CCBC Center for Business Innovation & Trades' Growth Lab Accelerator Program

General Information Packet – Spring 2027

The CCBC Center for Business Innovation & Trades' Growth Lab Accelerator Program is designed to strengthen small businesses and foster local economic development within our communities. Focused on the Essex community, this program supports existing businesses that are ready to pivot, grow, or overcome challenges with hands-on guidance and resources. Participants gain access to coaching, mentorship, training, and seed funding of up to $5,000 to help implement their growth plans.

This document outlines the key details of the program, including eligibility requirements, important dates, participation expectations, and terms and conditions. Please review all information carefully. By participating in the program, businesses agree to follow the guidelines and disclosures included in this packet.

Whether your business is adapting to new challenges or preparing for expansion, we're proud to partner with you through the Growth Lab Accelerator Program as we work to strengthen local businesses and build thriving communities across Baltimore County and beyond.

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Program Overview:

The Growth Lab Accelerator Program is an initiative that provides hands-on support to help existing small businesses identify barriers, pursue growth opportunities, and execute strategies for long-term success in their communities. Participants engage in class sessions, coaching, and mentorship designed to enhance business operations, marketing, and financial management, while also developing a personalized Growth Plan to guide their next steps.

Building on the success of its inaugural cohort in Randallstown, the program is entering its second year, now focusing on supporting businesses in the Essex community. Selected participants will receive access to professional mentorship, tailored training sessions, and up to $5,000 in seed funding to implement growth or pivot strategies.

How is the Growth Lab Accelerator Program organized?

- Interested participants can attend a general information and interest meeting on November 4, 2026, at CCBC Essex to learn more about the program.
- Participants submit their program application by December 6, 2026
- A review round of applications by CCBC faculty and community leaders in which the top applicants are selected to participate in the program
- The selected businesses participate in the 14-week program, developing an actionable growth plan, culminating in a final pitch competition and graduation ceremony.

What do the Accelerator members receive?

Accepted members of the accelerator program gain exclusive access to training, funding, and coaching designed to help them overcome barriers and grow their businesses.

Participants receive:

- Up to $5,000 in seed funding — $2,500 mid-program and $2,500 at program completion — to invest in eligible business growth activities such as marketing, branding, or customer outreach.
- Eight interactive sessions focused on topics like financial health, marketing strategy, leadership, operations, and technology.
- One-on-one business coaching to help apply what you learn directly to your business goals.
- Mentorship and guest presentations from experienced entrepreneurs, subject matter experts, and community partners.
- Networking opportunities with fellow business owners and access to CCBC's Business Innovation and Trades (CBIT) ecosystem.

- Pitch preparation and presentation coaching leading up to the final showcase and graduation event.
- Ongoing post-program connections through Think & Grow Seminars, alumni resources, and future program opportunities.

The Growth Lab Accelerator is built to meet business owners where they are — helping them pivot, strengthen, and thrive with hands-on support every step of the way.

Who Can Participate?

To be eligible for the Growth Lab Accelerator Program, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Operate a registered business in good standing with the State of Maryland.
- Have been in business for at least one year.
- Demonstrate a need to pivot, grow, or overcome a current business challenge.
- Be located within the Essex, MD area.

How Do Eligible Business Owners Apply?

Interested business owners can apply by completing the Growth Lab Accelerator Program Application Form. The form will be live from November 4, 2026 – to December 6, 2026. Once available, access it here: Community College of Baltimore County Submission Manager - Growth Lab Accelerator Program - Essex Application

Our Program Funders & Partners

The Growth Lab Accelerator Program is made possible through the generous support and collaboration of our funders and partners who share our mission to empower small businesses and strengthen local communities:

- **The Philip E. & Carole R. Ratcliffe Foundation** – The Philip E. & Carole R. Ratcliffe Foundation, Inc. (Ratcliffe Foundation) operates as a charitable organization providing grants for colleges, universities and non-profits working to prepare the next generation of workers and entrepreneurs with a focus on programs in Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware.
- **Wells Fargo** – Wells Fargo invests in programs that promote financial empowerment, small business development, and inclusive economic opportunity.
- **National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE) – Everyday Entrepreneur Program** – The National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE) is a 501(c) (3) organization dedicated to promoting entrepreneurship through community colleges by providing resources and support to build and sustain high-impact entrepreneurship programs. The association represents

340+ community and technical colleges, universities and HBCU's including over 2,000 faculty, staff, administrators and presidents who serve more than three million students. For more information, visit nacce.com.

Spring 2027 Center for Business Innovation & Trades

Growth Lab Accelerator Program: Essex Schedule

All sessions will be held in person at CCBC Essex, unless otherwise noted.

Location: CCBC Essex, 7201 Rossville Blvd, Baltimore, MD 21237

Time: 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Below is the anticipated program timeline for the Spring 2027 Essex cohort.

