

Catskill Watershed Corporation
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EMAIL COVER SHEET

To: PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMITTEE

ATTN: Jim Ellis Allen Hinkley
Innes Kasanof Thomas Snow
Tina Molé Shilo Williams
James Sofranko Joseph Cetta

CC: CWC Staff, John Schwartz, Michael Meyer, Matthew Giannetta, Thomas Stalter, Gerson Tavarez and Aaron Bennett

SUBJECT: Public Education Committee Meeting

DATE: Tuesday, September 1, 2026

TIME: Immediately Following Economic Development

LOCATION: Catskill Watershed Corporation Building & Via Zoom.

Additional Instructions:

Please be advised that the Public Ed. Committee meeting has been scheduled.
If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Jessica Fiedler.

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CWC Public Education Meeting
Tuesday, September 1, 2026
Agenda

I. Call to Order

II. Election of Chair

III. Approve Minutes from May 2026

IV. Workforce Development Program Round 2 2026, including Grant Recommendations.

Pre-Read documents:

- Pre-Application deadline inquiries summary document
- Applications Received summary document
- Executive Summaries of recommended Round 2 grant awards

V. Other

VI. Next Education Committee meeting **TBD**

VII. Adjournment

Public Education Committee

DRAFT MINUTES

May 5, 2026

Committee Members Present: Arthur Merrill, James Sofranko, Joseph Cetta, Innes Kasanof, Tina Molé, Allen Hinkley, Shilo Williams.

The meeting was called to order at 11:10am.

1. March 2026 minutes were approved as submitted
2. Workforce Development grant application review: Gemma Young gave a brief presentation and overview of the WFD program. She explained the evaluation criteria used for evaluating the applications were based on the program rules. She also talked about the process the team used to evaluate each application. Gemma talked briefly about the DEP internal review team process who provided their own comments and recommendations. Gemma showed a chart of the preapplication deadline inquiries – who reached out with questions and who may be interested in applying. Based on this she anticipated that there may be up to a dozen applications submitted for round 2. Gemma then shared a chart of the applications that were received which also showed recommended and not recommended applications. Gemma then went on to show the five individual applications that were recommended by CWC for funding and referred to the two-page Executive Summary that was created for each application. John Schwartz wanted to remind everyone that scholarships are not part of the DEP contract and cannot fund WFD applications.

The five applications put forth for recommendation:

ONC BOCES: This grant would help address the shortage of CDL Class B operators in the Watershed. It also provided funding for a septic-specific training in the EOR program. This program targets high school juniors and seniors. Tina Molé noted how great an application this was and a much needed training opportunity in the area. The motion to move this application to the Board of Directors was moved by Arthur Merrill and seconded by Jim Sofranko.

Gilboa Conesville Central School: This grant would provide funding on drone education and certification for 10th-12th grade students enrolled in the CTE Pathways program. Tina noted how great an application this was and that Delaware County uses drones all the time. The motion to move this application to the Board of Directors was moved by Innes Kasanof and seconded by Shilo Williams.

Columbia-Greene Community College: This grant would provide a pre-certification course for WWTP management. The college is in a particularly useful area, being within an hour of many WWTPs. The target audience will be working-age residents wanting to become WWTP operators. Tina again noted how great the application was and that it is in an industry that will need qualified individuals. The motion to move this application to the Board of Directors was moved by Jim Sofranko and seconded by Arthur Merrill.

Friends of the Upper Delaware River: This grant would fund an internship program for three interns and focus on technical training in watershed protection measures. The target audience is individuals connected to the WOH Watershed. Tina noted that Delaware County has reservations about FUDR as an organization but will support the application because it is for internships. The motion to move this application to the Board of Directors was moved by Shilo Williams and seconded by Jim Sofranko.

Café Mornings: This grant would address the many challenges had by businesses in the hospitality industry by training people in proper food safety, customer service, and barista techniques. The target audience is individuals aged 13-30 who are early career residents in the WOH Watershed. The motion to move this application to the Board of Directors was moved by Jim Sofranko and seconded by Innes Kasanof.

