



An Economic Development Alliance Representing Lee and Sumter Counties, South Carolina

10 East Liberty Street, Sumter, SC 29150 1.800.888.7926 www.TheLINKsc.com info@TheLINKsc.com

November 1, 2018

The Honorable Hugh Leatherman, Sr.
The Honorable W. Brian White
The Honorable Robert M. Hitt III

Proviso Funding FY 2017/2018 Annual Report

Dear Sirs:

Please accept this Annual Report on the status of Proviso Funding for TheLINK, a regional economic alliance representing Lee and Sumter Counties. We thank you for your continued support of our economic development efforts within these two counties and look forward to continued progress. What began in 2014 when TheLINK was formed has resulted in a renewed partnership for progress in Lee and Sumter Counties. During the 2017-2018 Fiscal year, LEDA funding continued to bolster our ability to promote and market our region through many different efforts including but not limited to: lead generation and recruiting; image enhancement; workforce development training initiatives; product development and economic infrastructure improvements; international exposure with participation in trade missions encompassing the globe; and professional development and new strategic initiative-based programming to make our region stronger and create more economic opportunities. This is evidenced by the project announcements that occurred this year, the progress in workforce training programming, the certification of sites in the region and the sale of the spec buildings located in TheLINK region.

Properties (23% of budgeted allocation)

Three (3) Site Certifications Complete – James Industrial Park and I-20 Industrial Park (Lee County)
Black River Airport Industrial Park (Sumter County)

One Underway – Palmetto Sites Certification for Pocatigo East
(formerly known as the Lewis/Lawrence Tract)

Funding has been secured to build a new Spec Building in Sumter and develop a 10-acre pad-ready site in Lee County. Currently, no Spec Buildings remain available in the region.

Workforce Training and Development (6%)

Workforce has been a primary focus for TheLINK in the 2017-2018 fiscal year. The LINK has spearheaded and sponsored activities and marketing initiatives focused on talent development and retention. These include:

- Job Fairs in both Counties
- Middle and High School Career Fairs
- Manufacturing is Cool – partnering with local industry sponsors at local football games to engage students and parents to learn more about careers in manufacturing
- College Outreach programs – USC and the Citadel
- Shaw AFB job board opened to employers
- Second Annual Manufacturer’s Expo for 350 8th grade students to showcase work opportunities with local industry held at the CCTC Advanced Manufacturing Technology Training Center
- Supported the Alice Drive Middle School Spaceflight Experiment Program
- Planned eSTEAM Festival for October 6, 2018
- Planned to launch Emerging Leaders Program for 25 high school juniors in the fall

TheLINK continues working with existing industry to determine needs and partnership opportunities with the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Training Center (part of the CCTC), regional workforce partners, and the Sumter School District.

Marketing, Recruiting and Travel (60%)

TheLINK’s marketing and recruiting efforts in 2018 included print media, social media, billboards and opportunities to participate with the SCDOC on regional, national and international trade missions.

- IDEA Accelerator Workshop
- Career Specialist Forum
- Webster Rogers Tax Credits Session
- SEDC Conference
- Consular/Trade Luncheon in Atlanta
- SCAerospace Conference
- Developed and produced the Economic Snapshot brochure that benchmarks our region against similar regions in the Southeastern US and highlights where we are successful and where we need improvement
- Developed an Annual Report for Investors
- Participated in the Sumter Litter Alliance to clean up regional roadways
- Hosted the SC Dept. of Commerce International Team
- Hosted SC Dept. of Commerce Business Development Team
- Billboards throughout the region primarily focused on Talent Development and upcoming eSTEAM Festival
- Radio Spots and live broadcasts from the new Economic Development Headquarters “Upper Deck”
- Crown Laundry Grand Opening

- TheLINK ad in Commerce Magazine, Trade & Industry and SB&D publications
- Annual Investor Appreciation Event – an Evening of Bluegrass and Barbeque
- Ads and Articles in Sumter Living Magazine
- Attendance and Sponsorship of the SCEDA Conference
- Palmetto Partners trip – Nordic Mission
- Palmetto Partners – Select USA

Projects

At the end of the last fiscal year, Project Volcano made its official announcement that the project – Sumter Easy Home – would locate their new facility in the Sumter County Black River Spec Building bringing \$37 million in investment and 88 new jobs to the region.

In early October, Project Tide – Crown Laundry – officially announced that they would begin operations on November 1st in the Lee County Spec Building located in the I-20 Industrial Park in Bishopville bringing \$12 million in investment and 150 new jobs.

Mount Franklin Nutritionals officially opened their Sumter facility located in the Live Oak Industrial Park in Sumter on October 11, 2018. This project has already invested over \$15 million and will bring 225 jobs

TheLINK has also been engaged with regional existing industries that are considering expansions. Between May and July 2018 TheLINK region had four announcements:

- Southern Current - \$101 million investment/ 2 jobs (Lee County)
- BD - \$150 million investment/125 jobs (Sumter County)
- Carolina Metal Finishing - \$1 million investment/20 jobs (Lee County)
- Merchant Iron Works - \$2.5 million/27 jobs (Sumter County)

In the past year between new industry locating in the region and existing industry expansions, TheLINK region has benefitted from over \$318 million in investment and the creation of an additional 637 jobs within the area.

With both Spec Buildings now occupied, TheLINK has focused attention on securing the funding necessary to build a new spec building in Sumter County and develop a 10-acre pad-ready site in Lee County

Leadership and Development Training (10% budgeted allocation)

Proviso funding supported staff training at IEDC, SEDC, SCEDA and the Advanced Economic Development Symposium, in addition to supporting a strategic planning session for the staff facilitated by Grey Swoope from VisionFirst Advisors.

Funding

TheLINK met its funding match of \$385,000 for the 2017-2018 fiscal year in February 2018. We anticipate meeting our current funding match in early 2019.

Your continued support of our economic development efforts is having an impact in TheLINK region as is evidenced by the continued interest in companies locating in and expanding within its footprint. This funding continues to enable us to attract well-paying jobs to the region in addition to providing resources for a robust marketing program in a broad spectrum of media outlets. Likewise, talent development and retention in TheLINK region continues to benefit from programming and initiatives that this funding allows.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay Schwedler". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jay Schwedler
President & CEO

cc: Senator Thomas McElveen, TheLINK Ex Officio Member
Senator Gerald Malloy, TheLINK Ex-Officio Member
Representative G. Murrell Smith, District 67
Representative David Weeks, District 51
Representative Will Wheeler, District 50
Gordon Eckley, TheLINK Chairman
Mr. Chris Huffman, Chief Financial Officer, South Carolina Department of Commerce