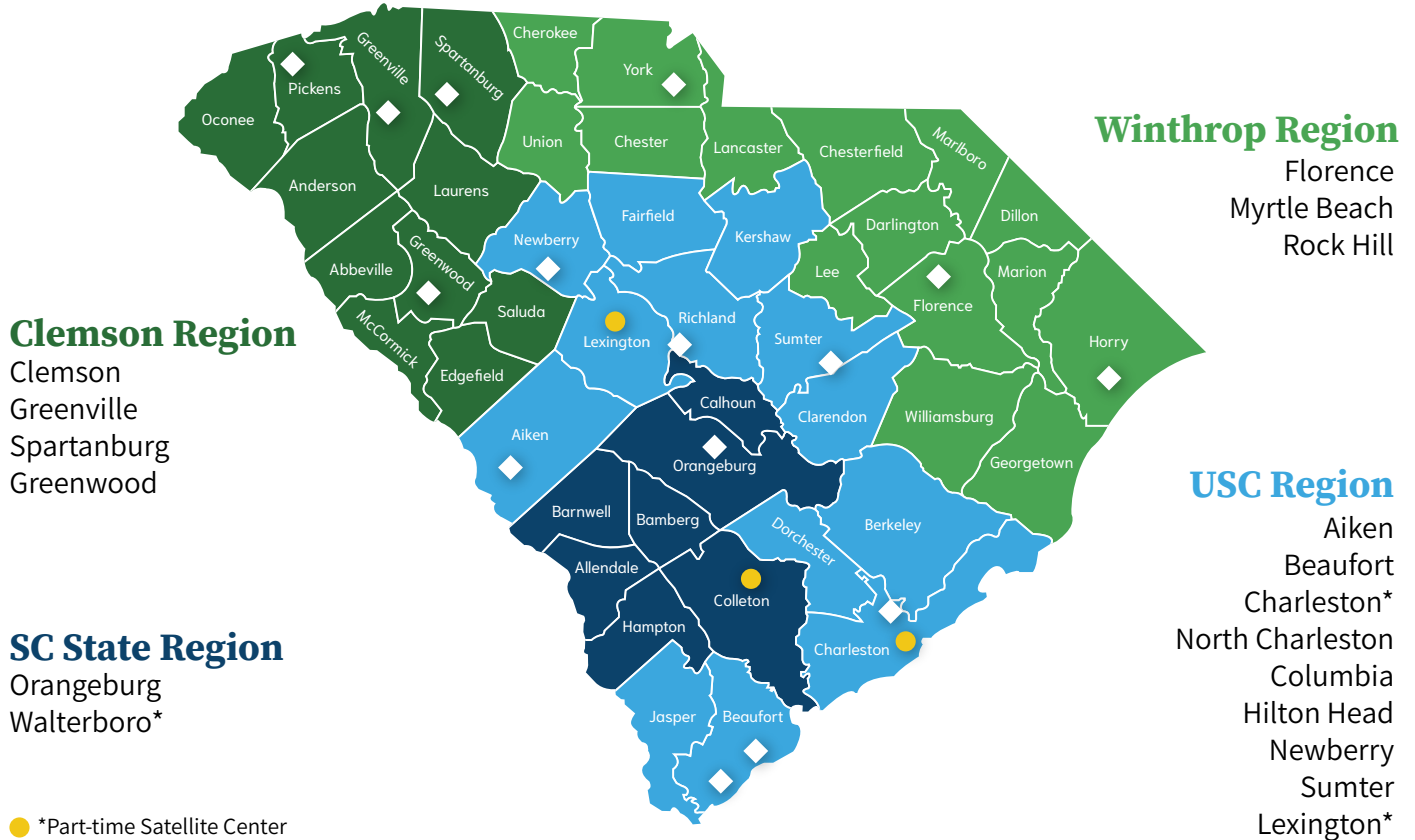




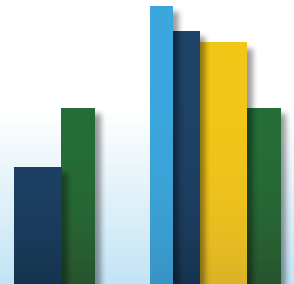
SOUTH CAROLINA **SMALL BUSINESS** DEVELOPMENT CENTERS
ANNUAL REPORT

WHO WE ARE

The South Carolina Small Business Development Centers (SC SBDC) provides no-fee consulting, training, and access to resources that help small businesses start, grow, and succeed. Through expert guidance and trusted partnerships, we drive measurable impact—fueling job creation, capital investment, and economic growth across South Carolina.



