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Commonwealth
Cyber Initiative

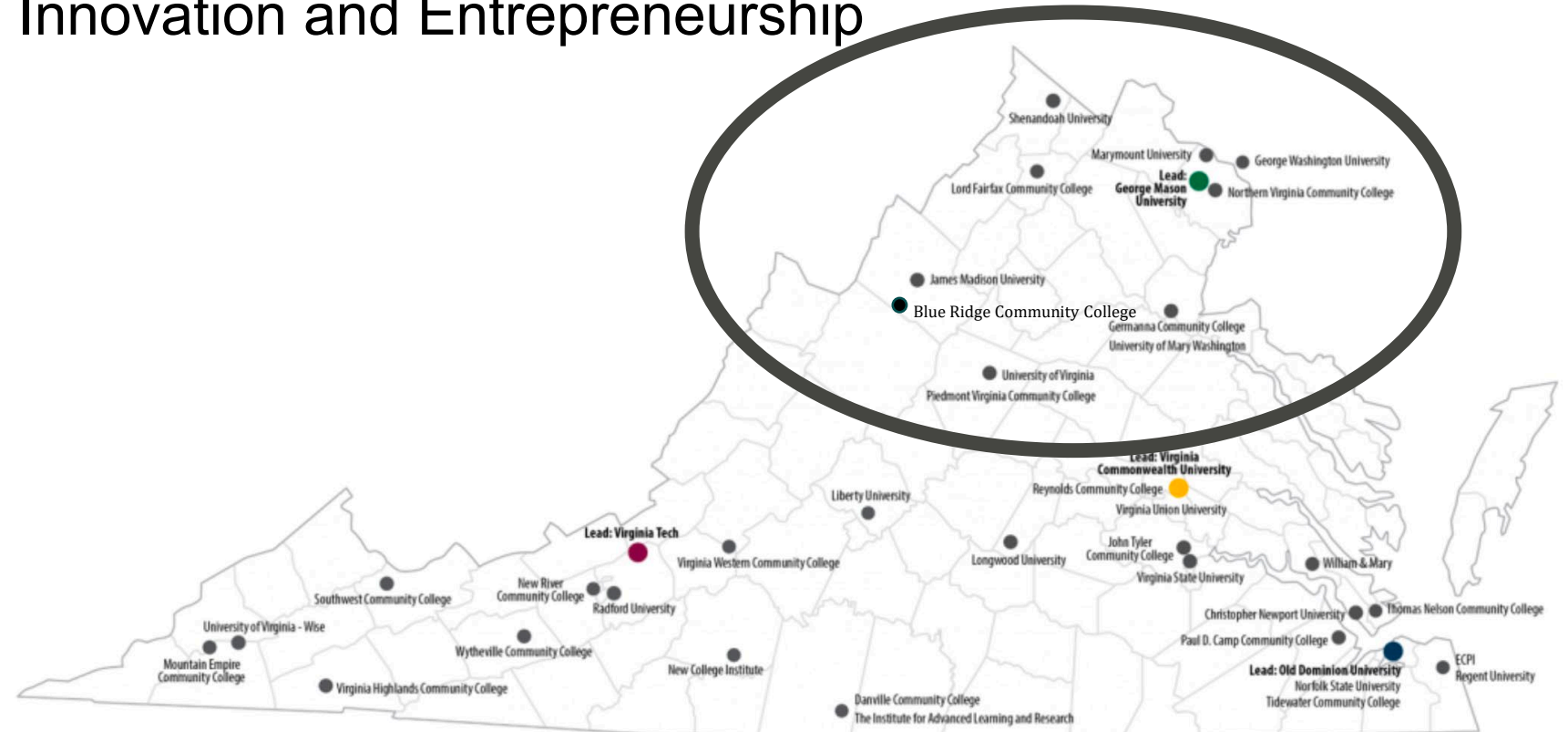


Commonwealth
Cyber Initiative
NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Goal: To make Virginia a globally recognized center of excellence in cybersecurity, and by doing so contribute to Virginia's economic diversification and development.

Investments:

- Research
- Workforce Development
- Innovation and Entrepreneurship





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CCI Northern Virginia Node by the Numbers FY25

4000 SF of Infrastructure

6 5G Testbeds

1213 Students Engaged in Cybersecurity Experiential Learning

73 Cybersecurity Companies Directly Impacted

\$36.7M in new research drawn to Virginia as a result of NoVa Node CCI Investment

141 New Cybersecurity Internships and Apprenticeships

49,735 workforce development contact hours

<https://cyberinitiative.org/about/regional-structure/northern-virginia-node.html>



Research Investment



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- Cyber Research for the **National Defense**
- Cyber Security of **Transportation Networks**
- Cyber Security of **Electric/Power Distribution**
- Cybersecurity in **Manufacturing and Supply Chain**
- Impact of **Human Behavior** on Cyber Security and Resilience
- Securing the **Next Generation of Networks**
- Securing **Human-Machine Interactions**
- Securing **Critical Infrastructure**



Identify and foster commercialization of research from university labs across the commonwealth and collaboration with industry.



