

**Small Business Development Center
Saint Vincent College**

Helping businesses start, grow, and prosper.

First Craft Distillery in Fayette County opens with SBDC assistance

I would recommend the Saint Vincent SBDC to anyone who is trying to start a small business, with the strong foundation they helped me build, I now feel like the sky is the limit!

Christian Klay

Ridge Runner Distillery, LLC.
417 Fayette Springs Road
PO Box 338
Chalk Hill, Pa 15421
Fayette County

Industry: Distilleries

NAICS 312140

Year Founded: 2014

SBDC Assistance: Start-up Assistance, Business Plan Development, Market Research, Demographic Analysis, Financial Projections, Capital Acquisition.



Saint Vincent College SBDC
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Mr. Christian Klay was seeking assistance in opening a craft distillery in Fayette County and was encouraged to reach out to the Saint Vincent College SBDC. Upon meeting Christian at our Fayette County Outreach location, he shared that he was interested in starting a micro-distillery. Micro-distilleries are also known as craft distilleries and are very popular for using local ingredients made in small batches. Christian appeared very knowledgeable of the industry and had attended numerous conferences and classes on micro-distilling.

The SBDC had to work under a very aggressive project time line as Christian wanted to close on his financing in order to break ground on the new facility in the summer of 2014. He provided a preliminary business plan that was very detailed and well written. Our client has obviously been doing his homework. The SBDC performed some secondary market research that seemed to indicate a promising infant industry with much upside potential. The SBDC also generated some timely and beneficial industry information through our subscription to First Industries. According to industry analysis, there were 50 such craft distilleries in 2005: now there are about 250. The industry was being compared to the rise of the craft beer industry in the 90s.

Utilizing the encouraging research, over the next several months, through one on one meetings and e-mail exchanges, the SBDC was able to assist Mr. Klay with the development of a formal business plan. The final plan and financing request was accomplished by the SBDC providing additional and timely trade industry publication data, detailed market research, thorough demographic analysis of his proposed location, operational analysis and comprehensive financial projections.

With the assistance of the SBDC, Mr. Klay was able to submit his business plan and loan request to the Progress Fund, a multi-state CDFI. His loan request of approximately \$500,000 was approved and Christian eventually opened his distillery the first week of July, 2015. Christian was thrilled with the consulting services provided by the SBDC and his new business has been exceeding expectations. Mr. Christian Klay undeniably benefitted from business planning assistance provided by the Saint Vincent College Small Business Development Center. As he recently noted "Jim Kunkel and the Saint Vincent SBDC were able to help me take my passion for making great spirits and focus it into a solid business plan. First time entrepreneurs know what they want to do, but it can be hard to figure out just where to start. Jim and the SBDC were able to help me make a plan with realistic goals and expectations, then find funding to get my business off the ground."