



SWLA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
**ALLIANCE**



**CHAMBER**  
SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA



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**ALLIANCE**  
F O U N D A T I O N

# 2019 Report



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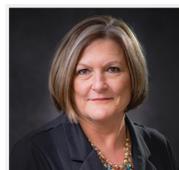
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# THE EXECUTIVES' SUMMARY

Wow, what a year 2019 was for SWLA and the Chamber.

In Dr. Loren Scott's Louisiana Outlook, he stated were in the middle of a "lull," but it sure didn't feel like it. As a banker, I have noticed that a lot of banks are coming to SWLA – it is where the money is! Last year, we experienced continue growth with SASOL, Cheniere, and Lotte, and SOWELA. Our region even hosted the US Olympic Boxing trials!

Over the past few years, the major focus has been our I-10 Task Force. Under the leadership of Keith DuRousseau, the group accelerated in 2019 with incredible help from local, state and federal officials. During a visit to our region, President Trump promised funds for the bridge, as has Governor Edwards - committing \$85 million.

It has been my honor to serve as Chair of the Chamber and Foundation Boards for 2019. Our five-star accredited Chamber is in the top 1% in the nation, and our Alliance has been named as one of the top ten economic development organizations in the nation four of the last six years. We have a diverse, strong board with members of different backgrounds representing our diverse industries .

George and his team do a great job, and our strong partnership with McNeese State University at the SEED Center is the envy of many regions.

Thank you for allowing me to serve.



**Phil Earhart**  
President, Southwest Louisiana  
IberiaBank



2019 was another record setting year for economic activity in our region, as several of our major industrial projects completed the construction phase and began operations. Looking forward, we may experience a slight lull in industrial construction. However, several mega projects are in the final decision making phase of the process and may reach approval in 2020. This will start the “second wave” of major industrial construction for the future, followed by even more new permanent jobs.

With this growth, we will also face challenges for our region. The poverty level continues to hold at about 18%. Our need for more citizens with Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) education and training is critical for the future workforce.

Also critical to our region are infrastructure improvements and industry diversification . A new I-10 bridge and keeping the Calcasieu Ship Channel dredged to 40 feet are essential for serving current and future industries, and diversifying our economy to attract and support more technology based entrepreneurial businesses is necessary to compete with other regions in the state and nation.

Through your support, we are able to continue to work on attracting and growing new businesses in our region, and initiate policies, processes, and discussions that have long term impacts on our region. We are grateful to have your continuing support in the performance of this important work for our region.

**George Swift**  
President/CEO

Not a single work day goes by that I don't speak with a member of the Chamber SWLA.

I am here for their first days, their highs, their lows and everything in between. The most visible part of my job are the ribbon cuttings that I coordinate , but, they are only a fraction of what I do. I want each and every member to know that me and the other member agents on staff Ana Denison, and - our newest staff member - Chrystal Kruid - are here to serve, to advise, and to promote our member businesses.

It is fair to say that we have lost some sleep at night wondering what we can do to help a member with a problem they are having or how to connect them with a resource they seek. We will text each other over the weekend to share Eureka moments and information that just can't wait until Monday. That is just a fact when you work at the Chamber. We are made up of and support the businesses within our region, and we feel that down to our bones.

The Chamber and Alliance staffs will also never rest on our laurels. For each event and during each project we wonder how we can do this better, reach more people, and provide more benefit.

This year, we are trying a few new things. First, we are hosting a workplace wellness event. This will help our smaller businesses with improving the health and morale of their staff. If one person from a business can attend, we can send them back to their workplace with a few new tools for their toolbox.

If you need anything or have an idea for a project, program or event that may benefit our members, please let me know at [pramsey@allianceswla.org](mailto:pramsey@allianceswla.org).

**Paula Ramsey**  
VP/Chamber SWLA



Economic Development focuses on retaining, expanding and recruiting new manufacturing businesses to the community. The goal is to attract and retain businesses that make goods that are shipped out of the region, bringing more money into the region, and creating high skill, high paying jobs.

