



INFORMER

Official Newsletter for the Innovation DuPage Community

Member Wins



Karin's Third Place win at the NSA Championship

Congratulations to ID member Karin Knecht, founder of Dunamis Coaching and Consulting, on earning 3rd place at the NSA Illinois Chapter Championship on March 5th at the Skokie Theater! Karin competed against veteran speakers with her five-minute story, "The Secret Sauces to Success."

Coming Up

DCEO Workshops for Clean Energy Incubator Members: April 21 & 27

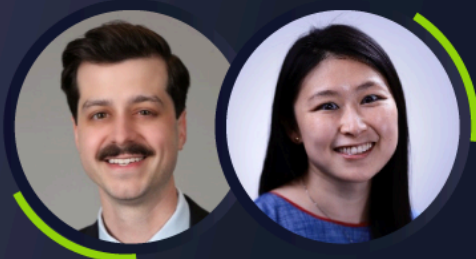
The Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is hosting two workshops for CEI members this month:

The first is a **virtual session on the Illinois Innovation Venture Fund (INVENT)** on Tuesday, April 21 from 1:00–2:00 p.m.

[Join the Virtual Session Here](#)



Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity Support for Startups



Chad Phillips

Donna Yuen

Monday, April 27th, 2026

In-Person: 1:00 – 2:00 PM

Donna Yuen and Chad Phillips will share resources available to startups in Illinois including the Angel Investment Tax Credit program, the Illinois Innovation Voucher program, the Illinois Innovation Venture Fund, SBIR/STTR matching grant program and the federal support program.

535 Duane St. Glen Ellyn, IL 60137



The second is an **in-person workshop at Innovation DuPage** on Monday, April 27 from 1:00–2:00 p.m. Donna Yuen and Chad Phillips will walk through resources available to Illinois startups, including the Angel Investment Tax Credit, Illinois Innovation Voucher Program, INVENT, SBIR/STTR matching grants, and other federal support programs.

[Register for the In-Person Session](#)

We encourage you to attend both sessions, as neither will be recorded per DCEO guidelines.



Join biweekly Member Meetups at Innovation DuPage! Network, enjoy bagels & coffee, and learn from spotlight members & resource experts.

The next Member Meetup will be on April 29 from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Member Spotlight: Joe Stella of Backpack Agency

Member Resource: Ileen Kelly and Colleen Sall of Illinois APEX Accelerator

Following the Member Meetup, there will be an EdTech and Education cluster meeting.

If you can't make it in person, attend virtually through our [Zoom Link](#)

Sign up to present at a future Member Meetup

Come Support the 9th Annual Big Idea Pitch Contest: May 6



Save The Date For The 9th Annual

BIG IDEA Pitch Contest

Wednesday, May 6th, 2026

In-Person: 5:00 – 7:00 PM

425 Fawell Blvd, Glen Ellyn,
IL 60137, HEC RM1022



On Wednesday, May 6 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at College of DuPage, student finalists from across DuPage County will take the stage to pitch their business ideas for a chance to win a share of \$12,000 in prizes.

This event is free and open to the community. Whether you're an entrepreneur, a mentor, or simply someone who enjoys seeing fresh ideas come to life, this is a great evening to be part of. Presented in partnership with College of DuPage, this year's prizes are generously sponsored by NACCE, PermaSeal, and Ezee Fiber Internet.

[Register Here](#)

College of DuPage Graphic Design Showcase: May 14



The College of DuPage Graphic Design Program is hosting Portfolios 2026 on Thursday, May 14 at the Student Resource Center (SRC 2000) on the COD campus.

From 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., attendees can meet graduating graphic design students, view their portfolios, and connect with emerging talent available for hire or interviews. The evening also features an exhibition of nominated student work and light appetizers. The night wraps up with the COD Graphic Design Student Awards from 8:00 to 9:30 p.m.

Whether you're looking to bring on a designer or simply want to celebrate the next generation of creative talent in our community, this is a great opportunity to engage with local students who are ready to work.

[Register Here](#)

Business Model Canvas Workshop Series with Phil Brown

Turn Your Idea Into a Real Business Plan



4-Week Business Model Canvas Workshop Series

Led by Phil Brown, SCORE, Land of Lincoln & Innovation DuPage Mentor

Through our partnership with SCORE Land of Lincoln, ID recommends our early-stage companies participate in The Business Model Canvas, a 4-week workshop series that provides entrepreneurs with fundamental business knowledge and guides participants in developing a business plan.



Have a business idea but don't know where to start?

This hands-on workshop series is designed specifically for early-stage entrepreneurs who **don't yet have** a business plan.

