Some businesses are launched after years of careful planning; others are born almost by accident. Take the case of Leslie’s Laundry Care, a Charlotte startup founded by Domonique Boone. Her mother’s washing machine stopped working, so Boone went to her mother’s house, picked up her towels and washed and folded them and then delivered them back to her mother. And that’s when the idea hit her. Today, Leslie’s Laundry Care is a mobile company serving Charlotte and surrounding areas, including Fort Mill and Rock Hill. The business, named after the 5-year-old daughter, also offers dry cleaning and alterations.

Mecklenburg County’s Office of Economic Development is proud to call Leslie’s Laundry Care a client of the Business Diversity & Inclusion program. Leslie’s Laundry Care was also a participant in Mecklenburg County’s Get Up and Grow program, a program administered by Central Piedmont Community College that is designed for existing businesses seeking to move beyond $125-400K in annual sales.

Pictured: Domonique Boone, Leslie’s Laundry Care (Leslieslaundrycare.com)
Photo by: Shahid Rana
This past year has presented its share of challenges and uncertainty as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, Mecklenburg County continues to prove its economic resiliency and ability to withstand hardships for a brighter future. The FY2021 Economic Development Annual Report highlights several of the County’s transformational economic development achievements of the last fiscal year.

Within weeks of the onset of the pandemic, Mecklenburg County launched the COVID-19 Small Business Emergency Stabilization Loan Fund intended to rapidly deploy working capital to meet the immediate needs of small businesses throughout the County before other Federal or State funds became available. Over the course of the past fiscal year, this program has approved 220 loans for a total of $4.9 million. Going forward, small businesses have access to the Mecklenburg County Small Business Revolving Loan Program, which provides loans of up to $75,000 at the prime interest rate to qualified small and start-up businesses in Mecklenburg County.

In addition to these programs, Mecklenburg County’s Office of Economic Development has experienced tremendous growth in the last year. Programs developed in recent years are continually adding clients with their own success stories. These programs include Existing Industries, Small Business Concierge and Capital and Credit Coaching, and the Business Diversity & Inclusion (BDI) program (formerly the Minority, Women and Small Business Enterprises Program). The County’s commitment to the BDI program was exemplified in the FY2022 Budget with 10 new positions approved in various County departments to implement the recommendations of the recently completed disparity study, which is aimed at expanding opportunities and access for minority, women and small business contractors.

It is clear that Mecklenburg County continues to be a place where people choose to live, learn, work and recreate.
The Office of Economic Development is charged with the implementation of the Board of County Commissioners’ six Economic Development Focus Areas:

- Minority, Women, Small Business Enterprise Opportunities
- New and Existing Business Growth
- Small Business & Entrepreneurial Growth
- Strong Communities and Neighborhoods
- Workforce Development
- Tourism, Arts and Culture

**Mecklenburg County Leadership for Economic Development**

- **Dena R. Diorio**
  Mecklenburg County Manager
- **Dr. Leslie Johnson**
  Assistant County Manager
- **Peter Zeiler**
  Economic Development Director

**Office of Economic Development Staff**

- **Malaya Abed**
  MWSBE Program Compliance Officer
- **Fred Atiemo**
  Capital & Credit Coaching Program Manager
- **Michael Boger**
  Business Manager
- **Gretchen Carson**
  Existing Industry Program Manager
- **Jamila Davis**
  MWSBE Program Manager
- **Monica Grier**
  Administrative Support Coordinator
- **Shahid Rana**
  Business Attraction Program Manager
- **Mark Stewart**
  Small Business Concierge Program Manager
**Fast Facts**

- **4.9 Percent**  
  County June 2021 Unemployment Rate  
  Mecklenburg County’s unemployment rate stood at 4.9% as of June 2021. In comparison, the unemployment rate in June 2020 was 9.7% due to the economic impacts of COVID-19 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).

- **595,573 Jobs**  
  Total Employed Persons  
  As of June 2021, 595,573 persons were employed in Mecklenburg County. This is an increase of 8.3% from the June 2020 count of 549,771 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).