Workforce Investment



The Pentagon recognized Northern Virginia Regional Commission's Community, Military, and Federal Facility Partnership and Fort Belvoir with one of the U.S. Army's 2019 Community Partnership Awards. Those attending, included (from left): Alex A. Beehler, Assistant Secretary of the United States Army, Installations, Energy, and Environment; Col. Michael Greenberg, Fort Belvoir Garrison; CSM Young, Fort Belvoir Garrison; Robert E. Lazaro, Executive Director, NVRC; Liza Wilson Durant, CCI NoVa Node Director; Melanie Stover, Northern Virginia Community College; Will Rowe Jr., Booz Allen Hamilton; Peggy Tadej, Director of Community and Military Partnerships, NVRC; and Lieutenant General Jason T. Evans, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9 (Installations).

Goal: To close and diversify the cyber workforce gap in Virginia, becoming a recognized resource for talent statewide



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Widening the Pipeline of Cybersecurity Talent 2021-2025

- ✓ **Subsidized Internship with Start Ups – '21,'22, '23, '24, '25**
- ✓ **Subsidized (sliding scale) College Student Internships – '21, '22, '23, '24, '25**
- ✓ **Subsidized 19 week Training/Apprenticeship Program – '22, '23, '24, '25**
- ✓ **Subsidized High School Internships - Summer '22, '23, '24, '25**
- ✓ **Undergraduate Research Assistantships with Faculty – '21, '22, '23, '24, '25**
- ✓ **All candidates participate in Clearance Readiness Program**
- ✓ **Teacher Professional Development - '21, '22, '23**
- ✓ **Building Pipeline: Cybersecurity High School Experience - '22, '23, '24**
- ✓ **Cyberstart and Cyberslam Investment - '23, '24, '25**
- ✓ **Secure Drone Competition - '25**
- ✓ **Cybersecurity Field Training Experience - '25**

Summer High School Internship

Summer 2021

- 110 applications for **20** positions



Summer 2022

- 181 applications for **30** positions
- 37% identify as women
- 20% are or will be the first in their family to attend college
- 40% of this year's cohort are underrepresented population groups in science and engineering



Summer 2023, 2024, 2025

150 applications for **40** positions



ManTech



US Federal
Government Agency



IvySys
 Cask Gov't Services
 Edgemoor Research
 KeyCaliber
 NT Concepts
 InterSec
 Fend
 Telos
 Colvin Run Networks
 DataLock Consulting
 KaDSci LLC
 Itinfra
 NN Data
 Total Cyber Solutions
 Next5
 Solvitur Systems
 Assuresec LLC
 Degree Six
 Auspex Labs
 CyRisk
 Altamira Technologies
 EngineeRD

Harmony Tech
 Monoc Securities
 GigaSheet Inc
 NowSecure
 Federal Home Loan Banks Office of Finance
 NikSoft
 RPRC
 Peraton
 Arlington County
 Sedulous
 DEKRA
 ManTech
 CACI
 CGI
 TekScope
 Frost Mountain
 Rohic
 Great Victory Legends
 Solvitur Systems
 Blue Sky Innovations

College/University Internship Host Companies





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Cybersecurity Apprenticeship Program

NOVA | Northern Virginia
Community College

Program Information

- 7-week classroom learning and training experience
- 12-week apprenticeship/traineeship with a cybersecurity company
- Cohort 1 has seen 75% of participants obtain FT employment in cybersecurity or pursuing further education in field



- **Cohort 2** launched June '23
- **Cohort 3** with 23 positions in June '24
- **Cohort 4** with 20 positions in June '25



Auspex Labs Inc.



