



GATEWAY INITIATIVE 2023-2027



Workforce
Development &
Recruitment

Pro-Business
Advocacy &
Legislative Action

Entrepreneurship &
Existing Business
Assistance

A Message from our Chamber Leadership



Donna Watts, IOM, AACE
President & CEO
South Baldwin Chamber of Commerce

Nearly five years ago we started with “Why.....”

South Baldwin County has a proud history and has long been known as the “Gateway to the Gulf.” From what was once a stretch of two-lane road leading to a sleepy fishing village, our Tri-City area has grown to become the destination for more than 6.5 million visitors each year. Those visitors leave behind an economic impact of \$4.6 billion and create thousands of jobs. The increased tourism, coupled with our growing business and industry (that also employ thousands of people throughout South Baldwin County) has brought about significant workforce challenges.

Prior to 2018, as *Gateway* was being developed, members of our business community were concerned about the future stability of our region and our ability to retain, recruit and train a sustainable



Greg Alexander, IOM
President & CEO
Coastal Alabama Business Chamber

workforce. At the time, unemployment was at an all-time low, at 3.9% in the County, and the top priority of the *Gateway Initiative* was to address the challenge of having an adequate supply of workforce to continue to serve those 6.5 million visitors as well as meet the employment needs of our other business and industry. Furthermore, stakeholders were adamant to provide ongoing advocacy and support for small businesses - the bedrock of the community.

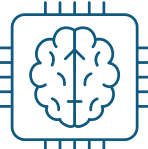



There are specific reasons “why” we created the *Gateway Initiative* and the biggest reason; It’s our *Mission and Passion*. It’s our *mission and passion* to help families, to grow businesses and industry in order to strengthen our communities within South Baldwin County. Along with investors and community partners, we are forging a brighter tomorrow and bringing about positive change through career pathing, apprenticeships, training and more. It is our goal to improve one life at a time while building communitywide economic prosperity. It is our *duty* to provide business and industry of South Baldwin County with what they need today, tomorrow and beyond. Over the next five years, we will be creating and executing solutions for employee housing, transportation challenges, shortages of available childcare; all while offering educational opportunities.

Today, *Gateway* has multiple meanings and produces real results in many areas; a “*Gateway to a Career*”, the “*Gateway to Local Legislators*”, a “*Gateway to Innovation*”, the “*Gateway to Service Excellence*”, the “*Gateway to Professional Development*”, the “*Gateway to Sustainable Economic Growth*,” and so much more. The *Gateway Initiative* was developed to meet the needs of our business and industry and we are proud of the progress we have made thus far. But, we must push forward for the real fact that many challenges remain. With the impending development of the Workforce Training Campus and the prospect of expanded programming to more businesses and industry throughout South Baldwin, now is our opportunity to capitalize on this momentum. We hope that you will join us!

Gateway Initiative by the Numbers – Business Driven Solutions

The *Gateway Initiative* has been guided by a set of strategic objectives and outcomes called our Accountability Plan. These measurements are based upon our original Case Statement, which was developed by South Baldwin Chamber leadership with guidance from Funding Solutions in 2017. The Accountability Plan's purpose is to track and communicate Gateway's success. It is revised bi-annually by the internal team and then approved by the Oversight Council which is comprised of four investor representatives from each chamber. Below is a sample of the accomplishments of the *Gateway Initiative* since 2018:



154 Participants in leadership, customer service and supervisory development training courses	6 Community partners working in collaboration on the development of the South Baldwin Workforce Training Campus	5 Regional partners involved in advocacy efforts to support regional training and workforce	53 Local companies participating in Apprenticeship programs
5 Job/career fairs conducted annually in collaboration with Baldwin County Schools, Career Centers and SAWDC	134 Local employees who have completed or are currently enrolled in Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship programs	 Gateway's contract with TransfrVR provided training to students and others alike at the South Baldwin Literacy Council	
10 Active Apprenticeship credentialing opportunities and two more in development	43 Start-up entrepreneurs or existing businesses provided services or solutions	Bi-annually publish the results of the industry salary survey to better report current industry wage and benefit trends in our region 	
		 Administered, analyzed and distributed the Baldwin County Chamber Coalition's 2022 Legislative Agenda for local elected officials	
5 Industry Cluster Consortia formed to better understand local workforce and educational needs as well as increase advocacy efforts	5 Chambers in the Baldwin Chamber Coalition who engage in relevant pro-business advocacy efforts, including legislative communications, and community education opportunities	 Launched the Gateway Career Connection website	

