

ABILENE CHAMBER ORGANIZATIONAL



ANNUAL REPORT

2023-24

PARTNERSHIP 2027 UPDATE

VISITORS | DOWNTOWN | MILITARY | YOUNG PROFESSIONALS | ARTS | WORKFORCE
ENTREPRENEURSHIP | SMALL BUSINESS | ADVOCACY





POWERED BY BUSINESS

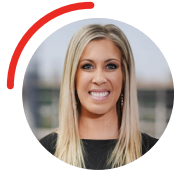
In fiscal year 2023-2024, the Abilene Chamber Board of Directors continued *Partnership 2027* with three main organizational goals: Leading with a bold voice, expanding the area talent base, and helping create a vibrant region. This report finalizes the second year of a multiyear strategy to provide a blueprint for a collection of investments and projects that positions the Abilene regional business community for the future.

CHAMBER LEADERSHIP

2023-2024
Officers & Executive Committee



KELLY JAY
Chamber Chair
Texas Media, Inc.



DR. KELSI MANGREM
Chair-Elect
Holland Hearing Center



LAURA MOORE
Immediate Past Chair
The Grace Museum



MICHAEL HERNANDEZ
Executive Committee Member
Ben E. Keith Beverages



ALAN HARTMANN
Executive Committee Member
Hartmann's Inc.



WILL DUGGER
Executive Committee Member
Jacob | Martin



DOUG PETERS
President & CEO
Abilene Chamber of Commerce

2023-2024 Board of Directors

AFFILIATE AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

- Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau: **Donna Long-Wolfer**, About Face Skin Care
- Abilene Cultural Affairs Council: **Pam Tippen**
- Abilene Regional Growth Alliance: **Shaun Martin**, Atmos Energy
- Abilene Young Professionals: **Allison Alvarez**, Arrow Ford Mitsubishi, Inc.
- Business Advocacy Council: **Mitch Barnett**, Barnett & Hill
- Hispanic Business Council: **Ricardo Gutierrez**, RGF Insurance Agency
- Leadership Abilene: **Adam Lancaster**, CCSB – Coleman County State Bank
- Military Affairs Committee: **Greg Blair**

TERM ENDING 2024:

- **Tiffany Gutierrez**, Motis Investments, LLC
- **Rachel Lantrip**, International Rescue Committee
- **Amanda O'Connor**, Cypress Street Station
- **Brandon Osborne**, Abilene Youth Sports Authority
- **Rick Waldraff**, Goodwill – West Texas
- **Sabrina Williams**, Optimum

TERM ENDING 2025:

- **David Bailey**, First Financial Bank
- **Matt Beard**, Maverick Saw Cutting & Core Drilling
- **Brad Benham**, Hendrick Medical Center Foundation
- **Ted Evans**, Lone Star Dry Goods
- **Shanna Kevill**, Arrow Ford Mitsubishi, Inc.
- **Keith White**, DATROO Technologies, LLC

TERM ENDING 2026:

- **Will Dugger**, Jacob | Martin
- **Ken Hogan**, Abilene Association of Realtors
- **Doug McIntyre**, Hardin-Simmons University
- **Mike Perez**, Abilene Environmental Landfill, Inc.
- **Kimberly Prater**, Gary's Floral
- **Fran Stone-Beale**, A-Town Cleaners

EX-OFFICIO (Non-Voting):

- **Eric Bruntmyer**, Hardin-Simmons University
- **Phil Crowley**, Taylor County Judge
- **Heather Hicks**, Cisco College
- **Robert Hanna**, Abilene City Manager
- **Sandra Harper**, McMurry University
- **Linda Hinshaw**, Abilene State Supported Living Center
- **John Kuhn**, Abilene Independent School District
- **Stan Lambert**, State Representative – District 71
- **Thomas Lankford**, 317th Airlift Wing Commander – Dyess AFB
- **Joey Light**, Wylie Independent School District
- **Justin Price**, Texas State Technical College
- **Delores Moore**, Black Chamber of Commerce
- **Mary Ross**, Workforce Solutions
- **Phil Schubert**, Abilene Christian University
- **David Smith**, Small Business Development Center
- **Seth Spanier**, 7th Bomb Wing Commander – Dyess AFB
- **David Young**, Abilene Independent School District

LEAD WITH A BOLD VOICE

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As the oldest and largest business advocacy organization in the Big Country, the Chamber proudly serves as the voice of business. In order to provide a business-friendly climate, we've advocated for our area, engaged with our members by providing core services, and communicated the Abilene story effectively.



