Calendar of Events

October 21, 2025 - December 2, 2025 Mastering Microsoft Copilot for Business Owners
Bradley University, Business & Engineering Convergence Center, Room 1130
1422 W Main Street
Peoria, IL 61606
04:00 PM - 05:30 PM CST
Katie Whalen, (309)677-1700
illinoissbdc@bradley.edu

Our 6-week hybrid course, "Mastering Microsoft 365 Copilot for Personal & Professional Applications," is designed to help small business owners unlock the power of AI — without needing to be tech-savvy.

What You'll Learn:

Week 1: Copilot + Word - Writing & Content Creation

Week 2: Copilot + Microsoft Designer - Visuals & Graphics

Week 3: Copilot + Excel – Data Entry & Analysis

Week 4: Copilot + Excel & PowerPoint - Reports & Presentations

Week 5: Copilot Studio – Creating Your First Agent

Week 6: Copilot Studio – Building Smart Workflows for Repetitive Tasks

Course Format & Flexibility:

Classes on Tuesdays from 4-5:30pm starting Oct. 21 - Dec. 2 (no class Nov. 25)

Hybrid: Attend in person at Bradley University, Business & Engineering Convergence Center | 1130, live via Zoom, or watch the weekly recordings

November 5, 2025

Expand Your Business Globally: Illinois Export Roadshow for Manufacturers 2025 Business and Engineering Convergence Center (BECC), Bradley University, Room 1122 1500 W Main St

Peoria, IL 61625

12:00 PM - 01:30 PM CST Turner Center, (309) 677-3447

tce@bradley.edu

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Office of Trade and Investment and the Illinois SBDC International Trade Center in the Turner Center for Entrepreneurship at Bradley University

Intro:

Join us for a pizza lunch-and-learn to explore solutions, connect with experts, and take the next step forward to global success.

You will learn how state resources can help your business grow through exports with International Trade Specialists from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Office of Trade and Investment (OTI) and Illinois Small Business Development Center-International Trade Centers (SBDC-ITCs). In addition, we will be joined by OTI's International Trade Specialist for Africa and the Middle East to discuss opportunities for Illinois companies and to answer questions on these important regions.

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION: {Short summary for marketing your event/workshop }

Who should attend

- ? Companies exporting or interested in exporting
- ? Economic Development Organizations
- ? Companies interested in learning more about Africa and the Middle East

What You'll Learn

OTI services:

- ? Export assistance and education
- ? Illinois State Trade and Export Promotion (ISTEP) program
- ? Market intelligence and international protocol
- ? Trade mission coordination

Illinois SBDC-ITC's services:

- P Export strategy and planning
- ? International market selection

and market entry strategy

- ? Export pricing strategy
- ? Export marketing strategy and resources

Africa and Middle East Spotlight:

OTI's International Trade Specialist for Africa and the Middle East will provide an overview of Africa and the Middle East's growth trajectory, highlight Illinois' export potential, and temper expectations with a realistic view of challenges.

OUR SPEAKERS:

Ericka White, State Director, the Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network, hosted by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO).

Margo Markopoulos, Deputy Director at the Illinois Department of Commerce over Trade and Investment.

Siobhan Pangerl, International Trade Specialist for Africa and Middle East, Illinois Office of Trade and Investment.

November 8, 2025

Craft and Market Sale
Morton Methodist Church
420 N. Tennessee Ave.
Morton, IL 61550
09:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST
Morton Methodist Church, 3092667174
info@mortonmethodist.org

November 13, 2025

Get Contract-Ready: Funding and Bonding Tools for Small Companies Who Sell Business to Peoria Next Innovation Center A114
801 W Main St

Peoria, IL 61606 03:30 PM - 05:00 PM CST Katie Whalen, 3096771700

illinoissbdc@bradley.edu

Many small businesses win purchase orders or government contracts but lack the available cash flow or bonding capacity to perform. This workshop will help participants understand how to secure working capital through purchase order and contract financing, meet bonding requirements, and position their company for larger contract opportunities.

What are alternative funding options and why do I need them?

Purchase order (PO) and contract financing are used by small businesses to cover the costs of fulfilling a customer's order or a large contract when they lack immediate capital.

Do I need to have bonds?

Bonds are often required for state and local government projects, with specific state and local requirements for contractors. Bonds guarantee performance and payment to subcontractors, with a three-party contract involving the principal, obligee, and surety.

Winning a big order or government contract is only half the challenge;

financing and bonding it are the other half.

Join experts Bob Jaskiewicz and Larry Polec for a practical session on how small businesses can use purchase order and contract financing to fund performance, meet surety bonding requirements, and strengthen their capacity for larger opportunities. This in-person event will cover the following topics:

Purchase Order Funding - Access capital for growth

What types of small businesses should consider purchase order or contract financing?

What's the difference between PO financing, factoring, and contract financing?
How can small businesses use these tools to fulfill large government or commercial orders?
What are the key costs, risks, and lender expectations?
How does purchase order financing work?
What are the benefits of purchase order financing versus other operating capital options?
Bonding - Guarantee performance and payment
What types of small businesses should be aware of bonding requirements?
What are the benefits of surety bonding for small businesses?
How does a small business qualify for bonding?
What costs will the small business incur?
Do higher levels of surety bonding have additional requirements?
When is a surety bond required in government contracting?
What does it mean to be "bondable"?
How can small businesses qualify for bonding or increase bonding capacity?
What are common mistakes that prevent contractors from obtaining bonds?

