

2024

NESA  SC

ANNUAL  
**REPORT**



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The North Eastern Strategic Alliance (NESA) is a regional, non-profit, economic development organization that serves nine counties in northeastern South Carolina.

Our mission is to work with partnering county and state economic development organizations to create new jobs and increase the per capita wage of the citizens of the North Eastern region of South Carolina at a rate faster than per capita growth rates for the state and the nation.

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**Yancey McGill**  
**Former South Carolina**  
**Lieutenant Governor**

## CHAIRMAN'S **MESSAGE**

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During 2024, we participated in more mission trips, hosted visits to the region, and engaged in more in-person meetings which resulted in a successful year of announcements and developing projects.

We had 13 announcements this past year, which represented the creation of over 490 new jobs and over \$160 million in capital investment.

We are pleased that the State of South Carolina was awarded the prestigious Platinum Shovel Award in the Annual Area Development Gold and Silver Shovel Awards, which is a testament to our state's outstanding economic development accomplishments.

Within our region, the Myrtle Beach MSA was ranked third for prime workforce in the U.S. by *Area Development Magazine*.

Throughout 2024, average employment in the NESR region increased about 1.6% year-over-year. We continue to see historically low unemployment levels, with an unemployment rate of 5.4% as of November 2024.

Over the course of the year, we were able to generate 64 new projects that represent substantial economic growth opportunities for the region.

We appreciate each of our member counties and investors who collaborated to develop great opportunities for our region and communities over the past year. We are excited to continue working with you and seeing another wonderful year in 2025.

# EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



NESA Chairman &  
Former S.C. Lieutenant Governor  
**Yancey McGill**



Coastal Carolina  
University President  
**Dr. Michael Benson**



Former Florence  
County Councilman  
**Frank J. "Buddy" Brand**



Francis Marion  
University President  
**Dr. Fred Carter**



Horry County Council Chairman  
**Johnny Gardner**



S.C. State Representative  
**Roger K. Kirby**



President Lazarus Entertainment Group  
Former Horry County Council Chairman  
**Mark Lazarus**



Broker-in-Charge,  
ERA Leatherman  
**Jean Leatherman**



Former S.C. State Senator  
**Gerald Malloy**



S.C. State Senator  
**Luke Rankin**



S.C. State Senator  
**Kent Williams**



Former City of Florence Mayor  
**Stephen Wukela, Esq.**





## NESA BOARD MEMBERS

Mary Anderson  
*Representing Chesterfield County*

John Q. Atkinson  
*Representing Marion County*

John Bloom  
*Blue Cross Blue Shield of SC*

Ronald Carter  
*Santee Electric Cooperative*

Angela Christian  
*Representing Georgetown County*

Mike Cool  
*Santee Cooper*

William Fleming  
*Marlboro Development Team*

Johnny Gardner  
*Representing Horry County*

Benjy Hardee  
*Grand Strand Water and Sewer Authority*

Dr. Linda Hayes  
*Representing Dillon County*

Former S.C. State Senator Gerald Malloy  
*Representing Darlington County*

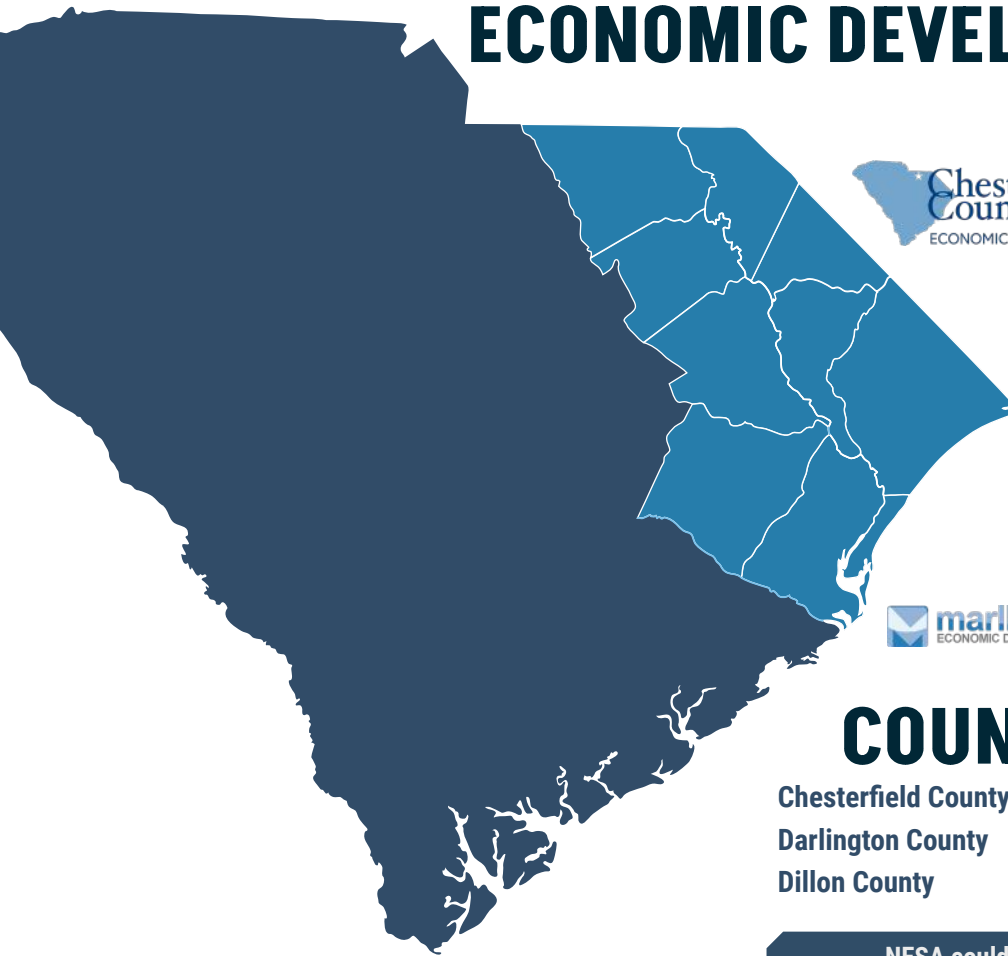
Jason Steen  
*Representing Marlboro County*