John Schwartz commented on the thoroughness of the CWC team's review process and thoughtfulness in looking at each application. He then noted that the WFD program is meant to make a meaningful difference within the workforce and going forward applicants should think about how the programs implemented will affect the workforce, long-term. He suggested tracking the people who go through this program for a number of years to see where they are at and how the grant had potentially influenced their career choices. Jim Sofranko also thanked the staff involved in the review process and noted he was impressed by the creativity of the applications.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:48am.

Next meeting: TBC

PRE-APPLICATION DEADLINE INQUIRIES

Organization Name	Type of Org	Outcome
Delhi Schools	Educational Institution	Wanted to know about the Round 2 funding timeframe.
SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry	Educational Institution	Wanted to know if indirect costs are allowable (they are not).
Communities for Local Power	Non-Profit	May apply in 2027 for grant to train people in solar and geothermal installations and other clean building trades.
Delaware County CDO Workforce	Non-Profit	Applied for grant in round 2.
Catskill Center	Non-Profit	Applied in Round 1, 2026. May re-apply in 2027.
Prattsville Art Project	Non-Profit	Applied for grant in round 2.
Mountain Top	Non-Profit	Applied for grant in round 2.
Andes General Store & Deli	Private Employer	May apply in 2027 to help expand hospitality training opportunities for local residents and students.

Potential applicants for 2027 Rounds

APPLICATIONS RECEIVED ROUND 2, 2026 (JUNE 5 DEADLINE)

Appl. #	Organization Name	Entity	Project Name	Grant Requested	CWC Final Score	CWC Rank	Recommended Grant	Modification	DEP Comments (shortened)
A-0016	Delaware County Planning, Parks, WSA	Municipality	Building the Engineering Workforce	\$ 36,463.75	73%	1	\$ 36,463.75		Support Funding. The application addresses a known workforce (very few P.E's in watershed) gap, is well-developed with strong partnerships in place to achieve programmatic goals and objectives that are relevant to WOH watershed.
A-0018	Prattsville Art Project	Non-Profit	Digital Watershed Project	\$ 55,650.00	62%	2	\$ 54,950.00	Request of breakdown of additional building hours for WFD program led to a revised estimate of heat and electric utility bills. Estimated increase of \$6,000 for 12 months. CWC to provide up to 50% maximum or \$3,000 upon final reconciliation of utility bills. Modification is from request of \$3,700 for heat/electric to recommendation of maximum \$3,000.	Support Funding with Questions. Somewhat concerned with the \$18,000 "salary" for participants (recognizing the \$300 for each module will only be made if certification is obtained). DEP notes the intent here is an incentive to get certified opposed to choosing to work at minimum wage job. DEP notes that transportation costs are hard to estimate not knowing the exact audience.
A-0020	Mountain Top Arboretum	Non-Profit	Protecting the WOH Watershed Through Arboriculture Education & Mentorship	\$ 42,429.98	58%	4	\$ 42,429.98		Support Funding, with questions. Arborist workforce training seems niche, however there is a shortage locally. Target audience seems low for funds requested and the application would have benefited from a detailed description of the training/day-to-day activities.
A-0019	SEEC	Non-Profit	School-to-Career Pathway Program	\$ 48,400.00	56%	5	\$ 48,400.00		Support Funding, with considerations. Somewhat concerned with the \$10,000 (1k each) for host businesses, but recognize it takes time and effort to supervise each participant.
A-0014	Western Catskills Community Revitalization Council	Non-Profit	WCCRC Entrepreneurship Program	\$ 10,000.00	52%	6	\$ 10,000.00		Support Funding with minor questions.
A-0017	Cornell Cooperative Extension	Non-Profit	Catskill Working Lands and Waters Workforce Program	\$ 42,568.89	61%	3		Agree with DEP	Appreciate the proposed curriculum and educational goals of this program, however the objectives and audience (up to 220 landowners, farmers and students) may align more with the goals of a public education program than a WFD program.
A-0021	Delaware County LDC	Non-Profit	Drive-to-Thrive Grant	\$ 38,100.00	48%	7			Not supportive.
A-0015	Outsiders Kitchen LLC	Private employer	Snack Manufacturing Expansion	\$ 50,000.00	43%	8			Not supportive.