Speakers: Bob Jaskiewicz and Larry Polec

BOB JASKIEWICZ: Robert (Bob) Jaskiewicz is a graduate of Michigan State University and served on the faculty of Michigan State from 1972 until 1985. Bob has been in the Alternative Finance Industry from 1986 until present. Founded by Bob, 1776 Capital Finance LLC specializes in working with start ups as well as established businesses who sell to business or government, but are not able to obtain traditional bank financing. 1776 Capital Finance LLC provides funding using your business or government purchase orders or invoices as collateral.

LARRY POLEC: For more than 35 years, Larry Polec has been actively helping small and emerging and scaling businesses achieve their goals through various surety programs, including the SBA.

Larry served as Project Director of Risk Management for the Detroit Bankruptcy Team overseeing the risk mitigations efforts to reduce claims in addition to identifying and implementing resources to improve the City's comprehensive insurance program.

Larry has presented surety seminars to Johns Hopkins University, City of Detroit, Minority Enterprise Week (United States Department of Commerce), City of Atlanta, Indiana Department of Administration and others.

This event is co-sponsored by the Illinois APEX Accelerator Center and the Illinois Small Business Development Center which are both part of the Turner Center for Entrepreneurship at Bradley University.

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

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.

November 20, 2025

Festival of Trees
Holiday Inn & Suites at Grand Prairie
7601 N Orange Prairie Rd
Peoria, United States, IL 61615
05:30 PM - 10:00 PM CST
Adrianna Ponce-Landaverde, 3096740105
adriannapl@crittentoncenters.org

Jingle & Mingle – Thursday, November 20th, 5:30 PM

Kick off the holiday season at Jingle & Mingle! Guests will enjoy an open bar, a festive signature drink, a buffet dinner, and desserts sponsored by Nothing Bundt Cakes. DJ Todd will keep the energy high, and a live auction will add to the excitement. It's the perfect mix of fun, food, and holiday spirit—all supporting Crittenton Centers. Tickets are \$100 each or \$850 for a table of ten.

Senior Day – Friday, November 21st, 9:30 AM–1:00 PM Senior Day is a free event for anyone 55 and older. Guests can enjoy bingo, sweet treats, hot cocoa, coffee, and live entertainment—all while soaking in the festive atmosphere of the Festival of Trees. It's a special way to celebrate the season and honor seniors in our community.

Paint Night - Friday, November 21st, 7:00 PM

Tap into your creative side at Paint Night! Guests will be guided step-by-step to create the featured painting, "Frosted Festive Wreath," while enjoying the festive atmosphere of the Festival of Trees. Tickets are \$45, and seats are limited—only 100 available. A bar will also be open for guests 21 and older. Brought to you by Rachel Reyes of Paint Nite Central IL.

Brunch & Bubbly – Saturday, November 22nd, 9:30–11:30 AM Start your Saturday with sparkle at Brunch & Bubbly! Guests will enjoy a delicious brunch spread, drinks, raffles, and live entertainment. Tickets are \$75 each or \$600 for a table of ten. It's a lively and stylish way to celebrate the season while helping families in our community.

Family Day – Saturday, November 22nd, 1:00–4:30 PM

Family Day is all about holiday fun for every age! Families can enjoy cookies sponsored by Hy-Vee, live entertainment, and kid-friendly activities. Guests can come and go as they please during the afternoon, making it the perfect way to create magical memories together.

Sparkle & Sip Soirée – Saturday, November 22nd, 7:00–10:00 PM Sparkle & Sip Soirée is a chic evening event with light hors d'oeuvres, desserts sponsored by Nothing Bundt Cakes, beer and wine, plus live entertainment by Regal Sounds and Entertainment. A cash bar will also be available. Tickets are \$75 per person. It's the perfect way to toast the season in style.

Here is the link to purchase any tickets: Home - Peoria's Festival of Trees 2025

November 22, 2025

Morton VFW Holiday Market Morton VFW Post 5921

2310 Veterans Rd

Morton , II 61550 09:00 AM - 03:00 PM CST

John Hanson, 392665031 vfleamarket5921@gmail.com

Come in this Saturday from 10am to 5pm come to Morton VFW for your first annual Holiday market. Come check out all our vendors.

November 22, 2025

Holiday Market Morton VFW Post 5921 2310 Veterans Rd Morton , II 6550

10:00 AM - 05:00 PM CST John Hanson , 3092665031 vfwfleamarket5921@gmail.com

Join us for some holiday shopping with over 10 handpicked vendors that have boutique style booths overflowing with handmade products and vintage treasures PLUS food, a cash bar and more! The event is completely indoors, with the exception of a few mobile shops.

The market will be Saturday, November 22nd from 10am to 5pm.

November 23, 2025

Thanksgiving Service
First Baptist Church of Morton
900 E. Jefferson St.
Morton, IL 61550
06:00 PM - 07:00 PM CST
Jennifer Damotte, 3092669654
jennifer@firstbaptistmorton.com
https://www.firstbaptistmorton.com/

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 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.

December 12, 2025

Sidewalk Prophets Great Big Family Christmas Lincoln Square Theater 141 N Main St. Decatur, IL 62523 07:00 PM - 09:30 PM CST Darlene Francis, 6156120593

darlene@sidewalkprophets.com

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.