U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Accredited



ADVOCACY

- Began work with new Business Advocacy Council: Chair Gary Grubbs, Carol Dromgoole, Jay Hardaway and Cynthia Pearson.
- Solidified our relationships with lawmakers and members of their staffs through direct interactions benefiting our Chamber members and Abilene business as a whole.
- Intensified our efforts in the area of childcare and its direct impact on the workforce.
- Renewed our partnerships within the Big Country region through the Texas Midwest Community Networks and other groups.
- Participated in Texas Association of Business Advocacy conference calls.
- Represented Abilene businesses and the Chamber of Commerce on the Technical Advisory Committee of the Metropolitan Planning Organization. This is a vital tie to the transportation needs and projects in the region.
- Produced and posted on the Chamber website 15-minute videos with primary election candidates.
- Began creation of the 2025 Legislative Agenda to guide our policy positions and advocacy efforts.
- Attended or watched online, approximately 75 city council, school board, county commissioners and other meetings and hearings of local or state government entities.

QUICK HITS:

↑ 25%

Increase in average attendance at our Hispanic Business Council Luncheons

↑ 50%

Increase in attendance at the West Texas Young Professionals Leadership Summit

↑ 54%

boost in gross revenue for our Texas Farm Ranch & Wildlife Expo for the last two years



ENGAGEMENT AND CORE SERVICES

The Abilene Chamber maintained its Five-Star Accreditation rating from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which places us among the top two percent of best-performing Chambers among more than 7,000 Chambers nationwide.

Exceeded our member retention goal of 80% by maintaining an 84% retention rate in fiscal year 2023-2024, exceeding national industry standards (reflecting 10.1.23 - 9.12.24).

Secured 170 new members, representing \$65,310 in new membership investment.

Launched a new Leadership Abilene Alumni Association and program scholarship making this premiere program more accessible to small business owners.

Started a quarterly agriculture luncheon series where our Ag partners can connect on industry-specific trends and issues and also hear from featured guest speakers.

Our Abilene Young Professionals program hosted the largest West Texas Leadership Summit in our organization's history and saw a 50% increase in attendance compared to the prior summit in 2022.



COMMUNICATIONS

Enhanced member communication through our Monday Morning Memo newsletter that gained 330 subscribers.

123 job opportunities posted to growabilene.com.

29,866 followers across all of the Chamber and its affiliate social media platforms.

MILITARY AFFAIRS

- Worked with the Texas congressional delegation to pass the largest National Defense Authorization act for Dyess Military Construction of \$31.3 million dollars for B-21 bed down at Dyess AFB.
- Additional work performed to secure \$20 Million in funding for the B-1 Load Adaptable Modulator (LAM) pylon providing the B-1 with optional external carry of munitions.
- Awarded a \$600,000 grant to provide Dyess Security Forces with new state of the art sensors allowing Security Forces personnel to greatly enhance perimeter protection and reduction of response times for potential security threats.
- Continuing the downtown Jumpstart program educating new Dyess first term airmen to the benefits and activities Abilene has to offer with a Cypress Street walking tour.
- Hosted the Air Force Global Strike Command Senior leaders conference in downtown Abilene where commanders from eight states and all Global Strike bases come together to formulate pathways forward.
- Implemented the Airmen Home for the Holidays program and purchased plane tickets home for 46 airmen who could not afford the ticket home at Christmas.
- Executed additional efforts for community collaboration in the area of child care, education, healthcare, housing, and spousal employment ensuring Abilene meets and exceeds quality of life standards.