Total \$ 323,612.62

\$ 192,243.73

CWC WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Round 2, 2026

Grant Recommendations: Executive Summaries

Applicant	Grant Amount Requested	Grant Amount Recommended
Delaware Cuntly Planning, Parks, & Water (DCPPWA)	\$36,463.75	\$36,463.75
Prattsville Art Project	\$55,650.00	\$54,950.00
Mountain Top Arboretum	\$42,429.98	\$42,429.98
Schoharie Economic Enterprise Corporation (SEEC)	\$48,400.00	\$48,400.00
Western Catskills Community Revitalization Council (WCCRC)	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00
	Total:	\$192,243.73

Executive Summary for Project: Building the Engineering Workforce

CWC Workforce Development Grant Application Number: A-0016

Name of Institution/Organization: Delaware County Planning Parks and Water (DCPPWA)

Collaborating Partners: Delaware County Soil & Water Conservation District (DCSWCD); SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF)

1. Proposal Overview

- **Primary Objective:** To address a documented workforce gap in watershed engineering by establishing a 10-week summer internship program for 3rd and 4th-year environmental engineering students. Located at the DCSWCD office in Walton, NY, the program provides practical, on-the-job conservation engineering experience (erosion control, stormwater management, agricultural Best Management Practices [BMPs]) alongside human-dimension social science research evaluating landowner adoption barriers.
 - **Total Amount Requested:** \$36,463.75
 - **Total Project Budget:** \$49,253.75 (\$12,790.00 provided as match from partners)
 - **Project Timeline:** June 01, 2027, to August 31, 2027
-

2. Strategic Alignment

- **What need(s) does the project meet?:** Directly targets addressing a shortage of trained conservation engineers in NY Soil & Water Conservation Districts (highlighted in the Southern Tier 8 CEDS Strategy 2D) and bridges the gap between engineering education and practical watershed management. Located in the Catskill/Delaware Watershed, the pilot program builds a local workforce pipeline to support long-term source water protection and agricultural BMP implementation.
-

3. Key Impact Metrics

- **Target Population:** 3rd and 4th-year undergraduate environmental engineering students (recruited via SUNY-ESF).
- **Direct Beneficiaries:** 3 summer engineering interns.
- **Skill Acquisition:** Technical expertise in conservation engineering design, stream assessments, water quality monitoring, field data collection, landowner/stakeholder interviews, and human-dimensions social science data collection.
- **Economic Impact:** Expands the local watershed engineering talent pipeline, supports regional agricultural/conservation infrastructure improvements, and generates published

research to inform future engineering curricula and improve BMP adoption rates across the region.

4. Financial & Resource Commitment

Category	Requested from CWC	Internal/In-Kind Match
Personnel	\$32,023.50	\$9,885.00
Equipment/Supplies	\$3,279.00	\$0.00 (Partner In-Kind)
Communications	\$704.50	\$1,636.00
Services/Travel	\$456.75	\$1,269.00
TOTAL	\$36,463.75	\$12,790.00

Note on Risk: Program execution requires formal SUNY-ESF Institutional Review Board (IRB) exempt approval for student human-subject research prior to project launch, alongside successful recruitment at SUNY-ESF career fairs.

5. Evaluation & Sustainability

- **Measurement:** Evaluated through a mixed-methods approach including pre/post surveys, weekly student reflection journals, supervisor performance evaluations (target: ≥50% rated "proficient"), project metrics (≥10 projects supported/intern, ≥10 landowner interactions/intern), 30–45 landowner interviews analyzing BMP adoption barriers, and two planned peer-reviewed academic publications.
 - **Post-Grant Plan:** Serving as a pilot project, the long-term goal is to establish a renewable 3-year internship program. Insights gained will be shared across the CWC, DCSWCD, SUNY-ESF, and statewide conservation networks to refine engineering curricula and replicate the workforce model across the broader Catskills watershed.
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Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the Public Education Committee move application number **A-0016** forward to the CWC Board of Directors:

- ☒ As submitted
- ☐ With modification:

Executive Summary for Project: Digital Watershed Project

CWC Workforce Development Grant Application Number: A-0018

Name of Institution/Organization: Prattsville Art Project Inc (Prattsville Art Center)

Collaborating Partners: Columbia-Greene Workforce Development; Grow with Google / Coursera

