



Director's Report – Don Ryan Center for Innovation (DRCI)

June 2026

Overview:

June was a month focused on community engagement, strategic planning, business recruitment, and continued activation of The COVE. Significant progress was made in developing the Lowcountry AI Tech Exchange initiative, expanding DRCI's mentor and entrepreneur network, and strengthening regional partnerships.

Entrepreneur Program Update

- Continued strategic planning with AMA Private Dining/Lucky Fig regarding physical location launch.
- Conducted diligence reviews and meetings with prospective STARTUP clients.
- Conducted one-on-one meetings with entrepreneurs and business owners.
- Researched newly licensed businesses for outreach and recruitment efforts.

STARTUP Companies

- **OPFOB**
- **Part of the Family**
- **AMA Private Dining**
- **Bright Beginnings Academy**
- **Belleau Woods Tavern (HEROES)**
- **Buysight.ai**
- **221B Studios**
- **Rosano**
- **Airbana**
- **High Tide Pediatric Dentistry**
- **Keora Finance**

GROWTH Companies

- **Effervescence Yoga (Graduated)**

THRIVE Companies

Ongoing long-term work with established Growth companies

- **Universal Bookkeeper (Graduated)**
- **HardeeGreens (Hardeeville)**
- **Delta Roofing**

Mentor Program

- Met with prospective mentors to expand support resources for DRC clients.
- Continued recruitment efforts to strengthen mentor expertise across key industries.

Operations, Economic Development, Events and Meetings:

- Continued lease development and tenant onboarding activities at The COVE.
- Chase Bank moved into The COVE Landing Pad office.
- Mashburn Construction moved into The COVE Landing Pad office.
- Supported the EDIP second reading for Sterling Helicopter at Town Council.
- Attended the groundbreaking ceremony for The Goddard School.
- Hosted the Greater Bluffton Chamber Annual Meeting at The COVE.
- Hosted and attended the Greater Bluffton Chamber Lunch & Learn.
- Participated in networking events, ribbon cuttings, and community celebrations.
- Participated in FY27 strategic planning discussions.
- Created the framework for the Lowcountry AI Tech Exchange initiative.
- Continued development of the AI Tech Community concept.
- Continued refinement of DRCI logo concepts and branding updates.
- Met with Bob Manning regarding marketing video development.
- Developed script concepts for the DRCI Alumni Company video project.
- Met with WHHI regarding potential collaboration opportunities.
- Continued refinement of DRCI logo concepts and branding updates.
- Met with Bob Manning regarding marketing video development.
- Developed script concepts for the DRCI Alumni Company video project.
- Met with WHHI regarding potential collaboration opportunities.
- Onboarded summer intern Sofi Giordani.
- Posted jobs for full-time Innovation Manager and Business Engagement Manager position.
- Successfully hosted the Second Founders' Forum sponsored by Southern Barrel Brewing.
- Reviewed program structure and new engagement levels.
- Continued strategic planning efforts for organizational growth.

Partnerships

Key Collaborations:

- **Hardeeville:** Continued joint marketing planning efforts with Hardeeville. Working on Shop Local Video and Lunch, Learn for October, researching venue options for a Founders Forum in September in Hardeeville.
- **Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation:** Ongoing collaboration on multiple impactful projects. Attended board meeting.
- **Greater Bluffton Chamber:** Participated in numerous ribbon cuttings, showcasing the growth and expansion of local businesses and attended. Hosted several GBCC events at The HUB and The COVE.
- **Hilton Head – Bluffton Chamber:** Participated in ribbon cuttings and networking events
- **Hispanic Business Association of the Lowcountry:** Ongoing membership, Paul Arvantides is a member of the HBA Lowcountry Partnerships Committee
- **Beaufort County Airport Board:** David Nelems is a member of this Board