It is “a game of inches,” in that much of the work to accomplish a “win” for the community is done in numerous business meetings and involves a broad range of complex issues. When a project is publicly announced and the final details and incentives that are crucial making our region economically competitive are disclosed, we frequently hear less informed members of the community say “they are going to come anyway.” In 2019, economic development partners worked quietly and effectively to bring a new steel manufacturer to DeQuincy. Unfortunately, the company selected a site in South Texas. **This is an example when they did not come anyway.** However, in the process of working this project, we found an interested major land management group with thousands of acres of land that could become potential sites for future growth in our region. Having landowners willing to place their property into commerce is a critical part of the economic development process, so in losing, we also gained a valuable asset for future projects.

**R. B. Smith**  
VP, Business & Workforce Development

**Coming together is a beginning,  
Staying together is a process,  
And working together is success.**

**HENRY FORD**

# Chamber Activities



## 65 Ribbon Cuttings Celebrating

- New Businesses (38)
- Ground Breakings
- New Memberships (145)



## 15+ Workshops, Seminars & Luncheons



## 1321 Members at the end of December 2019

## Signature Chamber SWLA Events for 2020:

- Annual Banquet - January 30, 2020
- Business After Hours - Usually held on the 3rd Thursday in February, March, April, May, June, July, September, and November.
- Business EXPO - March 26, 2020
- Business Pitch - April 2, 2020
- Intern Soirees - Hosted with McNeese State University, April 7, 2020 and October 2020.
- Southwest Louisiana Day in Baton Rouge - May 12, 2020
- LegisGator Luncheon - August 21, 2020
- Golf Tournament - To be held in October
- Louisiana Outlook with Dr. Loren Scott - To be held in October.

## SWLA Connection: Year 2

SWLA Connection lets you explore the region's rich culture and find opportunities to help you eat, play, stay, do, learn, save and explore Southwest Louisiana like never before! Southwest Louisiana is home to Lake Charles and five parishes including Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, and Jefferson Davis.

### Download SWLA Connection to

- Discover things to do, community events, festivals, art exhibits, live music and more.
- Explore all of Southwest Louisiana's attractions, museums, parks and historic sites.
- Find the perfect restaurant to fit any mood, and get turn-by-turn directions right to its doorstep.
- Access a complete directory of local businesses and organizations such as real estate, shopping, automotive, health and medical, financial and professional services, schools, senior living and more.
- Receive timely push notifications for local news and announcements. Save money with coupons and deals for local businesses.



Visit [www.allianceswla.org](http://www.allianceswla.org) to download the app!

# 2019 Foundation Activities



Even with over \$109 billion in industrial projects announced for the region, the Alliance is actively pursuing additional manufacturing businesses to locate in the region. In partnership with Entergy, the Alliance has engaged ROI, a research firm that specializes in targeting businesses that are in expansion and/or relocation mode and matching them with communities that are potential good fits for them. The leads generated by ROI assist the Alliance staff in making the initial contact with these companies needed to build a business relationship that attracts their interest.



THE POWER OF PEOPLE

Unprecedented job opportunities are emerging as a result of the billions in investment coming to Southwest Louisiana. It is important that residents who want to work and succeed in today's workforce get the required training and credentials now. The Southwest Louisiana Workforce Resource Guide is a road map for job seekers to get from point A to point B on their workforce preparation journey. It includes information to help individuals choose a career, get the training and certifications required, prepare a resume, acquire basic life skills and ultimately, land a job. The Southwest Louisiana Workforce Resource Guide initiative is funded by Sasol and the information within is curated by a network of Southwest Louisiana workforce development and higher education experts.



"With more than 15,000 electronic downloads of the guide, Sasol is thrilled with the reach and credibility of this initiative, and its success demystifying the process to acquire a career in industry," said Crystal Briscoe, Corporate Affairs Adviser for Sasol.

