



**LYNCHBURG REGIONAL
BUSINESS ALLIANCE**

— Chamber & Economic Development —



2020 Annual Report & 2021 Program of Work

Empowered. Resilient. Unstoppable.

A Letter from the CEO



This past year was a year unlike any other. Despite the challenges, we worked collaboratively with so many regional partners to overcome the tremendous adversity posed by the pandemic.

Immediately after the statewide shelter-in-place order, we launched the “Wednesdays@One” virtual webinars which informed and encouraged the business community with timely information from experts like Jay Timmons, Stephen Moret, our state and federal delegation, & numerous leaders from across the region.

We confronted economic and social inequities by hosting webinars, advocating for economic inclusion and in February, we highlighted the achievements of Black-owned businesses in the Lynchburg region with the first Black Business Guide.

We empowered individuals around the Lynchburg region by giving them opportunities to connect with employers virtually despite the pandemic.

Thank you for continuing to support the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance and our mission! We hope these efforts and others will empower local organizations to be resilient, and unstoppable in the faces of challenges as the world continues to recover from the pandemic.



Megan A. Lucas
CEO & Chief Economic Development Officer
Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance

A Letter from the 2021 Chair



For any organization, 2020 was a strenuous test of values, agility and resilience. Looking back on all the Alliance has done since the beginning of the pandemic, I am proud to be part of the organization and honored to serve as Chairperson for 2021.

Our core values served us well as we responded to the lockdown, and we never lost sight of our vision to create a region where businesses and people thrive. I have worked in local companies for 30 years and I have never been prouder of our business community.

Adapting quickly to the COVID-19 restrictions, the Alliance hosted several virtual meetings to share information, provide guidance, and stimulate dialog. Together, we found ways to help businesses and restaurants survive, and even thrive. We are truly unstoppable!

We talked about what diversity, equity, and inclusion look like in our community and to clarify our intentions. Now we are taking actions that make it tangible.

Through it all, we are promoting the region and benefits of growing locally as well as moving into this vibrant community. There were 31 ribbon cuttings in 2020 and a flurry of events in the first quarter of this year.

The engagement of all members is important to fulfilling our mission to enhance the business climate, cultivate talent, generate jobs and investment, and promote our brand and image globally. Thank you for all you're doing for our community and the people who live and work here in the greater Lynchburg region.



Denise Woernle
Board Chair
Vice President, Communications, Framatome



Our Mission

The mission of the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance is to lead regional economic development through:

- Enhancing the Business Climate
- Cultivating Talent
- Generating Jobs & Investment
- Promoting Our Region's Brand and Image Globally

Our Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Statement

The Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance values diversity and practices inclusion. We endeavor to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion are an integral part of all aspects of operations and strategic initiatives. As part of this charge, the Alliance works continually to allow every possible advantage for economic prosperity. The Alliance achieves this by:

- Advocating for economic inclusion
- Facilitating minority business growth and development
- Championing and equipping diverse leaders through our leadership development programs
- Encouraging and providing leadership and resources to our membership

Our Vision

Creating a region where businesses and individuals can thrive.

Our Core Values

- Agile
- Accountable
- Beyond the Business Card
- Integrity
- Champion Free Enterprise
- Southern Hospitality

2020 Annual Report

Our Top Ten Wins

1

Raised \$395,572 to continue site improvement projects at two regional industrial parks and economic development marketing.

2

Launched the Central Virginia Training Center Redevelopment Plan planning process.

3

Completed regional industrial site improvement due diligence advancing six sites in tier ranking with Virginia Business Ready Sites Program.

4

Created Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion statement, Lynchburg Region Minority-Owned Business web listing, and co-sponsored two events with the Black Excellence Network. Also created first Lynchburg Region Black Business Guide.

5

Executed 2020 Regional Wage and Benefit Survey to evaluate how employer's wages/benefits compare.

6

Stood up the Regional COVID-19 Business Support Task Force, the pandemic business information hub on LynchburgRegion.org, and created a regional Reopening and Renewal Guide.

7

Retained 82% of members and 87% of dues. Despite a pandemic, we also held 31 ribbon cuttings for new or expanding Alliance members.

8

Celebrated six regional expansions that added 175 jobs and \$68 million in capital investment.

9

Received 145 new member leads and converted 80 to new members.

10

Conducted 42 virtual meetings with existing companies interested in Virginia locations through the Virginia's Manufacturing Region program.