YOUR PARTNER IN PROSPERITY

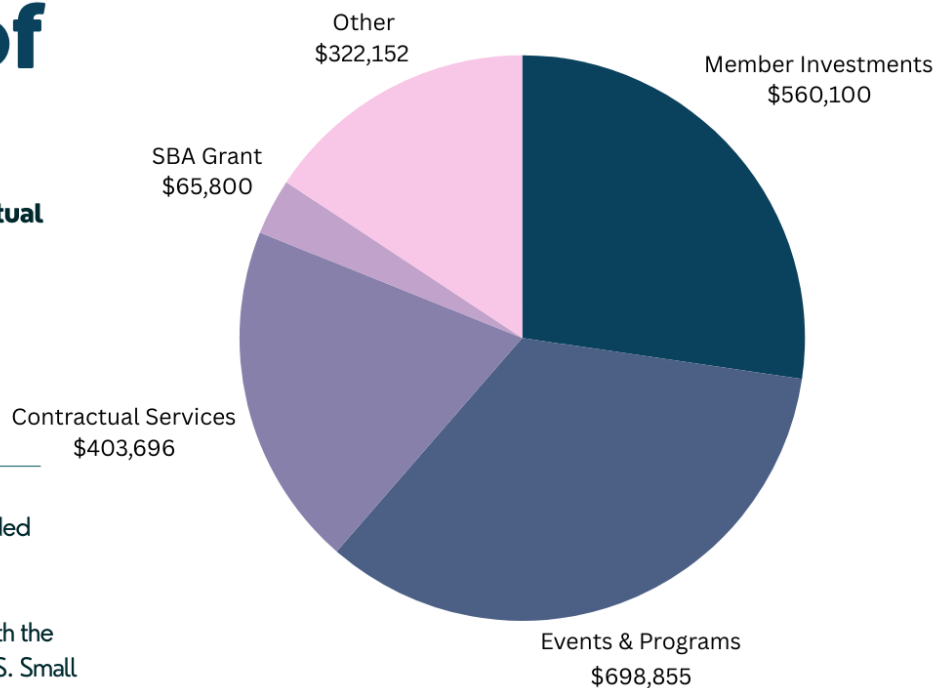
MEMBERSHIP DIVISION

Abilene area businesses come in all shapes and sizes and so do Chamber memberships. Whether you're a startup or a million-dollar corporation, there's a membership level that's tailored to fit your business and your business needs.

Membership Division

Sources of Revenue

- **Membership Investments**
- **Contractual Services**
- **SBA Community Nav. Grant**
- **Other**
- **Events & Programs**



The Membership Division revenue is divided between membership investments, programming, contractual services with organizations in our community along with the Community Navigator Grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration. The Community Navigator Grant ended in November 2023.

Looking to take your partnership with the Chamber to the next level? Reach out to the membership team today to customize your connection with the membership division.



WORKFORCE & TALENT DEVELOPMENT

MakeMyMove

This year we partnered with a workforce recruitment platform called MakeMyMove. MakeMyMove allows communities to advertise themselves and showcase employer incentives for workers to move into their community. While the focus was on workforce recruitment, the tool can be used to help with recruitment in any field. This tool has been a great success in advertising our community by generating over 270K impressions on our community, and creating a potential workforce pipeline worth over \$8.3M a year.

QUICK HITS:

2,723

average number of job openings. Number as of 9.24.24

3.5%

*OBJECTIVE: Target an average unemployment range of 3.5 percent to 5 percent. Number as of 8.28.24.

10

OBJECTIVE: Increase number of companies successfully using SkillBridge – 20 by 2026.

ABOUT SKILLBRIDGE: The Department of Defense SkillBridge provides an invaluable chance to work and learn in civilian career areas.

EXPAND THE TALENT BASE

The regional success of the Big Country and Texas are closely tied to the quality of the workforce and talent pipeline – from all levels. It will take all of us working together, while minimizing duplication of efforts, to foster the workforce needed for the future.



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ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Small and emerging businesses are the lifeblood of our economy, and the Chamber's Growth Alliance has made significant progress in working with and on behalf of our area's risk-takers and job creators.

In 2024, the Abilene Regional Growth Alliance launched its first comprehensive Pay and Perks Survey of area employers to provide aggregated data in the areas of wages, salaries, and benefits.

The Growth Alliance embarked on an annual Business Blitz, identifying regional non-Type A companies to better understand the opportunities and challenges that confront them in our market.

The Chamber's Growth Alliance has partnered formally with the Austin-based Central Texas Angel Network (CTAN) to establish a local angel funding network resource for company founders seeking early stage and higher risk capital investment in order to launch and grow their enterprise.

