



ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2026



A YEAR OF INNOVATION, POWERED BY COMMUNITY

This year, innovation has been more than a buzzword, it's been the heartbeat of Central and Northern Pennsylvania. Across our 32-county footprint, entrepreneurs have been transforming ideas into impact, redefining industries, and creating new opportunities that strengthen our communities and our economy.

At Ben Franklin Technology Partners, we've always believed that innovation doesn't just happen in one place, it happens everywhere there's imagination, courage, and a commitment to solving real problems. From the labs and barns of our agricultural entrepreneurs to the collaborative spaces where software engineers and scientists meet, this year has proven once again that the spirit of invention is alive and thriving here at home.

In the pages ahead, you'll see what that looks like in action. You'll meet founders who are reimagining healthcare with Atlas Biotech, creating sustainable food systems through Founders Market, and powering cleaner energy solutions with PS Energy. You'll also get a glimpse into the "ones to watch", companies like Eventio, Car-to-Camp, and Stellar Floors, whose early momentum points toward long-term success.

We'll also take a moment to celebrate the people who make our work possible. From Sherry Davidson's years of dedicated service to the partners who collaborated with us through initiatives like the Sensor Network and Entrepreneurial Takeover. Ben Franklin's story continues to be one of shared purpose.

One trend we've seen a powerful wave of innovation focused on is improving the lives of our elder population through the rise of AgeTech. We stepped up as leaders in supporting this space by focusing our legacy programs, the Big Idea Contest and TechCelerator, on improving AgeTech. As a result, we witnessed a new generation of founders building technologies that help older adults live healthier, more connected, and more independent lives.

Our mission remains clear: to invest in the future of Pennsylvania by empowering innovators today. Whether through funding, mentorship, or partnership, Ben Franklin is here to ensure that great ideas born in our region grow into sustainable, job-creating businesses that drive our economy forward.

Thank you for being part of this journey, whether as a founder, partner, or champion of innovation. The progress we've made this year is only the beginning. Together, we'll continue to build a stronger, smarter, more resilient Pennsylvania.

With gratitude,



President & CEO

Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Central and Northern Pennsylvania

OUR 2025 IMPACT

Ben Franklin Technology Partners surveys its portfolio companies annually on the economic impacts that they accomplish as a direct result of our investment.



SEE OUR STATEWIDE IMPACT AT [BENFRANKLINIMPACT.COM](https://benfranklinimpact.com).

433

COMPANIES ASSISTED

\$346,983,325

CLIENT COMPANY REVENUE EARNED

270

JOBS CREATED

\$141,529,353

PRIVATE FUNDS LEVERAGED

1448

JOBS RETAINED

\$27,266,951

CLIENT RDT&E EXPENDITURES

24

NEW COMPANIES FORMED

\$621,792

LICENSING REVENUE EARNED

DID YOU KNOW... independent economic analyses show that every dollar invested by the state into Ben Franklin generates \$3.90 in additional state taxes.

INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHTS

Throughout the 32 counties, Ben Franklin CNP serves and supports start-up and established businesses in a multitude of industries. From preventative healthcare and supply chain improvements to agriculture and Ai assisted tech, these are a few of the portfolio companies that are making an incredible impact on Pennsylvania's economic force.



FOUNDERS MARKET

When a business creates a product, there are usually several steps between “add to cart” and the moment it arrives on your doorstep. In retail, especially in the food and beverage world, getting your favorite artisanal popcorn or sparkling drink into your hands requires a small army of partners. Traditionally, three different companies handle the essentials: storing the product, processing the purchase, and finally packing and shipping the order.

Founders Market and Co. is the answer to that age-old process. Their response flips the script entirely. Instead of juggling multiple vendors, Founders Market brings everything under one roof including product storage, e-commerce fulfillment, packing, shipping, and even returns. In a fragmented and often confusing industry, this level of streamlining is more than innovation, it's a welcomed disruption.

