



Small Business & Entrepreneurship Advisory Board FY27 Priority Recommendations

Presented to the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners
March 17, 2026

5 Key Priorities – Identified from Community Feedback

1. Strengthen Awareness of Small Business Services and Programs

2. Expand Pathways and Communication Channels for Informal Contracting Opportunities in the Construction and Services Sectors

3. Strengthen Local Business Ecosystem Connections

4. Secure Dedicated Funding for Outreach and Workshops to Elevate Key Economic Development Initiatives

5. Monitor and Advise on Small Business Trends and Needs



Strengthen Awareness of Small Business Services & Programs

Recommendations

Increase	Digital Marketing
Support	Outreach Initiatives
Highlight	Success Stories
Establish	Successful community partnerships such as CLIMB and Prospera

To reinforce the board's ongoing initiatives around economic development and community engagement, we propose elevating the communication strategy for our small business services and programs.



Recommendations

- **Workshops tailored to municipal needs:**
 - Funding to support Mecklenburg County OED-led workshops designed around each municipality's priorities, including remote "drop-in" sites that make it easier for small business owners to access guidance and resources.
- **Spread Awareness of Office of Economic Development (OED) and Charlotte Business INClusion (CBI) resource programs:**
 - Plan initiatives for Small Business Month & Economic Development Week.
- **Countywide staff support for direct engagement:**
 - Resources to enable staff to travel across the county, strengthen township connections, and expand boots-on-the-ground outreach—such as door-to-door check-ins with Main Street businesses to increase awareness of available small business services.



Recommendations

- **Standardize the Invitation Process:**
 - Reduces reliance on individual lists and ensure consistent access for all eligible vendors.
- **Develop Mentorship or Team Programs:**
 - Pair Primes with emerging small firms for guidance on project expectations, quality standards, and business development.
 - Provide information on sub-contracting opportunities with Primes and encourage relationships.



Strengthen Local Business Ecosystem Connections

Recommendations

- **Encourage Collaboration and Partnerships with local organizations**
 - Connect new businesses with organizations like SCORE & Women's Business Center.
 - Establish cross-sector partnerships with higher education institutions to connect students with Entrepreneurships & Business programs.
 - Network through Chambers to have access to closed pre-bid meetings on micro-purchases & contracts not unavailable to the public.
 - Have Businesses Register as a vendor with local agencies and MeckProcure.
- **Support local programs that elevate Small Businesses**
 - "Shop Small" - Economic Development Week/Small Business Month.
 - Promote Local Events
 - Street festivals & public art installations can motivate costumers to shop locally with small businesses.



Recommendations

- **Facilitator fees for high-demand business topics:**
 - Funding to secure expert facilitators for workshops on critical subjects like AI readiness, e-commerce, QuickBooks, and cybersecurity ensuring small businesses receive timely and relevant training.



Recommendations

Proactive Small Business Protection Framework

- **Proactive Risk Identification**
 - Flag regulatory and zoning shifts that threaten displacement (e.g., NoDa street vending changes).
- **Economic Impact Conversations**
 - Quantify corridor-level disruption through structured engagement with vendors and brick-and-mortar businesses.
- **Formal Advisory Leadership**
 - Deliver policy recommendations to County leadership to prevent unintended displacement.



Monitor and Advise on Small Business Trends and Needs

Recommendations



Stabilization & Anti-Displacement Strategy

- **Advance Project BOAST**
 - Ensure infrastructure and policy decisions strengthen — not destabilize — business ecosystems.
- **Deploy Stabilization Pathways**
 - Connect impacted entrepreneurs to permitting guidance, capital access, and ecosystem partnerships.
- **Strengthen Early Intervention Systems**
 - Monitor emerging risks before corridor-level disruption escalates.



Small Business Needs: Project BOAST

How do we get there?



1. Business Preservation and Anti-Gentrification

2. Access to Contracting Opportunities

3. Capacity Building and Technical Assistance

4. Customer Connections

5. Workforce and Talent Development



Business Opportunity And Supportive Transit

The **Project BOAST** framework reflects the County's commitment to supporting new and existing small businesses, as well as anti-displacement efforts.

The vision is clear. Transportation investments should strengthen business communities, not displace them.

- Positions small businesses to benefit from transportation improvements.
- Connects local small businesses to economic opportunities.
- Protects existing small businesses from displacement by providing needed resources to assist them during the construction phases.



Thank you!

Mecklenburg County Small Business &
Entrepreneurship Advisory Board

Chair,
Kevin Nickson