- **0.7 Months**  
  Supply of Housing Units on the Market  
  The months’ supply indicates how long the current for-sale inventory would last given the current sales rate if no additional new houses were built. Typically, a market that favors sellers has less than 6 months of supply (Mecklenburg County Residential Housing Market Report).

- **13 Days**  
  Average Days on Market for New Home Sales  
  Days on market is a key indicator for the local economy with less days on the market favoring home sellers. The June 2021 days on market was 13 days, compared to 36 days in the previous year (Mecklenburg County Residential Housing Market Report).

- **3.3 Million**  
  Sq. Ft. of Office Space Under Construction  
  As of June 2021, 3.3 Million square feet of office space was under construction. In comparison, 4.7 Million square feet of office space was under construction in June 2020. (Mecklenburg County Commercial Office Report)

- **16.5 Percent**  
  County-Wide Office Vacancy Rate  
  As of June 2021, the County-wide office vacancy rate stood at 16.5%. In comparison, the June 2020 office vacancy rate was 10.9% (Mecklenburg County Commercial Office Report).
COVID-19 Small Business Emergency Stabilization Loan Fund

The COVID-19 Small Business Emergency Stabilization Loan Program was developed in April 2020 to help small businesses in response to the economic impacts of COVID-19. The Loan Program was meant to serve as a rapid deployment of capital to meet the immediate needs of small businesses before other Federal or State funds are available.

The loan program was established with $5,000,000 in eligible funds and was administered by the Carolina Small Business Development Fund: www.CarolinaSmallBusiness.org.

Program Details

- **$35,000** Maximum Loan Amount
- **10 Years** Maximum Loan Term
- **3.0 Percent** Loan Interest Rate

April 7, 2020
Program authorized by County Commission

April 20, 2020
Funding disbursement begins

September 16, 2020
Funds disbursed passes $4M milestone

Program Performance (as of June 2021)

- **637** Total Applications Received
- **220** Total Loans Approved
- **$4.9 Million** Total Funds Disbursed
- **$22,273** Average Loan Amount

Get Connected!

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(980) 314-2757
Fred.Atiemo@MeckNC.Gov
OED.MeckNC.Gov
MeckCounty CARES Small Business Relief Grant (MeckCares)

The MeckCounty CARES Small Business Relief Grant (MeckCares) provided up to $25,000 for small businesses located in the six towns or unincorporated areas of the County whose businesses were negatively impacted by COVID-19. The grant was made possible thanks to CARES Act funding awarded to the County.

The loan program was administered by Mecklenburg County in partnership with the Centralina Regional Council.

Program Details

- **$25,000** Maximum Grant Amount
- Demonstrate that business was adversely impacted by COVID-19
- Located in one of the six towns or unincorporated areas

- August 2020 Program authorized by County Commission
- September 2020 Application opened
- December 2020 Remaining funds disbursed to approved businesses

Program Performance (as of June 2021)

- 244 Total Applications Received
- 165 Total Grants Approved
- $1.9 Million Total Funds Disbursed
- $11,483 Average Grant Amount

Get Connected!

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Meck Lending Small Business Loan Program

Small businesses play a significant role in the local and national economy; they create jobs, help diversify the economy and lead to neighborhood revitalization. This loan program is designed to support non-standard lending and help small business owners access capital.

The loan program was established with $2,750,000 in eligible funds and is administered by the Carolina Small Business Development Fund: www.CarolinaSmallBusiness.org.

Program Details

- **$75,000** Maximum Loan Amount
- **10 Years** Maximum Loan Term
- **Prime** Loan Interest Rate

June 2020
Program authorized by County Commission

January 2020
First loans approved

April 2021
Program guidelines revised to encourage additional applicants

Program Performance (as of June 2021)

- **6** Applications Under Review (July 2021)
- **2** Total Loans Approved
- **$59,000** Total Funds Disbursed
- **2** Loans for Minority-Owned Firms

Get Connected!

