



Introduction

In our third year, the Beaufort Digital Corridor (BDC) started to prove out traction in the community. We realized our first mission critical goal of getting residents into BASEcamp, and by summer 2019 we reached office capacity. The numbers for BASEcamp programs overall were up 35% over the previous year. We added a sixth board member, Dr. Robert LeFavi, University of South Carolina Beaufort (USCB) Dean of the Beaufort Campus, in May 2019, and we began several critical cross-organizational collaborations with USCB and others. We applied for a South Carolina Department of Commerce Office of Innovation Relentless Challenge grant and received notification of \$65K award for our project, Technology Product Development Training, in December 2019. In all, we had a very productive year and opened and closed 2019 with featured articles in local and regional publications.

Community

We continue to engage the tech community that has grown and refined itself since inception. Though we are seeing a general uptick in engagement, we continue to further rethink and revise some programs. The numbers here reflect the one-year period of January – December 2019.

TECHconnect is our signature happy hour ‘meetup’ networking event for tech professionals to connect with like-minded people. It takes place the third Thursday of each month. TECHconnect is our best consistently attended regular event and we continue to see new faces every month.

- The two-year anniversary was November 2019 with a record number of attendees.
- There were eleven events for a total of 174 attendees, similar to last year.

Fridays @ the Corridor is an interactive forum designed to inform, educate, and network. We rotated in a few “office hours” to this lunch and learn event.

- More notable events were the Lady’s Island Middle School Robotics students and a discussion on cybersecurity featuring TCL’s Cyber Security Certificate, new BDC member SNS Technologies, and a representative from longtime member/sponsor InterDev.
- Four events were held for a total of 40, similar in average attendees to last year.

Leadership/Tech Profile series is an ongoing showcase of business leadership in Beaufort. The profiles are featured on the Beaufort Digital Corridor website News page and distributed via social media.

- During this period, three leadership profiles were showcased – Kevin Klingler, Matt D’Angelo, and Jess O’Brien. All are current or past BDC board members.

BDC Membership is comprised of *Members*- the technology companies, and *Sponsors*- those who believe in the mission of the Beaufort Digital Corridor and wish to sponsor our effort to attract, nurture and promote the region's tech economy. Membership increased marginally with participating companies more in-line with our mission. We did not add any new business-level or above sponsors.

- Members at year-end were comprised of 29 tech-related companies.
- Sponsors at year-end included one education-level: USCB, and two business-level*: Rotary Club of the Lowcountry and InterDev. The City of Beaufort continues to be the BDC’s largest sponsor.

We expect to see some membership and sponsorship increase in the following year with an updated LowcountryWorks.org website including beneficial new functionality. LowcountryWorks is a directory and map of tech-related companies in Beaufort County, SC- a project based on the Charleston Digital Corridor’s CharlestonWorks.com. BDC in partnership with the Don Ryan Center of Innovation (DRCI) pays an annual subscription for management of this site.

Spaces

BASEcamp is Beaufort’s premier technology business incubator and co-working office located in Downtown Beaufort. The facility is designed to meet the transitional, professional office-based needs of technology entrepreneurs with adaptable, affordable office and conference facilities of the highest quality, while gaining access to the Beaufort Digital Corridor’s network of entrepreneurs and professionals.

Residents occupy nine of the ten offices at BASEcamp, and the tenth office is a BDC staff office. We reached office capacity in the summer of 2019 and remained at or close to capacity for the remainder of the year, with continued inquiry and interest by both start-up entrepreneurial ventures as well as remote workers. This is up 30% from last year and fills allotted space.

Residents at the end of the year included:

1. POS-related data software startup
2. Lowcountry Analytics, data analytics startup
3. Health technology remote worker
4. Optical technology entrepreneur
5. Maron Law software startup
6. Mindflint, digital marketing
7. Wave Sciences, hearing technology
8. 1212design, web design
9. E-commerce (IndustryWest/Vireo Labs) remote worker

Other tech-related leases during the year were Life Launcher, a web-based platform around student debt and part of our Live Work Mentor summer program; and a telemedicine remote worker and entrepreneur.

We are in discussions with local and regional entities that have interest in finding funding for upfit of the upstairs of 500 Carteret's close-equivalent area right above BASEcamp to be used for a combination of landing pad, additional office and/or coworking space as soon as 2020-21. BDC would manage the space.