"Sasol is a great supporter of the SWLA Economic Development Alliance (the Alliance) and other partnering agencies, helping these organizations develop the 2014 Workforce Resource Guide. This Guide provided a six-step process to help unemployed, underemployed, and future workers access the information and services they need to qualify for entry level employment in the regional workforce," said R.B. Smith, VP, Business Development for the Alliance

"Five years later, as we prepare for the second wave of industrial expansion, Sasol has again funded the updated Workforce Resource Guide. The 2019 edition of the Guide includes new information and services available that are available to those seeking employment in the region. More partners are participating and additional assistance is available to jobseekers," continued Smith. **Pictured: Michelle McInnis, Alliance Workforce Development Director; Crystal Briscoe, Corporate Affairs Adviser for Sasol; and R.B. Smith, VP, Business Development for the Alliance.**

## Stay Tuned....

Training and educating our citizens to be lifelong learners coupled with increasing their knowledge of science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM), is another key part of being a competitive community for future economic growth. With a grant funded by Phillips 66, the Alliance Foundation has conducted an inventory and assessment of the STEAM programs in the five-parish schools, charter schools, Sowela and McNeese. This is the first step to creating regional STEAM pathways that start in pre-kindergarten and extend through post-secondary and professional education. The assessment report is underway and will be shared once completed.



# ENTERING NEW TERRITORY

The effort to get more certified sites in Southwest Louisiana continued through the very end of 2019. The goal for the year was to get at least two sites certified. That goal was met with two sites completing the certification process by late December.

The two sites certified in 2019 were at DeQuincy Airpark and at West Cal Port, bringing the number of certified sites in Calcasieu Parish to nine.

Work continues in early stages on other sites, including one in Allen Parish, which currently lacks a certified site. Another site could be the region's first Certified Business Site, while a number of potential sites could also come out of the 12,000-acre mega-site between Vinton and Sulphur called the Calcasieu I-10 site. With one certified site in Beauregard Parish and two in Jeff Davis Parish, Southwest Louisiana now boasts 12 certified sites, up from just 7 in 2017.

Louisiana Economic Development recently expanded its certified sites program to include smaller sites more suitable for businesses development than industrial development. The new Certified Business Site program requires less due diligence and only applies to sites between 10 and 25 acres (industrial sites are 25 acres or more). These sites are ideal for a business park, mixed-use development, or Planned Unit Development. An 18-acre site in Calcasieu Parish currently undergoing review could become the region's first Business Certified Site.

The Calcasieu I-10 site also faces several challenges. The size of the site, 12,000 acres, makes it financially infeasible to certify the entire site. So, the approach is to identify the best tracts that can be developed as-is, which means cleared, with minimal wetlands and not in a flood zone. These sites will be certified in a staggered order over several fiscal years to keep budgets manageable. The first tracts under consideration range from 165 acres to over 400 acres. But, if all sites currently being considered are certified, there could be as many as 2,000 certified acres there in just a few years. That might be very attractive to a large operation, such as a distribution center or an assembly plant that is looking for a site to locate.

The goal for 2020 is to get at least three more sites certified.

For more information about the Site Certification Program, contact The Alliance's Project Coordinator, Gus Fontenot, at (337) 433-3632 or [gfontenot@allianceswla.org](mailto:gfontenot@allianceswla.org).



Gus Fontenot

## Certified Sites

- 12 Total Sites
- 5 More Than 2017



Lake Charles Regional Airport - Site 1



West Calcasieu Port

# Learning to Lead



## Feedback from this year's class:

What did you like best about this year's leadership program?

"Feeling connected to the region and, particularly, that it is possible to make a difference and play a role in the direction of the community."

What have you gained through your participation in this program?

"I have learned so much about our region. I've also learning we need to step up and get out of our comfort zone if we want to see growth and prosperity in our communities."

"I have gained an expanded knowledge, and potential strategies on ways to connect to, with, and for people, organizations, and causes that impact us all in ways that we may not initially see or feel."



