

Q: What is the Cornerstone Collective?

A: The Cornerstone Collective is an initiative housed within the Intentional Development Group (IDG), a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. It is designed to support micro-businesses in the Youngstown-Warren region.

Q: What is an Accelerator Program?

A: An accelerator program is a structured, short-term (typically 3-6 months) program designed to help early-stage startups accelerate their growth and prepare them for investment or market launch. They provide intensive mentorship, educational workshops, access to investors, and other resources.

Q: What is the Cornerstone Business Accelerator Program?

A: The CBA was created to support entrepreneurs in the Youngstown-Warren Region through a highly structured, accelerated program, focusing on food-based, consumer packaged goods and service based businesses. Participants will have access to online courses, technical assistance, and impact investment opportunities.

Q: Who is eligible to apply for the Cornerstone Business Accelerator program?

- A:
- Businesses must be located within Mahoning or Trumbull Counties
 - Businesses must be food-based, consumer packaged goods, or service based
 - Must be able to confirm household income according to most recently completed Tax Return
 - Must be registered to do business in the State of Ohio with the Secretary of State's Office
 - Must be a for-profit business

Q: How are businesses selected for the Cornerstone Business Accelerator Program?

- A: Program selections includes:
- Meet eligibility criteria
 - Submit a completed application
 - Complete an in-person interview
 - Attend orientation

Q: When do applications open and close for Cornerstone Business Accelerator?

A: Applications open on Monday, March 9, 2026 and close on Monday, March 30, 2026.

Q: When and where will in-person interviews take place?

A: In person interviews will take place the week of April 6th - April 10th, 2026 from 11:00am - 7:00pm at McGuffey Centre in Youngstown, OH.

CORNERSTONE BUSINESS ACCELERATOR PROGRAM



Q: How do I apply for the program?

A: A link to the application can be found on the IDG website at intentionaldevgroup.org/cornerstone-collective

Q: When will I know if I have been accepted into the program?

A: Applicants will be notified no later than Monday, April 6, 2026

Q: What types of businesses does this accelerator support?

A: It primarily supports food-based, consumer-based, and service-based businesses.

Q: What are the benefits of joining the Cornerstone Business Accelerator program?

A: Benefits include access to online courses, impact investment fund opportunities, access to Cornerstone Kitchen facilities, one-on-one counseling, technical assistance, tailored resources and referrals.

Q: Who will have access to my information?

A: The internal staff of the Intentional Development Group

Q: How will my business be categorized in the program?

A: All business will be put into Cohort I (Virtual), Cohorts II or III (In-Person).

Q: What will each cohort have access to?

A:
Cohort I will consist of food based and some product based businesses and will attend classes with the Lorain County Community College Small Business Development Center, receive business assessment and action planning and will be evaluated for access to the Impact Fund.

Cohorts II & III will attend classes with the Intentional Development Group, receive business assessment and action planning and will be evaluated for access to the Impact Fund.

Q: What topics will the online classes cover?

A:
Cohort I: Production, Learn How to Pitch, Business Model Canvas & Pricing, Labeling & Marketing, Sales & Promotion & Event.

Cohorts II & III: Foundations & Pitch, Research & Development, Budgeting & Bookkeeping, Marketing & Branding & Pitch Event

Q: When will the classes take place?

A: All Cohorts will meet: Wednesdays, from 6:00pm-8:00pm beginning Wednesday, May 2, 2026 and ending Wednesday, May 27, 2026.

Q: Will there be homework required for the courses?

A: No, there is no accompanying homework.

Q: What is the weekly time commitment for classes?

A: The fixed time commitment for the courses is 2-hrs per week (the duration of each class). However, applying the information learned during classes is a key component of accelerated programs. Participants are encouraged to spend the time necessary outside of class to apply course content to their businesses.

Q: Can you tell me more about the consultants/business coaches and how they get assigned to us?

A: The consultants and business coaches are provided by the Intentional Development Group and in partnership with the Lorain County Community College Small Business Development Center; their expertise and experience is vetted by the center and assigned based on the results of the business assessment and any additional observed needs.

Q: What kind of coaching and technical assistance is provided?

A: Participants receive personalized one-on-one counseling and technical assistance from experienced business consultants based on needs assessments and action planning.

Q: What are the fees involved in this program?

A: There are no fees associated with this program.

Q: What are the objectives of this program?

A:

- Assist with Business Growth and Scaling Support
- Increase Market Access and Visibility
- Increased Financial Competence
- Increased Access to Capital & Capital Readiness
- Legal & Regulatory Support
- Improve Technology & Digital Literacy

Q: What resources are available to participants, and do they differ based on whether I have a food-based business?

A:

- **Consumer Packaged Goods Service-Based Businesses;** you receive access to all Classes, the Impact Fund, Markets, Consultants/Coaches.
- **Food-Based Businesses;** you receive access to Online Classes, the Impact Fund, Markets, Consultants/Coaches) PLUS first access to the Cornerstone Community Kitchen, a specialized resource for food based businesses.
- **Service Based Businesses;** you receive access to all Classes, the Impact Fund, Markets, Consultants/Coaches.

Q: What is the Cornerstone Impact Investment Fund?

A: The Impact Investment Fund provides funding opportunities for accepted participants to help grow their businesses.

Q: Will all participants receive funding from the Impact Fund?

A: No, funding through the Impact Fund depends on available funding and the number of eligible businesses. A Business Viability Assessment will take place to measure the business' potential for long-term success and ability to sustain profits over a period of time.

- The following areas will be assessed:
 - **Organizational Viability:** impact, innovation, scale, market pull
 - **Financial Viability:** literacy, profitability and plan
 - **Branding Viability:** social media, website, and brand identity

Q: Do we only have access to the funds if we score a certain score on the business assessment?

A: The IDG staff uses the score as a guide to prepare and present each business's packet for the review committee which is composed of a wide array of financial and business experts. This review committee makes the final decision.

Q: What is the Cornerstone Community Kitchen?

A: The Cornerstone Community Kitchen is a shared commercial kitchen space where food-based businesses will be able to develop and produce their products.

Q: What is the Cornerstone Market?

A: The first phase of the Cornerstone Market will be a farmers market that provides a platform for participants to sell their products and engage with the community.

Q: How can I become a vendor at the Cornerstone Market?

A: Completing a vendor application and attending orientation.

Q: How can I stay updated on Farmers Market events and vendors?

A: Visit our website at intentionaldevgroup.org/contact-4 to sign-up for our mailing list or follow us (Instagram: @intentionaldevelopmentgroup, & Facebook: @IntentionalDevGroup).

Q: Will this information session be available after today?

A: Yes, this information session will be recorded and available on the IDG YouTube channel at youtube.com/@IntentionalDevGroup

Q: Are there community workshops or classes available?

A: Yes, IDG offers various community engagement posts, workshops, and classes. Visit our website at intentionaldevgroup.org/events for our events calendar, sign-up for our mailing list or follow us (Instagram: @intentionaldevelopmentgroup, & Facebook: @IntentionalDevGroup) for announcements.

Q: How can I support the Cornerstone Collective?

A: You can support by:

- Sign-up to volunteer for an IDG event
- Attending an IDG event
- Sharing IDG program information with eligible entrepreneurs
- Engaging with IDG on social media
- Direct donation or sponsorship at intentionaldevgroup.org/donate-1

Q: How can I contribute to the impact investment fund?

A: Inquiries about the fund can be made by contacting CEO, Carmella M Williams cwilliams@intentionaldevelopment.org