Cohort 3 Information

- 46% identified as female
- 42% identified as veterans
- 79% from underrepresented groups in science and engineering





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Innovation Investment

CCI + A and CATAPULT and ASCEND Funds

- **\$75K Awards**
- **Customer Discovery**
- **Mentoring**
- **Pitching**
- **Incubating and Accelerating**
- **34 entities accelerated to date**

OPSWAT Acquires Leader in Advanced Data Diode Technology to Strengthen Cyber Defenses for Critical Infrastructure

Acquisition of Fend Incorporated broadens OPSWAT's end-to-end cybersecurity product offerings in the field of Data Diodes and Unidirectional Gateway Solutions, establishing company as one of the most comprehensive providers in the industry

Dec 18, 2024 by OPSWAT

**Vibrint Acquires
Ampsight to Build
National Security
Footprint, Broaden
Mission Solutions**



ANNAPOLIS JUNCTION, Md., May 19, 2025 — [Vibrint](#), a trusted defense technology leader, today announced the acquisition of Ampsight, a premier provider of multi-cloud engineering, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence solutions for federal agencies. This acquisition brings Vibrint into new customer organizations including the geospatial community and strengthens the company's ability to deliver tailored, high-performance technologies across the full IT lifecycle — combining agility, technical depth, and mission alignment to support today's most complex national security challenges.



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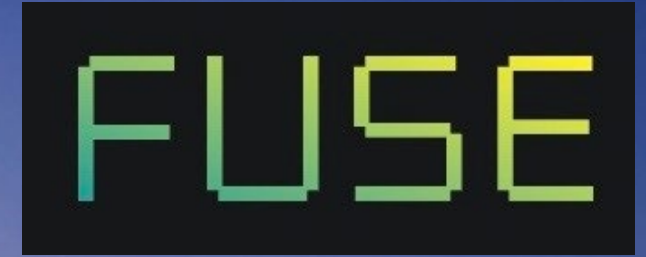
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Independent Economic Assessment Report conducted by RTI International:

Table 15. Economic Activity Supported by CCI in Northern Virginia in FY 2024

	Jobs	Labor Income	Value Add	Output	State and Local Government Revenues
Direct	222	\$24.9 M	\$30.9 M	\$53.8 M	\$1.3 M
Indirect	104	\$9.4 M	\$15.0 M	\$24.1 M	\$0.8 M
Induced	92	\$6.2 M	\$12.2 M	\$18.3 M	\$1.2 M
Total	418	\$40.4 M	\$58.1 M	\$96.3 M	\$3.3 M



Conceptual Drawing - EYP

FUSE

A Place to Collide and Accelerate Innovation

- A ONE-OF-A-KIND EXPERIENCE for industry, faculty, researchers, and students to interact and accelerate innovation
- A FUTURE READY, high tech, sustainable, resilient building that can respond to the speed of change
- LARGE SCALE MEETING, collaboration, conferencing, event, broadcasting and multi-media, laboratory, secure facilities, demonstration and office spaces and activated outdoor terraces and public plazas
- SPECIALIZED LABS to address cybersecurity, AI and autonomy and robotics, including double height aviary, network security, energy and power engineering, small modular reactor control, smart infrastructure, infrastructure security, AR/VR, data visualization, digital forensics, digital arts, and secure facilities;
- Space to support industry activities and to ACCELERATE BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT





**Commonwealth
Cyber Initiative
NORTHERN VIRGINIA**

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Digital Equity Coalition



LEADERSHIP
CENTER OF
ARLINGTON

Welcome

Lisa Fikes

President and CEO

Leadership Center of Arlington

Lead '19

lfikes@leadercenter.org



Leadership Center of Arlington

The mission of the Leadership Center of Arlington is to **connect, develop, and inspire** leaders for personal growth, civic engagement, and community impact.

LEAD!

CONNECTING ESTABLISHED LEADERS

IGNITE!

DEVELOPING EMERGING LEADERS

INSPIRE!

