

Calendar of Events

September 17, 2025

Starting Your Business in Illinois

Peoria NEXT Innovation Center

801 W Main Street

Peoria, IL 61606

01:00 PM - 03:00 PM CST

Katie Whalen, 309.677.2992

illinoissbdc@bradley.edu

This workshop is for aspiring entrepreneurs who want to learn all the components of how to start a successful business in Illinois. Get a realistic view of the requirements to start a business and the resources available to support your new venture. While attending this no cost 2-hour workshop, you will learn how to get your business name registered, where to obtain a tax ID number, which legal form to choose, business planning, taxes, financing options and much more. After attending the workshop, our team of certified business advisors are available to work with you, one-on-one, to navigate the process and help you succeed! This workshop is sponsored by the Illinois Small Business Development Center at Bradley University and co-sponsored by Morton Community Bank. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email.

<https://bradley.zoom.us/meeting/register/NIB1uxORT3iQWivNieGZxw>

06:00 PM - 07:00 PM CST

Jim Ryan, 3096773647

jryan@bradley.edu

Meeting foreign and international product safety standards and regulatory requirements for your goods can be a daunting task!

The Illinois SBDC International Trade Center at the Joseph Center and the Illinois SBDC International Trade Center in the Turner Center for Entrepreneurship at Bradley University are pleased to co-present this one-hour, live webinar with John Allen to help manufacturers make sense out of this complicated topic.

The Product Compliance industry changes at a fast pace and has taken on a life of its own. The days of only needing to worry about product certifications are long gone.

Today's managers must be familiar with certifications along with chemicals standards including PFAS and RoHS and software and cybersecurity requirements. Moreover, risk assessments are required for every CE directive and are starting to infiltrate U.S. standards. Our compliance expert from Product Safety Consulting will give you an update on the landscape here in the USA and Canada with NRTLs testing and certification and in Europe with the CE. He will round out the session with updates on what is needed for manufacturers to navigate the quagmire of standards and requirements to secure global market access.

PRESENTER:

John Allan, Founder, President & CEO of Product Safety Consulting, Bensenville IL. Over the last 39 years John has obtained worldwide Certifications on a diverse list of product categories including consumer electronics, small and large electrics, lighting, medical, industrial controls, machinery, gas appliances, ITE and many more. John also has been doing Hazard Analysis and Risk Assessments for over 20 years and serves as a senior advisor on product safety to a number of global companies. John has been a part of the IEEE's Product Safety Engineering Society since 1985. He is Past Chair of the PSES Chicago Chapter, Chairman of the PSES Compliance 101 Technical Committee, past Chair for the PSES's flagship Symposium ISPCE 2015, past President of the IEEE Product Safety Engineering Society and now again President (2024-2025). John often speaks on Certifications to various Trade Associations and Chamber of Commerce and various IEEE Conferences.

September 17, 2025

Making Sense of the Expanding World of Product Compliance and Global Regulations for Manufacturers

<https://Bradley.zoom.us/meeting/register/NIB1uxORT3iQWivNieGZxw>

12:00 PM - 01:00 PM CST

Jim Ryan, 3096773647

jryan@bradley.edu

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Cosponsors: Greater Peoria Economic Development Council, FTZ #114, Greater Peoria Manufacturing Network

September 24, 2025

Manufacturing 101: MVP to MFG

<https://bradley.zoom.us/meeting/register/Hq8gGx3pRhuqQVA8M1BLtQ>

12:00 PM - 01:00 PM CST

Katie Whalen, 3096771700

illinoisbdc@bradley.edu

The Turner Center for Entrepreneurship (SBDC and Peoria Next), IMEC, Barton Makerspace

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION:

*How do you design and create a prototype?
How does a prototype become a product?
What is the Barton Makerspace?
What do you need to bring a product to market?
What is IMEC?
How does a product become mass produced?
How can you partner to scale?
Why Manufacturing? Why Now? Why Illinois?
Part 2 in November (10th or 14th TBD) – Manufacturing Partners and Logistics led by IMEC in-person at Peoria NEXT*

Who should attend:

*Inventors who need to develop a prototype
Makers who want to commercialize or scale their products
Small Scale Fabricators and Manufacturing Shops
Contract Manufacturing Partners*

OUR SPEAKERS:

Jeremy Brockhouse, Bradley University Barton Makerspace: Machine Shop Supervisor and BECC Safety Coordinator

Jeremy Brockhouse brings over 25 years of manufacturing and project management experience. At Bradley University, he oversees the Business and Engineering Convergence Center's Machine Shop and is the Safety Coordinator for the building. His prior experience as a Production Supervisor at Pursuit Aerospace included managing teams of machinists and leading manufacturing operations for aerospace components.

