

The logo features a stylized 'C' composed of three curved segments in yellow, orange, and red. To the right of this graphic, the word 'CHESTERFIELD' is written in white, uppercase, sans-serif font. Below 'CHESTERFIELD', the word 'MY' is written in a bold, orange, sans-serif font, followed by 'BUSINESS STARTS HERE' in white, uppercase, sans-serif font.

CHESTERFIELD
MY BUSINESS STARTS HERE

A portal to starting a business
in Chesterfield County

mybusinessstartshere.com

“My Business Starts Here”
Chesterfield County, Virginia

Starting and growing a business in Chesterfield County just got easier! With the launch of “My Business Starts Here”, Chesterfield Economic Development (CED) and the Chesterfield County Public Library (CCPL) have partnered to offer residents seamless service and resources for their small business needs. This initiative creates a multi-pronged approach to getting residents the small-business information they need. Chesterfield County appreciates the contributions of small businesses to the local economy and works to provide programs and services that support their growth and success. “My Business Starts Here” truly brands Chesterfield County as “your place for entrepreneurship and business solutions”.

The Challenge

While there are numerous resources available to entrepreneurs, getting the RIGHT help is a daunting task. One of the major obstacles to self-employment is the difficulty in gathering accurate and specific information to facilitate the process of starting a business. Potential entrepreneurs are immediately faced with not only the requirements of business operation, but also a myriad of local, state and federal forms, requirements, rules and regulations that can become overwhelming. Sustaining and growing a small business can be equally daunting not knowing how or having the time to navigate through all of the resources and find an appropriate business solution. Historically, 73% of Chesterfield County businesses have fewer than 10 employees, with a large percentage being sole proprietors working out of their

homes. These potential and existing small-business owners also needed a place where data and information could be transformed into practical, usable knowledge.

County Supervisor, Jim Holland, approached Chesterfield Economic Development with a concern that the County did not have programs or resources to support small businesses and entrepreneurship. When the department shared with Mr. Holland all of the programs and resources available to Chesterfield County businesses, it became clear that the real problem was access. How do entrepreneurs and small business owners find these resources and how do they get to the right business solutions? Through Mr. Holland's association with the library and the Friends of Library, he was aware of the potential to leverage the vast business resources available through Chesterfield County Public Library with the business development resources available through Chesterfield Economic Development. He encouraged CED and CCPL to create a program to meet this need. The challenge was how to make access to these programs and services so available that any budding entrepreneur or small business owner could get to resources and business solutions in an easily accessible, user-friendly approach.

The Solution/Program

"My Business Starts Here" is all about access. The new web portal, www.mybusinessstartshere.com, is designed to funnel the user to the most appropriate and simple solution to their business needs. If the user is unsure of where to begin, the "Step-by-Step" approach links the user to a series of questions that guide the process. If the user

already knows some of the steps or has already completed some of the requirements they can go directly to the “Business Guide” for more detailed assistance. The section “I Want To...” is a compilation of common business questions and industry specific requirements. For example, the user can learn how to do business with government or what additional federal, state or local requirements are associated with starting a child day care center. Existing businesses can get guidance on re-zoning property, going through the county’s site plan process or find sign and banner regulations. One of the more popular sections is the “Money” section where users can get information on grants, financing programs and other business incentives. There are clearly identified links to the Chesterfield County Library’s business resources throughout the portal. MyBusinessStartsHere.com can be accessed from any computer or mobile device that has an Internet connection.

Recognizing that not all citizens have home computers or Internet access, the Chesterfield County Public Library system was a natural fit as a partner in this effort. The Library, as part of this initiative, created a new Small Business Resource Center, designed with the small businessperson’s needs in mind. The center can be utilized as a second office, a meeting place, a staff-training facility, or a research lab. Desktops and laptops are available to the public, as are current books and magazines and a variety of small-business tools – all free of charge. Users can access the best of the web as chosen by professional librarians, in addition to receiving one-on-one assistance with their business research. Not only is the Small Business Resource Center a space designed for every need of the small business user – from dedicated computers, to the most current magazines and print materials, to free access to

important, practical small-business tools such as a binder and laminator but it is also an oasis for community members – a space where they can sit in a comfortable chair and read the latest issue of Money magazine, meet with colleagues, attend free workshops relating to small business, or research a marketing plan. They can bring their coffee, settle in, check-out a laptop and use the space as their office.

