



Ready Charlotte

Regional Economic Stabilization, Acceleration and Advancement Task Force

Overview

From an economic growth perspective, the start of 2020 looked promising. A solid stream of new traded-sector jobs announcements and investments carried the Charlotte Region through early March, including several expansion announcements from manufacturers. Traded-sector companies announced \$323 million in capital investment, compared to only \$93.6 million in the same quarter of 2019.

The momentum and growth for our region came to an abrupt stop in mid-March as the effects of the COVID-19 rippled through the economy. The crisis ended the record 113-month, longest streak of economic expansion.

Early indications are that traded-sector industries have stalled, although there are many examples of tech firms growing and manufacturers innovating to maintain productivity. Cautionary measures and stay-at-home orders shut down much of the service-sector economy, and non-grocery retail and leisure and hospitality firms and their employees were hit first.

More than 362,000 people in North and South Carolina filed initial claims for unemployment insurance during the last two weeks of the quarter—that’s about 5 percent of all workers in both states. For the Charlotte Region, it’s estimated this will result in a loss of more than 71,000 jobs during the quarter.

For Charlotte and the economic mobility reality that continues to challenge our community, the pandemic presents a further widening between the haves and have nots.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this regional effort will be to ready Charlotte for strong, inclusive economic growth in a post-pandemic environment. In alignment with CLT Alliance’s vision to *create the most vibrant, innovative, and healthy economy in the nation*, this task force will focus on three objectives:

- 1. Stabilize the economy, prioritizing small-to-medium-sized businesses**

Small businesses are more susceptible to the downfall effect of coronavirus, leading to sharp declines in revenue, job loss and even closures. The impact is exacerbated for minority and immigrant-owned businesses and microenterprises. Coordination of short and long-term resources, including technical assistance and advocacy, and targeted outreach, especially for more at-risk enterprises, will be necessary to help all businesses recover. Solutions for affected employees could include new skilling, work sharing and talent exchange programs.

- 2. Lessen impact to high-risk industries**

Among top metros, Charlotte has a higher than average share of employment in some high-risk industries, including leisure and hospitality and transportation. The region’s strengths as an investment location for business, tourism, sports and entertainment, as well the major economic asset we have in Charlotte-Douglas International Airport, drive these industries and the jobs that support them. As we continue building on the strengths of financial services, technology, manufacturing, healthcare and energy, further industry diversification and an interdisciplinary sector approach could help lessen the impact and future shock-proof these high-risk industries and overall economy. Policy and workforce solutions must also be part of the equation.

3. **Advance strategies to achieve long-term inclusive, economic health**

The Alliance's current focus on increasing new investment, positioning the region's competitiveness, and ensuring Charlotte has data-driven insight to its regional workforce will remain as guideposts with or without a pandemic. However, the current environment creates an opportunity to reset and rethink more boldly about the economic trajectory of the Charlotte Region. This rare window enables us to reimagine and accelerate the development of strategies that will propel our region to the next level—inclusive innovation and entrepreneurship, expansion of global-and-local supply chains, comprehensive business retention and expansion support, and smart, sustainable, and equitable infrastructure. Federal programs are likely to emerge from this crisis, and regional solutions should leverage the potential of public-private partnerships to optimize federal-level resources.

Leadership

To achieve maximum community benefit, collaboration among a diverse and representative business community is necessary. The task force will be led and staffed by the CLT Alliance and comprise of leaders from a cross-section of business (small/medium/large, operating in Charlotte and across the region), government, education, economists, and philanthropy. Research, strategic consulting, and facilitation-structure expertise will be critical to the effectiveness of the task force and its outcomes.

Desired Outcomes and Measuring Success

A deliverable of the task force will be identifying clear metrics, key progress indicators, and timelines for each objective.

Frequency

The task force will meet virtually every other week beginning in May and conclude in August with a set of measurable recommendations. We expect to create work groups that will meet on the alternating weeks to support continued work within and across each objective. We'll also monitor our progress along the way and adjust as needed to ensure we're reaching desired outcomes.

Supporting Materials

- Data reports (forthcoming)
- Alliance economic impact survey results ([initial results](#); work still in progress)
- Inspired reading
 - [Rethinking disaster relief for small businesses](#)
 - [How local leaders can stave off a small business collapse from COVID-19](#)
 - [How cities are helping workers and small businesses during the coronavirus crisis](#)
 - [How to rebuild and reimagine jobs amid the coronavirus crisis](#)
 - [COVID-19: Investing in black lives and livelihoods](#)
 - [Who are the workers already impacted by the Covid-19 recession?](#)
 - [Supply-chain recovery in coronavirus times](#)
 - [Alliance Growth Report, First Quarter 2020](#)
 - [Covid-19 and jobs: Monitoring the US impact on people and places](#)