Adrian Garces, IMEC, Technical Specialist

Technical Specialist at IMEC with 2½ years of experience delivering 400+ services under the SCOIN grant. I leverage analytics and technical expertise to help Illinois manufacturers improve supply chain performance and operational efficiency.

Eric Sampson, Illinois SBDC at Bradley University, Director of the Illinois Small Business Development Center at Bradley University, advises individuals who want to start a business or expand existing businesses. Guidance provided includes developing business and marketing plans, creating financial projections, addressing business

formation issues, and obtaining financing. Eric also assists owners and managers of existing small businesses to identify solutions to business related problems, to examine strategic opportunities, expand their product portfolios, and enhance or diversify their sales efforts. His areas of interest include supporting entrepreneurs and local small business owners toward capital funding options, market expansion and improved profitability, and supporting growth, hiring and competitiveness through innovation and effective strategies. Eric received a Bachelor of Science in Finance from Bradley University.

Chris Youngmark, Peoria Next Innovation Center, Director

Peoria Next Innovation Center is a business incubator, featuring wet and dry laboratories, private offices, and shared coworking space for entrepreneurs and small businesses. In partnership with the Turner Center for Entrepreneurship at Bradley University, Peoria NEXT provides an affordable business environment, education, networking, and a host of amenities onsite, with support from Bradley University systems.

September 24, 2025

Make Better Decisions with Analytics - Grow with Google

<https://us06web.zoom.us/join/9tJfP8s2V0pORXzW70A>

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST

Katie Whalen, 3096771700

illinoisbdc@bradley.edu

Learn best practices and analyze trends about how customers engage with your business online, then turn these insights into well-informed, actionable decisions.

In this session we'll cover:

An introduction to Google Analytics.

Creating and understanding reports.

Making goals.

Using Analytics with other Google tools.

Presented by: Maria Elena Duron, Championing the mission "Helping businesses GET FOUND," Maria Elena Duron has helped over 12,400 small businesses grow with Google by simplifying digital marketing, search visibility, and AI-powered strategies. Recognized by the Texas Governor's Office and commissioned by the Grow with Google Program, she is an industry leader in SEO, AEO (Answer Engine Optimization), and online visibility strategies.

Maria Elena doesn't just teach theory—she delivers practical, actionable training designed to help businesses stand out in search, connect with the right customers, and turn visibility into revenue. Whether you're a brick-and-mortar business, a service provider, or an online brand, Maria Elena ensures that your marketing works smarter, not harder.

September 27, 2025

Fall Fest

So Chic Boutique

111 W. Washington St.

Morton, IL 61550

10:00 AM - 03:00 PM CST

Sara O'Shea, 3092910753

events@so-chic.com

This event is always a hit! By the time Fall Fest rolls around, people are in the full fall mood and are ready for yummy food, cozy clothes, a crisp day of weather enjoying all things pumpkin spice, and shopping with their friends and families. This event continues to grow each year and with live music and vendors all together - it's the perfect way to enjoy a fall day.

September 28, 2025

Trading Card & Game Day at DQ!

Morton Dairy Queen

11:00 AM - 05:00 PM CST

Brooke E McClaskey, 3092651897

brookemccclaskey@gmail.com

*Super excited to have local fans of Pokemon, Yu-gi-oh, World of War Craft, D&D, Magic the Gathering & so much more gather at our DQ! Make a SWEET deal on cards / games & get yourself a SWEET treat - only at your local DQ in Morton, IL! Thank you to Miss Megan for organizing this fun event for her store! We know a lot of our kiddos are very excited to bring their cards & see what new ones they can collect! See which of your friends are going! Check out the Facebook Event here! >>>
<https://www.facebook.com/share/1WbXHsRZDQ/>*

October 1, 2025

AI + YouTube: Build Trust & Get Found in Video-First Search - SMART BRAND SYSTEM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/join/9tJf6eYvKn5>

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST

Katie Whalen, 3096771700

illinoisbdc@bradley.edu

YouTube is the second-largest search engine—and it's now feeding AI tools directly.

Learn how to create trust-building, searchable video content that boosts authority, leads, and visibility.