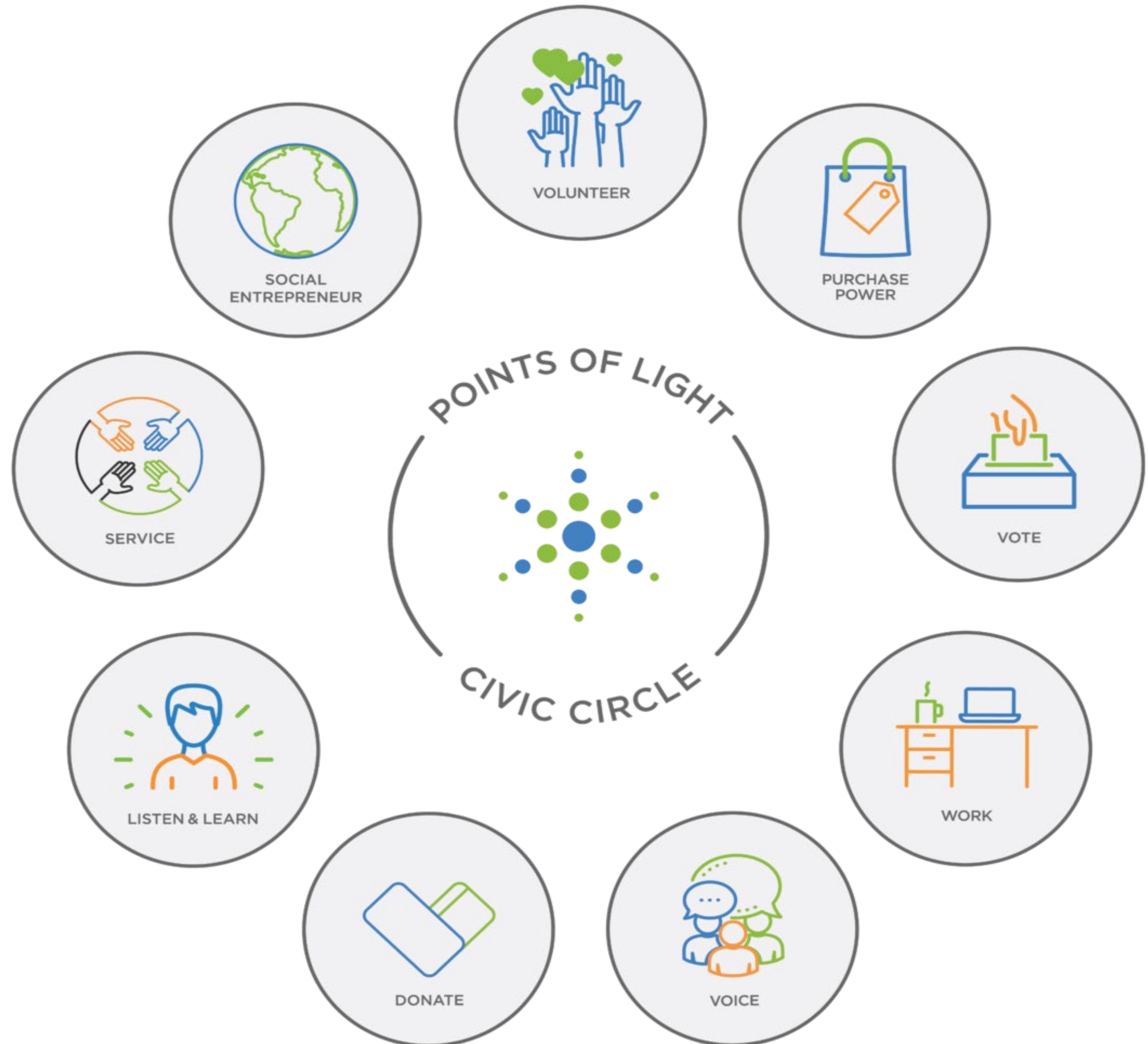
EMPOWERING YOUTH LEADERS

ON BOARD!

ELEVATING NONPROFIT BOARD LEADERS



Civic Life Today



B

Brittle

A

Anxious

N

Non-linear

I

Incomprehensible

- Coined by futurist J a m a i s C a s c i o in 2018
- New lens for understanding a fractured, unpredictable modern world



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B

Brittle

Demands resilience

A

Anxious

Increase empathy,
emotional clarity, and
direction

N

Non-linear

Adopt agile strategies;
growth mindset, improv

I

Incomprehensible

Inclusivity of various
voices; sense-making



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ARLINGTON

How might **BANI** relate to digital equity?



What questions should leadership be asking?
And, how could skilled volunteers be part of the equation?

BRITTLE

Systems look stable but can break quickly under stress.

- Connectivity and device access collapse under strain. (Remote work and school during the pandemic showed quick inequities.)
- Digital skills gaps leave communities vulnerable.
- **Digital equity work must strengthen resiliency.**



Questions:

How is your organization offering the local infrastructure to strengthen this resiliency?

(Ex) Community tech hubs, device repair programs, digital skills training

How might skilled volunteers contribute to these resiliency programs?

Anxious

Systems generate stress because they are unpredictable or overwhelming

- Fear of falling behind
 - losing job opportunities or jobs being eliminated due to brittleness of society
 - education, healthcare
- Fear of security
 - Scams, data misuse
- **Digital equity work requires empathy, building trust through nonjudgmental programs and community support.**



Questions:

How is your organization serving as a non-anxious presence and offering empathy?

How could you offer purpose and community to potential volunteers who could help reduce digital stress for others?

Nonlinear

Small shifts cascade into large, sometime irreversible changes.

