon University and the Mercer County Commissioners enables consulting services to be provided at no charge to the client.

Mike Blaurock, Mercer County Business Consultant, with the support of our entire team, works one on one with entrepreneurs and small businesses from start-up assistance to succession planning. The SBDC also offers educational programs with topics including The First Step, marketing, HR and business planning.

## Services We Offer

Gannon SBDC also administers The Valley Fab Lab, a makerspace located at Kennedy Catholic Middle/High School (KC). The Fab Lab is open to the public including certification training for the various machines. We also offer coursework and equipment training to the students at KC. Our small-scale workshop is the perfect haven for creatives, businesses, and entrepreneurs to turn their ideas into reality. With cutting-edge tools and a collaborative atmosphere, we empower you to bring your visions to life. Businesses can utilize our work for hire program for engraved promotional items,

banners, flyers, awards, staff gifts, etc. Workshops are offered on a monthly basis. To learn more about the Valley Fab Lab, visit [www.thevalleyfablab.org](http://www.thevalleyfablab.org).

If you are an entrepreneur or an existing business, contact the Mercer Outreach office at 724-300-1481 or visit our website [www.sbdcgannon.org](http://www.sbdcgannon.org) to connect with the SBDC team. Whether you need help identifying local markets for your business, are developing a business plan and want a second opinion, or have compliance issues you'd like to clarify, SBDC consultants are ready to help you grow your business.



# ENTREPRENEURS FOREVER

## About Us

Entrepreneurs Forever is growing nationally to help small business owners identify and overcome their challenges. Entrepreneurs Forever's mission is to empower all small business owners to grow thriving businesses that sustain their families and support their communities. While there are many resources designed to help start-ups and cohort groups exclusively for leaders of mature businesses, Entrepreneurs Forever is uniquely designed to offer a critical but previously missing piece: cohort support for businesses with revenues under a million dollars that are ready to grow beyond the "startup" phase. Entrepreneurs Forever is the premier program of the Mansmann Foundation.

## Opportunities for Small Business Owners in Western PA

The Entrepreneurs Forever model is based on peer-learning groups led by experienced facilitators. These groups, made up of non-competing small businesses, meet once a month for three years to address common challenges, share insights, and develop lead-

ership skills in a confidential, collaborative setting.

"Within just two years, we've seen entrepreneurs in our program achieve remarkable success," Drexler added. "By offering the right support, we're helping them break through those barriers and build sustainable businesses that contribute to their communities."

Since its inception, Entrepreneurs Forever has supported more than 1,000 small business owners across four states and small business owners participating in Entrepreneurs Forever peer learning groups are achieving unprecedented revenue growth in just under 2 years. By the end of 2023, 71.22% of Entrepreneurs Forever member businesses grew their revenue by an average of 83.9%.

## FAQs

### Q: What is "peer-to-peer" learning?

**A:** Unlike a teacher-student classroom setting, peer-to-peer learning allows members to freely share their small business challenges with each other so that the group can create collective solutions and, in the pro-

cess, learn critical small business fundamentals.

### Q: What does it take to qualify for Entrepreneurs Forever?

**A:** We have three simple qualifications to join a group. Members must:

1. Be in business for at least one year.
2. Have a minimum of \$30K in annual gross revenue.
3. Work in their businesses full time.

### Q: How much does Entrepreneurs Forever cost?

**A:** Thanks to the funding of partners dedicated to the growth of small businesses, our program is free for members.

### Q: What are some of the intangible benefits of a peer group?

**A:** Running a small business can be lonely. And that loneliness can erode confidence, hinder learning and damage results. Sharing and bonding over their experiences doesn't just help owners learn about business, it provides them with a critical safety net to share their thoughts and concerns with others who deeply understand what they're going through.

To learn more, contact us at [hello@e4ever.org](mailto:hello@e4ever.org)

# CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP + INNOVATION AT GROVE CITY COLLEGE

## About Us

The Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation at Grove City College (E+I) serves as a unique experiential component of our students' education that brings the concepts that they are learning in the classroom to life. Students of all majors participate in exciting competitions, programs, events, and international experiences that allow them to have valuable real-world experience while integrating what truly matters—values, judgment, and a Christian perspective. E+I presents entrepreneurship as a mindset and equips students with a set of practical skills and hands-on experience that prepares them to succeed, regardless of career path.