This year's class attended sessions covering economic development, business, workforce development, human services, education, government, coastal restoration, & infrastructure

## 2019 Leadership Class Graduates

- Kurt Allen, Air Liquide
- Gregory Bass, Golden Nugget Lake Charles
- Charla Blake, Project Build a Future
- Jonathan Boudreaux, B1 Bank
- Dr. Michael Buckles, McNeese State University
- Hope Buford, Junior League of Lake Charles
- Matt Come, PPG Industries
- Christy Comeaux, Calcasieu Parish Public Library
- Lori Drumwright, Pelican State Credit Union
- Klint Dubrock, Phillips 66
- Jessica Edwards, AMERISAFE, Inc.
- Payton Fruge, McElroy, Quirk, and Burch
- Kaitlyn Gallegos, Visit Lake Charles
- Ashley Gatte, Empire of the Seed
- Monte Hickingbottom, Triad Electric & Controls
- Velika Hurst-Trahan, BCBSLA
- Allison Jones, Sasol
- Matt Koch, CSE Credit Union
- Doug Mayberry, Citgo
- Carmen McGrath, Calcasieu Parish Assessor's Office
- Kevin Melton, Chennault International Airport
- John Mitchell, Oak Grove Wealth Partners
- Alex Mouhot, Stockwell Sievert Law Firm
- Tricia Poncho, Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana
- Wyvette Pryor-Cousin, Calcasieu Parish Police Jury
- Sarah Piper, Fusion Five
- Tara Ross, Ross Boy's Garage LLC
- Zach Rushing, Golden Nugget Lake Charles
- Allison Schnake, CHRISTUS Ochsner SWLA Foundation
- Nic Sheppard, West Calcasieu Chamber of Commerce
- Katie Simpson, University United Methodist Church
- Haley Tarasiewicz, Healthy Image Marketing
- Greg Wilson, Louisiana Companies





