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# BUILDING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ENTREPRENEURS AND WORKFORCE LEADERS

*Helping young people discover their potential, develop an entrepreneurial mindset, and become leaders that impact their communities.*



By Christine Kreisher, Executive Director, Emerging Entrepreneurs Leadership Academy (EELA)



As a business owner and someone who works closely with students, I see the same challenge from both sides — the widening gap between potential and workforce readiness.

Employers are struggling to find young people who are confident, prepared, and equipped with professional skills and an entrepreneurial mindset. At the same time, many students are graduating unsure of where they fit, how to connect with local employers, or how to translate their strengths into meaningful careers.

The Emerging Entrepreneurs Leadership Academy (EELA) exists to connect those two worlds.

EELA prepares high school students and young adults — many from underserved communities — for real-world success as entrepreneurs, innovators, and workforce leaders. Through a six-week summer intensive hosted at Penn State Berks, students learn directly from more than 100 local business owners, complete hands-on internships, and work in teams to develop and pitch business ideas in a Shark Tank-style format.

But EELA is no longer just a summer program. We are intentionally building a long-term leadership and workforce pipeline that strengthens our regional economy. Here are five key needs where the business community can make a direct impact:

**1. Internship Hosts:** Students thrive when they gain exposure inside real businesses. We are continually seeking employers willing to host a summer

intern, provide shadowing opportunities, or allow students to experience leadership in action.

**2. Mentors and Guest Experts:** Our students benefit from hearing directly from local professionals about resilience, financial literacy, sales, marketing, and leadership. A single hour can change a student's trajectory.

**3. Strategic Investment:** As EELA expands, we are building alumni coaching, incubator programs, and multi-year support systems. Funding ensures that cost is never a barrier for talented students with high potential.

**4. School and Community Partnerships:** We are actively exploring dual-enrollment credit opportunities and expanded partnerships to ensure EELA integrates with existing workforce and education systems.

**5. Long-Term Regional Commitment:** When young people see opportunity in their own communities, they are far more likely to build their futures there. EELA is about retaining talent in Berks County and strengthening our business ecosystem.

What makes EELA unique is its long-term alumni ecosystem. Students don't just complete a summer program — they enter a network of mentors, employers, and fellow entrepreneurs who continue supporting their growth. Through alumni leadership opportunities, continued mentorship, and entrepreneurial incubator support, EELA helps young people stay connected to the business community while developing the skills and confidence needed to lead. For employers across Berks County, it represents something powerful: a growing pipeline of motivated young talent committed to building their futures right here in our region.

The business community has always shaped the future of Berks County. Now is the moment to shape its next generation of leaders. Join us in creating a movement that changes the world!

To learn more about partnering with EELA, hosting an intern, or supporting our mission, visit [eeainpa.org](http://eeainpa.org) or reach out to Christine Kreisher at [ckreisher@eelausa.org](mailto:ckreisher@eelausa.org)

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## SBRA EVENTS

Events: Register at <https://www.sbrassociation.com/#EVENTS>

- Breakfast Referral Club – April 3rd at B2 Bistro
- SBRA Networking Mingle – April 29th

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