A Message from our Campaign Co-Chairs



Penny Groux
Director of Corporate Affairs
Perdido Beach Resort

"I am proud to say that we have been extremely successful to date in meeting the goals of the program. However, our job has just begun. As our area grows, we have increasingly difficult issues to tackle and that takes resources. We need your business involved and invested to keep Gateway staff members working every day on the critical issues that affect our businesses."

— Penny Groux

The first five years of the Gateway Workforce Development Initiative has set an amazing pace toward success and will show no signs of slowing down for the next five years. They will be focusing on what south Baldwin businesses need the most; an ample supply of trained and ready workforce!

The successes of the Gateway Initiative are a result of listening to the needs of business, as well as having experts on the ground finding solutions and responding with quick implementation of those solutions, while strategically developing long range plans for more permanent solutions.

The Gateway Oversight Council recognized early that bringing the two Chambers of Commerce together, who are just seven miles apart and struggling with the same workforce issues, just made sense. While the two organizations remain separate with their normal programs, events and purpose, coming together around workforce not only proved

to be doable, but highly successful and most importantly, beneficial for business.

From its inception the Gateway Initiative rapidly evolved into a powerhouse of resources for local businesses. The leadership of the Gateway Initiative has been focused on key factors for success; 1. Continuing to be business driven, 2. Collaborating with multiple partners who bring a value add to the table, 3. Being transparent with business investments and, 4. Continuous communication and conversation with investors. The record of accomplishments within this Case Statement speaks for itself.

As investors looking toward the future, the simple fact is no one can see clearly what will be needed in the next five years. But we hold tight to the things we do know; business is going to grow; visitors are going to continue to come, and shortage of workforce is not going to end. We trust the Gateway Initiative to react nimbly to changes in the economy and provide business a clear path to continuous improvement and potential solutions.

We hope you will respond positively when the Gateway Initiative Team calls on you. Please join with us as we work together to build a less vulnerable path forward for our Coastal Communities. The Cities, County and the State of Alabama need the businesses of south Baldwin to not only survive in these unfamiliar times, they also need us to thrive!



Chad Watkins
Owner
WAS Designs

A Special Thank You to our Top Investors



Alabama's White-Sand Beaches



An Employee Owned Company!

Investor logos displayed are Leader's Forum-level investors and above.

See all *Gateway* investors [HERE](#).

Contact our team for more details about the benefits you receive when you invest in *Gateway*!

Workforce Development & Recruitment



Gateway Training Academy

A major objective of the *Gateway Initiative* is to continually search out training opportunities for our investor businesses and organizations. The **Gateway Training Academy** brings world-class training and process improvement opportunities to small and large businesses, and across a variety of industry sectors. Through partnerships with **Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT)**, **Alabama Technology Network (ATN)**, **Columbia Southern - Supervisory Microcredential program**, and **Auburn's Technical Assistance Center (ATAC)**, Gateway is aiming to improve the workforce in South Baldwin County for the betterment of the whole community, locals and visitors alike.

Training Outcomes:

- Facilitate leadership, customer service and supervisory development training to 100 individuals, annually - 4th Quarter, 2022 and ongoing
- Collaborate with Gulf Shores & Orange Beach Tourism, Coastal Alabama Community College, Gulf Regional Early Childhood Services, Auburn Technical Assistance Center, Tri-City Leadership on the development of the South Baldwin Workforce Training Campus - 4th Quarter, 2022 and ongoing
- Collaborate with TransfrVR to develop additional VR training opportunities to support training for south Baldwin businesses. - 3rd Quarter, 2022
- Regular meetings and advocacy efforts with/for regional training and workforce partners (i.e., ATN, SAWDC, CACC, AIDT, SBLC) - 4th Quarter, 2022 and ongoing

Gateway Training Programs and Partner Organizations:

- Gateway to Great Customer Service
- Auburn's Organizational Management Course Series
- AIDT Leadership Training
- Alabama Ready to Work Soft Skills Training

Apprenticeships

Employers in Baldwin County are discovering a new type of employee. They create your future workforce, lift up your community, and help grow your business. We call them an apprentice. Apprenticeships are an industry-driven, high quality career pathway where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce, and individuals can obtain paid work experience, classroom instruction, and a portable, nationally-recognized credential. Gateway is a registered apprenticeship sponsor.

