

WELCOME TO THE TRAIL TOWN BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Rural Action and ACEnet invite you to participate in an exciting initiative with area entrepreneurs that are ready to grow our outdoor economy. **The Trail Town Business Challenge** will provide business planning training and the opportunity to earn cash and in kind incentives for those with the most developed business plans and a commitment to launch a venture in 2022.

Our region has long been a place for land and water based recreation from hiking to hunting, birdwatching to biking. Southeast Ohio has gained national attention as a destination for trail enthusiasts by the construction of the Baileys Trail system and improvements to the Buckeye Hiking Trail in Perry County and the Moonville Rail Trail in Vinton County. When completed, the Baileys will be the longest continuous trail system east of the Mississippi designed specifically for mountain biking and other human-powered outdoor recreation. Mountain biking is the second fastest growing outdoor recreation activity in the country, surpassed only by trail running. Our region is already a destination for tens of thousands of recreation travellers and the site of established trail events every year. **The Trail Town Business Challenge** is intended to work in conjunction with regional efforts to develop Southeast Ohio as a world class recreation tourism destination built on our cultural and natural attributes, and commercial attractions in our trail towns.

Our region is known for our local business and natural assets, and can grow even more to support a robust trail tourism visitor market that is looking for places for great food, entertainment, places to stay and adventures to experience. Now is an ideal time to take the steps of bringing your ideas to reality in our region. Beyond helping you design an outstanding plan, the **Trail Town Business Challenge** encourages participants to network as collaborating entrepreneurs to create a robust entrepreneur friendly support network.

The process begins with an application and commitment to participate in a five-session training course. This guide will provide you with what you need to know to embark on this adventure. We are excited to see what the ideas and enthusiasm for our community and region can do for our economic future.

Dan Vorisek, Rural Action
Leslie Schaller, ACEnet



Rural Action



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Program Participation Requirements

- I. Applications are due to Rural Action no later than 5pm by **October 29, 2021**.
- II. Applicants must be 18 years of age or older and must be the primary owner(s) and operator(s) of a new start-up, or expansion of an existing business to begin operation before December 31, 2022 based in Athens, Morgan, Perry or Vinton county.
- III. To be eligible for cash and/or in-kind incentives, attendance is mandatory at the five business planning workshops, a 1:1 coaching session, and at the business plan presentations to a review panel at the end of the program. Participants may be granted an excused absence for no more than one workshop if someone involved in the business planning is designated to attend on their behalf.
- IV. Final business plans are due via email to dan@ruralaction.org by **5pm January 12, 2022**. Submitted plans will be protected by nondisclosure agreement, and will be presented to judges and select members of the organizing committee.
- V. The business must provide goods or services which contribute to the trail town amenities for recreation tourism visitors, including opportunities for manufacturing and production of goods that support the outdoor recreation economy.
- VI. Applications are intended to summarize the business concept being planned, and must address these four points:

- Product or Service Description
- Customer Definition
- Market Description, including location, size and sales strategy
- Number and types of jobs expected to be created

Prioritized Business Categories - While all business venture plans are welcome, these business sectors will be prioritized for consideration of cash and in-kind incentives during the presentation to the review panel :

- I. Restaurants, microbreweries and related food service hospitality.
- II. Recreation tourism experiences ie; tours, adventure sports, instruction, etc.
- III. Locally owned hotels, short term rentals, and other forms of overnight accommodation.
- IV. Visual arts, performing arts, and historical venues.
- V. Outdoor recreation retail goods.

Trail Town Business Challenge Curriculum - The curriculum is designed to provide participants with an overview of the baseline knowledge and information necessary to develop a business plan that will enable them to initiate a successful enterprise in the Trails, Towns, and Tourism ARC Grant project region. Business planning workshops will be facilitated by ACEnet and will feature guest business owners as co-presenters.

At the conclusion of the course participants should be able to complete and present a business plan incorporating the elements presented, and know where to find more detailed sources of technical assistance.

Course Curriculum Topics

November 9, 2021 - Trail Town Business Challenge Program Overview &

Business Planning Essentials Understanding the components of a Business Plan and how to develop it.

November 16, 2021 - Show Me The Money How to access investments and loans from innovative and conventional sources.

November 30, 2021 - Managing My Sales Goals and Financial Skills Financial Management tools and practices for a successful operation. Specific emphasis on accounting.

December 7, 2021 - Formalizing my Business Navigating code, zoning, business liability and small business insurance needs for start-ups and expanding businesses.

December 14, 2021 - Using Social Media to Attract and Connect with My

Customers Small business marketing tools and strategies, including social media.

VIII. General Information

1. The five-part workshop sessions will begin on November 9, 2021 and conclude on December 14, 2021.
2. All sessions will be held virtually on Tuesday nights from 6:00 pm to 7:15 pm.
3. Participants must complete an application and submit it with a \$50 reimbursable fee by October 29, 2019 to Rural Action. Registration fee is refundable upon completion of the course and completion of a business plan.
4. Upon successful course completion, participants will be provided a Certificate of Completion and be invited to present their plans to a review panel in January 2022 (exact date TBA).
5. Each participant must schedule a 1:1 session with program coaches to review business planning progress. Additional 1:1 sessions will be available by request.
6. The competition committee will determine the top presentations in rank order and present prizes to the top participants in February 2022.
7. Dan Vorisek is the coordinator of the program; please contact if unable to attend an assigned session or if in need of additional information: dan@ruralaction.org