Founders Market and Co. provides distribution across Central Pennsylvania, nationwide third-party logistics support, e-commerce fulfillment, merchandising, warehousing, and comprehensive shipping services. Their fleet of sprinter vans, SUVs, box trucks, and sales cars allows them to deliver with both speed and flexibility, no matter the terrain or volume. Whether it's a palette of gourmet cookies or a single specialty item, this team is equipped and ready.

Behind this operation are co-founders Scott, Alex, and Matt—former brand owners who built this company from lived experience. They know how challenging it can be to grow a profitable food business because they've walked that road themselves. That empathy fuels everything they do. And because Founders Market is employee-owned, the commitment runs even deeper. They genuinely care about the success of every client they serve.

In an industry built on fragmented movement, Founders Market and Co. stands out by gathering heart and hustle in a shared mission to help food businesses thrive.



Photo: The Founders Market team



LEARN MORE AT
FOUNDERSMARKETANDCO.COM

ATLAS BIOTECH

Innovation in cancer research often begins with a single question: how can we find the right therapy faster? When Dr. Josh Reynolds entered the Penn State Systems and Synthetic Biology Lab as a Ph.D. student, he and his mentor, Associate Professor Justin Pritchard, set out to understand why some treatments work at first and then suddenly stop.

What began as a research question soon turned into a breakthrough. Across academic labs and pharmaceutical companies, the same challenge persists. Developing next-generation therapies is often slow, costly, and unpredictable, with progress halted by frustrating dead ends. Every restart cost valuable time, and in cancer research, time is everything.

That's where Atlas Biotech is rewriting the story. What makes the company stand out is its ability to generate large, high-quality datasets that map how biological structures relate to function, insight that's critical for understanding and treating disease. Atlas Biotech builds vast "biological libraries," collections of genetic and protein variants used to test and uncover how

tiny molecular changes impact cell behavior. And understanding cell behavior is everything in the fight against cancer. According to the National Cancer Institute, treatment resistance accounts for 90% of cancer-related relapses and deaths. That staggering statistic became fuel for Dr. Reynolds and his research team.

Through their work, Dr. Reynolds developed a method to predict how cancer cells will respond to different drugs, an approach that brings scientists and families closer to more effective, personalized treatments.

The company's momentum caught the attention of the Shapiro Administration, which visited Atlas Biotech at their headquarters inside the Ben Franklin Incubator located in State College to spotlight Pennsylvania's innovation economy and the Governor's proposed investments in startups like this one.



LEARN MORE AT [ATLASBIO.TECH](https://atlasbio.tech)



Photo: Dr. Josh Reynolds giving a tour of one of the Atlas Bio facilities to Sec. Rick Siger, Rep. Paul Takac, and Rep. Scott Conklin.



Photo: (L to R): Rep. Scott Conklin, Joshua Reynolds CEO, Atlas Biotech, Department of Economic Development Secretary Rick Siger, Rep. Paul Takac, Todd Erdley Ben Franklin/CNP Regional Director.

PHOSPHOLUTIONS



AGRICULTURE

Phospholutions' breakthrough product, RhizoSorb®, helps farmers grow more with less, by reducing the environmental footprint of phosphate runoff while improving crop yield and efficiency. As phosphate demand surges and environmental standards tighten, this kind of solution is essential.

The idea for Phospholutions first came to Founder and CEO, Hunter Swisher during his senior year of undergrad at Penn State University. While in class he learned about the finite resource, phosphorus and the international problem of it dwindling destined to leave the earth's crops destitute from lack of the growth stimulating element. Swisher's professor had developed patented technology that was believed to be a solution. Once he learned that those patents were available to license, what was once sitting on a shelf became the catalyst for his now innovative global solution.

From the first days, Ben Franklin CNP has supported Swisher's vision and provided resources that support and minimize risk for Phospholutions in a capital efficient way.

First as a student founder, Swisher received a Ben Franklin CNP Pre-Seed Grant. He later went on to become the winner of our legacy program, The Big Idea Contest. In 2025 Phospholutions received the largest funding investment in Ben Franklin CNP history, as one of the most successful portfolio companies contributing to an increase in Pennsylvania based-jobs.

"Ben Franklin didn't just fund us – they amplified our mission," said Hunter Swisher, CEO. "That belief gave us the confidence to pursue a global problem with a Pennsylvania-built solution."