Apprenticeship Program Outcomes:

- Determine Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship options and career pathways in local business roles or connect employers with industry expert sponsors (e.g., CACC or AOA) - 4th Quarter, 2022 and ongoing
- Continued partnership with educational institutions and local business leaders to create and promote apprenticeship credentialing opportunities - 4th Quarter, 2022 and ongoing
- Sponsor 50 Apprentices in key industry clusters in Baldwin County (including marketing, set-up, administration, and tracking of apprentice progress) - 4th Quarter, 2022 and ongoing

Recruiting and Hiring

Gateway Initiative is continuously working to identify opportunities to recruit new workforce in order to better meet the needs of businesses looking to hire motivated, trained and skilled workers.

Recruiting and Hiring Programs:

- Gateway Career Connection
- Job Fairs
- Local annual hiring and career events such as: World of Opportunity (WOO), SAWDC Virtual Hiring Events, Youth Apprentice Signing Day, Gulf Coast High School Career and Job Fair
- Apprenticeships as a recruiting and retention tool



Recruiting and Hiring Outcomes:

- Explore timeline and work plan for developing a recruiting, hiring, and job-sharing platform for local businesses and workforce - 1st Quarter, 2022
- Co-host job/career fairs in collaboration with Baldwin County School and Career Centers - 2nd Quarter, 2022
- Promote local job opportunities for Baldwin County's youth, support and participate in SAWDC Worlds of Opportunity (WOO; and senior event) and other similar events (in GS/OB), including promotion of pre apprenticeship and apprenticeship - 1st Quarter, 2022
- Continue to foster relationships with local educational institutions and employers in order to influence curriculum opportunities that align with local business needs (including regular meetings with career coaches and guidance counselors and promoting career tech opportunities to students and caregivers) - 4th Quarter, 2022 and ongoing

Career Technical Education

Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are the foundation of the workforce. CTE programs prepare individuals for a wide range of careers that reflect the contemporary workplace. CTE adds to our K-12 students' education and success. As we strive to prepare every south Alabama student to be college and career ready, CTE provides our greatest collective opportunities for creating a skilled, knowledgeable, and productive future workforce.

Local High School Career Tech Programs & Academies:

- Baldwin County Career Tech Programs – 23 programs administered through 11 Baldwin County Schools, striving to prepare students for the transition to postsecondary learning and workforce opportunities
- Gulf Shores City Schools - Academies
- Orange Beach City Schools

Career Technical Education Outcomes:

- Link Baldwin County businesses to job prospects who are technically proficient and career ready
- Establish (and continue to facilitate) employer advisory committees by career cluster to advise as to what they determine as necessary skills and credentials of value for job prospects

- Advocate within the Baldwin County school system, the Gulf Shores school system, Baldwin County private schools, and Coastal Alabama Community College for the development of training programs that meet employer needs and require completion of credentials of value
- Advocate for as many dual enrollment courses as possible for career technical programs where college credit is granted for high school coursework

Direct Benefit to our Local Employers and Future Employees (our current student population)

