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# Georgia Southern University's Business Innovation Group launches BIGx Accelerator

August 30, 2021



The Business Innovation Group launches BIGx Accelerator program at facilities in Metter, left, and Statesboro.

Regional entrepreneurs looking to grow their businesses now have access to an accelerated business growth and leadership development program through the Georgia Southern University Business Innovation Group (BIG).

The new program, BIGx, is an opportunity for business owners to gather and work alongside other entrepreneurs to enhance their success.

“We view BIGx, the business accelerator program, as a strategic way for companies in our incubator to deepen relationships with other entrepreneurs, to inspire innovation, and challenge each other,” said Dominique Halaby, DPA, director of BIG. “Peer advising, mentoring and friendships are often the result of these programs.”

BIGx will launch on Sept. 2 with two cohorts, one at BIG’s Innovation Incubator in Statesboro, Georgia, and the other in BIG’s newest facility, the Georgia Grown Innovation Center in Metter, Georgia, which is partnered with the city of Metter’s Economic Development Division and Georgia Grown, a division of the Georgia Department of Agriculture.

Each cohort will contain a minimum of six entrepreneurs who will participate in leadership circles over six months. The program format is partially executive development and partially peer-advising. The programs will be facilitated by Catherine Blake, founder of the Institute for Executive Women, who has been hired as BIG’s accelerator manager to lead the initiative.

“Statistically, peer cohorts are the best way for entrepreneurs to grow,” Blake said. “By bringing these talented, high potential professionals together, they will set the pace for each other to advance and accelerate. Individuals will organically form a high-performance team and support each other on what can be otherwise a lonely journey.”



*Catherine Blake, accelerator manager at BIG*

As the program for acceleration builds, so will investment, Blake added.

“When the greater community sees the value of programs to strengthen the leader, ecosystems are built,” she said. “BIGx is putting a stake in the ground to take the Business Innovation Group to the next level of world-class incubator status hailing from a small town.”

The Business Innovation Group (BIG) was founded when the University’s entrepreneurship and business development program agreed to work together to leverage their resources and maximize the impact the programs can have on the economic vitality of the region.

The result has been two vibrant business incubator centers where students, faculty, veterans and business professionals can find the support, education and training necessary to start and grow a new business. With locations in Statesboro, Metter and soon in Hinesville, BIG is expanding the footprint of Georgia Southern and economic development in the region.

Entrepreneurs or individuals with winning business ideas who would like to be a part of their community and receive business advising and coaching are invited to apply for a placement at BIG in Statesboro or Metter by visiting [GeorgiaSouthern.edu/BIG](http://GeorgiaSouthern.edu/BIG).

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