[LEARN MORE AT PHOSPHOLUTIONS.COM](https://www.phospholutions.com)



SPOTLESS MATERIALS



ADVANCED
MATERIALS

The mission behind each spotLess product is rooted in environmental problem-solving through engineering. Dr. Tak-Sing Wong, Professor of Engineering at The Pennsylvania State University and Co-Founder of spotLess, was originally approached by The Gates Foundation's team to consult on the Reinvent the Toilet Challenge, where researchers were seeking a solution for human-waste residue in low-water toilet systems. That challenge became the genesis for what would eventually become spotLess's patented liquid-entrained smooth surface (L.E.S.S.) coating.

Formulated using natural principles found in insects, the coating mirrors the water-repellent surfaces that allow creatures like grasshoppers to glide effortlessly through grass. Through years of scientific work, Co-Founders Dr. Birgitt Boschitsch and Dr. Wong transformed this natural protectant into a sustainable, patented cleaning technology.

Today, spotLess dramatically reduces surface fouling and contamination, saving the time, labor, and maintenance costs typically spent cleaning, repairing, or replacing equipment.

What began with sanitation has expanded across industries from medical and automotive to semiconductor devices. Their keystone product, a 5-ounce non-stick spray, saw breakout success in the consumer market when The New York Times's Wirecutter reviewed it as "magic spray," driving more than \$1.5M in direct-to-consumer sales in 2024. Since that spotlight moment, spotLess has broadened its CPG strategy, introducing vehicle-

care applications and entering the medical space with ostomy-hygiene products that help reduce residue buildup and make colostomy bags easier to clean.

At its core, spotLess remains driven by the same spirit that sparked its creation: using engineering to solve real-world problems in ways that make life cleaner, easier, and more sustainable.



LEARN MORE AT
[SPOTLESSMATERIALS.COM](https://spotlessmaterials.com)



PSNergy is an Erie-based industrial technology company making waves in how manufacturers heat and monitor furnaces, an essential but often overlooked part of heavy industry. What started with patented technologies like radiant tube inserts, which improve furnace efficiency by directing heat where it's needed most, has evolved into a broader suite of solutions that help companies reduce fuel use, cut emissions, and boost operational performance.

At the heart of PSNergy's offering is its Combustion Monitoring and Alerting (CMA) system, a hardware and software driven platform that gives operators real-time visibility of combustion performance. Instead of relying on periodic checks, manufacturers can now track critical metrics like temperature, pressure, and emissions every moment the furnace runs. This helps teams catch inefficiencies early and maintain consistent quality.

A standout example of PSNergy's commitment to innovation is its collaboration with Gannon University through the Manufacturing PA Innovation Program. Together, they are developing a heat-resistant carbon foam insulator designed to protect temperature sensors inside furnaces, enabling continuous in-process monitoring without shutting down production. This work could transform how heat treatment is validated, marrying academic research with real-world manufacturing needs.

PSNergy's impact is felt throughout the Pennsylvania economy, as it hires local talent with each stage of company growth. It exemplifies how advanced manufacturing can thrive in Pennsylvania, bringing both high tech and job growth to the state.



[LEARN MORE AT PSENERGY.COM](https://www.psenergy.com)





GIV LOCAL



Every credit or debit card purchase at a business incurs a processing cost paid by the owner. Giv Local has created a way to infuse purpose into that unavoidable fee, allowing small business owners to support their communities while conducting everyday transactions. Their processing system directs 20% of card-processing revenue back into local nonprofits chosen by the business, transforming a routine business expense into an act of community investment. This unique approach makes Giv Local one of the first B-Corp certified financial systems in the region and a leader in socially responsible payments. By giving business owners, the power to select nonprofits that matter to them, Giv Local reinforces a circular payment model, currency generated by for-profit business directly benefiting neighboring nonprofit organizations.

Giv Local was co-founded by State College area serial entrepreneur Christian Baum in partnership with Shizuka and Sam Buckley, who share a vision for aligning financial technology with community

impact. Since launching, the company has gained traction with local and regional businesses across banking, marketing, hospitality, and retail sectors, all eager to pair their daily operations with meaningful social good.