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Microbusiness Stabilization Loan Program

To mitigate the economic impacts caused by COVID-19 for businesses with 5 or less employees, the Microbusiness Stabilization Fund was created to provide forgivable loans to qualifying businesses located within the Towns of Cornelius, Davidson, Huntersville, Matthews or Pineville or be located in an ETJ/unincorporated areas of the County.

The loan program was established with $1,000,000 in federal CDBG funds and is administered by the Centralina Council of Governments (CCOG): www.Centralina.org.

**Program Details**

- **$10,000** Maximum Loan Amount
- **3 Years** Maximum Loan Term
- **0.0 Percent** Loan Interest Rate

- **April 7, 2020** Program authorized by County Commission
- **April 13, 2020** Full rollout of online application
- **April 20, 2020** Funding disbursement begins

**Program Performance (as of June 2020)**

- **60** Total Applications Received
- **25** Total Loans Approved
- **$208,275** Total Funds Disbursed
- **$8,331** Average Loan Amount

Get Connected!

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Timmothy.Tibbs @MeckNC.Gov
OED.MeckNC.Gov
Business Investment Grant Program Performance

Grant recipients must meet certain requirements each year to be eligible for reimbursement of incremental taxes paid. The number of jobs created over the grant term versus jobs promised in the grant contract is one of the key criteria for eligibility.

In total, companies receiving grant payment in FY2021 created **2,970** full-time jobs, **133%** of the promised amount.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Jobs Promised</th>
<th>Actual Jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equitable Holdings</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JELD-WEN</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORNING</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>579</td>
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<tr>
<td>NUTEC</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>183</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dimensional</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>259</td>
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<tr>
<td>TTI</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FritoLay</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siemens</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honeywell</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
New Business Investment Program
Grants Approved in FY2021

Arrival Automotive USA, Inc.

Arrival, the global company creating electric vehicles ("EVs") using its game-changing technologies, announced that it will be building its second US Microfactory in Mecklenburg County. This Microfactory will produce electric delivery vans, and is expected to bring more than 250 new jobs to Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.

**Project Details:**
- 5 Year, 90% Grant ($906,824 Cap)
- 281 New Jobs
- $42,171 Average Wage
- $40.95M Capital Investment
- Locating within a BIP Opportunity Area

Centene Management Company LLC

In July 2020, Centene announced it had selected Mecklenburg County as the future home of its new East Coast headquarters, creating more than 3,237 new jobs. Centene is investing more than $1 billion to develop a state-of-the-art corporate campus in the University City neighborhood. The campus will house 3,200 employees for the FORTUNE® 100 company and features an on-site daycare center and corporate "university" for professional development.

**Project Details:**
- 4 Phases with 10 Year terms, 50% Grant ($26,023,933 Cap)
- 3,237 New Jobs
- $100,089 Average Wage
- $662.57M Minimum Capital Investment

Get Connected!

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Capital & Credit Coaching

The goal of the Capital and Credit Coaching program is to help entrepreneurs manage their finances better for long-term stable growth and to better manage their capital needs. This service is provided in a one-on-one approach to provide a tailored and focused service to suit individual business needs.

Coaching may include:
- Credit building to prepare for future lending opportunities
- Creating action plans to correct credit deficiencies and attract future capital
- Evaluating progress of businesses that have received capital or credit coaching services
- Auditing business and financial plans for soundness and loan readiness
- Identifying financing that fits the needs of the applicant and the financial institution

Looking ahead to next year: The program will prioritize rebranding and marketing the Small Business Revolving Loan Program, coaching clients to better position themselves financially in light of the impacts of COVID-19, and enhancing customer service.

Program Performance

There were 2,218 persons reached in FY2021. This includes all interactions with clients and participation at community outreach events.

Annual Accomplishments

- Helped establish the Small Business Stabilization Loan Program and the MeckCares Small Business Relief Grant Program.
- Served on several panels and made presentations to business owners/organizations including Commissioner Leake’s Small Business Consortium, Mentor Me Program, Getup & Grow, AMP UP, Women Business Center, etc.
- In collaboration with MWSBE staff, designed and proposed Contractor Loan Program to serve MWSBE contractors.
- Worked with small business owners on their business plans and proforma and connected them with traditional lenders for SBA loan.