In appreciation of Frank L. Roddy for his leadership and support in the creation of the SC Small Business Development Centers



OUR HOST UNIVERSITIES



2025 ECONOMIC IMPACT



MESSAGE FROM SC SBDC STATE DIRECTOR



South Carolina's small businesses continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience, innovation, and determination. Over the past year, entrepreneurs across our state launched new ventures, expanded operations, created jobs, and strengthened the communities they serve. The South Carolina Small Business Development Centers (SC SBDC) is proud to support these efforts every step of the way.

As a Greenville native, it is a privilege to serve the state that helped shape my professional journey. I am continually inspired by the dedication of our consultants and staff across the SC SBDC network. Their expertise empowers business owners to navigate challenges, seize opportunities, and build sustainable enterprises.

This year, the impact of that work has been clear. Through consulting, training, and strong partnerships, the SC SBDC helped entrepreneurs access capital, start and grow businesses, and create jobs across South Carolina.

Our strength lies in our ability to operate as a unified network. Across our 20 Area Centers, we are aligning our expertise and collaborating with partners to deliver consistent, high-quality support statewide.

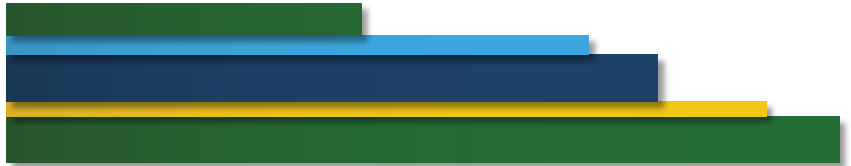
Looking ahead, we are building more than businesses—we are building opportunity, momentum, and a stronger economic future for South Carolina.

MARQUISE JACKSON
STATE DIRECTOR
SC SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

ADVISORY BOARD

- Gary Breit** Board Chair, Principal, Breit Ideas, LLC
- JoLee Gudmundson** Vice-Chair, Owner, Gudmundson Consulting
- R. Cal Bruner Jr.** Realtor, Century 21, The Litchfield Company - Moore Group
- Mike Forrester** VP, Economic Development, Spartanburg Community College
- Chantal Fryer** Director of Business Services, SC Department of Commerce
- Courtney T.R. Furman** President, Furman Architects
- Rachelle Jamerson-Holmes** Owner, Thee Matriarch Bed and Breakfast
- Frank Knapp** President and CEO, SC Small Business Chamber
- Douglas Lineberry** Partner, Maynard Nexsen
- Neil Rashley** Senior Vice President & Counsel, SC Bankers Association
- Ray Reich** Downtown Development Manager, City of Florence
- Jim Rohrer** Vice President, TD Bank
- April Simpkins** President, HRS&S Consulting LLC
- Melissa Lindler** Honorary Member, SC District Director, U.S. SBA

READ MESSAGES FROM
OUR PARTNERS &
STAKEHOLDERS



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



2025 AWARD WINNERS

STATE STAR

SCOTT MACE

The SC SBDC proudly recognizes Florence Area Manager and Business Consultant Scott Mace as the network's State Star, a prestigious annual award honoring consultants who exemplify exceptional commitment to small business success and our shared values.

Since joining the SC SBDC in June 2021, Scott has brought a passion for business development and a strong desire to help entrepreneurs succeed. His background includes national account sales and founding a consumer products marketing and performance improvement company, providing both strategic insight and practical experience. He holds a BA in Business Economics from Wofford College and an MBA from Emory University.

Scott works closely with clients on business management, process implementation, marketing strategy and accounting—foundational elements of sustainable growth.



CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

FLORENCE SC SBDC



EGI OAKMAN-BLACK & SCOTT MACE

with former State Director Michele Abraham

FIVE SC SBDC CLIENTS WIN STATE SBA AWARDS

RITA WILSON

Owner, Alphagraphics of Beaufort
Business Consultant: Martin Goodman

THOMAS LOFFREDO

Owner, Patriot Global Services
Business Consultant: Ben Calhoun

DARRIS STOLL

Owner, Stoll Industries
Business Consultant: Matt Dean

MICHAEL HALDEMAN

Owner, Spokeworks Bicycle Workshop
Business Consultant: Robert Jones

LAUREN MATTHEWS

Owner, MattLane Consturction
Business Consultant: Bob Jones

THE SC SBDC ADVANCES AGRIBUSINESS INNOVATION THROUGH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The SC SBDC is advancing innovation in South Carolina’s agribusiness sector through a \$600,000 initiative funded by the Wells Fargo Foundation and administered by the South Carolina Research Authority (SCRA).

Announced at the Statehouse by Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers and State Senator Russell Ott, the Cultivating Innovation in SC Agribusiness grant program is designed to accelerate growth and foster innovation among small farming operations throughout the state.