1. Proposal Overview

- **Primary Objective:** To establish a 12-month hybrid technology training program at the Prattsville Art Center targeting rural young adults (ages 17–30) in Greene and Delaware counties. The project runs two 6-month cohorts through the Google IT Support Professional Certificate, combining online coursework, weekly in-person instruction, open lab access, participant stipends, transportation assistance, and career placement support via Columbia Greene Workforce Development and Google's Employer Consortium.
 - **Total Amount Requested:** \$55,650.00
 - **Total Project Budget:** \$121,860.00 (\$25,790 from other sources; \$40,420 in-kind match)
 - **Project Timeline:** 12-month program beginning upon funding approval
-

2. Strategic Alignment

- **What need(s) does the project meet?:** Addresses the acute lack of local technology training and digital employment pathways for rural, low-income, and disabled young adults in the Northern Catskill Watershed. By providing access to high-demand IT support certifications and remote/local job placement tools, the project enables residents to secure high-paying tech roles (\$55,000–\$65,000 entry-level target) while remaining in their watershed communities.
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3. Key Impact Metrics

- **Target Population:** Rural residents aged 17–30 within the Northern Catskill Watershed, specifically encouraging low-income and disabled individuals.
- **Direct Beneficiaries:** 12–20 cohort participants across two 6-month training groups; 10–20 additional rural residents receiving free online Google classes, open lab access, and career counseling.
- **Skill Acquisition:** Google IT Support Professional Certification (Technical Support Fundamentals, Computer Networking, Operating Systems, System Administration, IT Security Defenses, AI Job Search), practical hardware/networking troubleshooting, and workforce interview readiness.

- **Economic Impact:** Focuses on entry-level IT positions with target salaries of \$55,000–\$65,000. Targets a 90% Google certification completion rate and a 70% job placement/advancement rate within 90 days of completion through Google’s Employer Consortium (150+ companies) and Columbia Greene Workforce Development.

4. Financial & Resource Commitment

Category	Requested from CWC	Internal/In-Kind Match
Personnel	\$40,800.00	\$22,200.00
Equipment/Supplies/Communications	\$700.00	\$18,820.00
Services	\$3,950.00	\$25,190.00
Travel	\$10,200.00	
TOTAL	\$55,650.00	\$66,210.00

5. Evaluation & Sustainability

- **Measurement:** Monitored via instructor administrative dashboards tracking weekly progress, Google Certificate completion rates (target: 90%), post-graduation job placement and salary tracking at 3, 6, and 12 months (target: 70% placement within 90 days), monthly 1-on-1 qualitative coaching evaluations, and comparative analyses between cohort participants and non-cohort lab users.
 - **Post-Grant Plan:** The project is structured as a pilot to generate an "Operational Playbook" and document a high-touch, small-cohort IT workforce model for rural regions. Computer lab facilities, hardware, and ongoing partnerships with Google/Coursera, Columbia Greene Workforce Development, and ONC BOCES will support future training cycles.
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Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the Public Education Committee move application number **A-0018** forward to the CWC Board of Directors:

- ☐ As submitted
- ☒ With modification: **Services reimbursement for heat capped at \$2,000 and for electric capped at \$1,000 and total grant modified to \$54,950** (from \$55,650)

Executive Summary for Project: Arborist Workforce Development

CWC Workforce Development Grant Application Number: A-0020

Name of Institution/Organization: Mountain Top Arboretum

Collaborating Partners: Dylan Walsh / D's Trees

1. Proposal Overview

- **Primary Objective:** To establish a 16-week hands-on arboriculture workforce development and apprenticeship program at the Mountain Top Arboretum in Tannersville. Led by ISA Certified Arborist Dylan Walsh (D's Trees), the program delivers 128 hours of professional tree care instruction, equipment safety training, hazard identification, and watershed forest stewardship for seven participants, with paid learning stipends and apprenticeship opportunities.
 - **Total Amount Requested:** \$42,429.98
 - **Total Project Budget:** \$54,237.95 (\$11,807.97 provided by D's Trees/ in-kind)
 - **Project Timeline:** January 01, 2027, to December 31, 2027
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2. Strategic Alignment

