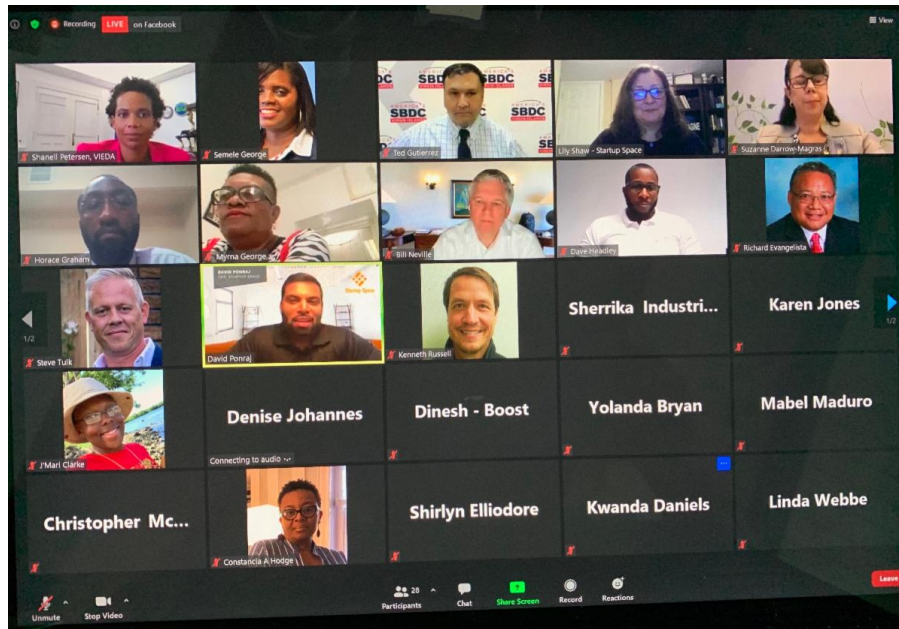


NEWS RELEASE - For Immediate Release



First day of launch week for USVI Business Resource Hub held via Zoom on Tuesday, October 20, 2020. *Photo credit: Semele A.C. George/VIDEA*

USVI Business Resource Hub draws interest, support among stakeholders, business community in one online space

CHARLOTTE AMALIE, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands– November 9, 2020 - USVI Business Resource Hub, an online and mobile business resource powered by Startup Space, was recently introduced to U.S. Virgin Islands businesses and community stakeholders during its four-day launch, according to an announcement from the Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority (VIDEA).

This launch was held virtually, due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, from October 20-23, 2020 in partnership with the Virgin Islands Small Business Development Center (VI SBDC), the V.I. Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs (VI DLCA), and the University of the Virgin Islands Center for Excellence in Leadership and Learning (UVI CELL) via Zoom, a software-based platform for video and audio communications.

More than 153 participants registered for the launch and 54 signed up for USVI Business Resource Hub which can be accessed through an app by phone or a computer to easily find a free, comprehensive directory of support services, mentors, online peer networks, calendar of events and much more that are based in the USVI.

“This is a great resource, not only for small businesses, but for individuals

interested in becoming business owners and to help them succeed in the Territory,” said Ted Gutierrez, state director, VI SBDC.

Lily Shaw, director of client experience, Startup Space, gave an extensive demonstration on how stakeholders and businesses can register for Startup Space, an in-depth overview about USVI Business Resource Hub and all its offerings.

Innovative features on this platform include:

- **A profile section** that displays an individual’s interests, their spoken languages, professional expertise and interests, and options to update and edit a profile.
- **COVID-19 resources** such as webinars, updates and support from leading agencies during this time.
- **A community hub** which allows users to build, or be a part of, a business community that shares challenges and experiences, network and build relationships in real-time; seeks mentorships, events, community-curated podcasts; and finds resources across a diverse group of agencies through a knowledge center.

Participants also engaged in one-on-one sessions with representatives of supporting agencies. Wayne L. Biggs, Jr., chief executive officer, VIEDA, interviewed Richard T. Evangelista, commissioner, VI DLCA, for a special fireside chat highlighting topics ranging from Mr. Evangelista’s insights about the pandemic’s impact on the USVI business community and his suggestions on pivoting a business in these challenging times to remain sustainable.

Representatives from the VIEDA met David Ponraj, founder and CEO, of Startup Space, at the International Economic Development Council’s Annual Conference in 2019 and began conversations about bringing this platform to the USVI to assist the USVI business community.

Other agency representatives present for the launch included, but were not limited to, Shanell Petersen, managing director, Marketing and Vision 2040, VIEDA; Monique T. Samuel, acting director of Lending, VIEDA’s Economic Development Bank; Horace Graham, Jr., director of licensing, VI DLCA; Dr. Suzanne Darrow-Magras, director, UVI CELL; and Caroline Polydore-Simon, marketing manager, UVI CELL.

For more information, contact Shanell Petersen, managing director, Marketing and Vision 2040, at spetersen@usvieda.org.

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About the Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority:

The Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority (VIEDA) is a semi-autonomous governmental instrumentality. It promotes economic growth, job creation, and wealth generation in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The VIEDA assumes, integrates and unifies the functions of these four entities: Economic Development Commission, Virgin Islands Economic

Development Park Corporation, Economic Development Bank and the Enterprise Zone Commission. The VIEDA accomplishes its mission by attracting investors to the Territory to establish or relocate their business in the U.S. Virgin Islands. It also provides financial assistance for new and existing small to medium-sized businesses in the Territory and assists V.I. residents and business owners with rehabilitating their properties located in distressed areas that were once vibrant economic centers of activity in the Territory. Learn more about the USVIEDA at www.usvieda.org or send an email to info@usvieda.org.

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