Through its partnership with SCRA, the SC SBDC will provide intensive training, expert mentorship and one-on-one business advising to participating agribusinesses. In addition to receiving innovation grants of up to \$30,000, selected businesses will work directly with SC SBDC consultants to strengthen financial management, refine business models and implement new products, services and technologies.

“South Carolina’s agribusiness sector is the backbone of our state’s economy,” said SCRA Interim President and CEO Bill Kirkland. “With Wells Fargo Foundation’s support and the partnership of the SC SBDC, we can equip small farmers with the resources and guidance needed to innovate and grow.”



(Pictured L to R): Mitch Smith, Jim Johnson, Hugh Weathers, Pam Bryant, and Representative Patrick B. Haddon

ROCK HILL PROCUREMENT CONFERENCE CONNECTS SMALL BUSINESSES WITH GOVERNMENT BUYERS

On May 7, the SC SBDC team in Rock Hill hosted a Procurement Conference that brought together more than 80 small business owners, nearly 20 vendors, and government procurement officials. Led by Tom George, John Blomberg and Emily Davison, the event—held in partnership with the City of Rock Hill—connected entrepreneurs directly with public-sector decision-makers, strengthening access to contract opportunities.

HARNESSING AI INNOVATION

SC SBDC Leads the Way in AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming essential for small businesses seeking to remain competitive. Through an investment by Google.org and proactive leadership from the SC SBDC, entrepreneurs across the state are gaining the skills and confidence needed to harness AI effectively.

A National Commitment

Google.org has launched a national initiative to counsel 100,000 businesses on AI and digital tools through America’s SBDCs over three years. The SC SBDC is meeting this challenge by strengthening internal expertise and delivering practical, client-focused training.

Building Capacity

A dedicated SC SBDC AI Team, led by Area Manager and Business Consultant John Blomberg, has implemented a “Train the Trainers” model and completed AI University coursework through America’s SBDC. These efforts were highlighted at the 2025 statewide conference, Harnessing Innovation, which featured sessions on AI readiness, marketing strategy, and cybersecurity.

Through training and one-on-one advising, the SC SBDC is helping clients integrate AI responsibly, enhance operations, and remain competitive.



GREENVILLE NATIVE MARQUISE JACKSON JOINS THE SC SBDC AS NEW STATE DIRECTOR

The SC SBDC proudly welcomes Marquise Jackson as its new state director, ushering in an exciting chapter for the statewide network.

His background includes small business consulting, impact investing, marketing, technology commercialization and organizational leadership. Most recently, he served as senior director of Business Development & Partnerships at Mission Driven Finance, where he led strategic initiatives and partnerships.

Jackson is also well known within the national SBDC network. As regional director for the San Diego & Imperial SBDC Network, he oversaw federal and state grants and led a performance turnaround that enabled the network to exceed all contracted goals.

“I am honored to return home to South Carolina and lead an organization with such a meaningful mission,” Jackson says. “The SC SBDC plays a critical role in strengthening communities, and I look forward to supporting our talented team as we help small businesses thrive.”

A Greenville native, Jackson describes his return as a full-circle moment. Drawing on his background in physics, he compares entrepreneurship to motion.

“Physics is the study of motion, and I see business the same way,” he says. “I am always anticipating change and positioning entrepreneurs to capitalize on it.”

Jackson has worked with scientists, the U.S. military and private companies nationwide. He holds an MBA in marketing and entrepreneurship, a Technology Commercialization certificate from California State University, San Bernardino, and a B.S. in physics from Benedict College.



IN MEMORIAM: HONORING THE LEGACY OF SC SBDC/SSBCI BUSINESS CONSULTANT DAVID DOUGHERTY



The SC SBDC family mourns the loss of David Dougherty—a trusted advisor and devoted champion of South Carolina’s small business community.

With decades of banking experience, David brought deep financial expertise and a passion for helping entrepreneurs succeed. He led the state’s Community Navigator service delivery, earning national recognition, and later served as a key consultant for the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) program, where he guided small business owners and mentored fellow consultants.

“David was dedicated, conscientious and a true team player,” said former State Director Michele Abraham.

“He was a steadfast mentor and close friend,” added Rick Vander Weele. “His impact will be lasting.”

David’s legacy of service and leadership will endure.

ACUTE HEATING & COOLING

Orangeburg Area SBDC Client
Business Consultant: John Gethers



**THOMAS & OCTAVIA
EDWARDS**

RESULTS:

\$1.8M
CAPITAL
INVESTMENT

10
JOBS
RETAINED

\$2.4M
2025 ANNUAL
SALES

Adversity became a catalyst for transformation at Acute Heating & Cooling. Partnering with SC SBDC consultant John Gethers, Thomas and Octavia Edwards shifted from reactive decision-making to disciplined strategy—strengthening operations, stabilizing growth, and positioning their company for long-term resilience.