Membership Highlights

715

Active Members

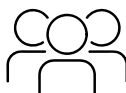


1,368

Ambassador
Member
Check-ins

80

New Members



16

Focus
Groups Held

3,957

Active Member
Representatives



67

Events Posted
by Members

159

Virtual & In-Person
Opportunities Held



23

Deals Posted
by Members

31

Ribbon Cuttings



120

Member
Press Releases

234

Gift Cards Purchased
to Support Members



87%

of membership
dollars retained



Economic Development Highlights

65

Lead generation meetings/calls executed

\$395,572

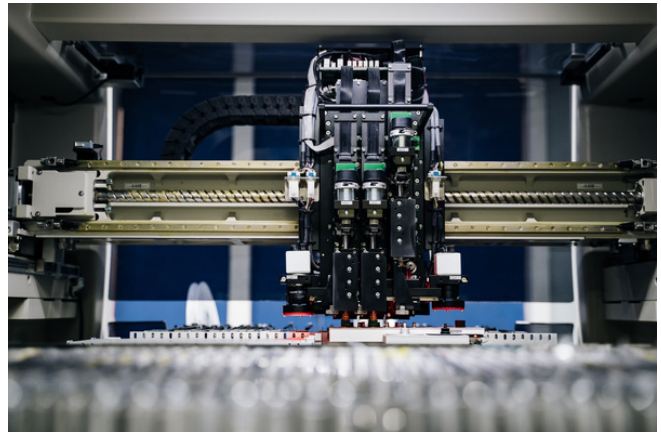
Raised for economic development initiatives

50

Economic development investors

2,502

Certificates of Origin processed



Largest Member Sectors

- Business and Professional Services
- Finance and Insurance
- Healthcare
- Restaurants, Food & Beverage
- Nonprofits

Marketing & Communications Highlights

47

Blogs added to LynchburgRegion.org

152

positive mentions in the media

37

Alliance press releases distributed

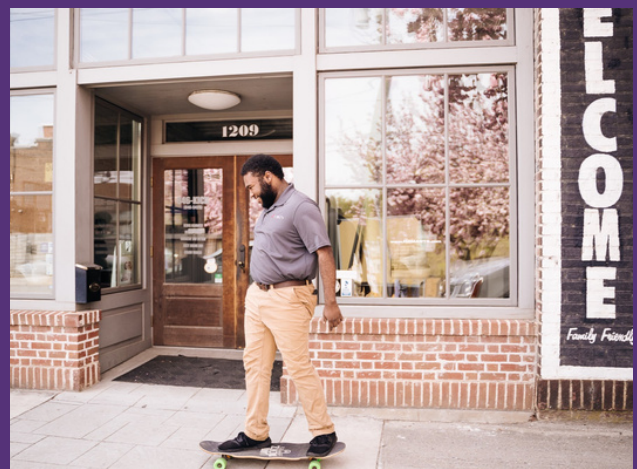
4

Best of Business Awards from *Lynchburg Business Magazine*

7,873

social media
followers

- 5,083 Facebook
- 1,376 LinkedIn
- 785 Instagram
- 629 Twitter



Government Relations & Advocacy Highlights

736

hours spent monitoring & engaging
on the 2020 and 2021 Legislative Sessions

100+

Business bills tracked

40

Positions taken on business legislation

Staying In Touch with Members and Officials

- **19** Alliance Advisors sent weekly with government relations news
- **6** Action Alerts sent to Alliance membership on high priority issues

SBDC-Lynchburg Region Highlights

The Alliance houses the Small Business Development Center-Lynchburg Region at our headquarters. The SBDC provides free advising and counseling to small businesses, unique trainings for business owners, and helps provide access to SBA loans, funds, and much more.



46

Total training events held

79

New jobs created

113

Total clients counseled

373

Existing jobs retained

70

Additional non-clients who received
advising on the CARES Act

\$6.06 Million

In funds obtained for clients through
PPP, EIDL, and COVID Relief

10

New businesses started

1,342

Total event trainees

2021 Program of Work

In 2016, the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance combined the longstanding work of the Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Region 2000 Business & Economic Alliance. This merger brought the 130 year-old Chamber of Commerce and our region's economic development entity under one roof for increased synergy and greater collective impact on the Lynchburg region.

In 2019, the Alliance Board and economic development partners created a three-year Strategic Plan centered on promoting entrepreneurial start-ups, business expansion and retention, and new job creation; workforce development; issue advocacy; connecting people and businesses; community, minority, and small business development; and the cultivation of local and regional leadership.