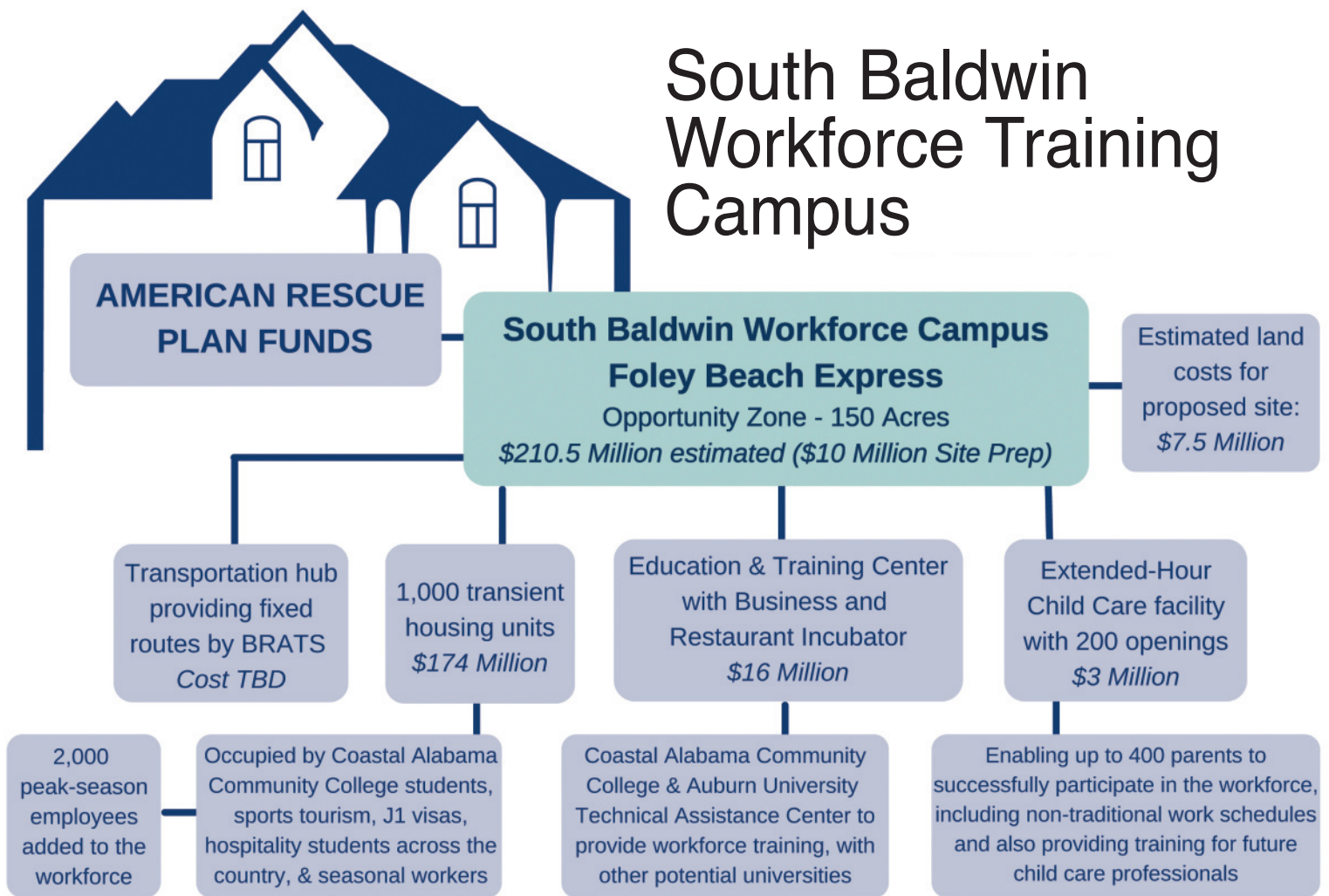
The *Gateway Initiative* in partnership with the **South Alabama Workforce Development Council (SAWDC)** manages the workforce development efforts of South Baldwin County. A SAWDC Project Manager is dedicated to providing industry cluster management, project coordination, case management/tracking, and maintaining persistent attention to the workforce needs of the employer members. Regional industry focus areas have been identified based on the make-up of business and industry in South Baldwin County. They include:

- **Hospitality & Tourism**
- **Advanced Manufacturing & Construction**
- **Aviation and Aerospace**
- **Healthcare**
- **Maritime**

Business leaders from each focus industry are encouraged to participate in regular consortium meetings to ensure that training programs are established and remain current to satisfy industry needs and to develop collaborative recruitment strategies. CTE adds to our students' education and success as we strive to make every south Alabama student college and career ready. CTE provides our greatest collective opportunities for creating a skilled, knowledgeable, and productive future workforce.