Jason Speake  
*Duke Energy Progress*

Kelvin Washington  
*Representing Williamsburg County*

Kevin Yokim  
*Representing Florence County*

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS



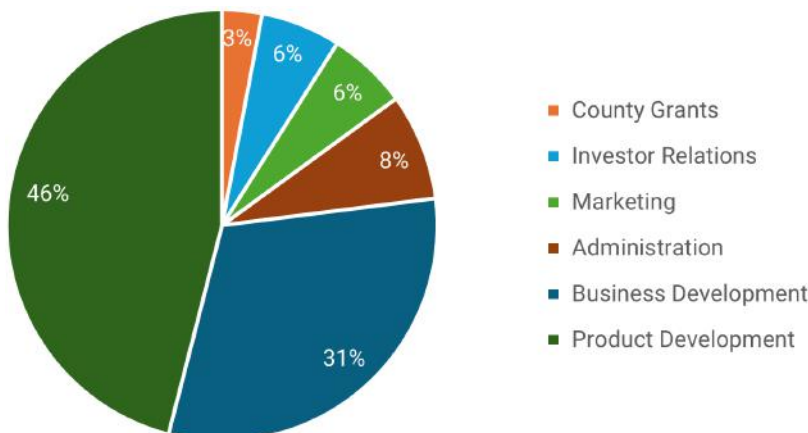
## COUNTY PARTNERS

Chesterfield County	Florence County	Marion County
Darlington County	Georgetown County	Marlboro County
Dillon County	Horry County	Williamsburg County

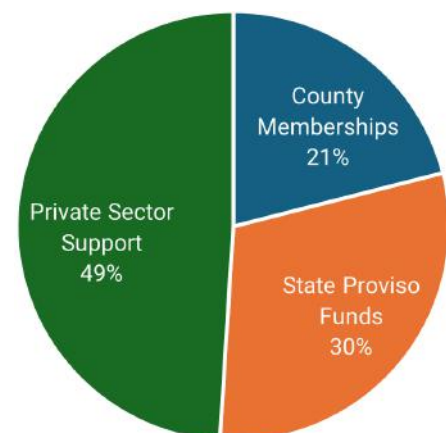
NESA could not do what we do as a regional alliance without the financial support of our county partners.

## FINANCIAL POSITION

NESA's funding for fiscal year 2024 was distributed as follows:



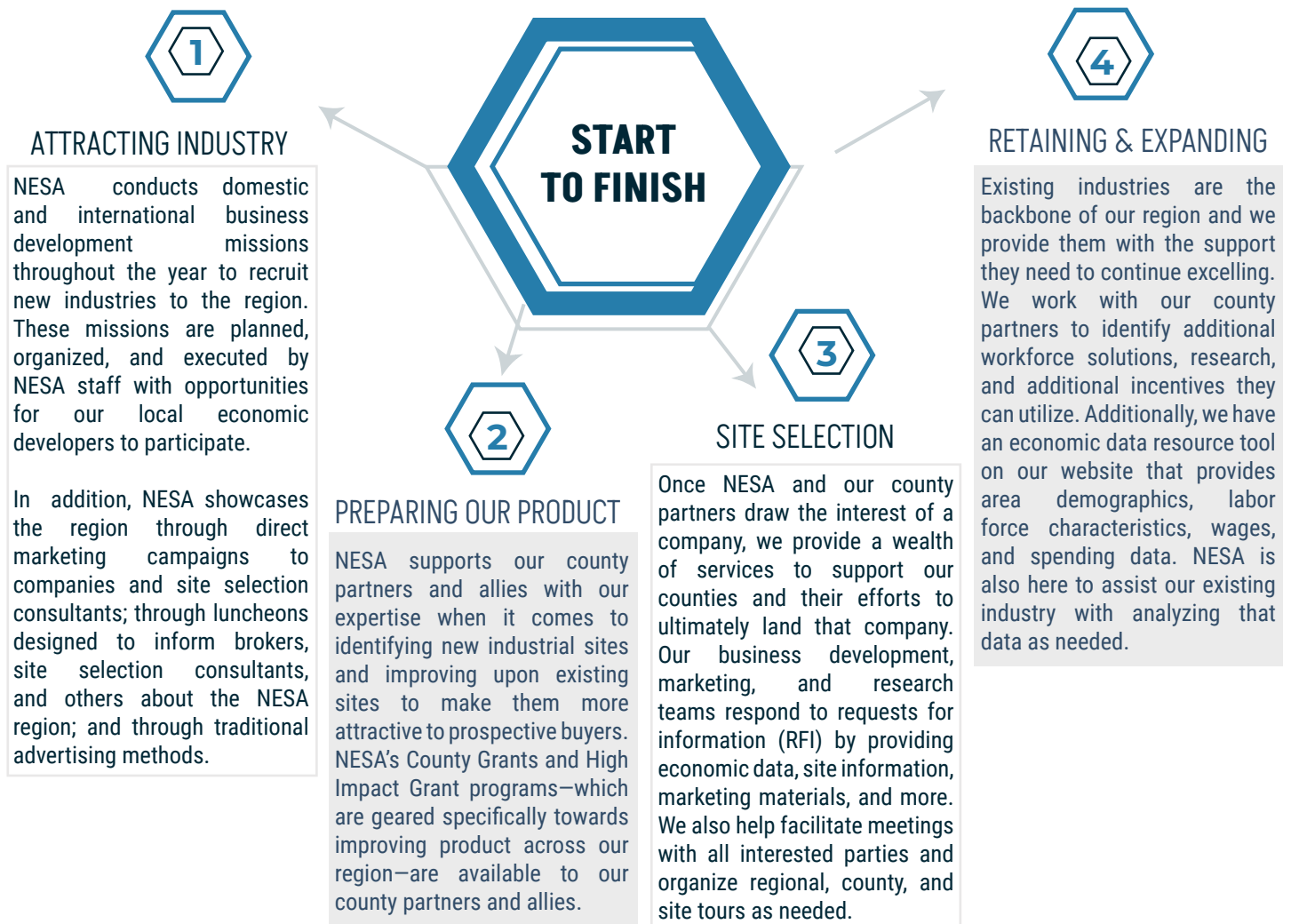
NESA's funding for fiscal year 2024 was provided through the following sources:



# STAFF & SERVICES

NESA works with our public partners to support their efforts recruiting new industry and facilitating existing industry expansions throughout our nine-county region. We achieve this by providing the expertise of our staff through business development, marketing, research, and more.

The NESA team supports our public and private allies throughout the economic development process—assisting their product development endeavors to recruit new companies and help existing industry expansion efforts.





# OUR TEAM

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**Executive Director**

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 843.229.6663



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**Director of Business Development**

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 843.409.0058




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**Director of Investor Relations**

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**Elizabeth McCarley**

**Director of Marketing**

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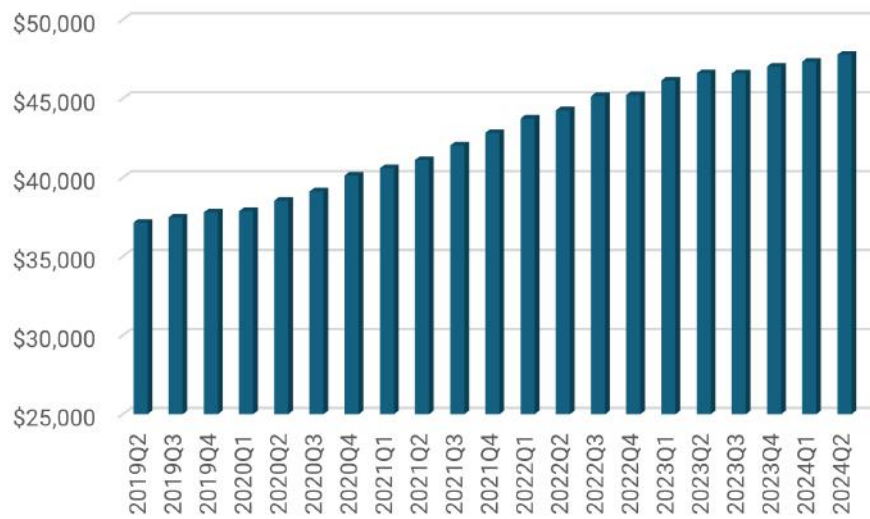
 843.319.8842

# REGIONAL ECONOMY

The regional economy proved to be resilient again in 2024. The sustained low unemployment rate, coupled with stable employment figures, modest GDP growth, and increasing wage levels, suggests the region as a whole is poised for continued prosperity. The research team at NESa will continue to monitor the regional economy and keep our partners informed on key economic data and trends as we move into 2025.

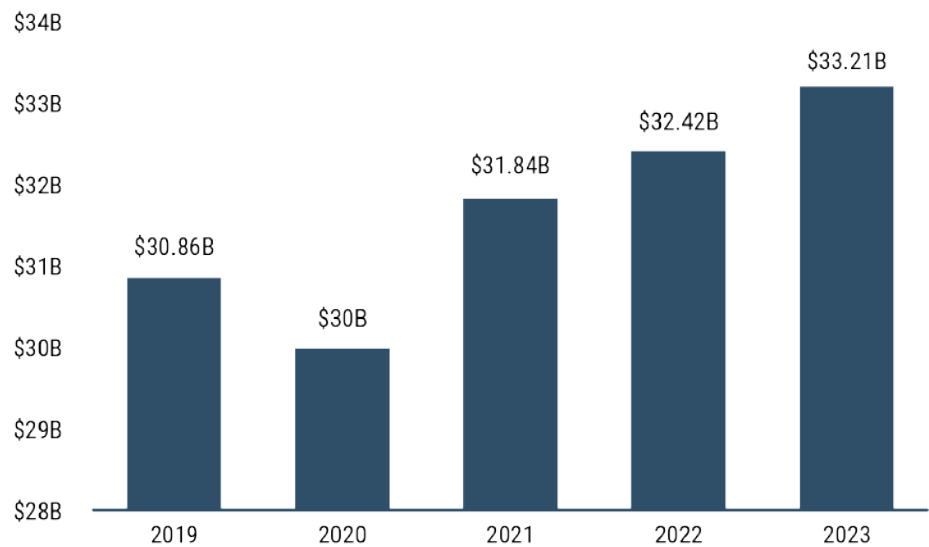
## Average Annual Wages

Average annual wages in the NESa region was \$47,776 per worker in 2024 as of the second quarter. This was a 2.5% increase from the same quarter a year prior, and a 28.7% increase since 2019Q2.



Source: JobsEQ

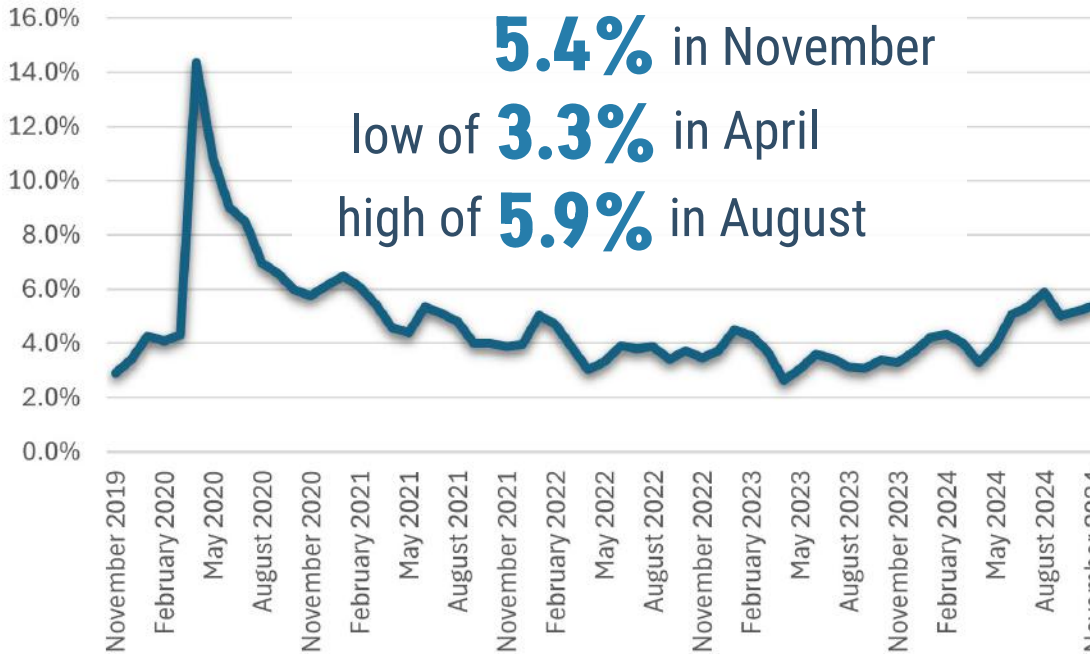
## Real Gross Domestic Product



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (Chained 2017 Dollars)

Real Gross Domestic Product (Real GDP) represents the inflation-adjusted value of all final goods and services produced within an economy, serving as a key indicator of economic productivity. As of 2023 (the most recent data available), regional Real GDP grew by 2.4% year-over-year, reaching \$33.2 billion.

