



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

November 2025

Overview:

November was a month of continued innovation, strategic planning, and program development for the Don Ryan Center for Innovation. The team finalized and submitted the SC Relentless Challenge Grant, advanced internal AI initiatives, and laid the groundwork for 2026 through staff and board planning sessions. Additionally, DRCI maintained strong visibility through presentations, networking events, diligence meetings, and educational engagement. Website development and KPI alignment remained a priority, with efforts focused on enhanced reporting and program clarity moving into the new year.

Entrepreneur Program Update

STARTUP Companies

Our STARTUP pipeline continues to grow, with new diligence meetings and program milestones achieved.

- **OPFOB**
- **Part of the Family**
- **AMA Private Dining**
- **Lisa Sulka Consulting**
- **Vital Bridge Wellness**
- **Bright Beginnings Academy**
- **Diversity Nursing Academy (Hardeeville)**
- **Amia Marcell**
- **Garage Experts**
- **Belleau Woods Tavern (HEROES)**
- **Soul Coastal**

Toured potential commercial kitchen and office locations for AMA Private Dining (8241 Pinellas Drive) and Part of the Family (10 William Pope Drive)

Held STARTUP diligence meetings with:

- 221B Studios
- Amber Lucido
- Lowcountry Soda

GROWTH Companies:

Supporting established businesses in their expansion efforts remains a priority for DRCI.

- **Bluffton Electric**
- **Delta Roofing**
- **Nexus Business Technology**
- **D'Flavor Custom Cakes**

THRIVE Companies

Ongoing long-term work with established Growth companies

- **Universal Bookkeeper**
- **Beachside Tire**
- **Noble Hearts Human Resources**
- **HardeeGreens (Hardeeville)**

Mentor Program

Mentorship Network:

- Met with new mentor Tom Moseley
- Continued engagement with mentors supporting new STARTUP clients
- Reviewed mentorship goals as part of 2026 strategic planning
- Planning mentor working lunch for beginning of December

Economic Development Update

- Working with Startup Companies AMA Private Dining and Part of the Family on finding locations for their business expansions
- Two LOIs have been sent out to finalize leases for the two remaining retail locations on the first floor of The COVE
- Master Lease for The COVE has been approved and signed

- In negotiations with our first potential tenant for the new DRCI Landing Pad
- Three LOIs sent out for lease negotiations to the potential upstairs tenants

Operations, Events and Meetings:

- Final submission of SC Relentless Challenge Grant
- Building tour and update with SC Power Team and Palmetto Electric Cooperative
- Site discussions and walk-throughs: Unit 102 in new building, Pinellas Drive, and 10 William Pope Drive
- Met with Michael Czymbor with Forino to discuss future properties for our program clients
- Tech planning for new building with Tracye Stormer
- Participated in DRCI Board Strategic Review Meeting
- Conducted internal 2026 strategic planning session with DRCI staff
- Continued KPI collection and internal system development
- Ongoing work on DRCI website redesign and content enhancements
- Reviewed and tested AI tools: MadisonAI, Prophecy.gov, Gov.ai
- Explored AI use cases with TOB HR and staff
- Demoed internal AI workflows and engaged in partner discussions
- Met with Paul Taylor from SCORE

Partnerships

Key Collaborations:

- **Hardeeville:** Quarterly meeting with Hardeeville City Manager Josh Gruber
- **BlacQuity:** Fall cohort graduated
- **Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation:** Ongoing collaboration on multiple impactful projects including collaboration. Attended board meeting.
- **Greater Bluffton Chamber:** Participated in numerous ribbon cuttings, showcasing the growth and expansion of local businesses and attended. Continuing to host lunch and learns for the GBCC and represented DRCI at their monthly Member Benefits Meeting
- **Hilton Head – Bluffton Chamber:** Attended several ribbon cuttings and networking events, presented at HHI–Bluffton Chamber Junior Leadership Career Day and presented to HHI Chamber Leadership Class
- **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

- **Furman University:** Ongoing collaboration through Strategic AI Program; exploring expanded offerings
- **Beaufort County School District:** AI Roundtable