Programs contribute to local and regional economic development by bringing students and the community together to solve problems cooperatively through service learning projects, volunteerism, and targeted events. For students who are interested in starting a business, E+I has programming geared toward supporting student ventures and has a shared mission with the Entrepreneurship Department to educate and inspire principled, high-impact entrepreneurs whose innovations improve people's lives and solve important problems.

## Services We Offer

### E+I Fellows Program

The Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation at Grove City College provides a unique opportunity for nonprofits, startups, and small businesses in the Western Pennsylvania area to receive much needed help without the financial burden of hiring traditional interns or employees by placing highly driven students at internships with local organizations. Students are paid by (and are employees of) the Center for E+I during their internship, meaning there is no cost to the host organization! Host Organizations determine their areas of need, and E+I Fellows are placed at the organization to help in those areas. The number of E+I Fellows placed will depend on the size of the Host Organization.

Special consideration will be given to nonprofit and commercial entities that are deemed to have a positive impact on the local region through social innovation or economic opportunity. A limited number of host organizations will be selected to participate in the program.

For an organization to receive consideration for acceptance as a host for the E+I Fellows program, they must be located within two hours

of Pittsburgh, PA. Due to restrictions related to insurance, hybrid or in-person formats can only visit one work site.

To increase the likelihood of acceptance into the program, organizations with a need for remote roles are strongly encouraged to apply, as there is significant student interest in remote opportunities.

### Staley Speaker Series

The Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation's Richard G. Staley '62 Visionary Entrepreneur Speaker Series brings experienced entrepreneurs to campus to share their insights and wisdom. Each semester, the Center, which strives to promote an entrepreneurial culture across the College, hosts successful business men and women whose compelling stories of success and failure have inspired and enlightened our audiences and provoked thought and stimulated conversation.

To learn more about Grove City College and The Center for Entrepreneurship + Innovation, visit [www.gccentrepreneurship.com](http://www.gccentrepreneurship.com).

# BEN FRANKLIN TECHNOLOGY PARTNERS

## About Us

Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Central and Northern Pennsylvania has been at the forefront of nurturing innovation, empowering entrepreneurs, and driving economic growth in Pennsylvania for over 40 years.

As an initiative of the PA Department of Community & Economic Development and funded by the Ben Franklin Technology Development Authority, we're the go-to resource for emerging tech-startups and small manufacturers seeking investment capital, business support services, and operational assistance.

We're committed to fostering an innovative, community-wide infrastructure that propels Pennsylvania's business technology economy forward, ultimately creating high-paying, sustainable jobs in our local communities. Learn more at [cnp.benfranklin.org](http://cnp.benfranklin.org).

## Services We Offer

We provide the essential building blocks for a startup's success: funding, valuable connections, and expert guidance. Whether

they're just starting out or an established manufacturer looking to innovate, we're here to offer unwavering support to help startups thrive.

We provide investment: We provide essential seed and risk capital to fuel the growth of small businesses, serving as a respected catalyst to attract follow-on funding required to launch innovative products.

We provide knowledge: Our team of experts provides free mentoring and support in a variety of business topics. This comprehensive support often gives client companies a critical competitive edge.

We provide a network: We cultivate ecosystems that unite ideas and talent, connecting entrepreneurs to business incubators, colleges & universities, venture capitalists, economic development organizations, and more.

## Read Our Client Testimonial

*Pretty cool day!!*

*The Board of Ben Franklin Technology Partners has unanimously approved in-*

*vestment into OttoQa! We couldn't be more excited here at OttoQa! This investment not only helps us grow and enhance our platform, but it also validates all the hard work we've put in.*

*It wasn't an easy road to secure funding from Ben Franklin. There were multiple rounds of due diligence to go through. But the process itself made our product stronger, as we received invaluable input from some incredibly smart tech and business professionals which made the experience with it!!!*

*The good thing though is you are not alone as you go down this road, shout out to Brian Slawin who is our guide, calendar manager, questioner, supporter and the one person we could always count on to help create an unfair advantage for us!*

*We're looking forward to not just the additional capital, but also the support of the Ben Franklin infrastructure as we continue our mission to redefine our industry. Another awesome step from just an idea 15 months ago to the start of what I believe will be a QA platform powerhouse in the months to come. We are just getting started!*

# eCenter@LINDENPOINTE BUSINESS INCUBATOR

## About Us

The LindenPointe Development Corporation in Hermitage strengthens Western Pennsylvania's innovation ecosystem by empowering the region through two entrepreneur-focused programs: the eAcademy and the eCenter. These initiatives support local entrepreneurs, enabling them to thrive and drive regional innovation.