- No device - no homework - lower grades - fewer opportunities
- Low-cost hotspot or refurbished laptop - unlock job access, telehealth, civic engagement
- **Digital equity solutions should be adaptable and layered. Stay in the moment, expect no script. Learn how to improvise.**



Question:

How is your organization continuing to evolve thinking to offer strategies that meet client and community needs?

Incomprehensible

Complexity that feels ungraspable

- Technology evolves faster than policy - AI tools outpacing community understanding
- Inequities embedded in systems - algorithmic bias, confusing portals create barriers that are difficult to overcome
- **Digital equity efforts need translation, storytelling and sense-making to offer meaningful agency. And, a variety of voices can bring clarity to the process.**

Questions:

How could volunteers offer sense-making to support digital equity efforts?



How is your organization continuing to evolve thinking that invites a variety of stakeholders to improvise with you?

Is your board and board pipeline adequately bringing various voices to your strategic thinking?

Leaving you with more
questions!

Any questions from you?



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Office of Community Engagement and Civic Learning (CECiL)

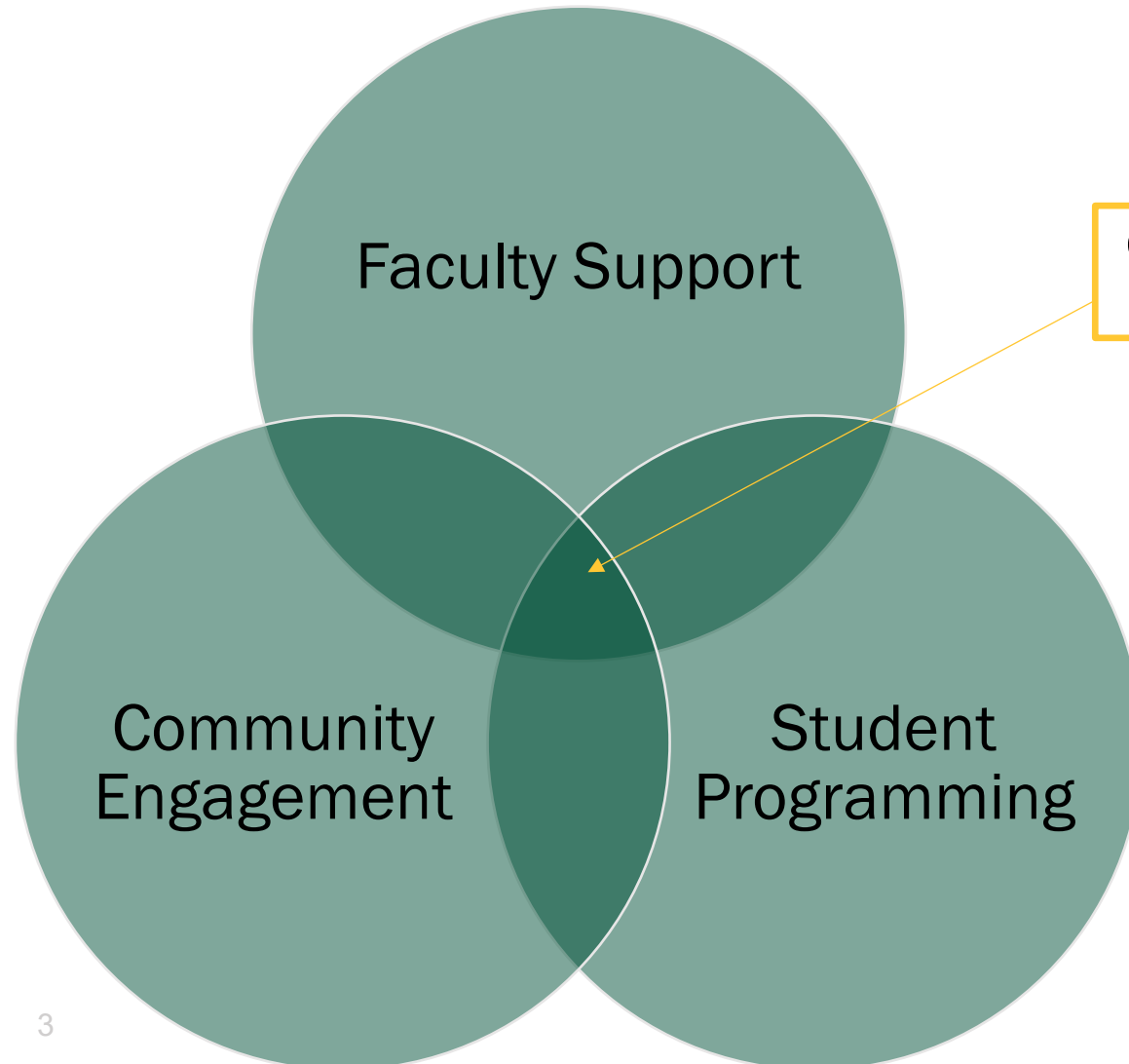


Introduction to CECiL

- Launched in 2022 as part of Mason's Quality Enhancement Plan
- Situated in Office of the Provost
- Three full time staff members plus two Americorps VISTA Member
- Removing barriers to participation in engaged learning activities
- Values: Community, Learning, Equity, Collaboration, Compassion, Justice
- Student learning centered approach to work