South Baldwin Workforce Training Campus



The Why

The local workforce is at least 2,500 people short of meeting peak season employment needs, while many city and business leaders say the shortage is 5x that amount. Labor force participation nationally is 61.73% with Alabama at 54.7%. A local task force would like to propose a project that can take advantage of one-time funding from the American Rescue Plan to make a permanent impact on this issue. [READ MORE](#)

Site rendering of the acreage off of the Foley Beach Express



The Cost of Inaction

More than \$90 million in tax revenue flows annually to the Alabama General Budget from the tri-city tourism and hospitality economy, seeing an average growth of more than 6% in retail sales and 7% in lodging sales annually.

Inaction puts not only the potential gains at risk, but will result in a decrease in current revenues. [READ MORE](#)

61.73%
national labor force participation

54.7%
Alabama labor force participation

The Ask

- Non-monetary Contributions
 - Grant funding
 - American Rescue Plan funds
 - Lobbying Efforts
 - A Tri-City Partnership
- [READ MORE](#)



Entrepreneurship & Existing Business Assistance

A major tenet of the *Gateway Initiative* is to promote entrepreneurship and provide assistance to existing business, always using an economic development lens. The *Gateway Team* facilitates services to entrepreneurs and existing business owners through *Gateway* programs and in coordination with community partners:

Start Up Coaching

Gateway has a broad network of subject matter experts in a variety of industries to assist in starting and successfully growing a business.

SCORE

The South Alabama Chapter of Senior Core of Retired Executives (SCORE) has partnered with *Gateway* to offer small businesses free mentor training in our area.

Business Acceleration

The *Gateway Team* has designed a formal process and program to learn about your operation and recommend strategies for growth.

Continuous Improvement

The Alabama Technology Network (ATN) Continuous Improvement team's primary focus is maximizing efficiency and product quality through process improvement.

Training Partners

Gateway training and educational partners offer a wide variety of business solutions through educational opportunities.



Entrepreneurship & Small Business Outcomes:

- *Gateway Initiative* Story Videos and Written Features on local business to help promote and grow their business
- Continue to provide engagement services and solutions or provide referral services to start-up entrepreneurs or existing businesses - 4th Quarter, 2022 and ongoing
- Continue to partner with existing local SCORE representatives to recruit SCORE mentors in order to aid local entrepreneurs - 4th Quarter, 2022 and ongoing



Pro-Business Advocacy & Legislative Action

Baldwin County Chamber Coalition



In 2018, *Gateway* facilitated the gathering of all five Chambers of Commerce in Baldwin County to collaborate on a county-wide business legislative agenda. For the first time in more than ten years, the executives and governmental affairs committee members from

each Chamber gathered to develop

the Baldwin County Chamber Coalition. Each year, the Coalition aims to support business by educating employers and their employees regarding important legislative issues. In addition we connect directly with our local elected officials about issues that matter to our business members in Baldwin County. We effectively represent 3,500 members and 74,000 employees in combined membership.

2022 Legislative Agenda

Research and Legislative Action

Gateway is dedicated to pro-business advocacy efforts that span many areas: we dove in head first to address business needs during the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Hurricane Sally relief efforts; we actively coordinate with schools and colleges to ensure curriculum aligns with hiring needs; and we've drafted numerous communications to State and Federal congressional delegates expressing our support or dissatisfaction with proposed legislation (e.g., the single-use plastic ban, infrastructure funding, and overtime wage reimbursement laws). We also facilitate survey efforts to better understand industry needs related to employee housing, workforce training, salary and benefits offerings, and more. We are continually looking for ways to ensure business owners can achieve their fullest potential.

Committee Participation

One specific way *Gateway* advocates for local business across the State is through committee and council participation.