# CHAMBER

SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA

## Revenue

Dues & Interest Revenue 752,386

Event & Publication Revenue 572,177

**Total Revenue 1,324,563**

## Expenses

General & Administrative Expense 794,640

Event & Publication Expense 396,827

**Total Expense 1,191,467**



# SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA

# ALLIANCE

F O U N D A T I O N

## Revenue

Program Support Revenue 236,269

Project & Campaign Revenue 1,044,090

**Total Revenue 1,280,359**

## Expenses

General & Administrative Expense 630,980

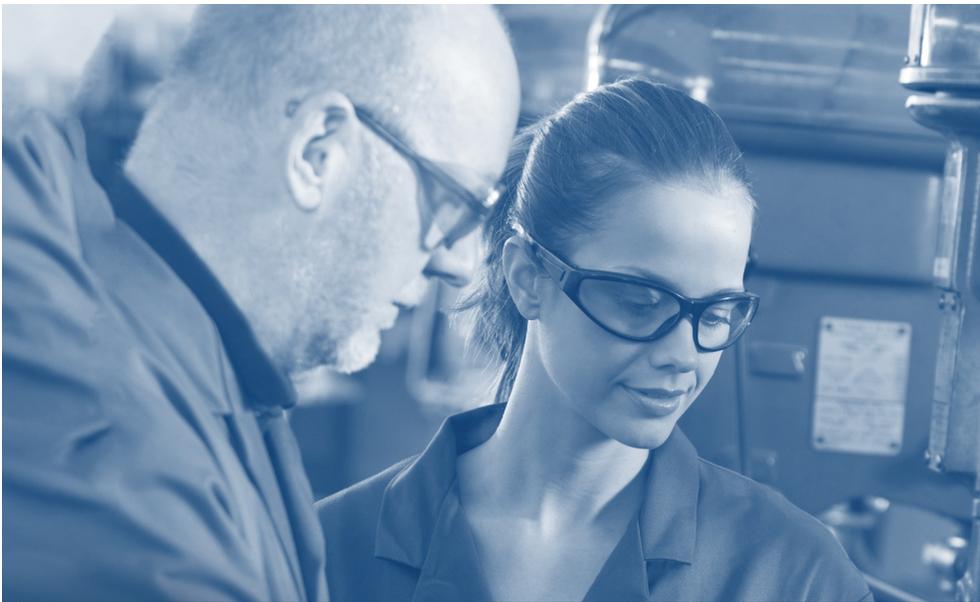
Program & Publication Expense 102,072

Project & Committee Expense 484,623

**Total Expense 1,217,675**

# Alliance Investors

- Acadian Ambulance Service
- Air Liquide
- Alfred Miller Contracting Company
- Alfred Palma, LLC
- AMERISAFE, Inc.
- B1 Bank
- Barksdale Credit Union
- Beauregard Electric Cooperative
- Beauregard Parish Police Jury
- Big Easy Foods
- Billy Navarre Group
- Biolab
- Brask, Inc.
- Brossett Architect, LLC
- Broussard Group
- Calcasieu Parish Police Jury
- Cameron Communications
- Cameron LNG
- Cameron Parish Police Jury
- Cameron Parish Port, Harbor & Terminal District
- Capital One
- CenterPoint Energy
- Century 21-Bessette Realty
- Champeaux, Evans, Hotard
- Cheniere Energy, Inc.
- Chennault International Airport Authority
- CHRISTUS Ochsner Health System
- C.H. Fenstermaker
- CITGO Petroleum Corporation
- City of DeQuincy
- City of DeRidder
- City of Lake Charles
- City of Oakdale
- City of Westlake
- CLECO
- Coushatta Casino Resort
- CSE Federal Credit Union
- CSRS, Inc.
- Delta Downs Racetrack Casino & Hotel
- Dunham Price
- E2E Technology, LLC
- Enbridge
- Entergy
- First Federal Bank of Louisiana
- First Flight Holdings LLC
- First National Bank of Louisiana
- FNBD
- Freshko Food Service, Inc.
- Fusion Five
- Georgia Pacific
- Golden Nugget Lake Charles
- Grace Church in DeRidder
- Greater Beauregard Chamber of Commerce
- H & H Industrial, Inc.
- Hancock Whitney
- Healthy Image
- IBERIABANK
- Indorama Ventures
- Ingevity Corporation
- Isle of Capri Casino Hotel
- JD Bank
- Jeff Davis Economic Development
- Jefferson Davis Electric Cooperative
- Jefferson Financial Federal Credit Union
- John H. Carter
- JP Morgan Chase
- Kaough & Jones Electric Company
- Keiland Construction
- Kennison Forest Products
- Lake Area Marine, Inc.
- Lake Charles Coca-Cola Bottling Company
- Lake Charles Memorial Health System
- Lake Charles Regional Airport
- Lake Charles Toyota
- Lake City Trucking
- Langley, Williams & Company
- L'Auberge Casino Resort
- Laundry World
- Lotte Chemicals
- Louisiana Radio Communications/Fulair
- Magnolia LNG
- McDonald's
- McElroy, Quirk & Burch
- Merchants & Farmers Bank
- Mermentau Harbor & Terminal District
- Northrop Grumman
- Pedestal Bank
- Phillips 66
- Port of Lake Charles
- Port of Vinton
- PPG Industries
- Pumpelly Tire
- R & H Refractory Services
- Rau Financial Group, LLC
- ReCon Management Services
- Sabine State Bank
- Safety Council of SWLA
- Sasol North America
- Scalisi, Myers & White (APC)
- Scofield, Gerard, Pohorelsky, Gallagher & Landry, LLC
- Southland Environmental
- Southwest Beverage Company
- Southwest Louisiana Credit Union
- Stine, Inc.
- Stockwell, Sievert, Viccellio, Clements & Shaddock. LLP
- Stream Family
- Suddenlink
- TC Energy Foundation
- Tellurian, Inc.
- Town of Iowa
- Town of Vinton
- Turner Industries
- Venture Global LNG, Inc.
- Visit Lake Charles
- Weeks Marine
- West Calcasieu Cameron Hospital
- West Calcasieu Port