Office of Community Engagement and Civic Learning (CECiL)



Community at the center

Mission: To connect Mason students and faculty with community to support student learning and the development of civically engaged citizens and well-rounded scholars committed to positive social change.

CECiL Programs

- Community based teaching and research
 - Faculty training and development
 - Curricular support and designation
 - Grant funding
- Signature Paid Student Experiences
 - Bonner Leader – 4 year program
 - Civic Fellows – 1 year program
 - Engaged Summer – summer program
 - Community Based Federal Work Study
- Campus Wide Infrastructure and Coordination
- Mason Votes!



CECiL Programs

- Community Partner Support
 - Communities of Practice
 - Grant funding
 - Advertising
 - Faculty Connections
 - Research Support
 - Space Rentals
 - Community Advisory Board
 - Community Engagement Tracking



CECiL Community Engaged Learning Types

CL (Civic Learning): Courses that incorporate civic learning into readings, assignments, or discussions throughout the course. Civic Learning includes knowledge, skills, and commitments to interact effectively with others and both participate in and improve their communities and the broader society.

CBL (Community-Based Learning): Courses that have a community-based learning or service-learning component where students engage in meaningful service connected to their course learning objectives and that respond to community identified needs

MI+CE (Mason Impact Civic Engagement): Courses that engage students in the process of asking and answering an original question in partnership with a community organization

Routine Annual Events!

CECiL Service Fair

Engage! Panel and Collaborative Roundtables Event



Contact Information

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THE LIBRARY

+

LEVY

=

AI UPSKILLING

A PROTOTYPE FOR RADICALLY ACCESSIBLE, PLACE-BASED ADULT LEARNING

**12 WEEKS.
50 PARTICIPANTS.
6 AI PROJECTS.**

A collaboration between DC Public Library and Levy to prototype a new model for adult AI upskilling—one rooted in community, place, and peer learning. Together, we designed and ran a 12-week cohort inside the library, built around small peer pods, volunteer mentors, and real-world projects.

The pilot explored how the public library can be a trusted space where adults learn emerging technologies together, gain confidence through hands-on practice, and step into leadership roles that strengthen the community long-term.

- For 12 weeks, a structured weekly rhythm anchored learning and trust
- 50 ex-federal and adjacent professionals participated
- They gathered at the library to learn, experiment, and build with AI—together

AGENDA

Who We Are Part 1

Why This Pilot Part 2

What We Co-Designed Part 3

What We Learned Part 4

Where The Work Is Now Part 5

Q&A Part 6

WHO WE ARE

WE ARE NOT AI GURUS

Levy is a strategic design company that helps public institutions, community organizations, and local innovators build the civic infrastructure their regions need but don't yet have. We operate as a studio, a think tank, and a network—designing programs, coalitions, and learning environments that move quickly without sacrificing staying power.

Studio

Levy's studio designs programs, pilots, and civic interventions that turn big challenges into structured experiments. We help institutions prototype quickly, test with real residents, and refine models that can scale.

Network

Levy's national network brings together founders, public servants, community leaders, and technologists to share ideas, move resources, and stand up high-trust collaborations that no single organization can build alone.

Institute

Levy's research arm studies how local systems actually work—workforce, innovation, civic infrastructure—and translates those insights into practical frameworks that help partners make better, faster decisions.

THIS PILOT FORMED AND MOLDED LEVY

Levy wasn't a finished entity when the AI Upskilling pilot began; we became one through the work. Designing and running the program alongside DC Public Library—week after week, in the room with residents, volunteers, and learners—shaped our partnership, our methods, and our identity.

The pilot forced us to merge our design instincts with the library's public mission, to build new muscles around volunteer leadership, and to redefine what “upskilling” looks like in a civic context.

Every part of Levy today—the studio, the think tank, the network—was forged in that environment. We were built by the same process we now help others design: showing up, learning with the community, and letting the work transform us.