Get Connected!

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Small Business Concierge

Small business owners and entrepreneurs can get direct, face to face assistance in establishing and growing their business by working with the Small Business Concierge. While there are a significant number of small business support providers in the County, it is often difficult to know which agencies can provide the best support to small business owners. The Concierge is accessible at locations throughout the County and on weekends and evenings.

Small business owners can:

• Meet directly with an expert that helps the owner identify their specific challenges
• Be connected to the appropriate service providers to meet their specific needs.
• Map out a process for meeting the challenges
• Access services on weekends and weekday evenings in locations throughout the County

Looking ahead to next year: Many support programs have been created throughout the nation to help small businesses maintain or recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19. The concierge will help small business owners in the County navigate these support programs to ensure financial stability in the future.

Program Performance

There were 4,931 persons reached in FY2021. This includes all interactions with clients and participation at community outreach events.

Total Persons Reached

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jul</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep</td>
<td>459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>360</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>490</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr</td>
<td>627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun</td>
<td>579</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Annual Accomplishments

• Throughout the past year, the program has expanded community outreach and partnerships, revamped and streamlined resources available to clients, and strengthened small businesses by instituting capacity building programming.

• During FY2021, the Concierge program provided 3,632 consultation hours for client businesses. This includes:
  ◦ 1,692 consultation hours for new business start-ups.
  ◦ 1,190 consultation hours for women-owned new business start-ups.

Get Connected!

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Existing Industry

The Existing Industry program supports incumbent businesses in Mecklenburg County. The mission of the program is to maintain close relationships to key employers in the County to become the “first phone call” when considering growth and expansion and to provide ongoing support for existing industries.

Support to incumbent businesses may include:
- Workforce (training resources, wage and benefit data)
- Infrastructure (rail, utilities, transportation)
- Municipal concerns (permitting, zoning, storm water, etc.)
- Expansions & growth (site and building identification, grant funding, operational efficiencies)

Looking ahead to next year: The Existing Industry Program will consider expanding programming to develop a networking and engagement platform to support human resources professionals in manufacturing settings. This initiative will provide an environment for professionals working in the manufacturing sector to be able to benchmark and collaborate on best practices, hiring, talent development and wages.

Program Performance

The Program Manager visited 103 client businesses in FY2021. Visits were limited due to the impacts of COVID-19. This included 21 visits to new clients during the year.

Annual Accomplishments

- Pivoted to online webinars during the pandemic covering topics such as mental health, energy efficiencies in manufacturing facilities and local workforce development.
- Played a critical role in disseminating information to clarify stay at home orders and essential business designations during the onset of the pandemic.
- In partnership with regional economic development teams, Stream 2021 was launched – a tradeshow aimed at helping manufacturers to understand what local suppliers are available in the Charlotte region.
- In partnership with the Charlotte Regional Business Alliance, completed the 2020 Manufacturers’ Labor Survey.

Get Connected!

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Mecklenburg County is committed to providing minorities, women, and small businesses equal opportunity to participate in construction and professional services contracts. Through the Business Diversity & Inclusion Program (formerly the Minority, Women, and Small Business Enterprises Program), the County works to help clients grow and be competitive for governmental purchasing.

To participate in the BDI Program, a business must meet the following criteria:
- The business must be 51% owned and operated by a minority, woman, or small business owner.
- The business must be certified. Mecklenburg County does not provide certification, but will accept certifications from the City of Charlotte, NC Office of Historically Underutilized Businesses, NC Department of Transportation, or the Small Business Administration.

Looking ahead to next year:
- In partnership with internal departments, the implementation of the Disparity Study recommendations will roll-out via a phased approach. Implementation will consist of, but not limited to, changed internal and external processes, updated guidance, increased supportive services, and use of a compliance software solution.
- Launch of the inaugural Business LaunchPad (BLP) program, to aid businesses in developing/advancing their government and institutional contracting portfolio.