- **What need(s) does the project meet?:** Directly addresses a growing regional shortage of certified arborists needed to manage and protect WOH watershed forests, which safeguard New York City's drinking water supply. By mitigating soil erosion, stabilizing stream banks, and managing canopy health, the program creates accessible, family-supporting green career pathways (\$60k–\$100k industry earning potential) while protecting vital natural source-water infrastructure.
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3. Key Impact Metrics

- **Target Population:** Aspiring and early-career arborists, forestry workers, or environmental professionals residing in the WOH Watershed.
- **Direct Beneficiaries:** Seven direct participants (five from the community and two Mountain Top Arboretum staff members).
- **Skill Acquisition:** Professional arboricultural Best Management Practices, tree risk assessment, pruning techniques, STIHL chainsaw/equipment safety and maintenance, root system protection, and forest-watershed interaction principles.
- **Economic Impact:** Paid training to participants to eliminate financial barriers; creates paid apprenticeships and establishes direct employer pathways into long-term arboriculture careers.

4. Financial & Resource Commitment

Category	Requested from CWC	Internal/In-Kind Match
Personnel	\$40,960.00	\$9,600.00
Equipment/Supplies	\$1,469.98	\$707.97
Communications		\$1,500.00
TOTAL	\$42,429.98	\$11,807.97

Note on Risk: Program execution relies on maintaining participant retention across the full 16-week, 128-hour outdoor schedule, as well as managing physical safety risks associated with chainsaw operation and heavy arboricultural equipment training.

5. Evaluation & Sustainability

- **Measurement:** Monitored through enrollment and completion tracking, pre/post self-assessments (knowledge/confidence in tree ID, pruning, risk assessment, watershed mechanics), instructor skills competency checklists, safety training log hours, and tracking of participants selected for advanced D's Trees apprenticeships and post-program arborist employment at three and six months.
 - **Post-Grant Plan:** The partnership between Mountain Top Arboretum and D's Trees establishes a repeatable workforce framework. Equipment acquired will support future arboretum-based training cycles, while graduates remain connected to regional employers and continuing education networks across the Catskills.
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Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the Public Education Committee move application number **A-0020** forward to the CWC Board of Directors:

- ☒ As submitted
- ☐ With modification:

Executive Summary for Project: School-to-Career Pathway Program

CWC Workforce Development Grant Application Number: A-0019

Name of Institution/Organization: Schoharie Economic Enterprise Corporation (SEEC)

Collaborating Partners: Jefferson Central School; Gilboa-Conesville Central School; SUNY Cobleskill (Institute for Rural Vitality / MV EAC); FMS Workforce Solutions

1. Proposal Overview

- **Primary Objective:** To establish a 10-month rural youth digital workforce pipeline connecting NYS Connect broadband investments to career readiness. Serving ten rising 10th/11th graders from Jefferson and Gilboa-Conesville school districts, the project combines six months of digital skills training (marketing, AI, cybersecurity, e-commerce, CRM, data literacy) with a six-week paid, supervised project-based internship at ten local watershed businesses, concluding with a public Digital Impact Showcase.
 - **Total Amount Requested:** \$48,400.00
 - **Total Project Budget:** \$61,400.00 (\$13,000 provided as in-kind match by SEEC)
 - **Project Timeline:** January 01, 2027, to October 31, 2027
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2. Strategic Alignment

- **What need(s) does the project meet?:** Transforms broadband connectivity in the rural watershed towns of Conesville, Gilboa, and Jefferson into a driver of economic mobility and business capacity. It bridges the digital skills gap for rural youth (where 92% of jobs demand digital skills) and provides local small businesses with digitally proficient intern support to expand e-commerce, eco-tourism, and operational efficiency without financial burden.
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3. Key Impact Metrics

- **Target Population:** Rising 10th and 11th grade high school students and local small businesses/organizations in the Catskill Watershed communities of Conesville, Gilboa, and Jefferson.
- **Direct Beneficiaries:** Ten high school students and ten local host businesses/organizations.
- **Skill Acquisition:** Digital marketing, administrative technologies, AI applications, cybersecurity fundamentals, inventory/POS systems, CRM tools, e-commerce support, data literacy, and a formal program micro-credential.