Coworking monthly subscriptions during this period included two full-time and four part-time on an individual basis from one to five months. There were several drop-in coworkers for one week or more, and more than a dozen single to multiple day coworkers and rentals of available offices.

Free Coworking @ the Corridor one day per week gives a taste of what it's like to work at BASEcamp. We will continue this offering for BDC members and to encourage the Beaufort community to engage with us. BASEcamp saw a total of ~180 coworking visits throughout the year, more than double over the past year.

Conference The conference room hosted visiting companies from out of town company retreats (PlaceEconomics, InsureSign), SC Commerce Innovation Pen to Paper Tour, SCRA's South Carolina Business Incubation Assoc. (SCBIA) inaugural meeting, TCL strategic and leadership meetings, USCB website cohort, City of Beaufort, BCEDC, nonprofits, cybersecurity and other initiatives.

BASEcamp Gallery invites local artists to display and sell their work. We host a quarterly artist reception to introduce the exhibiting artist(s) and invite Corridor members and community art lovers to attend. This is also a benefit for BASEcamp residents in that they get 'new digs' every quarter. The exhibits included Winter: Omar "Omally" Patterson's colorful mixed media and Angela O'Neal's abstract oils on canvas; Spring: a Gullah Art display sponsored by the Beaufort Arts Council with painted works by Diane Dunham Griffin, Claudette Humphrey, and Renee Smith, Andy Tate's digital photography, and sculptures by Bernice Mitchell Tate; Summer: the Photography Club of Beaufort's display of varied photos taken by over a dozen artists; and Fall: Emily Scott Pack's encaustic works of art and The RAW Project. There were easily ~180 visitors between the four events, almost double from the prior year.

Talent

The BDC continues to explore the needs of technology entrepreneurs and tech-related businesses in the community by meeting with relevant stakeholders and actively collaborating with local and regional educational institutions to inform both business and education on common interests. We will continue to identify and implement programming that is beneficial to the tech community.

Game On!, a game development class designed for students in middle-to-high school, completed its third season with two summer camp week-long classes that were taught by Seth Konoza, Beaufort High. A total of 19 students attended.

CODEcamp, an in-classroom continuing tech education program designed for adults, hosted classes in the spring- instructed by Sr. Software Engineer, Matt Shaw, and the fall- instructed by USCB Computer Science Student, Jarod Valvo. A total of 8 students attended.

Live Work Mentor is a collegiate summer program that targets the key demographic Beaufort is seeking to attract and retain. We provide a vibrant, focused environment for the college company to accelerate their business idea. Our second collaboration was again with the College of Charleston's ImpactX program. The second company was Life Launcher, a web-based platform that addresses student debt. The team worked on a professional business plan and made steps towards their minimum viable product (MVP). BDC Board Vice Chair Matt D'Angelo gave a presentation to the fall CoC ImpactX class and is in discussions with other collegiate entrepreneur programs- expect to see a mix of teams in the future.

LowcountryWorks is a directory and map of known technology companies and professionals in and around Beaufort County. We partnered with DRCI to subscribe annually as co-owners of the site; the backend is run by Charleston Digital Corridor. More functionality, including job posting and upgraded branding, is in the process of being added and will come online in 2020. All tech-related companies in the area are encouraged to create a free listing, and this will be a tool for ongoing interaction with these companies for both BDC and DRCI.

Capital

Capital is a critical component for any company seeking to grow. The BDC's role is not to aggregate capital but instead to aggregate investors and make curated information available to tech entrepreneurs operating in the Beaufort community. This past year, BDC Board Chairman Kevin Klingler participated in local and regional events, including VentureSouth, Venture Atlanta, and the Charleston Venture Conference, to better understand how current and future companies looking towards growth can utilize these resources once vetted by BDC.

Bridge Fund, a collaboration between Savannah's Creative Coast and Bluffton's DRCI, is being created with a federal grant from the Economic Development Administration to fund the development of a seed fund in the region. This will help fund the launch and management of a \$2M-\$10M seed fund that will invest in high-growth potential startups in an eight-county region (Beaufort, Jasper and Hampton counties in South Carolina, and Chatham, Bulloch, Bryan, Liberty and Effingham counties in Georgia).

