

# BUILDING INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS: BRAZIL MEETS PEORIA

We hosted a delegation of 33 Brazilian entrepreneurs, business leaders, and academics as part of the "Brazilian Tech Connections" program. Their visit included discussions on agriculture at Stewart Family Farms, a visit to the AgLab, and a tour of Distillery Labs, as well as networking events with local startups and advisors. This cross-cultural exchange showcased Greater Peoria's strengths in agriculture, manufacturing, and innovation to an international audience. Building global relationships enhances our region's visibility, attracts foreign direct investment, and fosters cultural understanding.



# UPDATED PROGRAM GUIDE: A RESOURCE FOR REGIONAL GROWTH

We released an updated Program Guide outlining our core initiatives in Business Attraction, Business Assistance, Workforce Solutions, Rural Development, the Greater Peoria Manufacturing Network, and Strategic Planning. This comprehensive guide is valuable for partners, stakeholders, and community members. Clearly communicating our programs and goals strengthens collaborations and aligns regional efforts. Scan the QR Code to explore our guide.



[www.greaterpeoriaedc.org](http://www.greaterpeoriaedc.org)



**GP** **GREATER PEORIA**  
Economic Development Council

**QUARTERLY  
REPORT**

**July - September 2024**



**Make your  
career greater**

**CHOOSE GREATER >  
PEORIA**



## DISTILLERY LABS: CATALYZING INNOVATION AND EDUCATION

After eight years of dedicated effort, we proudly celebrated the grand opening of Distillery Labs—Greater Peoria's innovation hub. This milestone event brought together around 200 community leaders, startup founders, and partners, marking a new era for entrepreneurship in our region. Since its opening, Distillery Labs has hosted significant events like the Illinois Falling Walls Lab pitch competition, where local startups like HuMod, ShotHawk, and Rehab Ranger showcased their innovations. The hub also hosted the Illinois Innovation Network board meeting and the Startup Showcase, featuring nine startups from the gBETA program who made their first public pitches to a large audience. Distillery Labs catalyzes innovation by providing entrepreneurs with resources, mentorship, and networking opportunities.



## LEADING THE BIO-PROCESSING ECONOMY WITH IFAB

With a \$51 million grant from the Economic Development Administration, the Illinois Fermentation and Agriculture Bioprocessing Hub (iFAB) is positioning Central Illinois as a leader in bio-manufacturing through precision fermentation. This innovative process transforms local crops like corn and soybeans into high-value products like textiles, biofuels, food ingredients, and polymers. Greater Peoria, home to nine bioprocessing facilities employing nearly 1,500 workers, stands to benefit significantly from iFAB's initiatives. Companies such as Alto Ingredients, Midwest Bioprocessing Center, PMP Fermentation, BioUrja, and NFW showcase our region's capacity to support and advance this burgeoning industry. This summer GPEDC continued to build bridges between our local companies and startup ecosystem and iFAB and its resources. Through collaboration we can connect our businesses with resources and best position Greater Peoria to be a center of this emerging industry.

## SHOWCASING GREATER PEORIA AT DEFENSE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY DAY

On August 15th, we participated in the inaugural Illinois Defense Manufacturing Industry Day in Chicago, organized by the Illinois Manufacturers Association and the Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center. Nearly 400 industry leaders, government officials, and stakeholders gathered to discuss challenges and opportunities in the defense manufacturing sector, covering topics like supply chain resilience, advanced manufacturing, and workforce development. Five Greater Peoria companies—Enercon Fluid Dynamics, Peoria Production Solutions, Omni, and Cast Technologies—proudly represented our region, highlighting our significant capabilities in defense manufacturing. By showcasing our strengths statewide, we attract potential partnerships and investments, leading to job creation and economic diversification for our community.



## ENGAGING EDUCATORS AT DISTILLERY LABS

In early August, GPEDC's Workforce Solutions team invited educators across the Greater Peoria region to tour Distillery Labs. The goal is to arrange events for local schools to utilize the available maker spaces, bridging education and industry. A planned event involves Pekin High School culinary students experiencing the commercial kitchen at Distillery Labs. Students will work with their teacher and possibly a guest chef to create meals using only the ingredients provided at the time. This initiative encourages creativity and demonstrates that healthy meals can be made from "whatever you have."

## LAUNCHING LOGAN COUNTY'S BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION PROGRAM

In September, our Economic Recovery Corps Fellow, Dorsey, in partnership with Lincoln Economic Advancement & Development (LEAD), hosted Logan County's inaugural Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Committee meeting. Representatives from local governments, educational institutions, workforce alliances, and the private sector collaborated to design a community-centered BR&E program. This initiative aims to strengthen existing enterprises, encourage job retention, and stimulate economic growth in Logan County by proactively addressing their needs. Enhancing the region's overall health makes it more attractive to investors and new enterprises.