



CONTACT:

Cassie Minder

Communications and Development Manager

Wheeling Heritage

304-232-3087

[cminder@wheelingheritage.org](mailto:cminder@wheelingheritage.org)

### **Small Business Program Seeks Entrepreneurs**

WHEELING, W.Va. – Mar. 1, 2023– The Regional Economic Development Partnership (RED) and Wheeling Heritage are now accepting applications for the eighth cohort of CO.STARTERS, a program for entrepreneurs and small business owners. The program equips entrepreneurs of all kinds with the insights, relationships and tools needed to turn business ideas into action.

Those who are interested in starting a business or want to expand a current business can apply at [redp.org/costarters](http://redp.org/costarters). The program will meet once a week for ten weeks from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The start date and weekly meeting day will be determined once the CO.STARTERS cohort is selected. Applications are due Mar. 20.

The cost to participate, including materials, is \$200. Payment plans are available upon request. The cohort will be made up of applicants who are aspiring entrepreneurs or seasoned entrepreneurs looking to launch a new product or service. The program is an action-driven, collaborative process with small supportive group of like-minded people.

“We’ve seen tremendous success with this program in the past and I am excited to be able to offer it again. The graduates from this program have the tools necessary to turn their dream into reality. We also strive for this program to serve as a resource for existing business owners who feel stuck. No matter how long you’ve been in business, sometimes it’s important to step back and take some time to work on your business, rather than in your business,” said Valerie Piko, Program Development Manager at RED.

“As a catalyst for the revitalization, we know that having an engaged small businesses ecosystem is an important component of a strong local economy,” said Alex Panas, Program Manager at Wheeling Heritage. “We’ve seen several CO.STARTERS graduates go on to grow their businesses and become staples in our community. I can’t wait to see the latest cohort of change-makers who take advantage of this opportunity.”

Drawing from the experience of successful entrepreneurs and start-up veterans from around the globe, CO.STARTERS walks creative small-business owners through lean, effective business modeling methods in a simple and intuitive way, and with the help of a supportive community. Rather than treating a start-up like a large corporation and writing a detailed business plan, CO.STARTERS participants are encouraged to build and test small models first. In the process, participants receive real-time customer feedback, update their models to meet customer needs and avoid creating businesses based on incorrect assumptions.



So far, more than 75 entrepreneurs in the Ohio Valley have completed the CO.STARTERS cohort. Every entrepreneur was in a different stage of the business creation process. Most had no business training or experience.

RED and Wheeling Heritage will continue to accept applications through March 20, or until the cohort is full.

This program is made possible due to community volunteers as well as funding from RED and Wheeling Heritage. To learn more about the program and to sign up, visit [redp.org/costarters](http://redp.org/costarters).

**About RED:**

Regional Economic Development Partnership (RED) is a private, nonprofit development corporation that serves Ohio, Marshall and Wetzel Counties in the Northern Panhandle of West Virginia, with emphasis on creating jobs and stimulating the local economy through assisting with local business expansion, recruiting new business investment, and encouraging small business development through entrepreneurial activity. RED also is active in the SBA 504 program and offers financial assistance through various state and local loan programs. RED was established as Ohio Valley Industrial Corporation in 1926, and incorporated as OVIBDC in 1961.

**About Wheeling Heritage:**

Wheeling Heritage is a catalyst for the revitalization of Wheeling. Through historic preservation, community development, and the arts, we help to tell Wheeling's story and shape its future. We seek to improve the quality of life in Wheeling by preserving and investing in our city, collaborating with others, and engaging the citizens of Wheeling in our work.