Meadowdale was selected as the first location for the Small Business Resource Center based on the established demographics. The demographics of the area indicate individuals from lower income brackets, higher unemployment rate, higher percentage of ethnic minorities, and higher percentage of children in free lunch programs. These are the library customers who don't know where to begin with their inquiry, but they realize that starting a daycare or working from home is an option that is both desirable and worth investigating. The free Internet connection, databases, and small business resources at the library are invaluable to this segment of Chesterfield County's residents.

Long-term plans include creating additional "My Business Starts Here" sites. A grant through the Community Development Block Grant has been awarded to create a Small Business Resource Center in the County's small business incubator, BizWorks Enterprise Center and planning is already underway by Chesterfield County Public Library to provide other Small Business Resource Centers at the remaining CCPL branches. Chesterfield Economic Development is also in negotiations to place Small Business Resource Centers in several private sector venues as well.

Technology is also a vital component this initiative. The “My Business Starts Here” portal is designed to be user friendly and guide visitors to the most appropriate section of the site for their needs. The web portal can be accessed from any computer or mobile device that has an Internet connection. A web app has been developed that can be downloaded from the site onto mobile devices such as smartphones and ipads which will enhance viewing. The CCPL has desktops and laptops with Internet capabilities. The desktops and laptops contain a full suite of software offerings such as MS Office, Adobe Photoshop and QuickBooks. A separate homepage was developed for the CCPL web site on the center’s computers that describes the resources available and offers prominent direct access to CED’s web portal. In addition to the library’s computers, free access to Wi-Fi is available over the County’s “Citizen Wi-Fi” network for use on personal laptops within the library. Visitors can also access CCPL’s subscription to electronic business-based databases such as: Reference USA, Morningstar and ValueLine, Business Economics and Theory, and the Gale Small Business Center.

The Cost

This initiative was developed and launched on a very limited budget. Some of the additional computer equipment and business resources purchased by the library were funded in part by two non-profit groups, Friends of the Library and the Meadowbrook Area Community Council. Computer and small office equipment for a Small Business Resource Center, which

will be located within the County's small business incubator, will be funded through a grant from the Community Development Block Grant program.

The costs are as follows:

My Business Starts Here Web Portal Start Up Costs	
Signage, Kiosks and Marketing Publications	\$ 7500.00
Desktop/Accessories for BizWorks Enterprise Center	\$3500.00
Small Office Equipment for BizWorks Enterprise Center	\$200.00
My Business Starts Here Print Resources/Marketing Items	\$1800.00
Total	\$13,000.00

Small Business Resource Center Start Up Costs	
Signage and Marketing Publications	\$ 2000.00
Desktops, Laptops and Accessories	\$9526.00
Secure Charging Cart for Laptops	\$473.00
Software and Licenses	\$1536.00
Small Office Equipment	\$400.00
Small Business Print Resources	\$1500.00
Total	\$15,435.00
Total Program Cost	\$28,435.00

The Results

One of the key methods for measuring the success of the program that Chesterfield Economic Development uses is Google Analytics. The department uses Google Analytics to determine how visitors found the site and how they interact with it. During the five-month period since the site was launched on September 1, 2010, nearly eleven hundred users have viewed pages more than 5,169 times. This translates to more than 4.79 pages viewed per visit. Users on average spent nearly five minutes viewing content on the site.

The vast majority (90%) of the traffic visiting the site came by directly entering the web address or came from a referring site. Less than 10% found the site via search engines. A higher than average time-on-site and a lower than average bounce rate indicates users visiting the site are finding topics they were expecting and spending time exploring the content. The most viewed areas on the site are the step-by-step guide to starting a business. This content would be useful to exactly the type of user the Economic Development Department and Chesterfield County Public Library were targeting when the site was established. The analytic results from the first few months seem to indicate a successful launch of "My Business Starts Here".