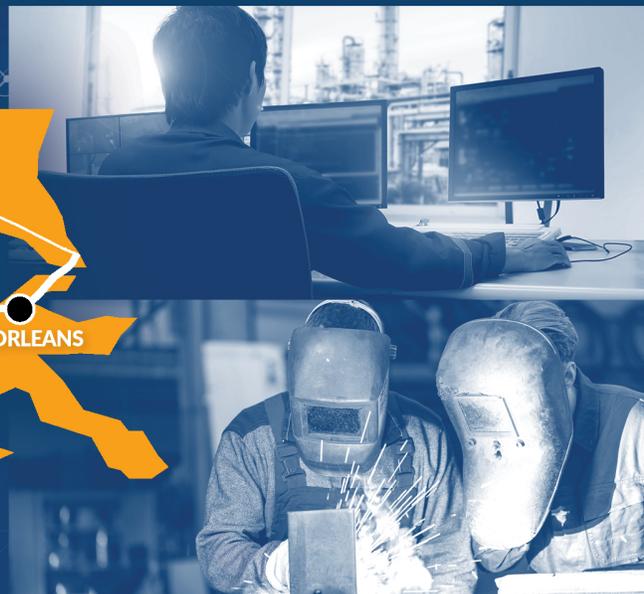
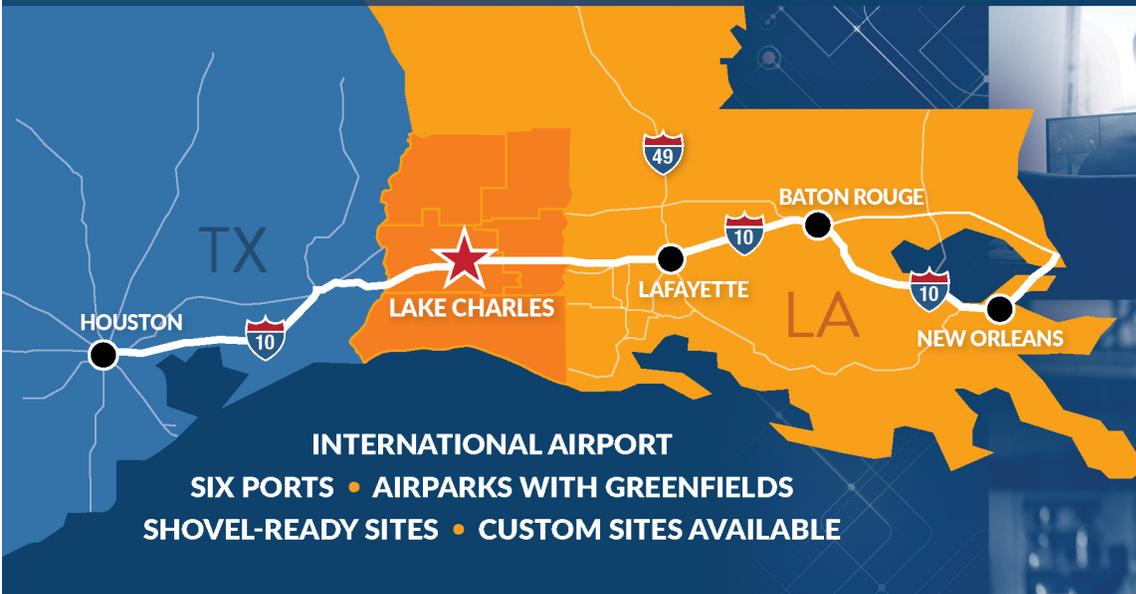


# WORKING. TRAINING. GROWING.

**OUR PEOPLE ARE MORE THAN READY –  
THEY’RE TRAINED BY THE BEST.**

Southwest Louisiana offers a seamless comprehensive education system from K-20 that focuses on current and future jobs providing a talent pipeline for our regional workforce.

[ALLIANCESWLA.ORG](http://ALLIANCESWLA.ORG)



For the 8th straight year, **McNeese State University** has been ranked as one of the top regional universities in the South by *U.S. News and World Report* and McNeese’s Engineering Program is ranked #1 in the Nation on ROI.

**SOWELA** was named by *Wallethub* as the number one community college in the nation for highest return on education investment.

Louisiana’s **FastStart** worker training program has been ranked #1 for the last 9 years by *Business Facilities Magazine*.



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