**Program Performance**

There were **45,530** persons reached in FY2021. This includes all interactions with clients and participation at community outreach events and mass communication messages.

**Total Persons Reached**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>2,414</td>
<td>2,226</td>
<td>3,199</td>
<td>4,512</td>
<td>1,356</td>
<td>2,490</td>
<td>3,128</td>
<td>3,920</td>
<td>4,857</td>
<td>6,263</td>
<td>6,026</td>
<td>5,139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Annual Accomplishments**

- 2021 Business Certification Summit hosted by Office of Economic Development and Commissioner Leake’s SBC: 348 businesses registered, four hour event, presentation partners NC Dept of Administration (NCHUB Office), NCDOT (Office of Civil Rights), and City of Charlotte (CBI Program), and nine business owners.
- Hosted the first virtual ceremony for the Crowns of Enterprise Awards in 2021 to honor 17 (2020) and 40 (2021) nominees [10th anniversary, 57 nominees, 12 winners, 323 registered viewers].
- Partnered with LUESA to increase MWSBE contractor participation in the new Compost & Mulch program and the GRADE program.

Get Connected!

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Events and Attractions

ACC Football Championship
The Atlantic Coast Conference Championship is an annual college football game featuring the champion of the Coastal Division and the champion of the Atlantic Division.

Attendance: 5,240
Hotel Rooms: 5,171
Direct Spending: $3.0M
Total Economic Impact: $5.6M
County Taxes Collected: $119K

Duke’s Mayo Bowl
The Duke’s Mayo Bowl is an annual college football game played at the Bank of America Stadium. Established in 2002, the bowl currently features a matchup between the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) and the Southeastern Conference (SEC).

Attendance: 1,500
Hotel Rooms: 1,487
Direct Spending: $1.3M
Total Economic Impact: $2.2M
County Taxes Collected: $48K

Charlotte Regional Film Commission
The Charlotte Regional Film Commission, part of the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority, promotes on-location filmmaking within the region.

Leads: 148
Hotel Rooms: 11,912
Total Budget for Film/Shows: $73.8M
Crew Hired: 2,129

Cultural Arts Facilities Annual Attendance
Mecklenburg County provides funding for several local cultural facilities that support non-profit organizations. Data below indicates in-person and virtual visits that occurred over the course of FY2021.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bechtler Museum of Modern Art</td>
<td>109,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery Place (All Campuses)</td>
<td>103,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey B. Gantt Center</td>
<td>11,341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mint Museum (All Campuses)</td>
<td>56,734</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Charlotte Knights
The Charlotte Knights stadium was relocated to Uptown Charlotte in 2014 through a grant agreement and lease from Mecklenburg County.

Economic Impact $30M
Non-Baseball Economic Impact $15M
Total Events 72
Total Knights Attendance 412,000
Average Game Attendance 5,722
Outside Events Attendance 95,650
Monetary & In-Kind Donations $375k
Employees (Full and Part-Time) 300
Partners

Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners

George Dunlap - (D), District 3, Chairman
Elaine Powell - (D), District 1, Vice Chair
Pat Cotham - (D), At-Large
Ella B. Scarborough - (D), At-Large
Leigh Altman - (D), At-Large
Vilma D. Leake - (D), District 2
Mark Jerrell - (D), District 4
Laura Meier - (D), District 5
Susan Rodriguez-McDowell - (D), District 6

Economic Development Committee

Susan Rodriguez-McDowell - (D), District 6, Chair
Leigh Altman - (D), At-Large
Mark Jerrell - (D), District 4
Laura Meier - (D), District 5

Mecklenburg County Manager’s Office

Economic Development Partners

Center City Partners
Central Piedmont Community College
Charlotte Regional Business Alliance
Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority
City of Charlotte
Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce
Lake Norman Regional Economic Development Corporation
NC Department of Commerce
Town of Cornelius
Town of Davidson
Town of Huntersville
Town of Matthews
Town of Mint Hill
University City Partners
Visit Lake Norman