Chesterfield County Public Library has also seen a positive impact of this effort. At least 2/3 of the small business workshops offered in the Small Business Resource Center have approached or reached capacity of 25 participants. Small business owners have been using the small office equipment such as laminators, hole punch, binding machine, copier and other tools to develop packets for their businesses. The print materials are engaging the users. Initially, 1,500 print pieces were produced in support of the initiative. Within two months, all print products were distributed and we are currently preparing to order a third round of print materials.

Virginia's number one employer is small business. Historically, more than 73% of Chesterfield County's businesses employ ten or fewer employees. Recognizing that the

growth of small business is imperative to economic expansion in the nation, Virginia, and the county, Chesterfield County is committed to counseling, assisting, and protecting the interests of small business concerns. CED and CCPL were presented with the opportunity to meet the informational needs for the small business owners and entrepreneurs of Chesterfield County. This program is an excellent example of the value of partnerships. Through partnerships, Chesterfield County is able to leverage resources and offer this program to our businesses and potential entrepreneurs in a tight budget climate and with limited resources. Our unique approach, one that utilizes cross-departmental county resources, other business assistance providers in our community, and members of the business community - represents a highly leveraged approach.

The “My Business Starts Here” model is also scalable and transferable. While we started our effort partnering with the Chesterfield County Public Library, it is easy to expand the program to include additional resources centers. Partnerships with chambers of commerce, business incubators, and other private-sector business services providers present significant growth potential. There have also been discussions with neighboring municipalities about replicating this effort. The desired end result, of course, is to better serve the needs of the businesses in our community and grow healthy businesses, which in turn, provide increased job opportunities and capital investment to the community, as well as offering valuable goods and services. Through this partnership, we can offer a comprehensive package of support for small business enterprise, with the personalized assistance that can ensure their success.



CHESTERFIELD

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Business Starts Here

Chesterfield Economic Development (CED), along with support from the Board of Supervisors and County Administration, is committed to working with our existing, small, and minority businesses to help make them a prosperous part of the business community. By partnering with agencies like the Small Business Administration (SBA) and Virginia Department of Business Assistance, County departments such as the Community Development division, Chesterfield County Public Libraries and with other resource partners, both start-up and existing small and minority businesses can be provided technical assistance and access to business resources at the local level. Chesterfield Economic Development is your “corporate concierge” for business assistance.

CED currently offers: workshops and seminars, access to capital, site selection assistance, county permit process guidance, and one-on-one business counseling.

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Starting and growing a business in Chesterfield County just got easier! With the launch of “My Business Starts Here”, Chesterfield Economic Development and the Chesterfield County Public Library have partnered to offer residents seamless service and resources for their small business needs. The new web portal at www.mybusinessstartshere.com is designed to direct entrepreneurs to solutions to their business questions. Users will find a step-by-step guide to starting a business, information on sources of capital, how to get a business license in Chesterfield, additional requirements for certain business types and information on how to do business with government. Users can access the portal from their home computer or any library location, where they can also utilize a host of free tools, free expertise, and free technology.

Look for additional “My Business Starts Here” locations to come online as we expand our partnerships to make access to business resources convenient countywide so that in Chesterfield County business really does “Start Here”.



In fiscal
year
2009

customers borrowed 3.5 million items.
people visited the library 1.9 million times.
staff members answered 625,521 questions.
library computers were used more than 548,332 times.
library meeting rooms served as a venue for 3,677 meetings.

Chesterfield CCPL Public Library

**Why pay for Books and Magazines?
Put that money into your business.**

Your Place for Entrepreneurship and Business Solutions

INFORMATION you won't find on Google.....

Did you know that there is a world of information and resources online that cannot be accessed through your everyday search engine? The library pays for access to databases that contain up-to-date business and customer demographics, investment reports, stock performance, and news articles....all so you don't have to!

Use your library card
to begin your
exploration from
home.

Reference USA • NewsBank • Morningstar • ValueLine
General Business File ASAP • Business Economics and Theory
Insurance and Liability Collection • Small Business Collection

Books
to help
you
answer
business
questions.

The One Minute Entrepreneur: The Secret to Creating and Sustaining a Successful Business by Ken Blanchard, Don Hutson and Ethan Willis 658.11 B

The First-Time Manager by Lorin B. Belker and Gary S. Topchik 658.302 B

How to Write a Business Plan by Mike McKeever 658.15224 M

The Code of the County of Chesterfield, Virginia 348.755594 C

Code of Virginia 348.755 V

Magazines to help
keep you on top
of your game.

