IGNITE
YOUR BUSINESS

IGNITE YOUR BUSINESS

Montgomery County | 2027 Executive Growth Program

FROM BUSINESS OWNER TO GROWTH CEO.

Build the strategy. Strengthen the business. Execute your next three years of growth.

NO-COST EXECUTIVE EDUCATION FOR QUALIFYING PARTICIPANTS

January 20 – June 30, 2027 | Hybrid Learning | Approximately 20 Businesses

An initiative of the Montgomery County Commerce Department

Program developed and delivered by Widener University Small Business Development Center.

PENNSYLVANIA SBDC Small Business Development Centers

1821 Widener University

1. You've Built a Business. Now Build Its Future.

Running a successful business and leading its next stage of growth require different skills, perspectives, and capabilities. As companies mature, owners face increasingly complex decisions: Where should they focus growth? Which opportunities deserve investment? Can the business finance expansion? Does the organization have the people, systems, and leadership capacity to succeed?

Too often these decisions compete with everyday demands. **IGNITE Your Business** helps established owners move from managing daily operations to leading deliberate, financially informed, sustainable growth.

Through 13 interconnected executive learning sessions, business owners work **on their businesses, not just in them**, alongside experienced instructors, business advisors, and a trusted cohort of fellow owners and CEOs. They develop a customized **Three-Year Strategic Growth Plan** that connects ambition to informed decisions and implementation.

More Than Training. A Roadmap for Growth.

Most business training programs teach concepts. IGNITE goes further by helping participants apply what they learn to the decisions that shape their companies' futures. **IGNITE builds the capabilities, accountability, and strategic roadmap needed to pursue growth with confidence.**

- Establish a clear strategic direction and measurable growth objectives.
- Identify, evaluate, and prioritize growth opportunities.
- Improve financial understanding and decision-making.
- Align strategy with market demand, capabilities, and resources.
- Strengthen leadership, management systems, and organizational capacity.
- Reduce unnecessary owner dependence and build long-term business value.
- Translate strategic priorities into actionable plans and milestones.

The goal is to become a more capable Growth CEO, leading a stronger, better-positioned business.

2. The IGNITE Growth Methodology™

Practical Learning. Better Decisions. Measurable Progress.

At the heart of the IGNITE Experience is the **IGNITE Growth Method™**, a structured six-stage framework that guides business owners from business assessment through growth strategy, feasibility, implementation, and continuous improvement.

IGNITE — Envision Your Future
— Develop a Growth CEO mindset, challenge assumptions, clarify aspirations, and establish a three-year vision.

GROUND — Understand Your Business
— Establish a realistic baseline covering performance, finances, operations, leadership, strengths, and constraints.

NAVIGATE — Choose Your Growth Path
— Evaluate alternatives, customer and market opportunities, competitive choices, and underlying assumptions.

INTEGRATE — Align Strategy with Capabilities
— Connect ambitions with financing, demand, teams, systems, organizational capacity, and resources.

TAKE ACTION — Build Your Execution Roadmap
— Translate strategic priorities into initiatives, responsibilities, goals, and measurable milestones.

EVOLVE — Measure, Learn, and Adapt
— Build accountability, monitor progress, and adapt decisions as conditions change.

A Methodology Designed for Real-World Application

Participants use the IGNITE Growth Method™ to address real decisions facing their businesses, challenge assumptions, examine financial and market evidence, and evaluate alternatives. A central question guides the experience: **Is the growth I want to pursue realistic, financially feasible, operationally achievable, and worth the investment?**

3. The IGNITE Experience

Learn. Apply. Collaborate. Build.

Executive Learning.
Thirteen interconnected three-hour sessions address strategy, financial management, marketing, customers, leadership, organizational capabilities, and execution.

Build It as You Go.
Instead of creating a plan only at the end, participants progressively develop their Three-Year Strategic Growth Plans. Each module contributes analysis, decisions, and action priorities.

The Keystone Case: Learning Through Real-World Business Decisions

> Meet Penn Franklin, President and CEO of Keystone Company.

Like many established owners, Penn has built a successful company but now faces a new set of challenges: identifying the right growth opportunities, improving financial performance, strengthening his organization, and determining how to scale without becoming the biggest obstacle to his company's growth.

Throughout the IGNITE Experience, participants follow Penn and Keystone Company as they navigate critical decisions—from choosing a growth strategy and assessing financial feasibility to expanding markets, building organizational capacity, and securing resources for growth.

Through **Keystone in Action**, participants step into Penn's shoes, analyze realistic scenarios, evaluate alternatives, and make CEO-level decisions using the tools introduced in each session. They then apply those lessons to their own businesses.

> The Keystone Case transforms business concepts into practical decisions, helping participants develop judgment, confidence, and strategic discipline.

CEO Advisory Groups

Structured peer activities help business owners examine challenges, receive feedback, test assumptions, share cross-industry experience, and build accountability for growth milestones.

