

# INNOVATE HAMPTON ROADS

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Innovate Hampton Roads Established:  
Startwheel Corporation and Hampton Roads Innovation Collaborative  
Combine Education Programs

Hampton Roads, VA (May 18, 2023): StartWheel Corporation and Hampton Roads Innovation Collaborative have combined their education programs under the name Innovate Hampton Roads to better educate, support and help grow the innovation ecosystem in Hampton Roads. The official announcement will be made at the HR BIZWHEEL Quarterly Expo (link: <https://bit.ly/HRBZSVT>) on May 18<sup>th</sup> at the Slover Library in Norfolk, Virginia.

StartWheel Corporation has grown dramatically over the last few years as it continues to educate, connect, and build the entrepreneurial community in Hampton Roads by helping entrepreneurs find the information and resources they need to start, grow, and succeed in business. Through its website, [startwheel.org](http://startwheel.org), its weekly newsletter, its job posting service, and podcast, StartWheel is delivering what the innovation economy has been asking for and needs, and the results have been incredible by reaching and connecting tens of thousands of entrepreneurially focused individuals across the region, state and beyond. StartWheel has quickly emerged as the entrepreneur's "go-to" resource.

Technology Hampton Roads aka Hampton Roads Innovation Collaborative (HRIC) focused on incubation that has become its own industry with multiple players in the regional field. HRIC has remained active with its production of educational value-add programming, monthly Tech Tuesday series, its Critical Mass monthly business networking series, along with its core representation as the region's technology council.

Over the last few months, StartWheel and HRIC have been working together to unify the entrepreneurial and business footprints across the region through their educational programs. The HR BIZWHEEL Quarterly Expos bring the business community together to visit new or unique places of business, such as The HIVE in Virginia Beach or the Mariners' Museum in Newport News, or to learn from a new business such as Drone Up or a perceived "unapproachable" mature business such as, Newport News Shipbuilding. Additionally, the collaboration has resulted in the development of the region's largest business directory, which includes more than 8,000 businesses. Combining the efforts of StartWheel and HRIC into one just makes sense. Together these two organizations can better provide a robust educational environment for entrepreneurs and support the regional development of the innovation

ecosystem in Hampton Roads. And a strong innovation ecosystem will help diversify and grow Hampton Road's economy.

Initially, all current branded activities of the two organizations will continue under their current names StartWheel, Hampton Roads Innovation Collaborative, and HR BizWheel. Any future changes to the names of those branded activities will be decided by the StartWheel Board.

Tim Ryan, Executive Director of StartWheel, will be the Executive Director of Innovate Hampton Roads. Paul Hirschbiel (current Chairman of StartWheel) will be Chairman, and Dan Bell (current Chairman of HRIC) will serve as the Vice Chairman. The Board will continue to represent key participants in the innovation ecosystem and corporations that support it.

*Quote from Tim Ryan: "This is a significant and positive step forward for our region. Until now, our business community was essentially a siloed effort. The creation of Innovate Hampton Roads will connect early-stage businesses, growth-stage companies, and companies operating at scale to create a unified voice without duplicating any existing efforts. We all need each other to grow and compete with other regions."*

*Quote from Dan Bell: "Many of us in Hampton Roads know about our regional potentials and strengths. Yet all-too-often, we find ourselves playing catch-up in letting people know who we are, where we are, and the opportunities that exist in our region for business. It is our hope that this effort is a significant step forward making Hampton Roads a more well-known national and perhaps even international entity. The ultimate goal is for us to have a stronger regional economy."*

*Quote from Paul Hirschbiel: "Over the last ten years the Hampton Roads innovation ecosystem has grown dramatically with the creation of many organizations to support that growth. As was true of the recent merger of Reinvent Hampton Roads and the Hampton Roads Business Roundtable, uniting these two organizations with similar missions will decrease duplication of effort and allow the merged organization Innovate Hampton Roads to have a stronger role and voice in supporting entrepreneurs and in the growth of our innovation ecosystem."*