## eAcademy

The eAcademy program has been providing local high school seniors with a unique yearlong immersive experience to develop leadership and entrepreneurial skills as well as the confidence to be successful in an ever-changing, global economy for over 10 years now. The curriculum is purposefully designed with four primary program areas: Entrepreneurial Mindset, Startup Business Knowledge, Real World Experience, and Soft Skill Development. Participants are not limited to those pursuing business endeavors, but include students interested in a diverse range of careers, from technical trades, to filmmaking, to computer science, and more. Regardless of their life path - traditional college, workforce, gap year, or technical school - a growth mindset benefits all students. Young entrepreneurs grad-

uating from our program are equipped with the 21st-century skills necessary to be successful across all industries.

## eCenter

Established in 2012, the eCenter Business Incubator has been the keystone of technological innovation and entrepreneurial growth in Western PA. Operating out of the LEED Certified eCenter within the LindenPointe Innovation Park, we have proudly supported a diverse portfolio of technology startups. Our mission is to provide entrepreneurs with the resources, mentorship, and state-of-the-art facilities they need to scale their businesses and make a lasting impact.

## State-of-the-Art Facilities

The eCenter offers a range of flexible spaces designed to meet the evolving needs of our tenants. We offer dynamic co-working spaces and turn-key office suites designed to support startups and entrepreneurs at every stage of growth. Our flexible workspaces provide the perfect environment for innovation, collaboration, and productivity. The eCenter also caters to day-to-day business needs with amenities like an executive boardroom, kitchen, labs, and a podcast studio. Whether you're hosting a critical meeting, pitching to investors, developing

a prototype, or creating multimedia content, the eCenter is equipped to support your entrepreneurial endeavors.

## The Startup Stack: Comprehensive Support for Scaling

Understanding the unique challenges that startups face, we have developed a robust startup stack to empower entrepreneurs aiming to scale their businesses and raise capital. This comprehensive suite of services includes:

- Pitch Preparation
- Customer Discovery
- Research & Development
- Access to Capital Networks
- Mentorship Programs

At the eCenter, we believe in the power of community and the importance of accessibility. Our incubator fosters collaboration among community leaders, investors, advisors, and other entrepreneurs.

## Join the eCenter and Transform Your Vision into Reality

If you are an entrepreneur with a bold vision or a startup ready to take the next step, the eCenter is here to support you. Contact us today at [ecenter@lindenpointe.com](mailto:ecenter@lindenpointe.com) to schedule a tour or learn more about how the eCenter can meet your business needs. Let us be your partner in innovation, growth, and success.



# HERMITAGE COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## About Us

The Hermitage Community and Economic Development Commission offers two Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) programs to assist new and growing small businesses in the city. The Landscape & Façade/ Small Business Improvement Program was expanded to cover small business improvement, equipment and renovation projects, in addition to exterior landscaping, façade and site improvement projects. It provides up to \$40,000 or 90% of eligible project costs and carries an interest rate of 50% of the prime rate for 5-year loans or 50% of prime plus .5% for 7-year loans. The streamlined application requires no application fee and legal fees of \$200 are only required upon disbursement of loan proceeds.

## Services We Offer

The Business & Industry Revolving Loan Fund is for larger projects that are designed to create jobs that benefit the public and must create (or retain) at least one job for each \$50,000 in loan proceeds. Employment must be verified within 90 days of project completion. Projects must have a significant community revitalization benefit. It provides up to \$150,000 or 50% of the total project cost and carries an interest rate of 60% of prime for 5-year loans, 60% of prime plus .5% for 7-year loans, or 60% of prime plus 1% for 10-

year loans. Cash equity of at least 10% of the project cost is required. A \$100 upfront application fee is charged and up to \$750 in legal fees is required upon loan approval.

In addition, the City of Hermitage has teamed up with the City of Sharon to offer a Façade Improvement Program for eligible businesses and projects. The program offers up to \$5,000 in a reimbursable grant for eligible businesses and projects, on a dollar-for-dollar match basis. Business must be located within the target area which is E. State Street from the Sharon border to Keel Ridge Road, and Route 18 from Lamor Road to Longview Road. Projects must address exterior needs such as signage, awning/canopies, windows and doors, exterior lighting, exterior painting and cleaning, masonry, woodwork, metals, architectural finishes, and restoration of original architectural features. Interior work, work on outbuildings, landscaping, sidewalks and paved areas, projects begun or completed before an award are all ineligible.