Through the Growth Alliance, our support for America's Small Business Development Center at Texas Tech continues through both financial and partnership support, as well as enhanced access. The statistics below are but a small sample of the successful effort produced through this partnership:

1819

New and retained jobs supported

742

Number of training program attendees

\$2.4 M

Total bank loans and aggregated amount of commercial lending

436

Number of entrepreneurs served through SBDC partnership

1,152

Total counseling sessions

\$38.4 M

Impact from SBDC clients

YOUR PARTNER IN PROSPERITY

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

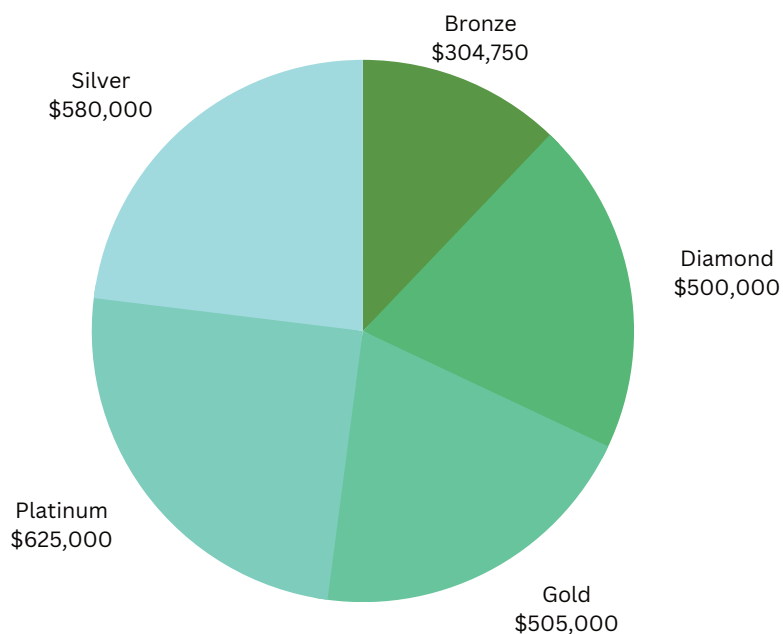
The Abilene Industrial Foundation repositioned and rebranded itself during fiscal year 2023 and is now doing business as the Abilene Regional Growth Alliance.

Community Development Division

LEADABI Breakdown

- **Diamond**
>250k
- **Platinum**
100-250k
- **Silver**
25-50k
- **Gold**
50-100k
- **Bronze**
<25k

LEADAbi investors support the Abilene Regional Growth Alliance's five-year strategic plan addressing our region's pressing economic development and community challenges.



Private sector funding committed to support five year initiative.

Looking to get involved in our work as we help cultivate the region's economy through business expansion and retention, targeted market-sector growth, and community enhancement? Reach out to a team member today!

YOUR PARTNER IN PROSPERITY

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INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITY'S FUTURE

As our highest-level investors in the Membership Development divisions of the Chamber, organizations at the Impact level recognize the relationship between the prosperity of the region and the success of their own businesses. Their investment supports influential advocacy initiatives that protect the business environment.

Companies at our Impact level value the Chamber's influence and view regional collaboration and growth as a key priority to achieving their firms' business objectives.

LEAD INVESTOR \$15,000+

Arrow Ford Mitsubishi, Inc
First Financial Bank
Hendrick Health
KTAB / KRBC
Lawrence Hall Abilene
Taylor Telecom

MARKET INVESTOR \$5,000+

AEP Texas
Atmos Energy
City of Abilene
Coca-Cola Southwest Beverages
Condley and Company, LLP
Directors Investment Group
First Bank Texas
Hardin-Simmons University
My Emergency Room 24/7 + Urgent Care
Primal Pet Group
Prosperity Bank
United Supermarkets, LLC

ENGAGE INVESTOR \$1,500+

Abilene Christian University
Abilene Independent School District
Abilene Teachers Federal Credit Union
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas
Buffalo Gap Instrumentation & Electrical Co, Inc
Eagle Aviation Services
Rentech Boiler Systems
Terracon Consultants, Inc
Texas Oncology – Abilene
Wesley Court Senior Living
West Texas Health, PLLC
West Texas Rehabilitation Center

*The impact investor list reflects \$1,500 in member investment, plus sponsorships to support the Chamber's events and programs.

A VIBRANT REGION

In order to be a forward-thinking region, we must invest in key mobility solutions and other 21st Century infrastructure initiatives. We must align our actions with the identity and unique assets our region possesses while ensuring that all residents are connected and that experiences among all groups are equitable.



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PLACE MAKING

Abilene was named one of the top 100 best places to live in the United States and the top 25 in the Southwest.

Abilene Cultural Affairs Council registered 5,458 people for the 12th Children's Art + Literacy Festival from 156 Texas cities and 28 states. This is the most states ever represented at CALF!

Young Audience of Abilene served 12,100 students from Abilene and across the Big Country through school performances, after-school arts residency programs and free summer library shows.