2021 marks the final year of our Strategic Plan, but with new modifications based on ever-changing state conditions surrounding the pandemic and regional economic recovery.

Encapsulated in this plan are the goals and action steps to continue our efforts to remain resilient, forward-focused, and . . .

UNSTOPPABLE!



1. Enhancing the Business Climate

Advocacy

Continue to serve as community convener and catalyst for action on pro-business issues:

- Advocate on local issues affecting our membership.
- Provide public comment at area government meetings.
- Identify two to three items annually from our legislative agenda as top priorities and dedicate time and resources leading to results on these.
- Explore development of a legislative scorecard to track outcomes on Alliance issues.
- Explore development of a PAC to advance pro-business candidates and initiatives.
- Increase public policy communication with members and public (blog, calls to action, policy newsletter, letters to editor, press conferences, etc.).
- Federal engagement with community and business leaders going to Washington DC to engage with VA delegation and receive briefings from administrative agencies (like Dept. of Transportation, Energy) and associations (like National Association of Manufacturers and US Chamber of Commerce).

Transportation

Champion for comprehensive regional transportation plans and solutions:

- Advocate for policies and projects that provide improved long-range transportation solutions for Central Virginia, recognizing that this may include lobbying for projects outside our transportation district that provide vital connectivity for our region's businesses.
- **Air** - Continue to advocate for commercial air service enhancements at Lynchburg Regional Airport, such as:
 - Preserve and maintain current level of service as we continue to recover from the global pandemic.
 - Continue to support LYH's efforts to secure a Northeast connection.
- **Surface** - Through the Lynchburg Regional Transportation Advocacy Group, continue to develop a priority list of regional road projects to submit for SmartScale funding.
- **Rail** - Continued advocacy for passenger rail expansion that completes the TransDominion Express vision of service between Bristol and Washington DC and between Lynchburg and Richmond.

Membership Value & Services

Offer relevant, memorable and valuable programming that will help:

- Grow the net membership both in terms of total number of members and total dues revenue (Current market share is 14% and national standard of market share is 17%).
- Maintain 90% member retention rate while improving member retention rate each year in terms of members and in dues revenue.
- Develop an editorial calendar of Alliance issues and/or story ideas for local media that will increase awareness of Alliance offerings, role, and impact in the community.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

- Partner with local media to distribute publication of new Black Business Owners Guide.
- Advocate for economic inclusion.
- Facilitate minority business growth and development.
- Champion and equip diverse leaders through our leadership development programs.
- Encourage and provide leadership and resources to our members so they can then create diversity, equity, and inclusion programs and initiatives at their own organizations.



2. Generating Jobs & Investments

Entrepreneurship

Increase entrepreneurship activity through improved opportunities for start-ups.

- Develop an innovation series (up to 3 programs) focusing on key areas of innovation, technology, and growth to target startup scholars and entrepreneurs, as well as seasoned business professionals looking to learn more about innovation.
- Research and establish a network of appropriate financial resources to support the eco-systems, including; venture capital, angel investing, and/or revolving loan fund.
- Develop a plan for the EPIC (Empowering People in Commerce) Center and funding strategy.



Sites & Buildings

Increase economic development project opportunities for the region through the improvement of industrial sites and existing buildings:

- Provide support to localities that desire to continue work started through GO Virginia opportunities to continue to move sites forward on the VA Business Ready Sites Program scale.
- Finalize Central VA Training Center redevelopment plan and present to Amherst County officials.
- Work with localities to create a plan to develop industrial shell buildings on available industrial sites.
- Increase support to municipalities on generating jobs and investment through existing companies.
- Continue to execute a three-tiered business, retention, and expansion program with state, the Alliance, and local economic development offices.
- Increase leads generated to local offices for new business opportunities.
- Provide roundtable and focus group opportunities for regional businesses to connect, learn, and solve regional issues.