What You'll Learn:

How AI pulls video content into search results and overviews

The structure of a trust-rich YouTube channel

Smart topics and titles that support visibility and authority

Easy repurposing workflows for long-form and shorts

How to tie video into your SEO and visibility system

Built for:

- *Business owners, educators, and marketers who want to expand visibility using AI-optimized video content on YouTube*

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October 15, 2025

Starting Your Business in Illinois

Peoria NEXT Innovation Center

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Peoria, IL 61606

03:00 PM - 05:00 PM CST

Katie Whalen, 309.677.2992

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October 15, 2025

Ecommerce Excellence: Unlocking Revenue Streams and Reach - GROW WITH GOOGLE

<https://us06web.zoom.us/join/8WEiLP2Q1q0KTc3TLM4dw>

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST

Katie Whalen, 3096771700

illinoisbdc@bradley.edu

This training provides ecommerce businesses with the strategies and tools to increase revenue and expand their reach. Topics covered include website optimization, effective marketing campaigns, social media engagement, customer service and retention, and data analytics. This training is designed to help ecommerce businesses thrive and succeed in a competitive online marketplace.

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October 16, 2025

Trade Tariffs in 30 Minutes

<https://bradley.zoom.us/meeting/register/0eCOgZfJR-0OkIYXSg8h4w>

12:00 PM - 12:30 PM CST

Katie Whalen, 3096771700

tce@bradley.edu

Tariffs, tariffs and more international tariffs! If you are getting confused, don't worry. The Illinois SBDC International Trade Center at The Turner Center for Entrepreneurship is pleased to host a 30-minute webinar covering the basics of international trade tariffs, how to find the tariffs, and what you can do to lower your tariffs. We will review both U.S. import tariffs and tariffs applied by other countries to U.S. exports.

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION: In this fast-paced 30-minute webinar, we'll cover:

Understanding the four types of U.S. import tariffs.

Where to find U.S. import tariff rates.

Understanding tariffs applied to U.S. exports and where to find the current rates.

Steps you can take to lower tariffs on imports or exports.

Resources to support making smart tariff decisions.

Q&A: The presenter will be available after the presentation at 12:30 pm for Q&A from the participants.

OUR SPEAKER/s:

Name,

James Foley

Bradley University

Jim Foley is the director of the Turner Center for Entrepreneurship at Bradley University. He is also the Director of International Programs for the Foster College of Business and the Director of Business and Nonprofit Partnerships for the university.

Mr. Foley is a frequent speaker on international trade issues and teaches International Business courses at Bradley University. Mr. Foley is the author of The Global Entrepreneur 4th Edition, which discusses techniques to expand exports. He is also the co-author of the eleventh edition of International Marketing by Vern Terspstra. Jim has received numerous recognitions, including the Illinois Governor's Export Award, the IATTO Lifetime Achievement Award, and the John Otis Lifetime Achievement Award, Nasbite International's highest recognition. In 2009, Bradley's International Trade Center was awarded the President of the United States' E Award. Jim serves as a member of the Illinois District Export Council. Prior to joining the trade center, Mr. Foley worked in the computer industry, living in Los Angeles and London. He has an MBA from the London Business School at the University of London and a B.A. from Knox College.

Outside cosponsors: i.e. GPEDC, FTZ #114, MBDC, SCORE, Hispanic Chamber, Peoria Chamber

October 16, 2025

2025 Better Business Bureau Torch Awards

Gateway Building in Downtown Peoria

200 Northeast Water Street

Peoria , IL 61602

05:00 PM - 08:00 PM CST

Stephanie Blue, 309-670-1183

absupport@hoibbb.org

The BBB Torch Awards for Ethics celebrate businesses and nonprofits that demonstrate an exceptional commitment to ethics and integrity in all their business interactions. The program not only emphasizes the importance of building trust but also recognizes the efforts of outstanding organizations in contributing to an honorable marketplace.

October 22, 2025

AI Visibility 360: How to Be Found by People, Platforms, and AI Tools - SMART BRAND SYSTEMS

https://us06web.zoom.us/join/WWZg_6LRSiyur5rL-1dEYA

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST

Katie Whalen, 3096771700

illinoisbdc@bradley.edu

Being found online is no longer just about keywords. It's about showing up everywhere AI looks. This session walks you through the visibility layers that matter now—and how to build a presence that sticks.