Business Week • Fortune • Kiplingers • Smart Money
The Wall Street Journal • Virginia Business Forbes • Money

Keep up
with trends
and
industry
news.

Small Business Trends Radio • smbtrendwire.com

Small Business Trends Radio is an hour-long radio program featuring small business experts on a variety of topics. Broadcasting LIVE, once a week, over the BlogTalkRadio network, each archived show is also available on their website as a podcast. Many shows also include a short Today's Trend segment, highlighting a trend impacting small businesses.

All Business Blog Center • allbusiness.com/blog/metablog.asp

Small Business Trends • smallbiztrends.com

Small Business



Resources

Chesterfield County, Va.

804-751-CCPL

library.chesterfield.gov



**CHESTERFIELD
MY BUSINESS STARTS HERE**

Providing a FIRST CHOICE community through excellence in public service

CCPL is Your Place for Entrepreneurship and Business Solutions.

From our spaces to our informative collections to our free programs to our knowledgeable staff, CCPL helps your small business to succeed!

The Best of the Web for Chesterfield Business Owners and Entrepreneurs

as chosen by our resident experts. These websites have something for everyone, the newcomer or the seasoned professional.

Tax Information

Chesterfield Economic Development chesterfieldbusiness.com

The Department of Economic Development in Chesterfield County works with existing, small and minority businesses by providing technical assistance and access to business resources. Explore their new portal at mybusinessstartshere.com

Chesterfield County Chamber of Commerce chesterfieldchamber.com

The Chesterfield County Chamber of Commerce is the most influential and effective business advocacy group in Chesterfield County and offers many networking opportunities with other business.

Chesterfield County: Business Services www.chesterfield.gov/business.aspx?id=9468

The Chesterfield Business page provides links to local tax rates, tax forms, rezoning requests, calculating your water and waste water bill, and local business news.

Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce grcc.com

The Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce advocates for and supports positive change in the community, offers members the opportunity to participate on Chamber committees, local Business Councils, attend and network at events, build professional development skills through educational workshops, and more.

Better Business Bureau, Richmond richmond.bbb.org/

BBB's mission is to be the leader in advancing marketplace trust. This link is for the Greater Richmond Area Better Business Bureau website.

Richmond Office of Minority Business Development richmondgov.com/MinorityBusinessDevelopment/index.aspx

Facilitates, produces, and advances opportunities for minority business enterprises (MBE), emerging small businesses (ESB), and disadvantaged business enterprises (DBE) to successfully participate in the full array of contracting opportunities available in the city of Richmond, Va.

Small Business Development Centers www.virginiasbdc.org

The Virginia SBDC network is the most extensive business development program in the Commonwealth providing professional business counseling, training and information resources to help grow and strengthen Virginia businesses.

The Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce vahcc.com/

The Chamber works with Hispanics and all interested in Hispanic business, the Virginia Hispanic business community; Virginia businesses and corporations; local, state, federal, and international entities, nonprofit organizations, and individuals.

YesVirginia.org: Start a small business in Virginia yesvirginia.org/pdf/guides/EstablishingBusiness.pdf

The Virginia Guide to Establishing a Business summarizes the major state and local tax, labor, occupational and environmental regulations that may affect businesses in Virginia.

Business.gov: Virginia Small Business Guide business.gov/states/virginia/

Business.gov, an official site of the U.S. Small Business Administration, helps small businesses understand their legal requirements and locate government services from federal, state and local agencies.

Virginia Department of Minority Business Enterprise dmbe.virginia.gov/

DMBE is the state agency dedicated to enhancing the participation of small, women- and minority-owned businesses in Virginia's procurement opportunities.

Virginia Small Business Assistance Program (VA SBAP) deq.state.va.us/osba/learnmore.html

The Virginia Small Business Assistance Program (VA SBAP) is a non-regulatory, voluntary program that offers small businesses free and confidential technical assistance on air quality and related environmental requirements.

Laws

Occupational and Environmental Regulations

Connections

Support



Mybusinessstartshere.com

Library.chesterfield.gov



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