Expert Guidance and CEO-Level Questions

Experienced instructors, advisors, and specialists contribute perspectives on strategic planning, finance, marketing, organization, and resources. Participants continually ask: Where should my business compete? Can it finance the growth I want? Is there customer demand? Can my organization deliver? What must happen next?

4. Your Three-Year Strategic Pathway™

From Growth Ambition to an Actionable Plan

The central deliverable is **Your Three-Year Strategic Growth Plan**. Participants establish their current position, define objectives, choose priorities, test feasibility, and develop an implementation roadmap. This is a working decision-making and leadership tool—not a static report.

Business Assessment and Strategic Direction.
Baseline, strengths, constraints, three-year vision, measurable priorities.

Growth Strategy and Competitive Positioning.
Target markets, customer opportunities, competitive advantages, strategic initiatives.

Financial Feasibility and Growth Requirements.
Profitability, cash flow, financial analysis, capital needs, and growth resources.

Market and Revenue Development.
Demand, customer acquisition, sales capabilities, profitable revenue.

Organizational and Leadership Readiness.
Staffing, management systems, leadership practices, capabilities, partnerships.

Implementation and Performance Measurement.
Responsibilities, milestones, initiatives, and performance indicators.

Four Dimensions of Business Success

Growth.
Revenue, customers, offerings, geographic reach, and opportunities.

Profitability & Efficiency.
Operating margins, cash flow, productivity, costs, and financial performance.

Organizational Capability & Owner Independence.
Teams, management systems, and less day-to-day dependence on the owner.

Business Value & Wealth Creation.
Enterprise value, resilience, ownership options, and long-term wealth creation.

Participants present final growth plans, receive constructive feedback, and identify implementation priorities. **The goal is not a document that sits on a shelf: it is a roadmap that guides decisions and action.**

5. Evidence-Based Results & Participant Impact

A Growth Experience Informed by Measurable Results

The planning materials describe a retrospective evaluation of **175 alumni respondents across nine previous cohorts (2019–2025)**. These respondent-reported results offer context for this educational approach, not guaranteed outcomes for Montgomery County businesses.

Historical Alumni Outcomes

PERFORMANCE AREA	REPORTED ALUMNI RESULTS
Business profitability	81% reported operating profitable businesses
Revenue performance	76% reported increased or maintained revenue
Revenue growth	101% reported aggregate revenue growth*
Employment impact	Reported job growth was 2.2 times the sector benchmark*
Access to financing	35% reported obtaining financing

PERFORMANCE AREA	REPORTED ALUMNI RESULTS
Financial management	87% reported using financial data in decisions
Business contracting	17% reported securing contracts
Strategic planning	78% reported using written growth plans
Program value	83% reported unique value
Marketing and sales	81% reported improvements
Customer development	77% reported improvement attracting profitable customers
Community engagement	80% reported charitable/community involvement
Peer network	67% reported ongoing peer contact

Why These Results Matter

The historical findings underscore how financial discipline can improve decisions, written plans can support execution, growth has multiple dimensions beyond revenue, and trusted peer relationships can persist after the program.

An Investment in Montgomery County's Economic Future

For the **Montgomery County Commerce Department**, IGNITE seeks to strengthen established local businesses, expand resilience and competitiveness, support job retention and local hiring, increase potential for capital investment and new contracts, and strengthen connections among business owners, lenders, and economic development partners.

A proposed completion target is **80%**. Evaluation will consider participation, plan quality, capabilities, and longer-term outcomes. Businesses may prioritize growth, profitability, owner independence, or enterprise value differently. **The goal is measurable progress toward a stronger business—not attendance alone.**

6. Who Should Apply?

IGNITE is designed for established owners, founders, and CEOs seeking stronger strategy, financial performance, leadership capabilities, and sustainable growth across industries.

CRITERION	REQUIREMENT
Location	Montgomery County, Pennsylvania
Annual gross revenue	$150,000–$10 million
Operating history	At least three years
Employment	At least one full-time-equivalent employee beyond owner
Leadership	Owner/CEO with strategic decision-making authority
Growth readiness	Interest in strategic improvement and implementation
Commitment	Participate in sessions, peer groups, and growth-plan work

The program is especially valuable for businesses evaluating expansion or investment, improving profitability or cash flow, entering new markets, strengthening teams, reducing owner dependence, or building enterprise value. **Approximately 20 businesses will be selected.**

Admission is selective and considers eligibility, readiness, leadership commitment, and program fit. Applicants may be invited to a readiness interview. Applications and interviews are reviewed on a rolling basis.

7. Program Cost and Participant Investment

No-Cost Executive Education

IGNITE Your Business is offered at no cost to qualifying owners selected for the program. There is no tuition or instructional fee. The program includes instruction, educational materials, planning tools, applied learning, peer engagement, and growth-planning guidance. Participants remain responsible for incidental expenses such as travel and the costs of implementing their business plans.