What You'll Gain

- Create a clear, one-page Business Model Canvas
- Identify key components of your business
- Evaluate viability and risks
- Plan your next steps—or if you need to pivot

Program Structure

- 3 Interactive Sessions (2 hours each)
- 1 Final Q&A Session
- Small Group Setting

Who This Is For

- Aspiring entrepreneurs with an idea
- Early-stage founders without a business plan
- Anyone looking to validate and structure their concept

Why This Matters

- Most businesses fail due to lack of clarity—not lack of effort
- This workshop gives you the foundation needed to move forward with confidence

Spots Are Limited!

- Only 10 participants
- Sessions scheduled once 8 are confirmed



Get Started!

Secure your spot and turn your idea into an actionable business model!

Sessions begin in June. Specific dates and times will be shared by Program Manager Rob Glaser to those who reach out using the QR code or clicking the button below.

Secure your Spot!

Opportunities

BMO Harris Bank: Celebrating Women Grant Program

Fifteen small businesses across the U.S. and Canada will each receive a \$10,000 grant to support their next stage of growth. This program is designed for business

owners committed to advancing women through their products, services, or community impact, and who can demonstrate how funding will help expand that mission. Applications due April 23.

[To Learn More and Apply](#)

Illinois Innovation Voucher Program: Now Accepting Applications

Illinois small and mid-sized businesses can apply for vouchers covering up to 75% of costs (up to \$75,000) to partner with Illinois universities and research institutions on R&D projects. Eligible uses include product development, prototyping, testing, and access to labs and equipment. Applicants must be Illinois-based for-profit businesses.

[To Learn More and Apply](#)

SCORE Chicago Small Business Pitch Competition: Applications Due May 7

SCORE Chicago is accepting applications for its Small Business Pitch Competition, open to small business owners ready to take their business to the next level. Participants receive one-on-one mentorship, exposure for their business, and a chance to compete for a share of \$15,000 in cash prizes. Applications are due May 7, with finalists announced in mid-June and the final pitch event taking place July 16 at the Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Chicago.

[To Learn More and Apply](#)

ID Member Industry Clusters

Innovation DuPage's Industry Clusters designed to connect ID Members working in the same industry. Industry Clusters will give you the opportunity to:

- Network with peers in your field
- Share resources and tools
- Discuss trends and challenges
- Request future speakers and programming

Clusters meet 10:45 a.m.–12:00 p.m. in our event space, right after our regular Member Meetups (9:30–10:30 p.m. on Wednesdays). You're welcome to attend both! Here's the schedule for the next quarter:

- April 29 – EdTech and Education
- May 13 – Commercial Goods & Services
- June 10 - Marketing
- June 24 - Technology

- May 27 – Female Founders from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Questions? Reach out to [Elina Conley](#), ID's Entrepreneur in Residence.

Seeking Clean Tech Companies!



Innovation DuPage is actively looking for startups and small businesses working in the clean energy or clean technology industry - or referrals to companies that could benefit from our targeted support.

[To Learn More](#)

Resources

Grant Writing Support: Jessica Wain, Co-founder of Hobbs & Wain Advancement Partners provides grant writing and proposal development support, helping you identify, pursue, and secure funding opportunities that can accelerate your company's growth and scalability.

[Jessica's Booking Link](#)

Dorian Dickinson, CEO of FundingHope has shared his presentation from his workshop on raising capital through investment crowdfunding. The slides cover how Regulation Crowdfunding works, what investors look for, and how to evaluate if your business is ready.

[Access the Presentation Here](#)

Allies for Community Business provides capital, coaching, and connections to help entrepreneurs grow businesses that create jobs and wealth in their communities. Allies for Community Business offers loans up to \$500,000 to support community businesses.

[Schedule a Session: Allies for Community Business](#)

The Illinois Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) located throughout the state provides information, confidential business guidance, training, and other

resources to start-up and existing small businesses. In addition, the Illinois SBDCs help clients with securing needed business capital, marketing, exporting, commercialization of new ideas, development of innovative products and services. Client projects range from early-stage, pre-revenue concepts to established business operations.

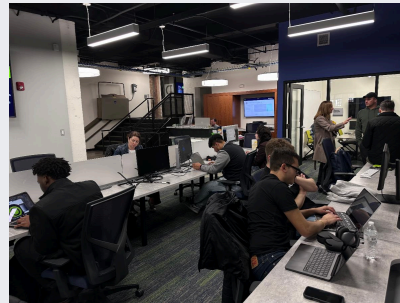
[Check Grant Availability Here](#)

Let us help you share your success with the ID community!

Share a recent win – big or small. It could be featured in our next letter! Email your accomplishment to [Hannah Macey](#).

[Sign Up to Present at a Member Meetup](#)

[Member Portal Login Page](#)



Reminder: Innovation DuPage is open for members as a coworking space 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!

Keep up with Innovation DuPage on social media!



Innovation DuPage | 535 Duane St. | Glen Ellyn, IL 60137 US

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