3. Cultivating Talent

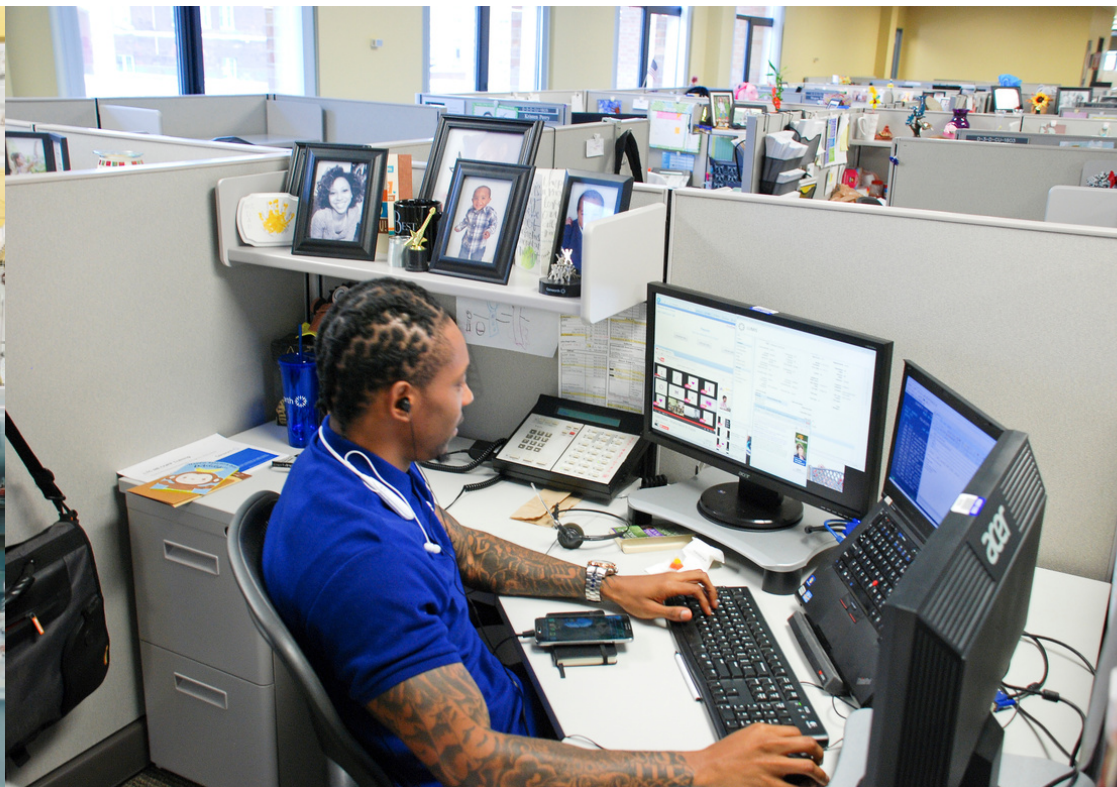
Workforce

Champion and lead streamlined and coordinated industry-led workforce development that fills the skills pipeline for in-demand, high-growth sectors in our region by:

- Continuing to partner with the Workforce Development Board on key initiatives where business leadership is needed.
- Expanding connections with our higher education institutions to keep local graduates employed in the region by partnering with colleges and universities to promote internships within the region.
- Focus on developing leadership in the region by strengthening engagement and programming in all Leadership Lynchburg programs including Flagship, Leading Off Campus, Executive Forum, and Alumni programming.
- Continue to provide the Young Professionals of Central Virginia (YPCV) program of work to focus on professional development and talent retention:
 - Offer at least six professional development events for young professionals with topics relevant to leadership development and requested topics via membership survey.
 - Continue to educate employers on the importance of getting employees connected to YPCV.
 - Promote and increase the number of YPCV memberships.
 - Continue to offer 535 connect events in a virtual format to connect YPs to one another in order to make community roots.

4. Promoting Our Brand & Image Globally

- Create industry guides to highlight regional strengths and distribute to site consultants highlighting the region's five target industry sectors.
- Create a targeted digital (email) campaign to reach site consultants with website improvements that highlights available sites, buildings, and community data.
- Continue call outreach program for CEO to contact site consultants on a quarterly basis.
- Exhibit at Select USA Summit (virtual event) with local economic development directors to obtain leads of international companies seeking U.S. locations.
- Sponsor two national economic development events to elevate regional presence and image.
- Redesign and launch YesLynchburgRegion.org website with improved user function and updated data and video capabilities.
- Execute the regional marketing and branding RFP as set forth in the regional comprehensive economic development strategy to create a cohesive economic development brand for the Lynchburg Region.
- Increase the number of earned media articles/blogs about the region in national economic development publications/websites to seven over three years.
- Position the Alliance for long-term success by securing leadership and the process for next five-year capital campaign for Economic Development.



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Heath Barret, IOM, Vice President of Membership Development

James Black, Communications & Writing Intern

Laverne Brown, Member Specialist

Jamie Glass, Director of Economic Development

Denise Jackson, Director of Events

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Ryan Weaks, Director of Marketing & Communications



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