In addition to local alignment, Giv Local responsibly engages with larger global issues through values-driven philanthropy. Their giving marketplace is intentionally inclusive and nonpartisan, meaning political organizations and elected officials are not eligible recipients. This ensures that donations remain focused on community uplift, shared benefits, and mission-driven causes.

By turning everyday commerce into a force for good, Giv Local is redefining what it means for small businesses to support the places they call home.



[LEARN MORE AT GIVLOCAL.COM](https://www.givlocal.com)

SPOTLIGHT ON

SHERRY DAVIDSON'S 27 YEARS

AT BEN FRANKLIN CENTRAL & NORTHERN PA



There was a time when we played outside until the streetlights came on, returning home on time without a watch or iPhone, the guiding light of dinner being served was enough to retire our bikes, skates, and sneakers. There was a time when work meant a job in one of a few traditional areas, business, medicine, law, or teaching. The goal was to get a job, keep that job, and retire from that job. No pressure from social media to compare your career trajectory with another.

That was a time.

Now, the streetlights have been replaced with the glow of screens, the hum of notifications, and blue or green chat bubbles that define our time. In the era of hustle culture, it is rare to find a person steadfast in who they are, satisfied without comparison with their career, and showing up for their colleagues and community with consistency. It's a rare gem to find. And that gem is right here in the Central Pennsylvania offices of Ben Franklin.

Sherry Davidson has served a historic 27 years in the offices of Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Central and Northern Pennsylvania (BFCNP). The second longest tenured employee in the company.

Davidson began her career in economic development working for the Moshannon Valley Economic Development Partnership incubator program, and the projects she worked on were the HOME PIDA, and RLF. One of the places she made funding requests to was Ben Franklin. This was her introduction into the Ben Franklin mission for supporting start-up companies. Making the transition from MVEDP to Ben Franklin, Davidson knew she was in the right place, "From day one, I was amazed and grateful to be a part of the BFCNP team. I was truly impressed by the talent and experience of the team. Everyone was working toward creating success for start-up companies. I found my calling."

In her early years at BFCNP, Davidson spent much of her time on the road, often five days a week, traveling across our 32-county footprint to stand alongside funded companies during their start-up launches. What began as outreach quickly became something more meaningful. Working onsite with founders, she discovered a deep passion for teaching and mentoring entrepreneurs at some of the most vulnerable and pivotal stages of their journey.

There was real joy in that proximity and helping founders move from ideas to infrastructure. "Rolling up my sleeves and working alongside entrepreneurs has been exceptionally rewarding" Davidson recalls. The relationships formed during that season were powerful. Companies felt supported, seen, and strengthened and she felt equally inspired by their resilience and drive.

As Ben Franklin evolved, she played a hands-on role in establishing accounting and finance infrastructure within client companies. Davidson co-created the Transformations Team, a practical, foundational system of in-house experts that gave start-ups clarity around their numbers and confidence in their operations. For some, that structure became the catalyst for growth and expansion. For others, it provided the insight needed to make difficult but wise decisions.

From educating Founders like Mike Jameson of JPW Manufacturing and stepping in as CFO to provide growth leadership for the company to collaborating with company owners to create good-paying jobs in Pennsylvania, Sherry Davidson has dedicated her career to the state of Pennsylvania.

Q. What was your role when you started, and how has it evolved over the years?

A. I began as a regional coordinator, providing training to entrepreneurs on business practices, software

programs, as well as finance and accounting principles. Within a few years, I was promoted to lead client coverage across our 32-county territory. In this capacity, I focused on working with start-up companies to teach them accounting basics, how to reconcile balance sheets and cash flows, and how to organize their financial house. I helped businesses transition from using a shoebox for receipts to implementing comprehensive accounting systems. Then, I became the Director of Operations, where I played a key role in strategic planning, formulating BFCNP's operational policies, practices, decisions, priorities, contracts, and audits under the guidance of our President & CEO, Steve Brawley.