PR/Communication

The BDC's primary method of marketing and communication is through the organization's website and social media channels, as well as communication with local and regional media. The BDC's ongoing activities are focused on programming for a targeted audience. For this time period:

- Six press releases were announced.
- Twelve major media appearances were made (local and regional print/digital news, television).
- Social media follower numbers reflect a combined 20% increase in followers over the prior year: 434 on Facebook, 276 on Twitter, 361 on Instagram, 85 on LinkedIn.

We continued our marketing campaign and messaging, including print, photo and video, and other assets both locally and regionally including the Beaufort County CVB, Lowcountry Weekly, Island News, as well as two 843TV episodes (three segments each) along with a 30-second ad on WHHI-TV, contributed to greatly by BDC Board Member Jess O'Brien.

Cross-organizational collaboration included the beginnings of a cybersecurity initiative with USCB, TCL, and other local entities, and an entrepreneurial certificate program with USCB after BDC Chairman Klingler presented a two-part entrepreneurship seminar series that was open to the public. We hosted the first Business After Hours of the year, a Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce event, and we participated in both Charleston Digital Corridor's iFiveK and DRCI's Trail to Ale 5K. We participated in the City of Beaufort's 2030 Future Lab and even created a BDC-inspired bench with help from our digital creatives for the Beaufort Cultural District's Sit In project.

At the state level, we hosted SC Innovation Pen to Paper tour, and we provided the venue for and participated in the inaugural South Carolina Business Incubator Assoc. (SCBIA) meeting. We also participated in several SC Innovation meetings including the Sketch Room Relentless Challenge Grant Series and MIT Venture Mentoring Network, and Chairman Klingler attended a SC Innovation Sketch Room event earlier in the year surrounding capital resources.

Community presentations included Leadership Beaufort Alumni, the Lions Club, Beaufort County Economic Development Corp. Board of Directors, and Beaufort City Council. Workforce representation included booths at the USCB and MCAS career fairs, and we continued our participation as part of the TCL Computer Technology Advisory Board with BDC Board Vice Chair Matt D'Angelo.

Organizational

Board of Directors Dr. Robert LeFavi joined the BDC Board of Directors as of May 2019. Bob is Dean of the USCB Beaufort Campus, is well-connected, gives exceptional input, and is an entrepreneur himself. The Board consists of six members as of the end of the year.

Staff Shelley Barratt's title changed from Program Manager to Executive Director as of July 2019 to better reflect her leadership role in the organization. Shelley was the sole employee as of the end of the year. We are already seeing the need for additional staff and we expect to hire a part-time and/or intern to assist with upcoming projects in 2020.

Relentless Challenge grant We were notified in December 2019 of a \$65,000 award for a South Carolina Department of Commerce Office of Innovation Relentless Challenge grant to go towards our project, Technology Product Development Training. Through immersive experience, selected entrepreneurs will be able to understand exactly how they will develop their product, what they need to do that and be in a much better position to complete their product in a timely manner. Training will be provided largely by USCB Computer Science faculty and students, as well as the BDC's mentor and professional network. Creating the environment for accelerated technology transfer speaks to the reason the Beaufort Digital Corridor exists: to develop technology entrepreneurs into growing, hiring companies. The grant requires a dollar-for-dollar match from non-state entities, so we will embark on fundraising exercises throughout 2020 to help with this.

Charleston Digital Corridor We retain a good relationship with the Charleston Digital Corridor (CDC), and Ernest Andrade, Executive Director, remains a valuable advisor to the BDC Board. All banking is now done locally with Ameris Bank and the former account in Charleston has been closed out. The items that continue to be linked to CDC for infrastructure purposes are:

- digital corridor general licensing for all programs and expertise
- website, web and email domains and subscriptions
- lowcountryworks.org subscription as mentioned above under Talent
- wireless access point Meraki subscription
- accounting with Moss & Yantis CPAs

Conclusion

The Beaufort Digital Corridor is gaining momentum building the technology ecosystem in Beaufort. In the coming year we hope to see current programs flourish, new projects launch, and movement towards a robust community of mentors to help the companies along towards the goal of graduation from BASEcamp and into the economy. With what we have seen this past year, we think the BDC is the right thing at the right time- and this motivates us to make it even more successful and significant this next year. We hope you will continue on the adventure with us!