Children's Performing Arts Series served 4,500 people through three high-quality live performances at the Historic Paramount Theatre and through a collaboration with Young Audiences of Abilene for Abilene ISD second-graders to see a show in April.

Abilene Cultural Affairs Council raised \$102,402 to launch the Abilene Storybook Experience app that brings Storybook Sculptures to life using augmented reality and allows you to virtually collect them in the game along with book covers when you fill in missing words from Storybook Bench quotes.

Abilene Cultural Affairs Council awarded \$156,050 in grant funding for local nonprofit arts programming.

More than 600 people registered for the Seuss-themed Christmas in the Garden at the Adamson-Spalding Storybook Garden hosted by the Abilene Cultural Affairs Council.

QUICK HITS:

2,320

OBJECTIVE: Increase the number of retail/restaurant establishments.

2022 baseline: 1,588

SOURCE: Texas Comptroller's Office

150

events on average per month are posted on Visit Abilene for the Abilene area



VISITORS BUREAU HIGHLIGHTS

The Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau hit some exciting milestones that boosted our local tourism and hospitality landscape. With the addition of three new hotels, including the DoubleTree by Hilton Abilene Downtown Convention Center, Home2 Suites, and TownePlace Suites, we focused on driving business through convention and group sales, while strengthening relationships with hotel partners and fostering collaboration with our stakeholders. On the marketing side, we implemented a comprehensive digital marketing strategy to target key markets and visitor profiles, while continuing to promote our “Authentically Abilene” campaign, highlighting the genuine charm and rich heritage of the city. The Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau was also honored as the 2023 Destination Marketing Organization of the Year by the Texas Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus, recognizing our commitment to excellence and innovation. Another major highlight was Abilene becoming one of the first cities in Texas to earn the Texas Tourism Friendly Community Certification, showcasing our dedication to driving sustainable, long-term growth of our tourism sector. These achievements were made possible with funding provided through the hotel occupancy tax.

- Abilene’s tourism economy saves each household \$764 in taxes
- Tourism provided an economic impact of \$555 million to the community, supporting the livelihoods of 3,630 hardworking Abilenians
- Travelers generated \$47.5 million in tax revenue (+2%) with \$16 million in local tax revenue for travel related purchases including lodging, dining, shopping and motor fuel
- Group sales generated 63,830 room nights with an estimated economic impact of \$45,903,562
- Sports tourism accounted for 36,731 room nights and an economic impact of \$19,755,954
- Serviced 236 groups with 152,134 attendees with an economic impact of \$50,752,365
- Serviced 208 groups with 114,250 attendees with an economic impact of \$35,814,033
- Every \$1 in funding the ACVB receives generates \$26 for the local economy



Broadband is Better with Taylor Telecom

Taylor Telecom is a proud partner of
the Abilene Chamber of Commerce.



CHAMBER STAFF

Executive Team

- Douglas Peters, President & CEO
- Frances Williamson, CFO

Cultural Affairs Team

- Lynn Barnett, VP, Cultural Affairs Council
- Tracie Hartmann, Interim Young Audiences Executive Director
- Vikki Head, Director of Operations
- Sidney Levesque, Marketing Director
- Madi Melbourne, Manager, CALF Director & Development Assistant
- Dawn Ripple, Executive Director of Children's Performing Arts Series
- Susan Steele, CPAS Box Office Manager and Grants Administrator

Visitors Bureau Team

- Kim Bosher, Sales Director
- Ashli Brooks, Visitor Experience Associate
- Courtney Eden, Sales Manager
- Robert Lopez, VP, Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Terri Owens, Office Administrator

- Pam Sites, Visitor Experience Director
- Kailey Valadez, Sports Tourism Manager
- David Waller, Marketing & Creative Director

Membership Team

- Gray Bridwell, VP, Military Affairs
- Ashley DiMauro, Senior Director of Operations
- Nathaniel Ellsworth, Office & Events Logistics Manager
- Hudson Ewing, Member Development Manager
- Jennifer Kent, Director of Programs
- Cynthia Nesmith, Executive Administrator, Military Affairs
- Kendal Subia, Events Manager
- Doug Williamson, Government Affairs Director

Growth Alliance Team

- Kodi Edwards, Marketing & Communications Manager
- London Moore, Downtown & Special Projects Manager
- Cameron Sloan, Talent & Emerging Business Specialist





ABILENE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Powered by Business.



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OPPORTUNITY AS EXPANSIVE AS THE WEST TEXAS SKY