VANSCO, INC.

Greenwood Area SBDC Client
Business Consultant: Matthew Dean



ALBERT MERRILL

RESULTS:

\$742K
CAPITAL
INVESTMENT

16
JOBS
RETAINED

\$694,235
2025 ANNUAL
SALES

An unexpected opportunity became a defining career move for Albert Merrill. With SC SBDC consultant Matthew Dean serving as strategic coach, he navigated valuation, financing, and expansion—transforming technical expertise into ownership of a growing manufacturing company supporting local industry and national infrastructure.



MATTLANE CONSTRUCTION

Columbia Area SBDC Client
Business Consultant: Bob Jones



RESULTS:

\$1.15M

**CAPITAL
INVESTMENT**

7

**JOBS
RETAINED**

\$6.2M

**SALES
INCREASE**

Lauren Matthews built MattLane Construction with grit and vision—but strategic structure fueled its next phase of growth. Working alongside SC SBDC consultant Bob Jones, she strengthened financial systems, secured critical capital, and positioned her rapidly expanding company for scalable, sustainable success.



LAUREN MATTHEWS

EL CARRIEL

Greenville Area SBDC Client
Business Consultant: Marco Ríos



RESULTS:

\$450K

**CAPITAL
INVESTMENT**

32

**JOBS
CREATED**

\$2,761,166

**SALES
INCREASE**

Expansion required more than ambition—it demanded strategy. Guided by SC SBDC consultant Marco Ríos, Paula Trujillo developed the financial roadmap and marketing approach needed to confidently open a second El Carriel location, growing her family restaurant into a thriving regional brand.



PAULA TRUJILLO

PURRFECT PAIR CAT CAFÉ

Rock Hill Area SBDC Client
Business Consultants: Tom George, Harish Iyer



INGA CAREY

RESULTS:

\$485K
CAPITAL
INVESTMENT

9
JOBS
CREATED

\$250K
2024 ANNUAL
SALES

For Inga Carey, entrepreneurship began as healing—and became a thriving community mission. With guidance from SC SBDC consultants Tom George and Harish Iyer, she transformed a deeply personal vision into Purrfect Pair Cat Café, blending strategic planning, financing support, and operational guidance to launch a purpose-driven business making measurable impact.



EARLY START CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Myrtle Beach Area SBDC Client
Business Consultant: Janet Graham



SONYA GUILLES

RESULTS:

\$620K
CAPITAL
INVESTMENT

14
JOBS
CREATED

45%
REVENUE
INCREASE

Decades of experience in early childhood education prepared Sonya Guiles to care for children—but launching her own center required business expertise. Partnering with SC SBDC consultant Janet Graham, she navigated financing, permitting, and strategic planning to open Early Start Child Development Center and build a sustainable foundation for long-term impact.



CMB SERVICES

Columbia Area SBDC Client
Business Consultant: Scott Bellows



RESULTS:

\$11.3M

**CAPITAL
INVESTMENT**

17

**GOVERNMENT
CONTRACTS
AWARDED**

18

**JOBS
CREATED**

CEDRIC BARNES

From a \$300,000 janitorial operation to a multimillion-dollar construction and facilities management firm, CMB Services' growth reflects vision and strategic execution. With ongoing mentorship from SC SBDC consultant Scott Bellows, Cedric Barnes leveraged government contracting expertise, 8(a) certification, and expansion strategies to scale confidently into federal markets.



SEALCATH

Charleston Area SBDC Client
Business Consultant: Dick Brabham



RESULTS:

\$984,117

**CAPITAL
INVESTMENT**

10

**JOBS
CREATED**

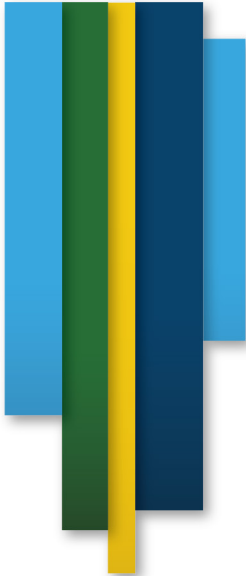
\$150K

**SALES
INCREASE**

CEPHUS E. SIMMONS, SR.

A clinical problem sparked an invention—but sustained strategy turned it into a scalable enterprise. Over more than a decade, Dr. Cephus Simmons partnered with a multidisciplinary SC SBDC team to refine financing, strengthen market entry, and move SealCath from concept to full-scale production in hospitals nationwide.





We're big on small businessSM
South Carolina Small Business Development Centers



The SC SBDC is funded through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration. All SBDC services are provided in a nondiscriminatory way to all legal residents and citizens in the United States. Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities will be made if requested at least two weeks in advance.