

CONNECT GREATER NEWPORT

Connect Greater Newport - Small Business Town Hall - April 28th, 2021 Summary Notes

On April 28th, 2021 representatives of the Greater Newport small business community convened in a Town Hall conversation focussed on how Connect Greater Newport and that Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce can further support small businesses during recovery and provide tools for long-term resilience.

The group discussed a handful of themes and provided some actionable recommendations.

Overall Confidence Levels

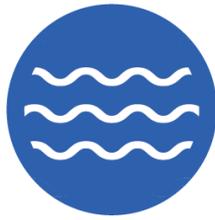
- There is growing confidence that we are reaching the other side of the pandemic.
- The various state and federal impact mitigation programs have helped many businesses.

Small Business Needs

- There is a real **difficulty in finding staff to fill open positions**. It is going to cause a reduction in capacity for some of the region's businesses.
- The **lack of affordable workforce housing** is limiting the ability to recruit workers to the region and creating a significant cost burden for those that live here.
- We need to do everything we can to **make sure the region and state are favorable to businesses**. There has been much progress made but we should continue to be attentive.

Broader Community Discussion Points

- A lot of the **region's community-oriented institutions are eager to help**.
- We are a small business state but our **small business infrastructure does not seem to be up to the task**



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Lessons Learned to Build On - Actions to Take

- Build on the idea of digital competency - **build more shared platforms for digital tools/ competency for small businesses**. This includes e-commerce, remote sales, new product opportunities and more. Efforts have been piloted in the past year and we can now scale.
- The Chamber and partners could create a platform that is shared and help businesses grow.
 - Add in other shared benefits such as 401K/ Health etc to leverage the region's businesses
 - Provide other technical support - bringing products/ new products to market
- Municipalities, the Chamber, and other organizations realized they **did not have direct contact information on local businesses**.
 - Lists have been improving but they will need to be maintained. CGN can work with municipal tax offices to try and create a more accurate directory.
- Host smaller - **municipal-level conversations to get input more directly from small business owners**. Identify ways to reach out - volunteers in the region to support calling/ interview efforts.
- **Identify excess workforce opportunities** - seek to identify if there are areas in the larger region that have people looking for work. If they are identified, seek to provide transportation.