



For Immediate Release

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Food and Beverage Accelerator Program Opens Application Period for Southwest Cohort

Free, six-week intensive training program starts week of February 21.

Southwest VA (January 13, 2021) The [Virginia Small Business Development Center](#) and [Cureate Courses](#) invite companies in Southwest Virginia to apply for the latest cohort of the Food and Beverage Accelerator, hosted by the Blue Ridge Crossroads, Mountain Empire, Southwest Virginia, and Virginia Highlands SBDCs.

This free, intensive 6-week program is designed to help the founders and CEOs of growth-oriented food and beverage producers acquire the competencies required to grow and scale existing operations and to consider the next steps in strategic growth opportunities through wholesale, retail, and direct-to-consumer sales channels.

“This is a fantastic opportunity for Southwest Virginia’s food and beverage businesses to learn how to take their company to the next level. Participation in this program will equip these small business owners with the skills to grow sustainably,” said Chris Van Orden, Craft Beverage Assistance Program Manager, Virginia Small Business Development Center.

Each week, participants will attend an interactive hour-long webinar where they’ll learn strategies to pivot toward new revenue streams, expand their production, enter new territories, and successfully scale. Subject areas include:

- Establishing Your Unique Value Proposition
- Developing and Positioning Your Brand
- Identifying Sales and Growth Opportunities

In advance of each session, participants will individually work through in-depth e-modules taught by industry experts and complete assignments that impart useful skills and strategies. At the culmination of the program, each founder will present a pitch for his/her company’s growth plan and receive actionable feedback from a select group of mentors. Participants are expected to devote 6 to 8 hours each week to the course, of which 5 to 7 hours will take the form of self-directed work.

Kim Bryden, Founder and CEO of the program’s co-sponsor Cureate, is eager to continue the program’s success: “It’s been wonderful seeing the growth of all the businesses that have been

through the program already and I can't wait to work with the great entrepreneurs in Southwest Virginia.”

In order to be eligible for the program, companies must be:

- Located in the regions of Southwest Virginia served by the Blue Ridge Crossroads, Mountain Empire, Southwest Virginia, and Virginia Highlands SBDCs
- Planning for specific growth (e.g. territory, product lines, production scale)
- Producers of food and beverage products in the consumer-packaged goods category

The application period opens 9AM Thursday 1/13 and closes 5PM Monday 1/31. Selected companies will be notified by Wednesday 2/2 and the program begins the week of 2/21.

Interested companies can learn more and apply here: www.brcsbdc.org/food-beverage-accelerator. Questions can be directed to cvanord@gmu.edu.

The program is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration.

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About Small Business Development Centers. *The Blue Ridge Crossroads, Mountain Empire, Southwest Virginia, and Virginia Highlands SBDCs are four of 27 Small Business Development Centers across Virginia providing professional business advice, training, and information resources to help grow and strengthen local businesses and Virginia's economy. The SBDCs are hosted by local partners in collaboration with George Mason University and funded in part by SBA and local governments. The Virginia SBDC Network (www.VirginiaSBDC.org) is the most extensive business development program in the Commonwealth and part of [America's SBDC](#) – the nation's proven, cost-effective, and accredited infrastructure focused on small businesses – America's job creators.*