

Covington Youth Entrepreneurship Lab Proposal

Prepared by: Covington Works / Northern Kentucky Area Development District

In Partnership With:

- Kenton County Public Library
- Northern Kentucky University Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship

I. Executive Summary

The Covington Youth Entrepreneurship Lab is a workforce-aligned entrepreneurship initiative designed to connect Covington youth with real-world business experience, mentorship, and pathways into future employment and entrepreneurship. Supported through Covington Works, the program will provide high school students and young adults with hands-on opportunities to develop business ideas, build leadership and employability skills, and launch products or services in a real-world environment.

Participants will engage in a phased experience beginning with entrepreneurship and idea-development training through BuildEd, followed by a multi-week entrepreneurship lab focused on business planning, customer validation, branding, financial literacy, marketing, and pitch development.

The initiative is intended to create meaningful connections between Covington youth and the city's growing entrepreneurial ecosystem while building confidence, creativity, communication skills, leadership abilities, and career readiness.

II. Statement of Need / Program Purpose

Many young people in Covington have limited access to structured entrepreneurship education, mentorship opportunities, and real-world business experiences that help prepare them for future careers and leadership opportunities.

The Covington Youth Entrepreneurship Lab is intended to provide a hands-on, project-based learning experience that connects students to entrepreneurship, workforce development, and community leadership. The program is designed to help participants strengthen communication skills, problem-solving abilities, creativity, professionalism, and self-confidence while introducing them to practical business concepts and local career pathways.

The initiative also supports broader workforce development goals by creating early exposure to entrepreneurship and helping students build relationships with mentors, educators, and professionals within the Covington community.

III. Program Description / Project Plan

A. Program Overview

The Covington Youth Entrepreneurship Lab is a multi-phase entrepreneurship program designed to help Covington youth develop, launch, and test business ideas while building connections to local employers and workforce opportunities.

B. Phase 0 – Idea Bootcamp (BuildEd Training)

The program will begin with a live entrepreneurship training delivered by BuildEd.

Proposed Timing: Late August / September 2026

Participants: Up to 20 students for BuildEd training

Format

- One 6-hour session OR
- Two 3-hour sessions

Focus Areas

- Entrepreneurial mindset
- Idea generation
- Problem-solving and customer awareness

Outcomes

- Students develop initial business ideas
- Participants are evaluated for selection into the Entrepreneurship Lab

C. Phase 1 – Entrepreneurship Lab

Selected participants will continue into a structured entrepreneurship lab hosted at the Covington Branch Library.

Proposed Timing: Winter 2027 (Mid-January through February)

Duration: Six weeks | Two sessions per week

Location: Kenton County Public Library – Covington Branch

Weekly Structure

- Session A: Teaching sessions led by a dedicated coach/instructor
- Session B: Hands-on application sessions supported by mentors

Core Curriculum Areas

- Business idea development
- Customer identification and validation
- Financial basics (cost, pricing, and profit)
- Branding and marketing
- Product and service development
- Pitch preparation

Additional curriculum topics may include:

- Entrepreneurial mindset and value proposition development
- Customer interviews and market testing
- Budgeting and break-even analysis
- Marketing materials and social media promotion
- Sales preparation and live customer interaction

D. Phase 2 – Real-World Launch

Participants will conclude the program through:

- Final business presentations and pitches
- Participation in a community-based vendor or showcase event
- Real-world product or service sales experience

The program also intends to include follow-up engagement opportunities, mentor check-ins, and participant surveys to gather both qualitative and quantitative outcome data.

IV. Mentorship & Partnerships

The program is being developed collaboratively with:

- Kenton County Public Library – Covington Branch
- Northern Kentucky University Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship
- BuildEd

The program will seek engagement from local entrepreneurs, business owners, community mentors, and university students interested in supporting entrepreneurship and workforce development efforts in Covington.

The mentorship model may include:

- Local entrepreneurs and business professionals
- Student mentors and volunteers
- One-on-one or small group coaching focused on accountability and project development

V. Target Population

The program will primarily serve:

- Covington high school juniors and seniors
- Covington-area youth and young adults

Initial outreach efforts will focus on:

- Holmes High School
- Community and youth-serving organizations

The Entrepreneurship Lab cohort is expected to include approximately 10–12 participants selected from the larger BuildEd training group.

VI. Expected Outcomes

Participants will:

- Develop and refine a business concept
- Create branding and marketing materials
- Launch and sell a product or service
- Build connections with mentors and workforce professionals

The program also aims to:

- Increase youth exposure to entrepreneurship and career pathways
- Strengthen leadership and communication skills
- Build stronger connections between Covington youth and community institutions
- Create future pathways into internships, employment, and entrepreneurship

VII. Budget & Funding

The Covington Youth Entrepreneurship Lab is intended to operate as a pilot initiative with an estimated total cost of \$8,225 to execute the full program.

Proposed Budget Categories

- Covington Works will cover the cost of Participant Business Launch Incentives and Student Mentor Stipends, totaling \$5,000.
- Instructor and coaching support (\$800 In Kind Support from NKU)
- Food and refreshments (\$800 In Kind Support from KCPL)
- Program materials and supplies (\$750 In Kind Support from KCPL)
- Marketing and event support (\$75 In Kind Support from KCPL)
- Vendor or showcase event costs (\$800 In Kind Support from KCPL)

VIII. Long-Term Vision

The Covington Youth Entrepreneurship Lab is intended to serve as a scalable model for youth entrepreneurship and workforce development in Covington. Long-term goals include expanding mentorship opportunities, strengthening partnerships with local educational and workforce organizations, and creating additional pathways into internships, employment, and small business development for Covington youth.