For example:

- Governor's Technical Education Advisory Committee for Hospitality & Tourism
- Business Council of Alabama
- Advisory Board Member Alabama Education Alliance
- Advisory Board Member Alabama Department of Education for Business & IT
- Governor's Think Tank on Education & Training Innovation

Pro-Business Advocacy & Legislative Action Outcomes:

- Facilitate meetings with industry cluster consortiums to better understand local workforce and educational needs as well as increase advocacy efforts on a variety of other regional topics - 4th Quarter, 2022 and ongoing
- Publish the results of the 2021 bi-annual industry salary survey to better report current industry wage and benefit trends in our region- 1st Quarter, 2022
- Participate in local, regional, and state-wide Advisory Committees in order to advocate for South Baldwin businesses - 4th Quarter, 2022 and ongoing
- Play a lead role in facilitating local communication and info sharing forums for members and investors to include participation from local leaders and representatives during critical times - 4th Quarter, 2022 and ongoing
- Engage Baldwin Chamber Coalition in relevant pro-business advocacy efforts, including legislative communications, and community education opportunities - 4th Quarter, 2022 and ongoing

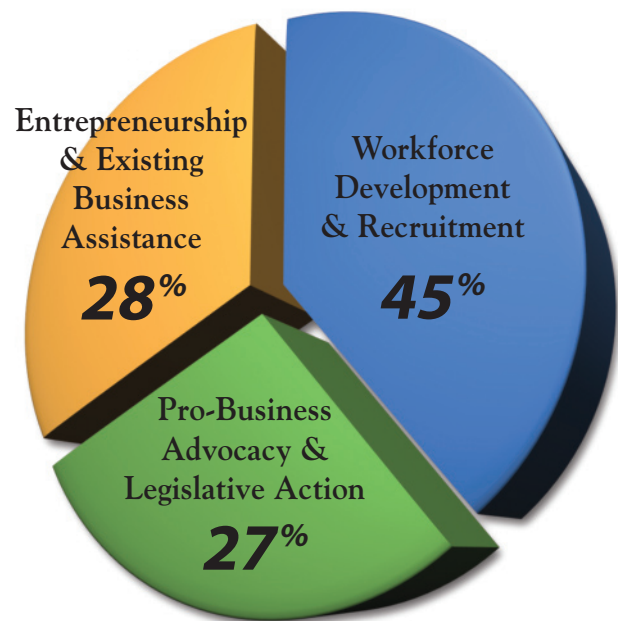


GATEWAY
INITIATIVE

2023-2027 Campaign Goal and Budget

\$2.5 million
five-year campaign goal

\$500,000
per year



Chairman's Circle: \$20,000 +

- Chamber Membership included with your *Gateway Initiative* investment
- Apprenticeship Program for three (3) companies (3 separate EIN's)
- Consultation and communication on the *Gateway Training Academy*
- VIP invitations to Leadership Series and investor only events
- Recognition on all *Gateway Initiative* materials
- Banner ad on the *Gateway Initiative* homepage
- Direct access to *Gateway Leadership* on key issues impacting your business
- Free listings on the *Gateway Career Connection Job Board* website and access to Job Fairs
- Networking opportunities with our other *Gateway Initiative* investors

CEO Council: \$15,000 - \$19,999

- Chamber Membership included with your *Gateway Initiative* investment
- Apprenticeship Program for two (2) companies (2 separate EIN's)
- Consultation and communication on the *Gateway Training Academy*
- VIP invitations to Leadership Series and investor only events
- Recognition on all *Gateway Initiative* materials
- Banner ad on the *Gateway Initiative* homepage
- Direct access to *Gateway Leadership* on key issues impacting your business
- Free listings on the *Gateway Career Connection Job Board* website and access to Job Fairs
- Networking opportunities with our other *Gateway Initiative* investors

Leaders Forum: \$10,000 - \$14,999

- 50% discount on Chamber Membership included with your *Gateway Initiative* investment
- Apprenticeship Program for one (1) company
- Consultation and communication on the *Gateway Training Academy*
- VIP invitations to Leadership Series and investor only events
- Recognition on all *Gateway Initiative* materials
- Banner ad on the *Gateway Initiative* homepage
- Direct access to *Gateway Leadership* on key issues impacting your business
- Free listings on the *Gateway Career Connection Job Board* website and access to Job Fairs
- Networking opportunities with our other *Gateway Initiative* investors