Q. What is your favorite part of your role?

A. I absolutely love witnessing the moment when our clients have that “a-ha” realization. Teaching and assisting companies remain a passion of mine, as the experience is truly transformational. I enjoy the enthusiasm of entrepreneurs and helping them build their businesses. Part of my role involves evaluating proposed ideas and, when necessary, communicating any significant challenges related to profitability and growth in their business models. This is a crucial aspect because it helps individuals understand when a business opportunity may not be viable, which can still be seen as a success. If a company realizes that their idea is not feasible before mortgaging their home or cashing in their 401(k)-retirement savings, that is indeed a success. It allows them to continue pursuing their entrepreneurial journey, and they live to fight another day.

Q. You have seen the organization evolve through leadership changes, economic shifts, and industry trends. What changes stand out the most? What has stayed consistent with throughout your 27 years?

A. The most significant challenge we faced at Ben Franklin was the fifty percent reduction in our budget. I take pride in how we managed this situation. Under Steve's leadership, we proactively reduced costs

while maintaining our team. We experienced several waves of retirements, and we learned how to adapt and focus our efforts effectively. This situation has provided us with a valuable opportunity to examine and reevaluate our delivery of services and programs. As responsible stewards of taxpayers' dollars, we remain committed to our mission of creating jobs in Pennsylvania and staying true to that goal.

Q. Who are some of the people who shaped your career or made the journey meaningful?

A. More than forty years ago, I was blessed to meet Ruth Funk, who was an exceptional leader and mentor to me. She believed in my potential like no one else, providing me with ongoing education and preparing me for an executive role. John Vidmar, retired Ben Franklin leader, was also a mentor and a voice of reason; he had great insight into strategy and is skilled at helping entrepreneurs grow. Additionally, Stephen Brawley has played a significant role in my career and has been an excellent mentor. He has consistently encouraged me and led by example. I am profoundly grateful for his support and leadership.

Q. What hopes do you have for the future of Ben Franklin?

A. The Ben Franklin Program, across the State of Pennsylvania, is making real measurable impact in the number of start-up companies launched, established businesses sustained, and employees created as a result of our program. My hope is that the BF program continues to grow in the future. We truly make a difference.

Q. What does 27 years of service mean to you, personally and professionally?

A. With a strong work ethic and commitment to my team, I have developed a close-knit work family. I take great pride in making a difference in people's lives and helping clients realize their dreams and potential. Building trust and rapport with companies is essential to my identity.

It is an incredible journey that I am on, one that has been guided by faith. With the support of my village, I am grateful for, and I look forward to a lifetime of learning, facing new challenges, and mentoring the next generation. God has always been with me, and I have been truly blessed.

Q. If your career at Ben Franklin were a book title, what would it be?

A. Work with Heart: The Team that Feels Like Family



A REEDSVILLE ENTREPRENEURIAL TAKEOVER

On a rainy May evening in 2025, Reedsville’s downtown transformed into a lively hub of founders, food, and what Ben Franklin CNP Regional Director and CREN founder Todd Erdley calls “random collisions of goodness.” For the first time, the Centre Region Entrepreneurial Network partnered with the Juniata River Valley Chamber and Ben Franklin Technology Partners to pull the region’s innovation ecosystem into one shared space and Central Pennsylvania showed up.

More than 150 entrepreneurs, business leaders, and economic development champions moved between five beloved Reedsville establishments; Revival Kitchen, Reedsville Creamery, East End Coffee, Stone House Market, and Pass the Dutchie, each offering curated bites and drinks to keep conversations flowing. A welcome tent with floral arrangements for guests and a team of greeters set the tone, while brief remarks at 6 p.m. highlighted something everyone in attendance could feel: community.

For 15 years, CREN gatherings have been a catalyst for connection in Centre County. But when Erdley met Rhonda Kelley, Executive Director of the Juniata River Valley Chamber, the opportunity to expand that energy beyond county lines became inevitable. The Reedsville Takeover made that vision real, creating a multi-county gathering where collaboration emerged organically – founder to founder, organization to organization, neighbor to neighbor.

The event was made possible through the generous support of Geisinger, Kish Bank, CBICC, HVAB, Happy Valley LaunchBox powered by PNC Bank, SEDA-COG, the Juniata River Valley Visitors Bureau, the Mifflin County IDC, and the College Township Industrial Development Authority.

By the end of the evening, one thing was clear: the entrepreneurial tribe in Central Pennsylvania is stretching beyond the mountains and gaining undeniable momentum. And Reedsville was just the beginning.



**INTERESTED IN JOINING CREN? VISIT
CNP.BENFRANKLIN.ORG/CREN**

ONES TO WATCH: EMERGING BUSINESSES ON THE RISE

CARTO CAMP | CARTOCAMP.COM

For all roadtrip enthusiasts, there's now a solution to sleeping on the road. Car to Camp stands out from its competitors as the first to offer a lightweight, adjustable platform bed that is customized to the model and make of your vehicle. Drivers can put down one side or both sides of their backseats and turn the space between the front and trunk into an organized and cozy getaway. Founder and CEO, Nathan Bonslaver, an outdoor enthusiast tested the prototype for what is now his best-selling product, by visiting concerts and camping grounds to gather feedback from his target demographic. In addition to the bedframe, additional products are available including, easy access storage drawers, compact refrigerator, an eating table that can double for games, and an inflatable mattresses.



BOWL NOW | BOWLNOW.COM

Bowling has long been a gaming pastime and physical activity to enjoy from small towns to big cities. However, the infrastructure of managing front-of-house and backend calculations has a history of antiquated tactics that reduce scalability. Founder of Bowl Now, Daniel Mowery, a third-generation bowling proprietor, saw how software often fell short for the industry. He shared, "I was frustrated by software that didn't understand our industry or subpar, ineffective software from equipment companies. I decided it was time to build something specifically tailored to bowling proprietors' needs." Bowl Now is the answer to streamlining the bowling management industry. For business owners, BowlNow captures consumer analytics that owners can leverage into marketing, tailoring the business to bowlers' needs.

EVENTIO | EVENTIO.AI

Planning a birthday, an anniversary, a wedding, or even a retirement party requires project management skills and time. Founder, Erin Kremer, a former corporate event planner, knows exactly what it takes and leverages her experience in partnership with Ai programming to make celebrating easier for consumers. Eventio is part planning, part shopping platform that provides creative inspiration and direct links of where to source your selected decor. With shopping guidance, calendar planning, and budget tracking, Eventio removes the stress of finding the right things and restores the joy of celebrations for guests and party hosts.

STELLAR FLOORS | FLOORSBYSELLER.COM

Genuine wood flooring has long been associated with high costs, lengthy installation, and permanent commitment. Stellar Floors changed that paradigm by developing an innovative system that offers authentic wood flooring that is cost-effective, easy to install, and reusable. Traditionally, wood flooring is secured with glue and nails. Stellar co-founders Dr. Britta Teller and her husband, Evan Stover, re-imagined the process by engineering a grooved system that allows solid wood planks to snap seamlessly into place. The floors remain secure for years and can be lifted and reused, using Stellar's patented removal tool, extending the life and reducing waste.

As the retail industry strives to evolve to match consumers' feedback, sustainable partnerships are increasingly important with buyers who value environmental protection. Stellar Floors has caught the attention of luxury retailers, including Chanel.



THE AGETECH REVOLUTION: ADVANCEMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE OUR SENIOR YEARS

Technology is an innovative appendage that provides us with the ability to function in our daily lives with assistance, transparency, efficiency, safety, and ease, but for the senior population it isn't always easy. In fact, the current elder generation, Baby-Boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964 are the last of an era – people who didn't grow up with technology in the home. Every generation after has developed mentally and emotionally with the aid of technology since birth. From mobile phones, computers, and medical advances. This means for the first time ever, our elders are not the professional technology leaders.

The advancements in technology have increased in speed, outpacing the traditional time taken for learning and adaptation. As a result, adults in their senior and late-midlife are struggling to comfortably adapt high tech into their daily lives, even though many of these advancements provide helpful daily solutions. Corporate workplaces have taken notice of and implemented reverse mentoring programs, where C-suite and senior executives learn from being paired with entry level and junior associates.

According to an analysis performed by S&P Global Market Intelligence, one in five Americans will be over the age of 65, by the year 2030. In the same year, one-third of Americans will be 50 to 64, as reported by the Joint Center for Housing Studies. This puts our nation's population in the prime position to focus its attention and abilities on aging with urgency.

In the United States, Pennsylvania is home to roughly 3.4 million older adults, giving it one of the largest senior populations in country. Approximately 19 % of the state's residents are age 65 or older, compared with around 16.5 % nationally. The team at Ben Franklin CNP was inspired to find solutions to support the senior population in Pennsylvania with the long-term goal of making it one of the best places to age by leveraging our legacy programs, The Big Idea Contest and TechCelerator with a focus on the estimated \$48 billion dollar AgeTech industry.

THE AGETECH BIG IDEA CONTEST

The Big Idea Contest is an annual competition that challenges entrepreneurs and innovators to bring forward their boldest concepts. More than 50 innovators from across the region applied to the Age Tech Big Idea Pitch Contest. With \$35,000 in cash prizes and personalized mentorship, finalists received foundational requirements to bring their ideas to life.

After a rigorous application review, five founders competed in a virtual finale event on May 15, 2025, judged by industry experts and an engaged audience.

The distinguished judging panel included:

- **Dr. Eunice Yang**, CEO of Okay2StandUp
- **Jennifer Gilburg**, Deputy Secretary of Technology & Innovation, DCED
- **Jim Fetzner**, President & CEO, Long Term Care & Medicaid Innovations
- **Dr. Marty Sliwinski**, Director, Center for Healthy Aging at Penn State

Jennifer Gilburg shared, "It was powerful to see such a wide range of solutions – our top two winners tackled entirely different problems, and that diversity is exactly what the Age Tech market needs."

First-place winner was Dr. Max Justice Founder of Setas Eternal Living (Franklin County). Dr. Justice won both \$25,000 in grand prize funding and the \$2,500 People's Choice Award for his biodegradable, carbon-negative mycelium-based coffin, designed to offer a regenerative alternative to traditional burial and cremation practices. The sustainable burial option is also a fraction of the cost of traditional methods providing financial relief during end-of-life planning.

Second place and a \$10,000 Judges' Award went to Robert Duschl, Founder of Nomo Innovations (Lancaster County), for their night light with a high-tech twist. The smart night light connects to Wi-Fi and sends alert texts if no motion is detected during key watch periods, offering peace of mind for families.

Dr. Nicole Osevala, Division Chief of Geriatric Medicine at Penn State Health, served as the event's featured speaker. Her keynote addressed the growing healthcare needs of aging Pennsylvanians and the urgent innovation gaps in dementia care, rural services, and independence-supporting technologies.

The Age Tech Big Idea Contest was a platform for founders who are designing a better, more dignified future for older adults. By supporting entrepreneurship in this growing space, Ben Franklin CNP is investing in innovation that improves lives and strengthens Pennsylvania's economy.



**MEET THE FINALISTS AND LEARN
MORE ABOUT THE CONTEST AT
[YOUTUBE.COM/@BENFRANKLINCNP](https://www.youtube.com/@benfranklincnp)**



Photo: Setas Eternal Living's MyCoffin, founded by Dr. Max Justice, first place winner of The Age Tech Big Idea Contest



Photo: OP Clinical Innovations prosthetics, founded by Dr. Sara Peterson, first place winner of the AgeTech TechCelerator

THE TECHCELERATOR: AGETECH EDITION

Hosted online by Ben Franklin Technology CNP, the TechCelerator, AgeTech Edition is an 8-week business accelerator designed to fast-track companies, inventing solutions that help older adults live safer, healthier, and more independent lives.

"These founders are not just building companies, they're building futures," said Sherry Davidson, Ben Franklin CNP Director of Operations. "From mobility to mortality, they're solving real problems that matter to families, caregivers, and communities."

After two months of hands-on mentorship, business development classes, and pitch practice, startup finalists took the virtual stage on Thursday, September 18th, 2025, to win Finale, \$15,000 in funding.

The seven finalists represented a wide spectrum of innovations:

- **OP Clinical Innovations (Mercer, PA):** Software and 3D-printed prosthetics restoring dignity through lifelike, adaptive design.
- **Entertainment Buddy LLC (Harrisburg, PA):** A flexible phone holder with wireless charging, alarms, and hands-free controls.
- **Simulations and Interactive Media (Indiana, PA):** An AI-powered, emotionally intelligent content ecosystem for older adults.
- **TalkingSick (State College, PA):** Voice-analysis tool that detects early signs of respiratory illness via everyday devices.
- **Arro AI (Harrisburg, PA):** A secure, AI-powered knowledge platform for aging service organizations.

- **Setas Eternal Living (Huntingdon Valley, PA):** Makers of MyCoffin, a biodegradable, carbon-negative burial vessel.
- **Nomo Innovations (Lancaster, PA):** Smart Nightlight, a motion-sensing device that passively monitors and alerts caregivers.

The finale featured live pitch presentations, demonstrating the art of storytelling, financial planning, and investor readiness. Audience engagement included industry trivia for the audience, keynote remarks from Jennifer Gilburg, Deputy Secretary of Technology and Entrepreneurship for the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, and interactive questions from each of the judges:

- **Matthew Cooley**, Business Unit CFO at Ericsson and Co-Founder of myAgeTechLab
- **Dr. Eric Ian Farmer**, Singer, Songwriter, Educator, and Board of Trustees Member at Foxdale Village Retirement Community
- **Jacob Jones**, Director of the Center for Family Business at Penn State Erie

First place of \$10,000 went to OP Clinical Innovations led by Dr. Sara Peterson of Mercer County for her customized prosthetic that provides comfort quickly for patients. In second place, Dr. Max Justice and the Setas Eternal Living team won \$5,000 in funding for their sustainable and cost-effective solution to end-of-life planning.



**LEARN MORE AT
CNP.BENFRANKLIN.ORG/
TECHCELERATOR**

WE'LL CONNECT YOU WITH THE RIGHT PROGRAMS AND FUNDING

With four regional offices across our 32-county region, including Central, South Central, Northwest, and Southern Alleghenies, we're strategically located to better serve startups in each unique community.

NORTHWEST OFFICE

CLARION, CRAWFORD, ERIE, FOREST, MERCER, VENANGO, WARREN

BRIAN SLAWIN

814.898.6650

BRIANSLAWIN@CNP.BENFRANKLIN.ORG

SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES OFFICE

BEDFORD, BLAIR, CAMBRIA, FULTON, HUNTINGDON, INDIANA, SOMERSET

JOSÉ LUIS OTERO

814.525.3283

JOSEOTERO@CNP.BENFRANKLIN.ORG

CENTRAL OFFICE

CAMERON, CENTRE, CLEARFIELD, CLINTON, ELK, JEFFERSON, JUNIATA, MCKEAN, MIFFLIN, POTTER

TODD ERDLEY

814.883.5932

TODDERDLEY@CNP.BENFRANKLIN.ORG

JOHN SIGGINS

814.865.2879

JOHNSIGGINS@CNP.BENFRANKLIN.ORG

SOUTH CENTRAL OFFICE

ADAMS, CUMBERLAND, DAUPHIN, FRANKLIN, LANCASTER, LEBANON, PERRY, YORK

JOE HACKETT

717.858.3046

JOEHACKETT@CNP.BENFRANKLIN.ORG

JULIE BRATTON

717.948.6339

JULIEBRATTON@CNP.BENFRANKLIN.ORG

LEADERSHIP TEAM

STEPHEN BRAWLEY

PRESIDENT/CEO

STEEVBRAWLEY@CNP.BENFRANKLIN.ORG

SHERRY DAVIDSON

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

SHERRYDAVIDSON@CNP.BENFRANKLIN.ORG



Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Central and Northern Pennsylvania

(814) 863-4558 | info@cnp.benfranklin.org | www.cnp.benfranklin.org



The Ben Franklin Technology Partners is an initiative of the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and is funded by the Ben Franklin Technology Development Authority.