

# VIPC Grant Catalyzes Launch of New Aerospace & Defense Startup Tech Accelerator

*Virginia welcomes Starburst Launchpad to National Landing in Arlington County.*

RICHMOND, VA, UNITED STATES, June 4, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation \(VIPC\)](#) announced it has awarded a Regional Innovation Fund (RIF) grant to

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*Starburst CEO and Founder  
Francois Chopard*

to [Arlington Economic Development \(AED\)](#) to catalyze the launch of the [Starburst National Landing Launchpad \(SNL Launchpad\)](#), a new startup accelerator dedicated to aerospace and defense (A&D) technology companies. The SNL Launchpad will create new opportunities for entrepreneurs, startups, investors, industry experts, and government partners to grow and thrive within Northern Virginia’s innovation ecosystem. AED and VIPC worked together through a collaborative public-private partnership effort along with JBG Smith, Microsoft, and National Landing Business Improvement District (BID) stakeholders to successfully attract Starburst and to leverage matching funds and resource support.

Starburst is a globally recognized A&D innovation firm that combines startup accelerators, venture investments, and strategy consulting to help stakeholders innovate, navigate, and invest in the dynamic A&D ecosystem. Starburst has successfully implemented A&D startup accelerator programs in other major cities in the United States and internationally, and leverages a global network of 15,000+ startups, investors, and industry partners.

The SNL Launchpad will offer a 14-week accelerator program tailored for early-stage A&D technology companies. With an inaugural startup cohort launching in early June, Starburst’s accelerator program will provide founders and entrepreneurs with direct mentorship, industry resources, and access to capital opportunities. Additionally, Starburst will host open community entrepreneur educational and networking events in National Landing throughout the year.

“VIPC’s grant underscores our commitment to successfully growing Virginia’s innovation and entrepreneur ecosystems through public-private partnership and strategic industry alignment,” said Joe Benevento, VIPC President and CEO. “With the launch of Starburst’s National Landing

Launchpad, VIPC is helping expand opportunities in the region for high-growth, aerospace and defense startups, while also further strengthening Virginia's position as an innovation leader in critical national security technology sectors where Virginia has a right to win."

"Arlington has long been at the heart of aerospace and defense innovation, and this partnership with Starburst will help ensure that our region remains competitive on a national and global scale," Arlington Economic Development Director Ryan Touhill said. "This initiative will not only support startups but also attract new talent and investment to Arlington, Virginia, and the region as a whole."

"With our expansion into Arlington, Virginia, Starburst is excited to partner with AED and VIPC to help establish National Landing as a powerhouse for aerospace, defense, and emerging technology startups," Starburst CEO and Founder Francois Chopard said. "This Launchpad will create new opportunities for entrepreneurs and companies driving the future of national security and dual-use technologies."

"National Landing is emerging as a top destination for technology, innovation, and business growth," said Tracy Sayegh Gabriel, President and CEO of the National Landing BID. "The launch of Starburst's National Landing Launchpad further catalyzes the region's transformation. We look forward to supporting this initiative and strengthening the aerospace and defense ecosystem in our fast-growing community."

"VIPC's grant is a key catalyst for the Starburst's National Landing Launchpad and for bolstering economic development opportunities through a robust innovation ecosystem," said Conaway Haskins, VIPC's Vice President of Entrepreneurial Ecosystems. "By investing in this inaugural launch, VIPC is not only connecting entrepreneurs with new resources to succeed but also enabling Starburst to establish a sustainable network across the local ecosystem, strengthening collaboration between startups, industry, and academia for lasting impact."

#### About AED

Arlington Economic Development (AED) is dedicated to fostering a dynamic and diverse business community that drives innovation and economic growth in Arlington, Virginia. AED works closely with entrepreneurs, investors, and global businesses to ensure Arlington remains a top destination for emerging industries. Learn more at [www.arlingtoneconomicdevelopment.com](http://www.arlingtoneconomicdevelopment.com).

#### About Starburst



Founded in 2012, Starburst is an innovation catalyst in the global aerospace and defense (A&D) industry. Combining three complementary activities – startup accelerators, strategy consulting, and venture investments – they help A&D stakeholders innovate, navigate and invest in the dynamic ecosystem. With offices in Los Angeles, Paris, Munich, Singapore, Seoul, Tel Aviv, Madrid, and Washington DC, the team has built a robust community with 60+ partners and a portfolio of 150 startups. Starburst's leading Flagship Accelerator program helps startups scale their business in aviation, space, and defense, as well as enabling technologies, with access to one of the largest groups of corporate representatives, government stakeholders, and private investors in the world to help startups win their first contracts. For more information about Starburst, visit [www.starburst.aero](http://www.starburst.aero).

About Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation (VIPC)

Connecting innovators with opportunities. VIPC operates as the nonprofit corporation on behalf of the Virginia Innovation Partnership Authority (VIPA). VIPA / VIPC is Virginia's designated authority for leading innovation and economic development in the Commonwealth of Virginia through research, commercialization, and technology advancement; entrepreneurship, startup, and venture capital growth; and regional ecosystem, innovation network, and industry sector expansion. As part of its operations, VIPC helps attract and catalyze private investment into early-stage startup companies, provides research and technology commercialization grants to universities and entrepreneurs, and offers resource and funding support for entrepreneurial ecosystems, innovation networks, and public-private partnerships at local, state, and federal levels.

VIPC's programs include: Virginia Invests | Virginia Venture Partners (VVP) | Commonwealth Commercialization Fund (CCF) | Virginia Accelerator Network | Regional Innovation Fund (RIF) | Smart Communities | The Virginia Smart Community Testbed | The Virginia Unmanned Systems Center | Virginia Advanced Air Mobility Alliance (VAAMA) | The Public Safety Innovation Center (PSIC) | Federal Funding Assistance Program (FFAP) for SBIR & STTR.

For more information, please visit [www.VIPC.org](http://www.VIPC.org).

About Entrepreneurial Ecosystems Division (EED) and the Regional Innovation Fund (RIF)  
VIPC's Entrepreneurial Ecosystems Division (EED) acts as a supporter, connector, and convener for entrepreneurial ecosystems and startup communities throughout Virginia. These stakeholders include accelerators, incubators, innovation hubs, economic developers, technology councils, chambers of commerce, industry associations, and others who assist founders during the early stages of business formation and growth. EED manages the Regional Innovation Fund (RIF), a state-funded program that awards competitive grants to Virginia-based entrepreneurial support organizations (ESOs) that have a strong track record of assisting early-stage Virginia science and technology entrepreneurs and companies. RIF grants provide operational and program funding for successful ESOs and ecosystem-building initiatives. For more information, visit [www.VIPC.org](http://www.VIPC.org).

Jennifer Hiltwine

VIPC

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