**WHERE THE
WORK IS NOW**



The Upskilling Labs

228

Registrants for events
since launch

70

Members in the
community

2

meetups

3

workshops

The pilot project at the Library concluded **October 28th**.

The Upskilling Labs hosted their first event **November 2nd**.

They now have a full calendar planned for **2026**.

418

LinkedIn followers

108

workshop registrants

21

volunteer organizers

THE UPSKILLING LABS

**WHY WE'RE
SPEAKING**

//

**HOW DID WE
GET HERE?**

CHELSEA KIRKLAND HAD A VISION

Chelsea saw the limits of traditional digital literacy programming firsthand: classes that filled once and never again, learners who disengaged the moment the material felt abstract, and adults who needed support but didn't feel safe admitting it. Her vision was to replace that model with something more human and durable—a cohort program that brought people back week after week because they felt part of something.

Problem 1

Waning engagement in classroom-style

- Traditional digital literacy classes were drawing fewer adults and struggling to sustain engagement.
- Many mid-career learners felt “talked at,” not supported, and avoided environments that resembled school.
- Adults were hesitant to admit gaps in knowledge, making formal instruction feel intimidating or stigmatizing.

Problem 2

Workforce disruption due to AI

- AI tools are advancing faster than existing workforce training systems.
- Workers are expected to use new technologies without structured support or guidance.
- The result: a widening confidence gap from both public educators and members of the public—people weren’t just missing skills; they questioned their ability to adapt.

Problem 3

Job loss in the federal sectors

- Federal and contractor layoffs hit thousands of professionals simultaneously in the region.
- Many displaced workers had deep specialization but limited exposure to emerging technologies.
- They faced an abrupt transition: outdated tools, uncertain next steps, and shrinking professional networks.

WHAT WE DESIGNED

Community-driven validation

- Program design began with residents, volunteers, and library staff —not a prewritten curriculum.
- Ideas were prototyped quickly, tested in real sessions, and refined based on what learners actually needed and valued.
- This kept the program grounded in lived experience and ensured every element had community demand behind it.

The result: a model shaped with the public, not delivered to the public.

Experiential learning

- Learners engaged tools by using them on real problems—work tasks, job searches, community challenges.
- “Try first, then get help” became a shared norm that redefined learning as exploration rather than instruction.
- Hands-on, project-based work replaced lectures, building confidence through direct practice.

This approach turned the library into a space where adults could safely experiment and grow.

Just-in-time support

- A rotating bench of mentors floated between pods, stepping in only after participants attempted tasks themselves.
- Support arrived at the moment of friction—when adults were stuck, curious, or ready to push further.
- Mentors brought both technical and nontechnical skills: AI tools, problem-solving, storytelling, career guidance.

This structure created a high-trust learning environment where help was present but never overbearing.

CORE PRINCIPLES WE'RE VALIDATING

PLACE-BASED

To build durable community + relationships, we needed to build habit of in-person interaction into the program design, and create a consistent rhythm of convening in a particular place.

This also drove engagement from the local community here in the DMV to support our mission: startup founders and technologists, workforce development organizations, employers like Mastercard, and elected officials like Rep. Don Beyer.

PLACE-BASED

73%

reported meeting 5 or more
useful connections to grow their
professional networks.

PRODUCTIVE STRUGGLE

The pilot cohort prioritized education via doing: try, show me that you tried, and then bring in support. No set curriculum or step-by-step tutorials, just responsive support to needs surfaced by the participants.

Participants were pushed forward through discomfort via “forced progress” milestones: weekly updates, build-in-public culture, and moments for public sharing. Education via doing vs. hand-holding - productive struggle

PRODUCTIVE STRUGGLE

89%

reported increased confidence
in exploring new projects and
building new skills in general

85%

of participants reported using
what they learned in their job
search/ job-related tasks

VOLUNTEERISM

To build durable capacity, we had to design volunteer roles into the structure from day one—not as an add-on at the end. That meant giving people clear ways to contribute, visible pathways to step up, and a rhythm of participation that made leadership feel natural rather than exceptional.

How we built it into the program

- **Community input** guided every major decision.
- **Design sessions** co-created the program with residents and staff.
- **Open houses** made it easy for new volunteers to plug in.
- **Lead-up workshops** prepared emerging leaders.
- **Mentors** rotated through pods, offering just-in-time support.
- **Cohort leaders** set the tone and kept pods moving each week.