- **Economic Impact:** Sets ten high school students up with marketable technology skills and an internship experience as well as providing local small businesses with support to expand e-commerce, eco-tourism, and operational efficiency without financial burden.

4. Financial & Resource Commitment

Category	Requested from CWC	Internal/In-Kind Match
Personnel	\$24,400.00	\$2,500.00
Equipment/Supplies	\$11,000.00	\$3,000.00
Services/Travel	\$13,000.00	\$7,500.00
TOTAL	\$48,400.00	\$13,000.00

5. Evaluation & Sustainability

- **Measurement:** Evaluated across four stages: baseline competency assessment (digital fluency, communication, problem-solving), training performance tracking, employer structured feedback during internships (professionalism, reliability, digital tool application), and post-program outcome evaluations measuring digital proficiency, workplace confidence, and readiness for postsecondary pathways.
- **Post-Grant Plan:** SEEC will maintain a database of student participants to periodically survey for personal growth, economic mobility, and watershed career retention. The program provides a replicable rural workforce framework, with continuous institutional support from SUNY Cobleskill (IRV) and FMS Workforce Solutions.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the Public Education Committee move application number **A-0019** forward to the CWC Board of Directors:

- ☒ As submitted
- ☐ With modification:

Executive Summary for Project: WCCRC Entrepreneurship Program

CWC Workforce Development Grant Application Number: A-0014

Name of Institution/Organization: Western Catskills Community Revitalization Council (WCCRC)

Collaborating Partners: Robinson-Broadhurst Foundation, Inc.

1. Proposal Overview

- **Primary Objective:** To deliver entrepreneurial training, skill-building workshops, and targeted support for business owners, job-seekers, and high school students across Watershed towns in Delaware, Schoharie, and Greene counties. The project includes a one-day Intensive Boot Camp, a six-part workshop series, and the publication of a Youth Entrepreneurship Workbook to foster local economic vitality and workforce readiness.
 - **Total Amount Requested:** \$10,000.00
 - **Total Project Budget:** \$20,000.00 (\$10,000 requested from CWC; \$10,000 match provided through Robinson-Broadhurst Foundation grant funding and internal WCCRC funds)
 - **Project Timeline:** January 2027 to January 2028
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2. Strategic Alignment

- **What need(s) does the project meet?:** It bridges critical skill gaps in digital/financial literacy, business planning, and Gen AI tools, assisting both new and existing entrepreneurs in the Watershed to launch and scale businesses while equipping job-seekers for an evolving labor market.
-

3. Key Impact Metrics

- **Target Population:** Entrepreneurs at all stages of business development, area job-seekers, and local high school students in Watershed school districts (e.g., Roxbury, Stamford, South Kortright, Windham-Ashland-Jewett, Hunter, and BOCES).
- **Direct Beneficiaries:** 100 people
- **Skill Acquisition:** Proficiency in business plan development, financial statement preparation, product pricing, marketing strategy, pitch/sales presentation, risk management, Gen AI applications, resume building, and personal branding.
- **Economic Impact:** Stimulates new business creation, business retention/expansion, and job creation within the Watershed. The program increases access to small business

financing, improves participant employment prospects, and fosters stronger civic and commercial ties across three counties.

4. Financial & Resource Commitment

Category	Requested from CWC	Internal/In-Kind Match
Personnel	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00
Equipment/Supplies		\$2,500.00
Services	\$1,500.00	
Communications	\$2,500.00	\$1,500.00
TOTAL	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00

5. Evaluation & Sustainability

- **Measurement:** Outcomes will be evaluated in December 2027 using quantitative and qualitative tools, including attendance and engagement figures, post-event surveys, one-on-one interviews, and end-of-year surveys tracking completed business plans, jobs created/retained, revenue growth, and employment outcomes. Findings will be published in a comprehensive white paper shared with the CWC and the public in January 2028.
 - **Post-Grant Plan:** The insights and metrics from the white paper will directly inform WCCRC's future strategic planning and ongoing business development programming. Established regional partnerships with local school districts and foundations provide a basis for continued entrepreneurial support across the Watershed.
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Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the Public Education Committee move application number **A-0014** forward to the CWC Board of Directors:

- ☒ As submitted
- ☐ With modification: