

# 2022

## ANNUAL REPORT



**NESA**   
SOUTH CAROLINA'S BUSINESS CORNER



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*The North Eastern Strategic Alliance (NESASOUTH CAROLINA'S BUSINESS CORNER) is a regional, non-profit economic development organization that serves nine counties in northeastern South Carolina.*

*Our mission is to work with partnering counties and state economic development organizations to create new jobs and increase the per capita wage for 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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# CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

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We are very excited about the past year in the NESAs region. As travel became easier, we were able to participate in more mission trips, host visits to the region, and engage in more in-person meetings which resulted in a successful year of monumental announcements and developing projects.

We had 15 announcements this past year, which represented the creation of 2,440 new jobs and \$1.106 billion in capital investment. The new jobs total represents the highest number of jobs created in the region since 2008, continuing the upward trend we've seen over the past several years.

At the end of December 2022, employment in the NESAs region increased by 0.6% compared to December of 2019. We monitored the fluctuations in the unemployment rate throughout the year and we continue to see a downward trend compared to 2021. At the end of December 2022, the unemployment rate was at 3.8%.

We were able to generate 77 new projects that represent a potential capital investment of \$19 billion and the potential creation of more than 24,000 new jobs.



Yancey McGill  
Former South Carolina  
Lieutenant Governor

Lastly, join us in welcoming a new member to the NESAs team, Ms. Elizabeth McCarley. We are excited to have her on board and look forward to all the talents she brings to our team.

2022 has been another exciting year for the northeastern region of South Carolina. We are thankful for our member counties and investors who collaborated to develop great opportunities for our region and communities. We are excited to continue working with you and seeing another extraordinary year in 2023.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yancey McGill". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



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



S.C State Senator  
**Luke Rankin**



S.C State Senator  
**Kent Williams**



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



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



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



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



Former Horry County  
Council Chairman  
**Mark Lazarus**



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



Owner,  
ERA Leatherman Realty  
**Jean Leatherman**

# BOARD MEMBERS

## Mary Anderson

*Representing Chesterfield County*

## John Q. Atkinson

*Representing Marion County*

## John Bloom

*Blue Cross Blue Shield of SC*

## Angela Christian

*Representing Georgetown County*

## Kelvin Washington

*Representing Williamsburg County*

## Mike Cool

*Santee Cooper*

## Johnny Gardner

*Representing Horry County*

## Benjy Hardee

*Grand Strand Water and Sewer Authority*

## Dr. Linda Hayes

*Representing Dillon County*

## Senator Gerald Malloy

*Representing Darlington County*

## K.G. "Rusty" Smith, Jr.

*Representing Florence County*

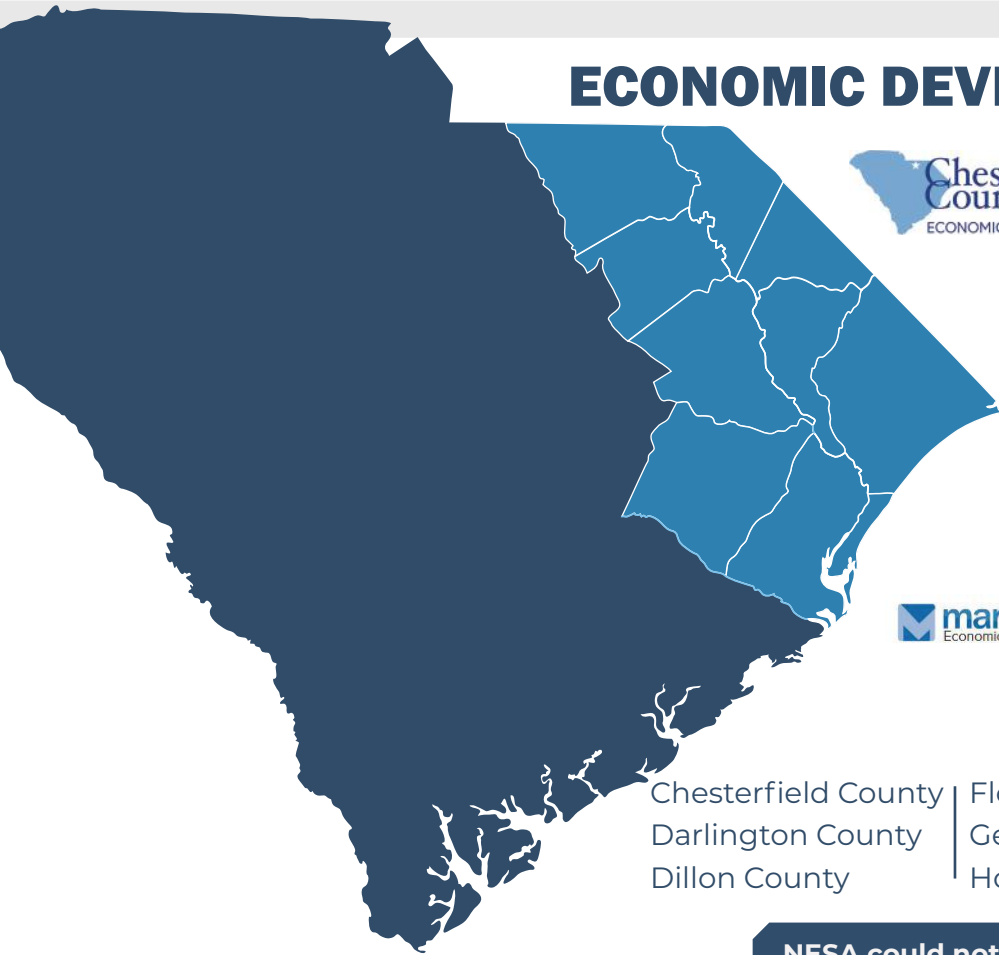
## Jason Speake

*Duke Energy Progress*

## Jason Steen

*Representing Marlboro County*

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS



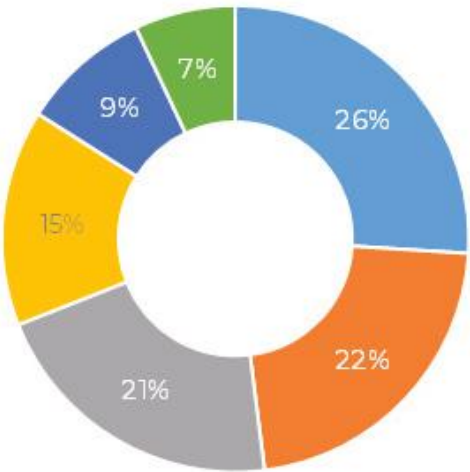
## COUNTY PARTNERS

- 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.**

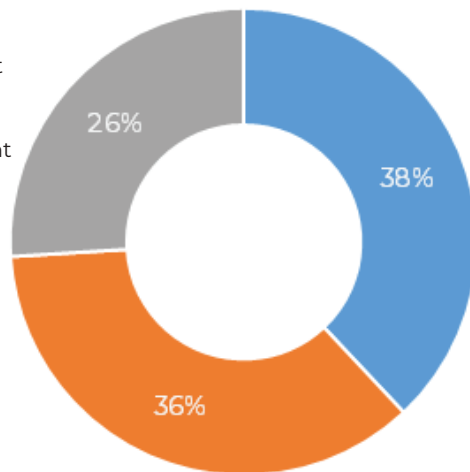
## FINANCIAL POSITION

NESA's funding for fiscal year 2022 was distributed as follows:



- County Grants
- Product Development
- Business Development
- Administration
- Investor Relations
- Marketing

NESA's funding for fiscal year 2022 was provided through the following sources:



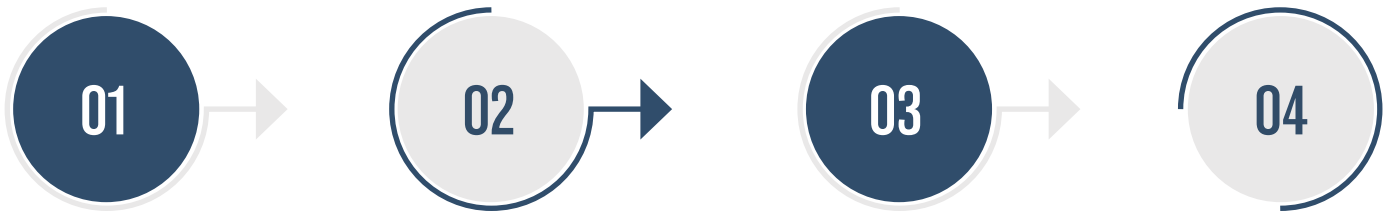
- Private Sector Support
- State Proviso Funds
- County Memberships

# STAFF & SERVICES

NESA works hand-in-hand with our public partners to support their efforts in the recruitment of new industry and the expansion of existing industry throughout our nine county region. We achieve this by providing them with the expertise of our staff through business development, marketing, research, and more. As an extension of our public partners staffs, we work closely with them to achieve both our goals and theirs alike.

## ▶ START TO FINISH

The NESA team supports our public and private allies throughout the economic development process from supporting their product development efforts to landing a new company and eventually helping that company's expansion efforts.



### ATTRACTING INDUSTRY

NESA supports the region by conducting domestic and international business development missions. These missions are organized, planned, and executed by NESA and our local economic developers are encouraged to participate. In addition, NESA aggressively markets the region through direct marketing campaigns to companies and site selection consultants; through luncheons designed to educate brokers, site selection consultants, and more about the NESA region; and through traditional advertising methods.

### PREPARING OUR PRODUCT

NESA supports our county partners and allies with our expertise when it comes to identifying new industrial sites and improving upon existing sites to make them more attractive to the prospective buyer. NESA also offers our county partners and allies a chance to apply for our County Grants and High Impact Grant programs which are geared specifically towards improving product across our region.

### SITE SELECTION

Once NESA and our county partners have drawn the interest of a company, we provide a wealth of services to support our counties' efforts to ultimately land that company. Our business development, marketing, and research teams help to respond to requests for information (RFI) by providing economic data, site information, marketing materials, and more. We also help to facilitate meetings with all interested parties and help to organize regional, county, and site tours as needed.

### RETAINING & EXPANDING

Existing industries are the backbone of our region and we provide them with the support they need to continue their success. We work with our county partners to help them with identifying additional workforce solutions, research, and additional incentives they can utilize. Additionally, we have an economic data resource tool on our website that provides area demographics, labor force characteristics, wages, and spending data. NESA is also here to assist our existing industry with analyzing that data as needed.



# OUR TEAM






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**JENNIFER GRIGG**  
Director of  
Investor Relations

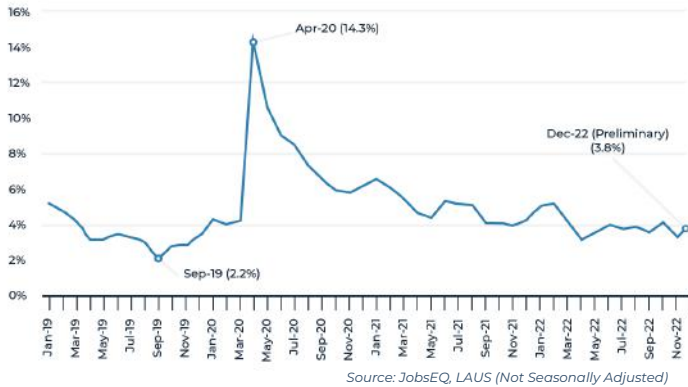
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# REGIONAL ECONOMY

## 2022 By The Numbers

The research team monitors our regional economy and keeps our partners informed of key economic data and trends. Over the past year, the region's economy experienced changes across unemployment rates and insurance claims, employment, average annual wages, and real GDP. This report provides graphical data along with brief summaries for each of these areas. The research team will continue to keep a close eye on developments in 2023 and how our regional economy changes moving forward.

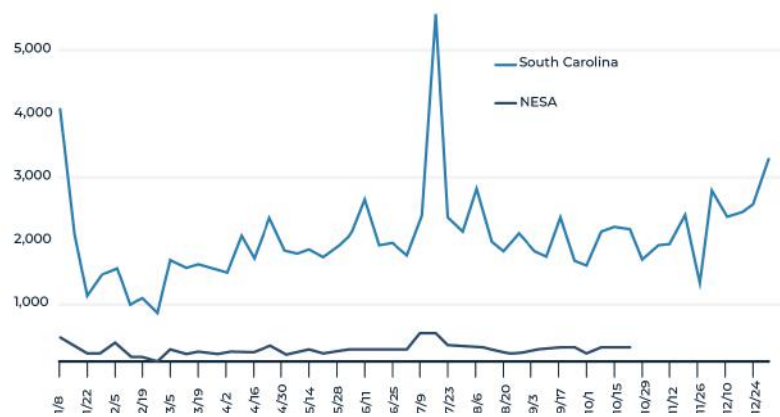


### Unemployment Rate

The regional unemployment rate was 3.8% as of December 2022. The lowest recorded unemployment rate this year was in April at 3.2% and the highest was in February at 5.2%. Notably, April had the lowest recorded unemployment rate since COVID-19 related shutdowns in 2020. In September 2019, the region's unemployment rate was the lowest it has ever been since the BLS began publishing Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) data in 1990. In fact, before 2018, the regional unemployment rate never fell below 4.0% going back to the early 1990s. In December 2022, the State unemployment rate was 3.0% and the National unemployment rate was 3.3%.

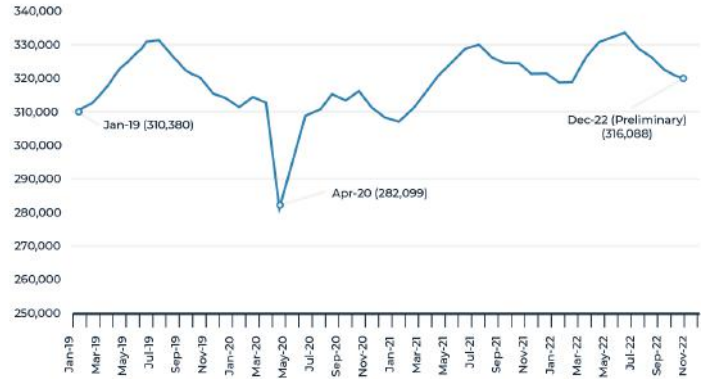
### Unemployment Insurance Claims

Up until October 2022, the region averaged around 320 initial unemployment claims per week and a total of 13,471 claims were made. As of October this year, SCDEW stopped publishing initial unemployment claims by county. The last week they published was the week ending October 22nd, 2022. In total, since the program began publishing weekly initial claims in early 2020, the region accounted for 176,149 initial unemployment insurance claims. The most initial claims made in a week was 15,554 in the week ending April 4th, 2020. For perspective, that single week accounted for 8.8% of all initial claims made in the region over the two-and-a-half year reporting period. The region reported 368 initial claims in the week of October 22nd, 2022. That represents only 2.4% of the claims made on the week ending April 4, 2020. The Research team is currently exploring new avenues to find the most up-to-date information on our region's economy in response to these changes.



## Regional Employment ►

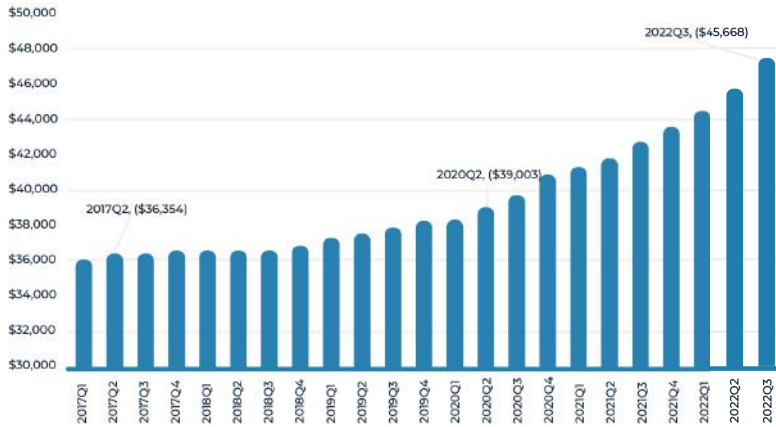
Employment in the NESAs region at the end of December was 316,088, a 1.6% decrease from the same month in 2021 and a 0.6% increase from December 2019. Through December 2022, the year boasted two months with the highest employment recordings for the region since the BLS began publishing Local Area Unemployment Statistics in 1990. The month of May set the record regional employment at 332,594 until the following month when June surpassed it at 333,667. As of December, the State employment was 2,289,630 and the National employment was approximately 158.9 million.



Source: JobsEQ, LAUS (Not seasonally adjusted)

## ◀ Average Annual Wages

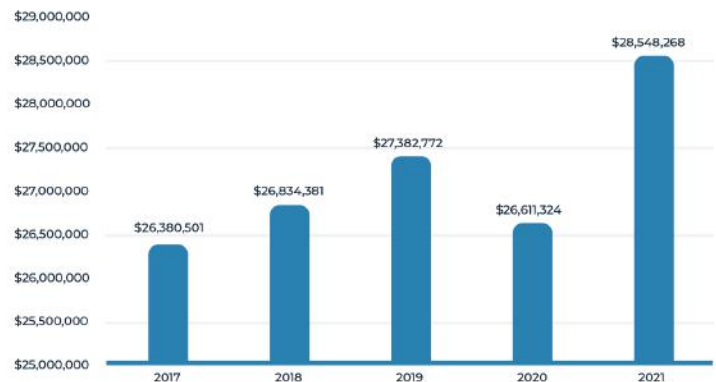
In the four-quarter period ending in 2022Q3, the NESAs region experienced unparalleled average wage per worker growth. The latest data, from 2022Q3, reported the NESAs average annual wage per worker was \$45,668, a 7.0% increase from Q3 of 2021. The year-over-year percentage change in wages in Q1 and Q2 of 2022 were the two highest since the BLS began publishing regional data in 2001. The region had never reported year-over-year growth higher than 4.0% before Q3 of 2020. Since then, every quarter has reported year-over-year growth in wages higher than 6.6%.



Source: JobsEQ, Bureau of Labor Statistics

## REAL GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT ►

From 2020 to 2021, real GDP grew in every county in the NESAs region. As of the end of 2021, the Real GDP of all industries in the NESAs region was approximately \$28.5 billion in 2012 dollars. In 2020, the regional real GDP shrank for the first time since 2012. However, 2021 saw the highest year-over-year growth in GDP since the Bureau of Economic Analysis began publishing county GDP data in 2001. Before 2021, the highest year-over-year growth in the region's history was 4.99%. Compared to 2019, the regional GDP was approximately \$1.16 billion or 4.3% higher in 2021.



Source: JobsEQ, Bureau of Economic Analysis (Thousands of Chained 2012 dollars)

# REGIONAL WINS 2022

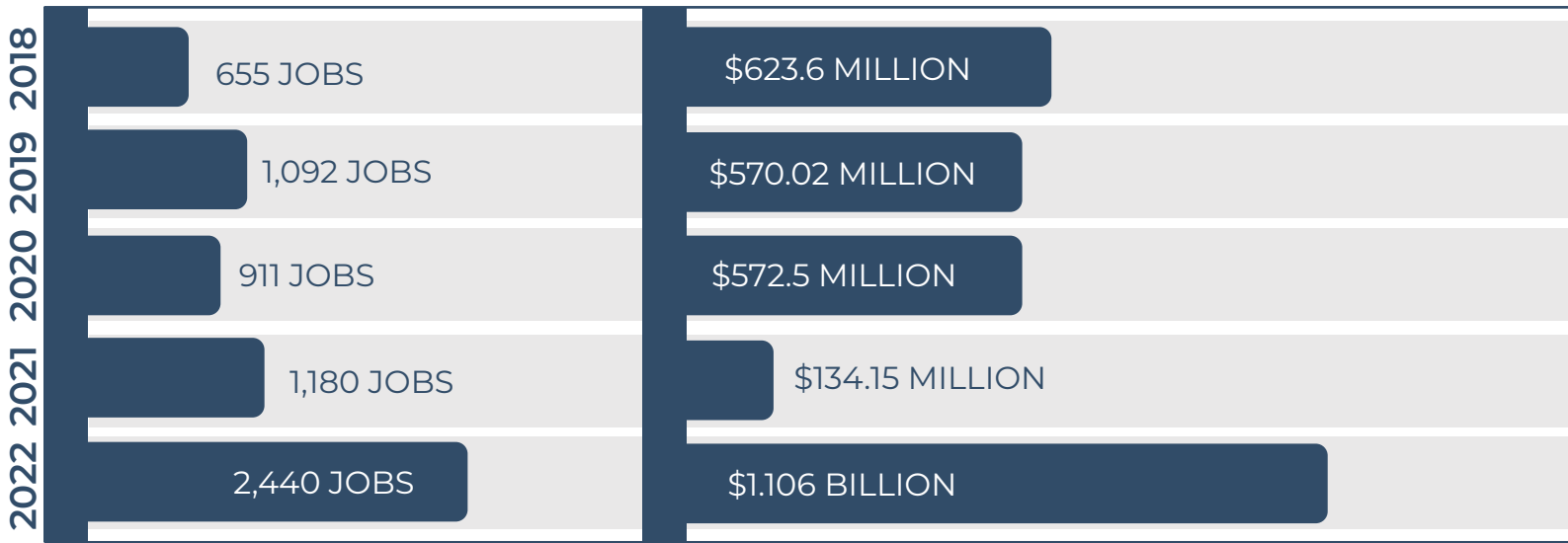
Company (* denotes expansion)	Jobs Created	Capital Investment	County
Fiber Industries*	0	\$ 30,000,000	Darlington
Cheney Brothers	280	\$ 66,000,000	Florence
Hemingway Sewing Solutions	242	\$ 3,300,000	Williamsburg
DC Blox	3	\$ 31,500,000	Horry
WingIts	40	\$ 7,400,000	Georgetown
Carolina Precision Foods, LLC	402	\$ 10,000,000	Florence
Carolina Food Service*	71	\$ 3,700,000	Horry
Thermo Fisher Scientific (Patheon)*	20	\$ 50,000,000	Florence
DMA*	30	\$ 5,000,000	Marion
FedEx	Not Disclosed	\$ 64,000,000	Horry
Shed Windows and More, Inc.*	42	\$ 4,200,000	Horry
Carolina Refractories, Inc.*	38	\$ 3,700,000	Horry
Envision AESC	1,170	\$ 810,000,000	Florence
Moose Logistics & Distribution	75	\$ 2,600,000	Horry
Pepsi Bottling Ventures, LLC*	27	\$ 15,000,000	Horry

Totals (15)

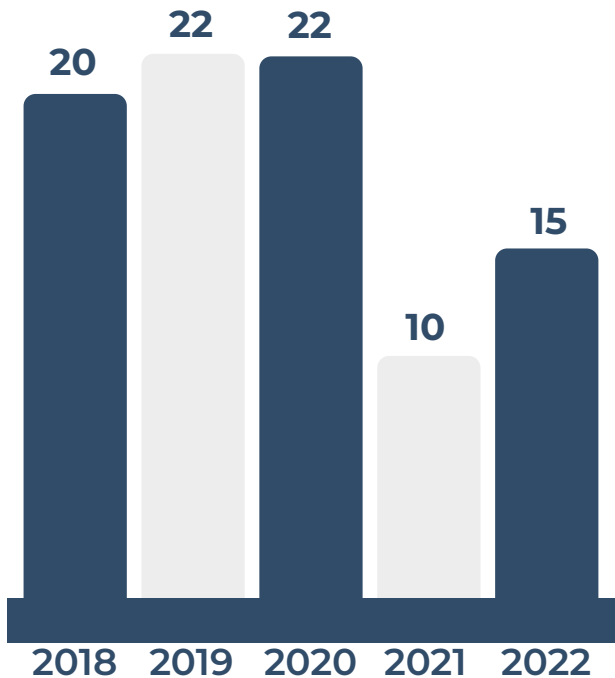
2,440

\$1,106,400,000

## ▶ JOBS & CAPITAL INVESTMENT BY YEAR

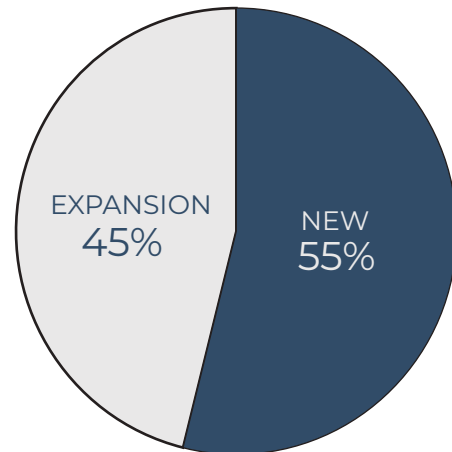


## ▶ TOTAL ANNOUNCEMENTS BY YEAR



## ▶ NEW VS. EXPANSION

2018-2022





# Business Development

Our business development activities are designed to bring opportunities for job creation and capital investment to the region. These activities include relationship building with companies, consultants, brokers, the South Carolina Department of Commerce, NESAC county economic developers and other allies. Our business development staff met with hundreds of company executives, brokers, and consultants on multiple marketing missions in 2022.

Our nine-county region had a record-breaking year in 2022; for the first time in NESAC's history, total capital investment exceeded one billion dollars, while total job creation was the second highest on record. Our project pipeline was also the largest it's ever been, representing more than \$19 billion in potential capital investment and more than 24,000 potential new jobs.



## Business Development Calendar

MONTH	EVENT	DESTINATION
February	Marketing Missions	Southern California
March	Consultant Luncheon	Charlotte, NC
March	SC Automotive Summit	Greenville, SC
April	LiveXchange	Charlotte, NC
May	Marketing Mission	Greater New York City
May	Consultant Luncheon	Greenville, SC
June	Select USA Investment Summit	Washington, DC
June	Consultant Luncheon	Chicago, IL
August	Marketing Mission	Greater Boston
August	Consultant Luncheon	Atlanta, GA
September	Consultant Luncheon	Dallas, TX
September	Marketing Mission	Europe
September	Marketing Mission	Canada
November	Marketing Mission	Pacific Northwest

# 77

## New Projects



PROJECTS BY INDUSTRY CLUSTER

**\$19  
Billion+**  
Potential Capital  
Investment

**49%**

Leads Generated by  
NESAs & County Allies

**51%**

Leads Generated by S.C.  
Dept. of Commerce

**24,000+**  
Potential Jobs

# Marketing

The NESAs marketing team continues to serve as a resource for our partnering counties and allies. We provide marketing assistance in various areas such as property imagery, graphic design, map creation, video production, advertisement assistance, consulting, and more. In 2022, we had:

## TOP REQUESTS

1

### CONSULTING

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

2

### PROPERTY IMAGERY

Our team is able to provide our partners with drone video, 360° imagery, still photography, and more for their properties depending on the need of the county or client.

3

### GRAPHIC DESIGN

We are able to create a variety of printed and digital marketing materials in-house and we offer these services as a cost saver to all of our partners.

4

### MISCELLANEOUS

There are a number of requests that our county partners reach out to us for because they may not know who else to ask. We do our best to assist them as our capabilities allow us too.

5

### MAP CREATION

Maps are essential to the economic development process and our partners rely on us to help them provide the right map to the right client when needed.

**97**  
Marketing  
Requests



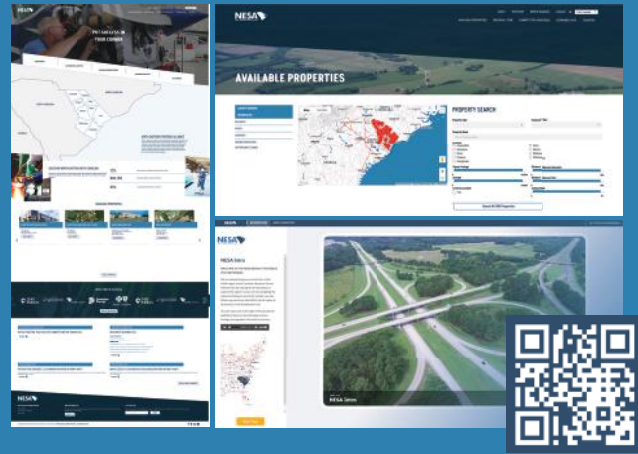
## ▶ Introducing our new Director of Marketing

Elizabeth McCarley joined the NESAs staff as Director of Marketing in September of 2022. She received a Bachelor of Arts in English, Professional Writing from Coker College (now Coker University) and a Master's in Business Administration from Francis Marion University. Her past work experiences include administration, communications, and support.



## ► NESAs Updated its Website

NESA staff started designing a new look for the NESA website with the DuBose Web Group in 2021. The new website was released in October of last year. Easy to navigate, the site includes data for partnering counties, target industries, regional news, economic data, and available properties. You can see more of these changes by going to [nesasc.org](http://nesasc.org) or scan the QR code:



## Product Development

The NESA Executive Committee annually authorizes grants to our county partners and allies to maximize the regional impact of key projects which align with NESA's 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 2022, the NESA Executive Committee approved grants totaling \$433,000. The following represents the grants that were awarded:



### **GEORGETOWN COUNTY**

was awarded a NESA High Impact Grant to assist with the cost of constructing a new speculative building pad in the county.



### **MYRTLE BEACH REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

was awarded a NESA County Grant to assist in master planning for a new industrial park.



### **MARION COUNTY**

was awarded a NESA County Grant to assist with the installation of a natural gas line in the Marion County Industrial Park located on US Highway 501.

NESA continues to be the premier destination for regional economic information. NESA has access to numerous information sources providing demographic, workforce, and economic data, among others. The data NESA 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 323 activities in 2022 alone with the majority of efforts focused in research, data analysis, and dissemination.





## INVESTOR RELATIONS

The support of our investors is critical to achieving our mission. Together we are working to improve the quality of life for the people throughout our region of South Carolina. Our investor relations activities are designed to keep our stakeholders informed, connected, and visible. We were excited to, once again, host events in 2022. Our annual Baseball Outing was held in the new Flamingos Baseball Stadium and provided a wonderful family day and networking opportunity. We also held the annual Fall Conference and Oyster Roast in Georgetown County at the beautiful Beneventum Plantation. In 2023, we look forward to having a full calendar of events that will provide updates on current affairs and connect our county allies and investors.

### Planned Events for 2023

\*Dates for these events are to be determined



## INTERESTED IN JOINING OUR MISSION?


When you commit to NESA, 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 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](mailto:jgrigg@nesasc.org)

 843.661.1170

 843.616.8543



### Site Selector Developer Dinners



In addition to our quarterly meetings we provide three 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 Dinner



We host an Investor Dinner to show our appreciation to their commitment to the growth and development of our region. This gathering is a meaningful time for investors to collaborate with their peers and hear more about the development efforts throughout the year.

### 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; giving our investors an opportunity to bring their loved ones to join them for a night of fun activities. It is a wonderful time to gather and network.

# ▶ Our Supporters

BOARD



Blue Cross Blue Shield



Duke Energy



Grand Strand Water  
& Sewer Authority



Santee Cooper

PARTNERS



Dominion Energy

ASSOCIATES



Anderson Brothers Bank



Farmers Telephone  
Cooperative



Honda South Carolina  
Manufacturing



Horry Electric  
Cooperative



Horry Telephone  
Cooperative



Lynches River  
Electric Cooperative



Myrtle Beach Area  
Chamber of Commerce



Santee Electric  
Cooperative



Sonoco



Truist



UNDERWRITERS

AT&T

DuBose Web Group

First Bank

M.B. Kahn Construction

S&ME

Sandhill Telephone Cooperative

South Carolina Power Team

DONORS

A.O. Smith

First Citizens Bank

Thomas & Hutton

Alliance Engineering

First Reliance Bank

Thompson Turner Construction

Bistro Holdings

Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd

THS Construction

Coastal Structures

McRory Construction

Vulcraft SC

Davis & Floyd

Nucor

Wells Fargo

ECS

Parker Poe Attorneys & Counselors at Law

Wilcox

Edward Jones – Sharon Ackerman

Pepsi of Florence

Womble Bond Dickinson

Elliott Davis

Stifel

Wyman Gordon

Fiber Industries

The Brandon Agency

Yahnis Corporation



## 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 NESAs and work with our team day in and day out to make our region of South Carolina a better place to work and to live.

## North Eastern Strategic Alliance

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