

Rowan Economic Recovery Plan

Path Forward from COVID-19
May 13, 2020

Introduction:

The Rowan Chamber, Rowan Economic Development and Rowan Tourism Development Authority have been working together to help our local business community and displaced workers during the COVID-19 crisis. We developed a community resource portal to communicate the rapidly changing Federal / State policies and economic recovery packages:

<https://www.visitsalisburync.com/plan/hospitality-workers-business-resources/>

Recently, we organized a Rowan Economic Recovery Task Force of business and community leaders to help us strategize on the best path forward for Rowan County. We researched other communities, surveyed our existing businesses, and talked with experts around the country. We would like to propose the following rapid response for businesses to recover quickly from this economic downturn.

Rowan Tourism Development Authority

- Develop and launch Visit Local: A multifaceted initiative to support businesses and commerce activities in a healthy and safe manner as applicable under North Carolina's phased reopening plan
- Distribute a business information kit with branded materials (see link for graphics):
- <https://share.wtghost.com:510/shares/file/cb27e19eddaf82/>
 - Incorporates rules, regulations and guidance from CDC and NC Health Department and any NC Executive Orders into a Business Re-Entry – Work Place Considerations Document
 - Best Practices FDA Chart
 - Best Practices Food
 - Business Re-Entry – Work Place Considerations

- Retail Reopening Best Practices
 - Complimentary hand sanitizers ordered provided to local small businesses upon request
 - Door decals
 - Posters with social distancing guidelines and number of people admitted per available spaces, amendable per business
 - Floor decals for proper distancing
 - Branded face coverings
- Create a phased Visit Local destination marketing campaign for various Rowan sites, businesses and activities, focused on promoting activities that are healthy, safe and permissible under current guidelines and Executive Orders.
 - Provide social media support and digital marketing templates
 - Continue research and further develop long term delivery infrastructure options in Rowan County for restaurants.
 - Continue to provide staff support for the Rowan Resource Portal and post new announcements
 - Launch marketing efforts on supporting Visiting Local, Shopping Local and Eating Local as authorized under Executive Orders.

Rowan Economic Development

- Conduct a bi-weekly survey of the Rowan County business community to determine COVID economic impact; make adjustments to our Economic Recovery plan as needed. (recent survey results link) https://data.surveymoz.com/r/691833_5ea81f6ad82065.46971401
- Market Rowan County to economic development prospects. Our latest promotion included sending 63 packages of New Sarum beer to leading site selection consultants across the country. (appendix A)
- Work with our existing (and growing) pipeline of businesses interested in relocating or expanding in Rowan County. There may be new opportunities related to supply chain fulfilment for existing employers or among businesses expected to grow rapidly following the pandemic.

- Identify available job openings at local companies and promote Connect Rowan as a tool for connecting employees with employers.
- Qualify new sites for certification and identify available buildings to meet the expected demand following the pandemic. Adopt new technologies to better help us compete for new investment.
- Promote Rowan County Zoombusiness, an online directory of open businesses in the region, and encourage businesses to list their open hours/delivery options; share information resource with the community
- Continue outreach to the Rowan County manufacturing community and other traded sector employers regarding supply chain, workforce, and other issues.
- Explore the potential to secure newly available Economic Development Administration grant funding to support economic development initiatives in Rowan County.

Rowan Chamber

- Further expand the Business Advocacy role of the Chamber to include specific strategies for COVID recovery; continue to advocate for Federal business relief packages; add the following advocacy positions to 2020 State Legislative Priorities:
 - Ensure sufficient capacity and transparent, equitable distribution for COVID-19 testing and Personal Protection Equipment and safety protocols for all businesses and workers throughout the state
 - Increase funding for the Golden Leaf Emergency Preparedness Loan program and other economic development recovery programs
 - Work with the federal government to increase funding and length of repayment periods for Economic Industry Disaster Loan (EIDL), and Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans ensuring equitable distribution

- Remediate and improve access to Unemployment Insurance benefits
- Provide tax credits or incentives to manufacturers and industry-changing production to meet public health and safety needs to address COVID-19
- Ensure Business Interruption Insurance and Gap Insurance policies cover claims related to COVID-19
- Prioritize investment in workforce training and upskilling programs to prepare workers impacted by COVID-19 job loss to transition to new careers and available, in-demand jobs
- Ensure investments are made in our transportation infrastructure (airport, highways, roads) for recovery of the lost gas tax and other, transportation revenues
- Pivot the Workforce Development Alliance Talent Attraction plan to focus on LOCAL hires:
 - Postpone the Military Talent Attraction program to Spring 2021; Focus the Fall 2020 Job Fair on local displaced workers
 - Coordinate with Catawba College, Livingstone College and RCCC on workforce training programs to transition displaced workers to career positions with better salaries and benefits. This could provide information to new graduates in the local community as well as provide information to those regionally dislocated who may consider educational degree advancement.
 - Rowan-Cabarrus Community College's R3 (ReFocus, ReTrain, ReEmploy) career services are available online or by phone to assist people with career planning. Topics include:
 - Resume Clinics,
 - Navigating online meetings and training,
 - Mastering virtual interviews,
 - Certifying current work skills,
 - Boosting computer skills from home,
 - Using LinkedIn,
 - Introduction to Real Estate Careers,
 - Exploring healthcare careers
 - New career choices during and after COVID-19
 - Special training also is available for people with criminal backgrounds who are searching for employment

- Continue to coordinate with our Rowan County Emergency Services and Health Departments to ensure the safety of our citizens.
- Continue customer service calls to Chamber Members – what's keeping them awake at night? make sure they are aware of resources
- Produce business webinars with excellent speakers, timely topics, and valuable business retention strategies
- Provide virtual business networking options for targeted peer-to-peer groups (Minority Biz Council, Young Professionals, Women in Business)
- Produce the Dragon Boat Festival on July 25 with mini-fundraising options for not-for-profit organizations who had to cancel Spring events

With everyone working together we can accomplish a great deal in the next few months. Our community is positioned to recover quickly from the COVID-19 crisis. We want the community to stay safe and ensure a successful economic recovery.

Please contact us with questions, concerns or additional strategies:

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