New program calls on Peninsula techies and innovators to connect

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The Hampton Roads Innovation Collaborative, formerly known as the region's Technology Council, is convening folks in the tech and innovation sector as part of a grassroots pilot project on the Peninsula.

The Innovation Collaborative is launching the virtual Foundation for Innovation program to find ways to better connect the assets and people on the Peninsula with the idea of sparking new ideas to eventually fuel a strong Hampton Roads-wide technology corridor, said HRIC President Dan Bell.

The effort is separate from existing startup and entrepreneurial efforts with more of a focus on creating a true innovation ecosystem whose growth can be measured, like with patent filings or the creation of technology jobs, Bell said. It's not creating a new organization or business incubator or accelerator, he said.

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Mike Kuhns, who is resigning as CEO of the Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, said he is joining the program's steering committee along with others. The next steps include creating a database or inventory of people, assets or efforts, including a list of high tech firms interested in designing, patenting, producing or exporting new products from within Hampton Roads, Bell said.

The idea is to meet with innovators to identify needs and potential solutions, Bell said. An example could be creating boot camps to enhance local information technology expertise to help employers find qualified employees, he said. The program is planning to host a Technology Hampton Roads Event with tech awards in September at Old Dominion University 's Virginia Modeling, Analysis and Simulation Center in Suffolk.

There is no cost to participate in the Foundation for Innovation effort. Folks who want to get involved can sign up for the mailing list at hrinnovationcollaborative.com to get updates about events and other activities. For more information, visit technologyhamptonroads.com/category/business-ecosystem/ or email Bell at danbell@hric.email. Bozick can be reached by phone at 757-247-4741. Sign up for a free weekday business news email at TidewaterBiz.com or follow @TidewaterBiz.