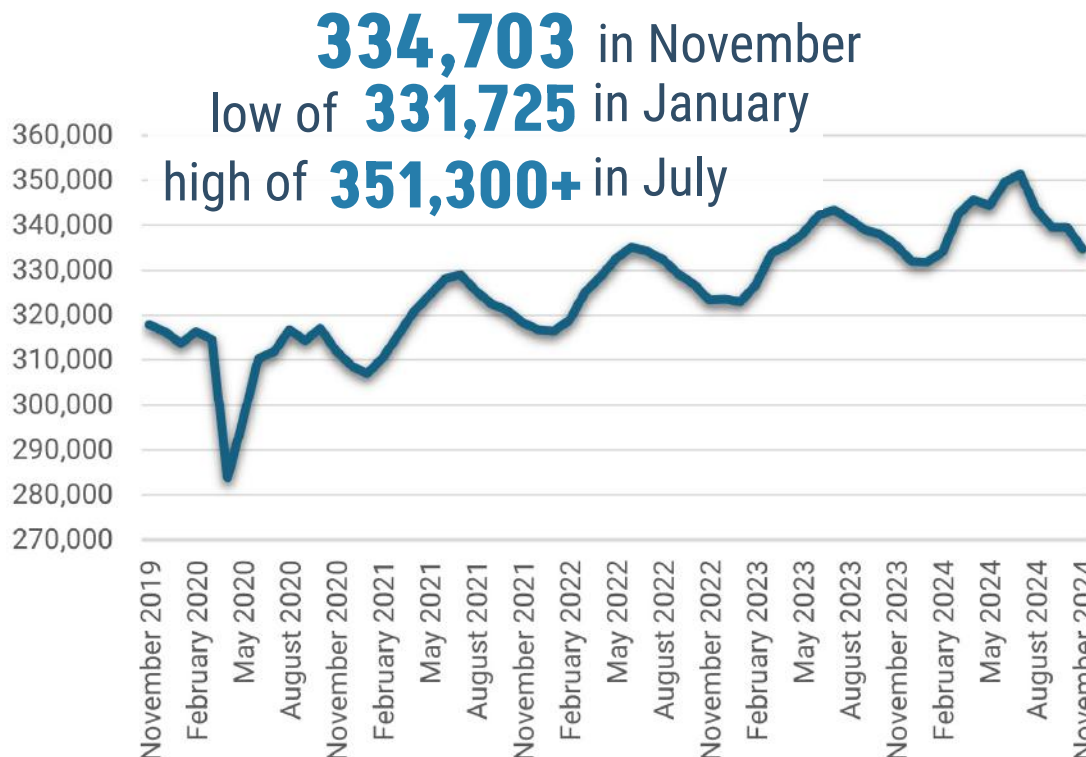
## Regional Unemployment Rate



Source: JobsEQ, SCDEW

On average, the region has maintained a 4% unemployment rate since November 2021.

## Regional Employment Level



Source: JobsEQ, SCDEW, BLS

The average annual employment level in the region was 341,563 in 2024, an increase of about 1.6% year-over-year.

# REGIONAL WINS 2024

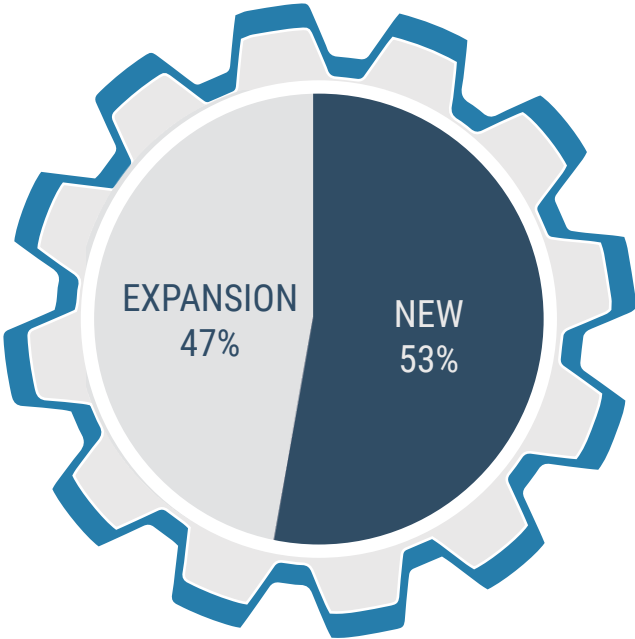
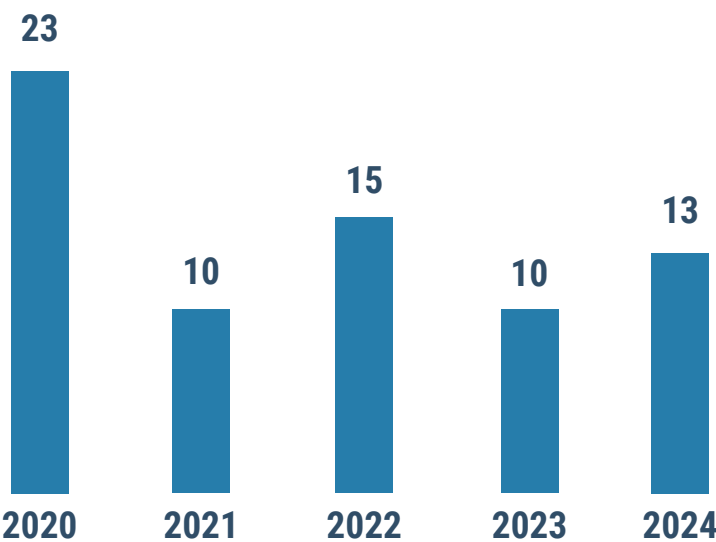
Company (*denotes expansion)	Jobs Created		Capital Investment	County
Confidential Existing Industry Expansion*	0	\$	3,930,000	Florence
DCC Metal Recycling	78	\$	11,000,000	Dillon
Ferroglobe	19	\$	20,000,000	Marlboro
AGRU America*	6	\$	7,800,000	Williamsburg
Amazon	100	\$	14,500,000	Horry
Confidential Existing Industry Expansion*	0	\$	41,400,000	Florence
Asset Technology Group, Inc.	77	\$	6,200,000	Florence
Palmetto Brick*	25	\$	5,000,000	Marlboro
Maxwood Furniture*	43	\$	6,000,000	Marion
AAC East*	25	\$	6,000,000	Marlboro
357 Brewers	35	\$	6,400,000	Horry
Amazon	10	\$	18,000,000	Florence
Confidential Existing Industry Expansion*	74	\$	18,500,000	Florence