Day	Date	Milestone
Wednesday	**November 4**	Growth Lab Information and Interest Session
Sunday	**December 6**	Growth Lab Application Due
Monday - Tuesday	**December 7 - 15**	Application Review Period
Wednesday	**December 16**	Notifications Go Out: Final Businesses are selected
Friday	**December 18**	Deadline for participants to confirm commitment
Tuesday	**January 19**	First Session
Tuesday	**February 2**	Second Session
Tuesday	**February 16**	Third Session
Tuesday	**March 2**	Fourth Session: Get Access to 50% of Seed Funding
Tuesday	**March 16**	Fifth Session
Tuesday	**March 30**	Sixth Session
Tuesday	**April 13**	Seventh Session
Tuesday	**April 27**	Eighth and Final Session: Pitch Competition and Graduation

Receipt and Usage of Funds:

The seed money can be spent on anything that will help grow or pivot your business. Here are some examples of allowable expenses:

- Website services
- Marketing or sales brochures
- Logo design
- Market research
- Direct mail campaigns
- List services
- Signage
- Promotional cards/business cards
- Advertising campaigns (online or offline)
- Social media campaigns
- Videos
- Copyediting
- SEO campaigns

Examples of what the funds may NOT be spent on:

- Legal fees
- Utility fees (phone, electric, water, etc.)
- Salaries
- Computers or computer hardware
- Municipal fees
- Vehicle expenses
- Travel
- Trade association fees
- Subscriptions or books

(If there is an expense that you'd like to use your seed funding on that isn't listed, please contact either the program facilitator, Delise White, or Terry Gilleland, Jr., for approval. Alternatives will be considered on a case-by-case basis.)

How do participants receive the seed money?

Seed request forms will be issued after the fourth-class session. To receive funds, participants must follow these steps:

1. Submit a seed request form to the program facilitator via email outlining the item(s)/service(s) you wish to purchase and how it will help grow your business.
2. The request will be reviewed and either approved or denied. If denied, suggestions or alternative options will be provided.
3. Once approved, participants can either make the purchase and be reimbursed or submit an invoice for payment. All receipts must be submitted for reimbursement after the purchase.
4. A check/ACH payment will be disbursed in the name of the business or the owner for the approved amount. Participants must complete a W9 form to receive the funds.

Terms and Conditions:

By applying to and participating in the Growth Lab Accelerator Program, businesses agree to:

- Actively engage in all scheduled workshops, coaching sessions, and evaluations.
- Use all awarded seed funds exclusively for approved business growth purposes.
- Spend awarded funds within 12 months of receipt.
- Submit required documentation, including a W-9 form, before funding can be issued.
- Participate in program reporting and evaluation activities.
- Allow CCBC's Center for Business Innovation & Trades to make final decisions regarding program participation and funding approval.

Disclosures:

By submitting an application for or participating in the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) Center for Business Innovation & Trades' Growth Lab Accelerator Program, you acknowledge and agree to the following terms and conditions:

Program Use and Media Release

You grant the CCBC Center for Business Innovation & Trades (CBIT) and its affiliates an irrevocable, perpetual, worldwide, non-exclusive license to reproduce, distribute, display, and create derivative works of your application and participation materials. This includes written submissions, photos, video recordings, presentation materials, and other content created during the program.

These materials may be used in connection with the promotion or administration of the program in any media now known or hereafter developed, including but not limited to CCBC's websites, social media, newsletters, press releases, printed materials, and internal reports.

You also agree that CCBC, CBIT, and their designees may use your name, business name, city and state of residence, voice, photograph, likeness, and biographical information for promotional or informational purposes in any media without further compensation, consideration, or notice, unless prohibited by law.

Program Participation and Communication

By submitting an application, you consent to being contacted by program staff, coaches, or CCBC representatives via phone, email, or postal mail regarding your application status, participation details, program activities, or related opportunities.

If selected, participants agree to attend scheduled sessions, engage in coaching, and complete required forms or deliverables to remain in good standing. Failure to participate fully or comply with program expectations may result in removal from the program or forfeiture of funding.

Funding and Financial Responsibility

Participants selected for the Growth Lab Accelerator are eligible to receive up to $5,000 in seed funding, distributed in two phases, contingent upon active participation and demonstrated business progress. Funding is not guaranteed and is subject to approval and availability.

All approved funding must be used for business growth activities as outlined by CBIT. Participants are responsible for ensuring proper documentation, compliance with any tax or reporting obligations, and adherence to all applicable laws. Misuse of funds may result in disqualification or repayment requirements.

Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure

While confidentiality and mutual respect are expected within the Growth Lab community, CCBC cannot guarantee confidentiality of information shared during sessions, meetings, or public events. Participants should not disclose proprietary or confidential information they wish to keep private.

Due to the collaborative nature of the program, staff, mentors, coaches, and guest speakers are not required to sign non-disclosure agreements (NDAs). CCBC will make reasonable efforts to limit public distribution of application and program materials but cannot ensure exclusivity or protection of ideas.

Intellectual Property

All intellectual property shared or developed by participants remains their own. Participants are solely responsible for protecting any intellectual property rights associated with their business, including trademarks, copyrights, or patents. If using copyrighted materials or third-party images during presentations or materials, participants must secure proper authorization and permissions from the rights holders prior to use.

Liability and Program Changes

By applying to or participating in the Growth Lab Accelerator, you release the Board of Trustees of the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC), The Center for Business Innovation & Trades (CBIT), their directors, officers, employees, contractors, affiliates, partners, sponsors, mentors, and facilitators from any and all liability for losses, injuries, or damages arising from participation, use of funds, or reliance on program guidance.

CCBC reserves the right to modify, suspend, or cancel the program at any time for reasons including, but not limited to, insufficient participation, funding limitations, or unforeseen circumstances. Decisions regarding applications, participation, and funding are at the sole discretion of CCBC and CBIT and are final.

Thanks to our sponsors:

We could not accomplish our mission without the support of our sponsors.