The city also has a First-Time Homebuyers Assistance Program which may provide \$5,000, payable to and disbursed by the closing agent, for qualified first-time homebuyers. Applicants must not have owned a principal residence in the city for the past three years (if either spouse meets this requirement, the

applicant is eligible). The program is for the purchase of single-family homes that will be used as the applicant's principal residence. Only individuals qualify. The purchase must be a bona fide, arm's length transaction upon which Realty Transfer Tax is assessed. It is available on a first-come, first-served basis for the first 15 applicants.

## Read Our Client Testimonial

*After owning and operating a successful restaurant in New Castle for several years, I decided to open a second location of Pita A Sandwich Shop, in Hermitage. I found a building that was a near replica of my original restaurant, in a great location, but knew that I would need significant capital for renovations, equipment, inventory and to hire employees. The Hermitage Revolving Loan Fund helped me fill the gap and make my start-up possible.*

*The City of Hermitage staff was wonderful to work with and the application process was relatively simple and straight forward. Since opening we have been able to make accelerated payments to pay down the loan. I love being a part of the Hermitage community and we look forward to growing in the years to come.*

*Abdou Saada, Owner - Pita: A Sandwich Shop*

## **SHARON COMMUNITY DEVELOP- MENT CORP**

The Sharon Community Development Corporation (SCDC) is dedicated to fostering community and economic growth in Sharon. Serving as a vital resource for both new and established entrepreneurs, the SCDC provides direct support and connects business owners to a robust network of entrepreneurial resources. With a hands-on approach, the SCDC coordinates shared marketing initiatives, organizes events to attract foot traffic, and undertakes projects that enhance the downtown experience, making it a welcoming destination for small businesses and their customers alike. In tandem, the SCDC works very closely with the City of Sharon and community partners to align strategic actions utilizing the 'Main Street' model; ensuring a consistent and sustainable positive path forward for the City. Through these efforts, SCDC is not just driving development, but also building a vibrant community spirit in Sharon.

The SCDC, for example, administers the Facade Grant program, a downtown outdoor Summer Concert Series, Small Business Saturday, Night of Lights, and regular 'Business Meet-Ups.'

## **GREEN- VILLE AREA ECONOMIC DEVELOP- MENT CORP**

The Greenville Area Economic Development Corporation (GAEDC) has been fostering economic growth in Greenville, Pennsylvania, since 1986. GAEDC collaborates with partner organizations to market Northwest Pennsylvania as an excellent place to work, live, learn, and play. They assist both new and established businesses in opening or expanding operations, working confidentially to attract new enterprises and support existing ones. GAEDC also serves as the Mercer County representative for the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's Engage! Program, which focuses on business retention and expansion.

In addition to these services, GAEDC has successfully managed a Main Street Matters state grant, enabling local property owners on Main Street to upgrade their facades. Recently, GAEDC applied for an additional \$140,000 in grant funding aimed at supporting businesses located in the Main Street Corridor.

## **PENN- NORTHWEST DEVELOP- MENT CORP**

Since being established in 1985 as a 501(c)(3) private, non-profit, economic development corporation, Penn-Northwest Development Corporation has participated in more than 400 development, expansion, retention and community projects – resulting in the creation of nearly 10,000 new jobs and the retention of over 15,000 jobs. The last 40 years of economic and community development activity has resulted in over \$1 billion in public/private investment in the County.

Penn-Northwest's business is dedicated to ensuring the success of other businesses. Whether a company is looking to expand or start anew, they serve as the strategic partner businesses need. With extensive knowledge and access to financial tools, including loans, grants, credits, and abatements, they help businesses "Make it in Mercer County."

The mission of Penn-Northwest is to attract new business and industrial investments, provide outreach and retention services to support the growth and expansion of value-added businesses and industries, and offer coordination and support services for economic development in the Mercer County, PA region.

Penn-Northwest's team can be reached at 724.662.3705, or online at [www.penn-northwest.com](http://www.penn-northwest.com).

# DIRECTORY

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***Greenville Area Chamber of Commerce***

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***Grove City Chamber of Commerce***

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***PA CareerLink and West Central Job Partnership***

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***Grove City College***

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