

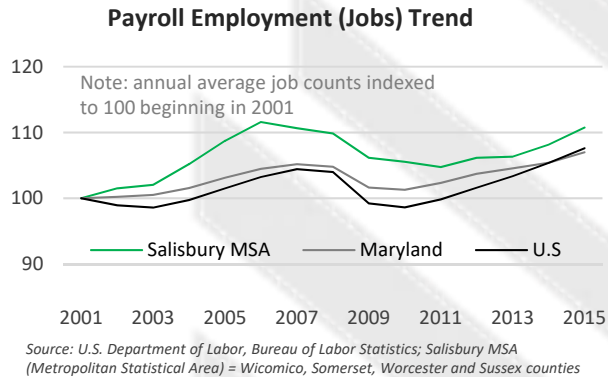


Annual Report 2015-2016



Moving Forward

As part of one of the fastest growing Metropolitan Statistical Areas of the country, Wicomico County experienced unprecedented employment numbers and a falling unemployment rate during our past fiscal year.



Telling our Story

Understanding the value and importance of differentiation and content in economic development today, we rebranded our organization and updated all marketing materials to reflect the new brand. This allows us to enhance awareness to our prospects and strengthen recognition among our numerous partners.

We also utilized our new brand and logo in our redesigned website that's more user friendly, informative and allows us a better vehicle in which to tell our story to visitors. Our site today loads faster, works with all browsers and screen sizes and offers better analytics for continuous improvement.

Adding to our content-driven message was the release of two videos highlighting successful businesses within our community and training opportunities throughout our region, respectively.



Our reach and breadth of coverage via social media continues to grow. In a cost effective and yet meaningful way, we're able to promote our community in a targeted fashion, increase the awareness of our organization and engage with our constituents on a daily basis.

Engaging our Community

Connections Program: Through key speakers and expert panelists, we explored how we can enhance our collective efforts to connect people to jobs and to the training needed to gain the skill sets demanded by business today.



Export Forum: Understanding local markets are not necessarily local any longer and exports can offer existing and new businesses additional market reach and revenue opportunities, we brought in experts to explain the benefits and process of exporting to our business community.

Community Forums: We're able to promote our community, organization and strategy while obtaining guidance and feedback by participating in various community events throughout the year. This past year, we were pleased to participate in a number of forums and guest speaking events with the Wicomico County Chapter of the NAACP, the Maryland Department of Juvenile Justice System, the Salisbury and Wicomico Rotary Clubs, the Wicomico Board of Education's Career and Technology Center, Comcast Spotlight, the Fruitland Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Commission, and the Economic Forecast programs of SVN Miller Commercial and the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce.

Key Partnerships

We simply cannot be effective without the support and confidence of numerous partners and especially those of the City of Salisbury and Wicomico County. Our goals and objectives must align with those of our community. We were happy to participate in rating agency presentations with both City and County officials, attend numerous strategic sessions with City and County personnel and offer guidance on various economic development initiatives throughout the year.



We worked consistently with Maryland Commerce representatives via trade shows, special events and engaged with Estonian and Ethiopian delegations during their visit to the U.S..

Mark Ahrens (Salisbury University '16) served with distinction as our summer intern while our SWED Award at Salisbury University's annual business plan competition went to Matt Greene and ConnectUsby, an online digital marketing company.

Start > Grow > Move

Local, corporate visits and working with our existing business base continues to be a priority. Calling on existing customers allows us to better understand the needs of our business community and to tailor programs and services to meet those needs. We called on numerous customers and collaborated with Quality Linens as the firm added 20,000 sf to its existing facility. The company anticipates forty new jobs at its Westwood Commerce Park location.



Through our business expansion fund, we assisted Paxstar Logistics in the opening of their downtown Salisbury headquarters. Paxstar projects one hundred new jobs over the next several years. We also negotiated and secured new leases for Piedmont Airlines (headquarters, maintenance base and ticketing counter) at our regional airport. The company projects twenty-five new jobs associated with the introduction of regional jets into their existing fleet.

We laid the groundwork and initiated new business starts to retain contractual work in the cable harness industry. Several companies are now in various stages of certifications, development and procurement needed to garner work and ultimately, create new jobs.

Connecting the Dots

We've long been and continue to be a very entrepreneurial community and we'll continue to strengthen our ecosystem so that new business ideas can turn into new businesses and ultimately, employment opportunities.

We'll focus on developing, strengthening and growing key industry sectors of agriculture and agribusiness, life sciences, electronics and health care.

And perhaps most importantly, as agrarian, industrial and information age eras converge and create new opportunities, we'll remain connected to our customers, partners and constituents so that we, collectively as a community, can prosper together.



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