Potential Business Microgrant Opportunities

Eligible businesses may separately qualify for a microgrant of up to **$5,000** through the Historically Disadvantaged Business Assistance (HDBA) program administered by Greenline Access Capital. The **Pennsylvania Southeast Business Assistance Center (PA SEBAC)** provides business assistance and connections to resources across Southeastern Pennsylvania.

PA SEBAC information: https://www.pasebac.org

The Montgomery County Commerce Department is exploring complementary funding opportunities, subject to formal approval and availability. All awards have separate eligibility and application requirements. **Participation in IGNITE does not guarantee a grant.**

Participant Time Commitment / Investment

Your Time Is the Investment. Your Business Is the Priority. Qualifying participants pay no tuition but commit sustained time and attention: approximately **100 hours** from January through June 2027.

ACTIVITY	ESTIMATED TIME
13 instructional sessions, three hours each	39 hours
Orientation, assessments, assignments, CEO Advisory Groups, business analysis, plan work and final preparation	Approximately 61 hours
Total estimated commitment	Approximately 100 hours

Participants are expected to attend sessions, engage in CEO Advisory Groups, complete assessments and assignments, apply concepts to their businesses, submit plan milestones, share appropriate information for analysis, and complete and present a Three-Year Strategic Growth Plan. Actual independent work will vary.

8. Tentative Program Calendar — 2027

IGNITE begins with **Session 0: Orientation and Introduction**, held virtually on January 20, and concludes June 30. The program has **six in-person instructional sessions, seven virtual instructional sessions, and one virtual orientation**. Each instructional session is approximately three hours.

SESSION	DATE	FORMAT	TOPIC AND LEARNING FOCUS
0	Jan. 20	Virtual	Orientation and Introduction: expectations, methodology, assessments.
1	Feb. 3	In person	From Business Owner to Growth CEO: assess and envision.
2	Feb. 17	Virtual	Strategic Growth: Choosing Where to Play: priorities and positioning.
3	Mar. 3	Virtual	Building and Stress-Testing the Growth Strategy: assumptions and sequencing.
4	Mar. 17	In person	Understanding Business Financial Performance: statements and profitability.

SESSION	DATE	FORMAT	TOPIC AND LEARNING FOCUS
5	Mar. 31	In person	Financial Analysis and Growth Decisions: ratios, KPIs, cash flow.
6	Apr. 14	In person	Financial Readiness and Growth Feasibility: capital and capacity.
7	Apr. 28	Virtual	Market Positioning and Competitive Advantage: markets and customers.
8	May 12	Virtual	Customer Acquisition and Revenue Growth: marketing and sales.
9	May 26	Virtual	Building a Scalable Sales System: conversion and retention.
10	Jun. 2	Virtual	Leadership, Staffing, and Organizational Capability: teams and systems.
11	Jun. 9	In person	Accessing Capital for Growth: financing and funding readiness.
12	Jun. 16	In person	Government and Anchor Institution Contracting: procurement.
13	Jun. 30	Virtual	Growth Plan Presentations and Graduation: feedback and next steps.

In-person locations in Montgomery County and final session times will be announced. **Schedule, descriptions, and logistics remain tentative.**

9. How to Participate

Step 1 — Learn About IGNITE.
Review the program and attend an optional information session to learn about eligibility, curriculum, commitments, and selection.

Step 2 — Submit Your Application.
Provide relevant company information, growth interests, and strategic priorities. Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis.

Step 3 — Participate in a Readiness Interview.
Eligible applicants may discuss goals, challenges, commitment, and program fit.

Step 4 — Receive an Admission Decision.
Selected applicants receive welcome materials, calendar, and initial assessments.

Step 5 — Begin the IGNITE Experience.
Join the virtual **Orientation and Introduction** on January 20, 2027.

Upcoming Information Sessions

Information Session #1:
Tuesday, November 17, 2026 | 12:00–1:00 PM Eastern

Register for Information Session #1:
https://pasbdc.ecenterdirect.com/events/33994

Information Session #2:
Wednesday, December 2, 2026 | 5:30–6:30 PM Eastern

Register for Information Session #2:
https://pasbdc.ecenterdirect.com/events/33995

Ready to Become Your Business's Next Growth CEO?

You've already built a business. Now it's time to build what comes next. Whether the priority is revenue, profitability, organizational strength, owner independence, or lasting enterprise value, IGNITE offers a structured pathway to plan and pursue growth.

FROM BUSINESS OWNER TO GROWTH CEO.

NO-COST EXECUTIVE EDUCATION | APPROXIMATELY 20 BUSINESSES | JANUARY–JUNE 2027

Learn More • Attend an Information Session • Apply

Program Website:
https://widenersbdc.org/master_class/ignite/

Application:
https://form.jotform.com/wdsbdc/ignite-your-business-application

Program Questions:
Julian Ramos | JULIAN@PASEBAC.ORG | 610-499-4109

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