What You'll Learn:

Where AI search pulls from and how to be listed, ranked, and cited

The role of Google, directories, and structured content in modern search

How to build authority across your digital footprint

What makes your profile and site "AI-citable"

Visibility audits and quick wins for multi-platform search

Built for:

- *Experts, consultants, and local businesses ready to optimize for human search, machine learning, and future-facing platforms*

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October 23, 2025

How to Recognize and Rise with AI- SMART BRAND SYSTEM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/hqUlfmWeQ0CrtO5259D1eA>

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST

Katie Whalen, 3096771700

illinoissbdc@bradley.edu

In this powerful and practical keynote, Maria Elena Duron shares the personal story of the opportunity she missed - the chance to buy into eBay at \$1/share - and uses it to deliver a critical message: we're standing at the edge of the next eBay moment... and this time, it's AI.

But unlike AI keynotes that focus on tech jargon or speculative futures, this talk is rooted in real transformation: helping business leaders, service providers, and entrepreneurs understand AI as the new operating system for visibility, trust, and authority.

What the Audience Will Walk Away With:

Why AI is becoming the new OS for how people (and machines) search, choose, and trust.

What the real risk of doing nothing looks like (hint: invisibility).

The 3 practical moves every business leader must make to become unmissable in the age of AI.

How to simplify and align your business with how AI sees and recommends.

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October 29, 2025

Get Your Business on Google Search and Maps- GROW WITH GOOGLE

https://us06web.zoom.us/join/join?from=invite-link&join_code=Jq0nburqTOGv-Dh-8UjUjw

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST

Katie Whalen, 3096771700

illinoisbdc@bradley.edu

Showing up when customers are searching online is more important than ever. Ensure customers can find accurate, updated information about your local business on Google Search and Google Maps, no matter which device they use. In this workshop, you will learn how to create and manage a Google Business Profile from start to finish.

In this session we'll show you how to:

Create or claim your Google Business Profile.

Manage your business info across Google Search and Maps.

Use your Business Profile to connect with potential customers.

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November 15, 2025

Mistletoe Market

So Chic Boutique

111 W. Washington St.

Morton, IL 61550

10:00 AM - 03:00 PM CST

Sara O'Shea, 3092910753

events@so-chic.com

If you want to experience the EPITOME of Christmas magic and a Hallmark movie setting, this market is it. It was started in 2020 as a way to safely bring people together outside when we couldn't gather inside....what started as a one time event is now one of our most beloved and best attended. Santa comes, there's children's activities, everyone's in the holiday (and spending!) spirit and it truly is just a magical day from start to finish. We are so excited to bring new and fun ideas into play! Regardless of the weather (which can be dicey outside in November) - it's always an amazing turnout!

November 19, 2025

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Peoria, IL 61606

01:00 PM - 03:00 PM CST

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December 10, 2025

Starting Your Business in Illinois

Peoria NEXT Innovation Center

801 W Main Street

Peoria, IL 61606

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST

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December 22, 2025

Blue Violin Candlelight Christmas Extravaganza

Bertha Frank Performing Arts Center

350 N Illinois Ave

Morton, IL 61550

07:00 PM - 08:30 PM CST

Chris, 617 575 9519

contact@blue-violin.com

TICKETS AT: <https://blue-violin.com/candlelight-christmas/>

Back by popular demand, Blue Violin's Candlelight Christmas Tour returns for its third spectacular year — bigger, brighter, and bolder than ever before.

Often described as "Trans-Siberian Orchestra meets Lindsey Stirling," Blue Violin delivers fiery virtuosity and cinematic flair in every performance.

Fresh from acclaimed tours across Australia, Asia, Europe, and the Americas, Blue Violin has been earning international accolades for genre-bending performances that blur the line between classical virtuosity and rock energy. With last year's holiday tour playing to packed houses and sold-out nights, this year's Candlelight Christmas is set to be the most unforgettable yet.

This one-of-a-kind holiday concert experience blends the beauty of traditional carols with high-octane rock anthems, cinematic classical reimaginings, and heartwarming favorites — all brought to life in glowing candlelight, with a dazzling stage set and immersive light show.

? Guest vocalists and surprise musical collaborators? Live choirs and symphony orchestras in select cities? Blue Violin performing virtuosic, high-energy arrangements that blur the line between elegance and edge? Holiday classics like Somewhere in my Memory, Carol of the Bells, and Holly Jolly Christmas — reinvented with power and soul? Genre-bending takes on Stairway to Heaven, Bohemian Rhapsody, Interstellar, and more

From grand concert halls to intimate candlelit theaters, this is a concert that transforms every venue into a wonderland of sound and light.

Whether you're creating a new holiday tradition or returning for another season, the Candlelight Christmas Tour is more than a concert — it's a celebration.