

## **For Immediate Release**

### **Contact:**

Mary Miller, PhD  
RAMP Director  
(540) 595-7315  
mary.miller@rbtc.tech

## **RAMP business accelerator awards VOLATIA \$5,000 job-creation prize**

*The language translation company was selected by its peers as having the greatest potential to create jobs in our region over the next 10 years*

**ROANOKE** - The Regional Acceleration and Mentorship Program (RAMP) is pleased to announce that VOLATIA is the recipient of a \$5,000 award provided under a state Building Entrepreneurial Economies (BEE) grant received by Virginia Western Community College. The goal of the state's BEE grant program is to encourage micro/small business development and job creation.

VOLATIA was chosen as the award recipient based on rankings provided by the CEOs of the six companies that took part in the first RAMP business accelerator cohort, which launched in June 2017. These peer rankings were based on each company's potential to generate jobs in the greater Roanoke region over the next 10 years.

"We are so honored and very thankful," said Baraka Kasongo, CEO of VOLATIA, a Roanoke-based language translation company. "I am confident that each of the five other companies is going to make a great impact in this region. I am so proud to have shared this journey with each of them."

He added, regarding the RAMP business accelerator, "There are many benefits of RAMP but, in short, VOLATIA has received the *most organized business development support* in just 6 months than we did from all the other organizations that focus on business development in the last 10 years. RAMP has been and will continue to be a gateway to connections who are thought leaders in various aspects of managing and growing a business. We are honored and proud to have been selected as a member of the first RAMP cohort and look forward to creating many jobs in this region."

Samantha Steidle, Virginia Western's RAMP Innovation Officer, said, "VOLATIA embodies the best in our region. We are so excited to watch this locally grown startup impact our region through job creation."

A Wrap Party was held on Jan. 4 to mark the conclusion of programming for the first cohort. Cohort companies, mentors, sponsors and the RAMP Advisory Board members came together to celebrate the

progress made during the seven-month residency. Mary Miller, RAMP Director, said, “I think I can speak for all those involved with supporting this first cohort when I say this work has been gratifying. The six companies that participated have a clear understanding that our region embraces them and we will continue to support their growth. I know I look forward to the day when they will become mentors for future cohorts.”

The application period for the second cohort will open on Jan. 15 and close March 15. Technology companies interested in applying are encouraged to attend one of three information sessions that will be taking place across the region in early February. The first session will be held at TechPad in Blacksburg on Feb. 6, the second at the RAMP/Gill Memorial Building in Roanoke on Feb. 7, and the third session at the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance. An announcement regarding the companies selected for the second cohort will be made at the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council’s Annual TechNite Awards dinner May 3 at the Inn at Virginia Tech. Details can be found on the RAMP website, [www.ramprb.tech](http://www.ramprb.tech).

The RAMP business accelerator is housed in the historic Gill Memorial Building at 709 S. Jefferson St., along the Roanoke Innovation Corridor. RAMP founding partners include:

- the City of Roanoke, which won a \$600,000 state grant approved by Gov. Terry McAuliffe to renovate the Gill building as an accelerator;
- Virginia Western Community College, which operates the facility and provides entrepreneurial classes and faculty support;
- the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council, which runs the accelerator program and has developed the accelerator’s mentorship and networking initiatives.

RAMP’s inaugural year was supported by a \$40,000 state Building Entrepreneurial Economies grant from the state Department of Housing and Community Development. This assistance supported the instruction of Lean Startup, an entrepreneurial methodology developed by Silicon Valley startup guru Steve Blank and taught at Stanford, Columbia, Virginia Tech and UC Berkeley universities. BEE funding in RAMP’s second year will support the development of entrepreneurial classes at RAMP focused on “gig economy” workers.

### **Media Contacts:**

#### **Robert McAden**

President & CEO

Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council

(540) 293-3230

[robert.mcaden@rbtc.tech](mailto:robert.mcaden@rbtc.tech)

#### **Josh Meyer**

Director of Marketing & Strategic Communications

Virginia Western Community College

(540) 857-6311

[jmeyer@viriniawestern.edu](mailto:jmeyer@viriniawestern.edu)