# ANNOUNCED JOBS & CAPITAL INVESTMENT BY YEAR



## TOTAL ANNOUNCEMENTS BY YEAR



NEW VS. EXPANSION  
2020 - 2024



# BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

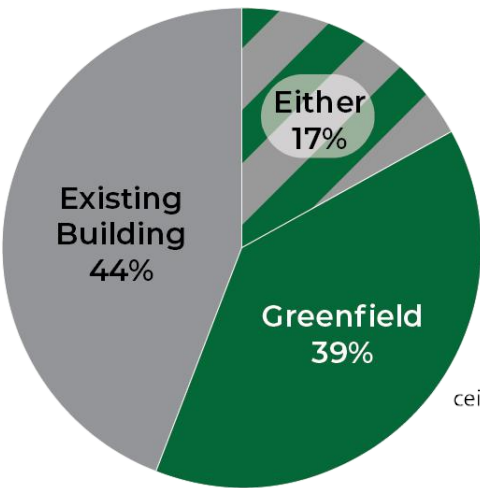
NESA’s business development initiatives are designed to promote job creation and attract significant capital investment to our nine-county region. These efforts focus on building strong relationships with companies, consultants, brokers, the South Carolina Department of Commerce, and other key allies. In 2024, our business development team engaged with hundreds of company executives, brokers, and consultants through multiple targeted marketing missions.

Over the course of the year, NESA added 64 projects to its pipeline. Collectively, these projects represent more than \$20 billion in potential capital investment and over 13,100 potential new jobs. While the total number of verified projects in the pipeline was slightly lower than the previous year, the average scale of each project remained impressively robust.

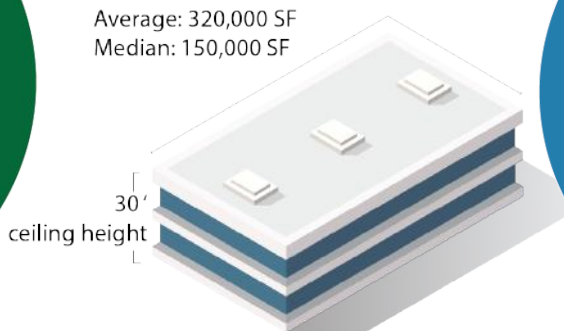
These efforts culminated in 13 announcements across the region in 2024, resulting in \$164.7 million in new capital investment and the creation of nearly 500 new jobs. These achievements highlight the region’s ongoing commitment to fostering economic growth and opportunity.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CALENDAR	MONTH	EVENT	DESTINATION
	February	SC Automotive Summit	Greenville
	March	Marketing Mission	Florida
	March	LiveXchange	Richmond
	March	Consultant Luncheon	Washington, DC
	April	IAMC	Greenville
	May	Consultant Dinner	Charlotte
	May	Site Select Showcase	NESA Region
	May	Marketing Mission	Ohio
	June	SelectUSA Investment Summit	Washington, DC
	July	Marketing Mission	Boston
	September	America’s Food & Beverage Show	Miami
	September	IEDC Annual Conference	Denver
	October	SEUS/Japan Conference	Charlotte
	November	Consultant Luncheon	Atlanta
	November	Marketing Mission	Vancouver
	December	Marketing Mission	Europe

# PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS



Real Estate Preferences

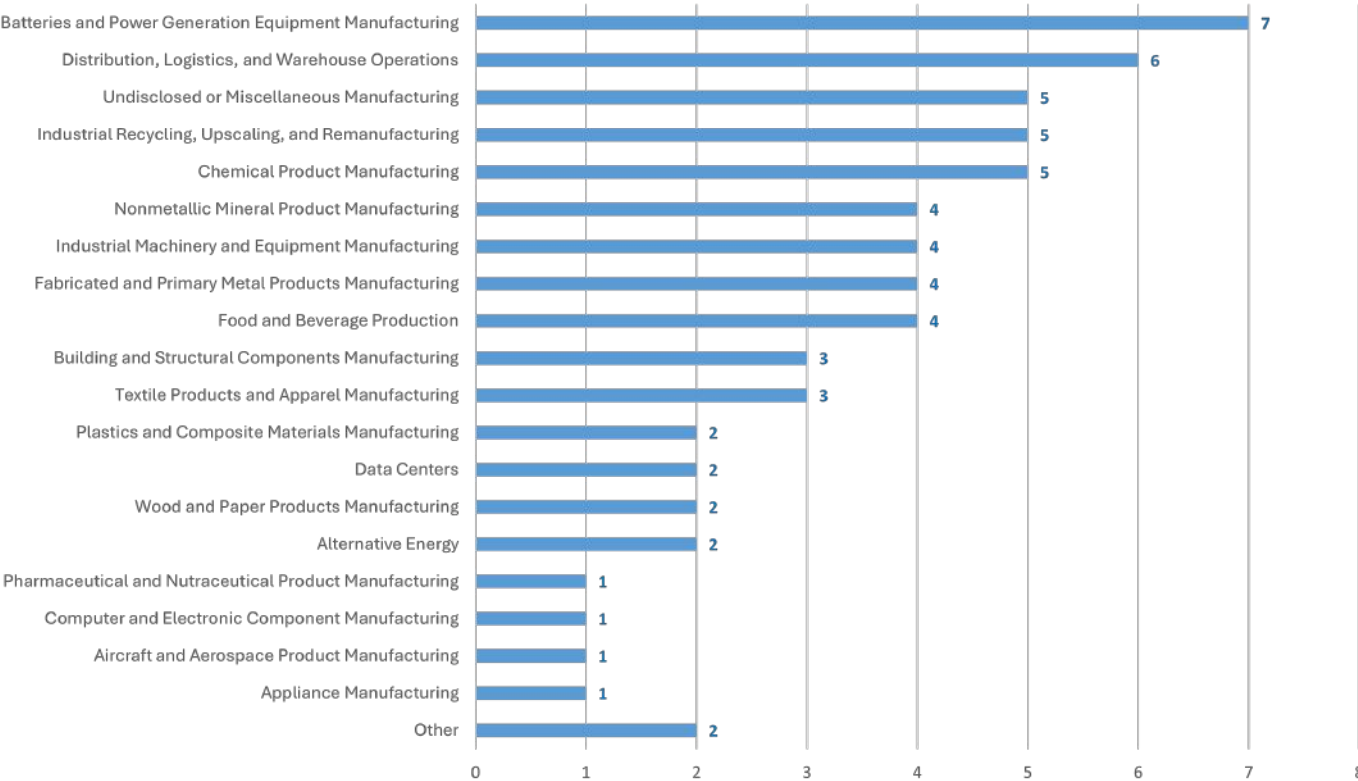


Building Size Preferences



Ownership Preferences

## PROJECTS BY INDUSTRY CLUSTER FOR 2024



# MARKETING

## TOP REQUESTS



### PROPERTY IMAGERY

We provide drone video, 360° imagery, still photography, and more for industrial properties.



### MAP CREATION

Our team can generate and create enhanced maps that meet the requirements of an RFI or the marketing needs of our county partners.



### GRAPHIC DESIGN

We create a variety of printed and digital marketing materials in-house as a service to all of our partners.



### CONSULTING

Our partners rely on us for guidance and advice as they develop new marketing initiatives, individual marketing pieces, website upgrades, and more.

# 116

## Marketing Requests

## ► Introducing NESAs Apprentices



Michael Drew, Jr.



Tyson Jackson

Michael Drew, Jr. and Tyson Jackson are both seniors at Francis Marion University. They started working with the NESAs team as part of a new apprenticeship program created through Apprenticeship Carolina for students who are interested in economic development.

# PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

The NESAs Executive Committee annually authorizes grants to our county partners and allies to maximize the regional impact of key projects which align with NESAs mission and that help to impact other economic development efforts throughout the region. Our county partners each have the opportunity to submit grant applications for both our County Grants and High Impact Grant programs each year. In 2024, the NESAs Executive Committee approved grants totaling \$459,000. The following represents the grants that were awarded:



## FLORENCE COUNTY

was awarded a NESAs High Impact Grant to assist with funding towards a new two-mile boulevard road.



## DARLINGTON COUNTY

was awarded a NESAs County Grant to assist with the overall cost of strategic planning for economic development.



## HORRY COUNTY

was awarded a NESAs County Grant to assist with the cost of lead generation services and website traffic.



## WILLIAMSBURG COUNTY

was awarded a NESAs County Grant to assist with the cost of updating their strategic plan.

# RESEARCH

NESA continues to position itself as a key data resource. NESAs has access to numerous information sources providing demographic, workforce, and economic data, among others. The data NESAs can provide is useful for a variety of applications: industry recruitment, industry expansion and retention, and community development. These efforts proved vital to our county allies in particular, as the research department completed over 334 activities in 2024 alone with the majority of efforts focused in data analysis and business development.

**334**  
**Research  
Requests**

# INVESTOR RELATIONS

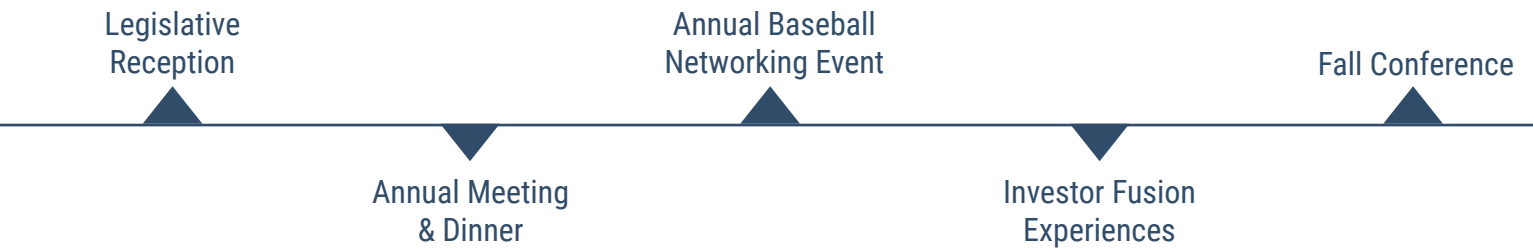
The support of our investors is critical to achieving our mission. Together we are working to improve the quality of life for residents throughout the northeastern region of South Carolina. Our investor relations activities are designed to keep our stakeholders informed, connected, and visible.