Strategic Partner: \$7,500 - \$9,999

- Recognition on the *Gateway Initiative* website based on investment level
- Consultation and communication on the *Gateway Training Academy*
- VIP invitations to Leadership Series and investor only events
- 30% discount on Chamber Membership included with your *Gateway Initiative* investment
- Direct access to *Gateway Leadership* on key issues impacting your business
- Free listings on the *Gateway Career Connection Job Board* website and access to Job Fairs
- Networking opportunities with our other *Gateway Initiative* investors

Growth Leader: \$5,000 - \$7,499

- Recognition on the *Gateway Initiative* website based on investment level
- Consultation and communication on the *Gateway Training Academy*
- Leadership Series pre-meeting introduction and Q&A with the presenter
- VIP invitations to Leadership Series and investor only events
- 20% discount on Chamber Membership included with your *Gateway Initiative* investment
- Free listings on the *Gateway Career Connection Job Board* website and access to Job Fairs
- Networking opportunities with our other *Gateway Initiative* investors

Investor Colleague: \$2,500 - \$4,999

- Consultation and communication on the *Gateway Training Academy*
- Leadership Series pre-meeting introduction and Q&A with the presenter
- 10% discount on Chamber Membership included with your *Gateway Initiative* investment
- Recognition on the *Gateway Initiative* website based on investment level
- VIP invitations to Leadership Series and investor only events
- Free listings on the *Gateway Career Connection Job Board* website and access to Job Fairs
- Networking opportunities with our other *Gateway Initiative* investors

Community Associate: \$1,500 - \$2,499

- Consultation and communication on the *Gateway Training Academy*
- Recognition on the *Gateway Initiative* website based on investment level
- VIP invitations to Leadership Series and investor only events
- Free listings on the *Gateway Career Connection Job Board* website and access to Job Fairs
- Networking opportunities with our other *Gateway Initiative* investors

Our Proud Community Partners



www.GatewayInitiative.com
www.GatewayCareerConnection.org

Gateway Initiative Campaign Leadership Team

Jim Bibby
The Wharf

John Fitzgerald
Saunders Yachtworks

Kristin Hellmich
OWA

Sted McCollough
McCollough Architecture

Mike Steward
Vision Fox Business
Advisors

H.C. (Harry) Cecil
Ala. Technology Network

Beth Gendler
Gulf Shores & Orange
Beach Tourism

Tom Knighten
Tanger Outlets

Bob McDowell
Edward Jones

Clark Stewart
WHEP Radio

Tom Debell
Riviera Utilities

Lane Gilbert
Wharf Restaurant Group

Tim Lower
RE/MAX Paradise

Christina McInnis
Woerner Companies

Ken Styron
Columbia Southern
University

Dr. Josh Duplantis
Coastal Alabama
Community College

Charlene Haber
Wolf Bay Restaurants

Tony Marzullo
Spectrum Resorts

Dr. Craig Pouncy
Coastal Alabama
Community College

Bryan Wolfe
Vulcan, Inc.

Matt Fetner
Bryant Bank

Brian Harsany
Cosmo's Restaurant
Group

Dec McClelland
Edward Jones

Dr. Margaret Roley
So. Baldwin Regional
Medical Center

Gateway Initiative Oversight Council

Gateway is guided by a group of leaders in the business community, the *Gateway Oversight Council*, composed of four Gateway Investors from each chamber, each Board of Directors Chairperson, and both chamber Presidents/CEOs. The council convenes quarterly to review program accomplishments and realign programming where necessary, and represent a diverse set of industries in south Baldwin County. Members rotate annually. 2022 Members include:

- **Chad Watkins**, WAS Design, SBCC Board Chair
- **Mike Steward**, Vision Fox, CABC Board Chair
- **Beth Gendler**, Gulf Shores & Orange Beach Tourism
- **Jim Bibby**, The Wharf
- **Penny Groux**, Perdido Beach Resort
- **Matt Grant**, Grant Wealth Management
- **Dec McClelland**, Edward Jones Investments



Meet the Gateway Initiative Team



Pictured L to R: Travis Valentine, Tyler Morgan, Ryan Moberly, Greg Alexander, Donna Watts, Ed Bushaw, Penny Hughey, Kaitlyn O'Neal, Lori Pressley

Donna Watts

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