VOLUNTEERISM

6

volunteer pod leads

7

programming leads from within the pilot participants at the Library

10

of the new volunteer organizers for The Upskilling Labs were participants or mentors in the project

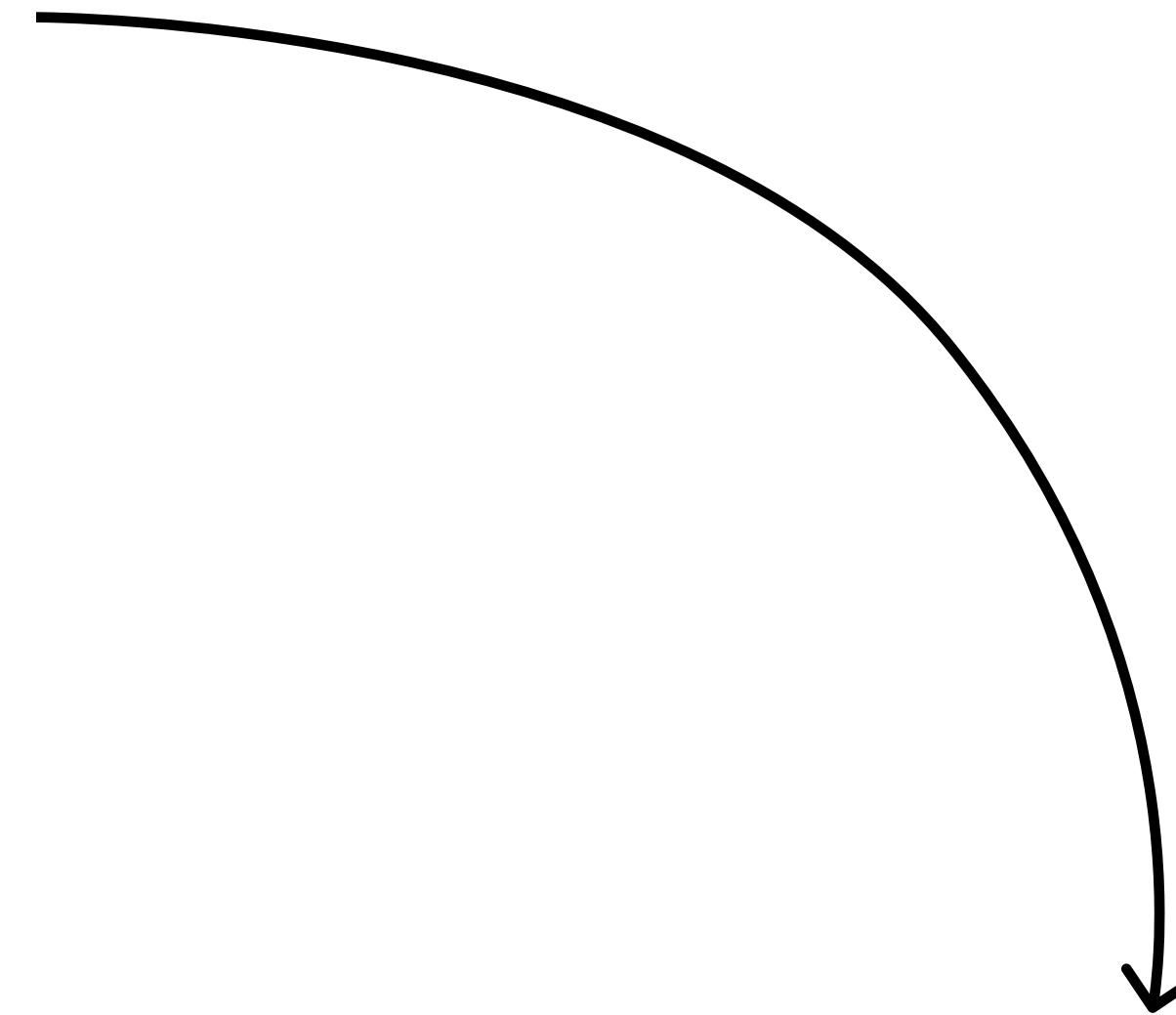
DC PUBLIC LIBRARY

and

LEVY

teamed up to pilot

**THE AI UPSKILLING
COHORT**



THE UPSKILLING LABS ^{Now}

meets monthly at the DC Public Library
and Levy is supporting them on community design

The Problem

**WANING ENGAGEMENT IN CLASSROOM LEARNING
JOB LOSS IN THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE
WORKFORCE DISRUPTION FROM AI**

The Design Principles

**COMMUNITY DRIVEN VALIDATION
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
JUST-IN-TIME SUPPORT**

What's Working

**PLACE-BASED DESIGN
PRODUCTIVE STRUGGLE
VOLUNTEERISM**

THANK YOU

☺

connect@withlevy.com