We were excited to host several events last year beginning with our legislative reception held in Columbia. We were honored to have Senator Kent Williams and House Representative Russell Fry speak to our guests. This was followed by our annual meeting and oyster roast at Francis Marion University's Performing Arts Center in Florence, S.C. The meeting included an update on the National and Regional Economy provided by Jackie Falconer, vice president at Truist Securities in the Financial Risk management group. While NESAs Annual Networking and Family Night event at the Florence Flamingo's Stadium was brief due to inclement weather conditions, those in attendance enjoyed social time beneath bleacher shelters. We held our annual fall conference at the Marina Inn at Grande Dunes with presentations by Bethany Greene, a Regional Economist at the Charlotte Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, and Al Simpson, the Managing Partner at Due South Advocacy. The conference was wrapped up with an evening of networking, dinner, and jazz band music from Coastal Carolina University's Music Department.

Our fusion lunch experiences provided opportunities for investors and developers to connect in a more relaxed and conversational setting, and explore state and regional offerings such as SC Ports Authority Charleston, Inland Port Dillon, Honda Manufacturing of SC, Lift Academy, and Robinson Nuclear Plant.

We look forward to having a full calendar of events this year that will provide updates on current affairs and connect our county allies and investors.

## Planned Events for 2025\*



\*Dates for these events are to be determined




## INTERESTED IN JOINING OUR MISSION?

When you commit to NESAs, you're committing to furthering economic success and improving the quality of life for the citizens of our region. As a private sector investor, you not only accelerate capital investment, but aid in facilitating a sustainable strategy for job creation. You become a champion for a brighter future in our nine-county region.

Reach out to Jennifer Grigg, our Director of Investor Relations, to learn more about how you can make a difference in our region today.



JENNIFER GRIGG  
Director of  
Investor Relations

 jgrigg@nesasc.org  
 843.661.1170  
 843.616.8543





### Site Selector Developer Dinners



In addition to our quarterly meetings, we provide these opportunities as part of our Site Selection Showcase for our county developers to have small group interactions with the experts who determine business location strategies. These provide invaluable conversation and interactions.

### Fall Conference



Our Fall Conference event is the region's economic development educational opportunity of the year. We host local, regional and national experts for a half-day presentation followed by a fun evening of food and fellowship. Our public and private partners, regional delegation, state legislators, and community leaders are invited to attend.

### Investor Fusion Experiences



We host a series of casual lunches where 8-10 investors, delegates, and county economic developers can connect with allies on a more personal level.

### Legislative Reception



We kick off each year spending time with our legislators in Columbia. This grants our investors the opportunity to spend quality face-to-face time with our state's governing body. It is our first opportunity each year to update our legislators and investors on the previous year's successes.

### Annual Meeting



Each year at this event, we distribute and review our annual report highlighting the previous year and discussing opportunities for the coming year.

### NESA Family Night



This is a family favorite—we host a night of fun activities for our investors to bring their loved ones along. It is a wonderful time to enjoy a game, good food, and networking.

# OUR SUPPORTERS

BOARD



**South Carolina**

BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina  
is an independent licensee of the  
Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

*Blue Cross Blue Shield*



**DUKE  
ENERGY®**

*Duke Energy*



**GRAND STRAND**  
WATER & SEWER AUTHORITY

*Grand Strand Water &  
Sewer Authority*



**MPD**  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

*MPD Electric  
Cooperative*



**santee cooper®**

*Santee Cooper*



**SEC**  
Santee Electric Cooperative Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

*Santee Electric  
Cooperative*

PARTNERS



**Dominion  
Energy®**

*Dominion Energy*

ASSOCIATES



**ANDERSON  
BROTHERS BANK**

*Anderson Brothers Bank*



**FTC®**

*Farmers Telephone  
Cooperative*

**HARBOR  
FREIGHT**

Quality Tools at Ridiculously Low Prices

*Harbor Freight Tools*



**HONDA**

*Honda of South Carolina  
Manufacturing*



**Horry Electric  
Cooperative, Inc.**

*Horry Electric  
Cooperative*



**HTC**

*Horry Telephone  
Cooperative*

**LYNCESRIVER**  
electric cooperative inc.



**RiverNet Connect**

*Lynches River  
Electric Cooperative*

**McLeod Health**

The Choice for Medical Excellence

*McLeod Health  
Foundation*

*Myrtle Beach Area*  
**CHAMBER of COMMERCE**



*Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of  
Commerce*



**SONOCO**

*Sonoco*

UNDERWRITERS

AT&T

Bistro Holdings

Davis & Floyd

Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd

M.B. Kahn Construction

Moore & Van Allen

Parker Poe Attorneys & Counselors at Law

Pepsi of Florence

S&ME

Sandhill Telephone Cooperative

South Carolina Power Team

Truist

DONORS

A.O. Smith

First Reliance Bank

Thomas & Hutton

ARCO Design/Build

Florence Concrete Products

Thompson Turner Construction

Alliance Consulting Engineers

G3 Engineering

THS Construction

Baker Roofing

Hussey Gay Bell

Vulcraft SC

Coastal Carolina National Bank

Landmark Construction

Wilcox Office Works

DSM-firmenich

McCrory Construction

Womble Bond Dickinson

ECS

Nucor

Wyman Gordon

Edward Jones – Sharon Ackerman

PLC Commercial

Yahnis Corporation

Elliott Davis

Stifel

First Citizens Bank

The Brandon Agency

Our Supporters are Our Champions

Our corporate investors are integral to our continued success. They are industry leaders who want to see our region continue to succeed and grow. They believe in the mission of NESA and work with our team day in and day out to make our region of South Carolina a better place to work and live.

# NOTES







## North Eastern Strategic Alliance



1.843.661.4669



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