



Elevating business through connection.
ANNUAL REPORT 2024



A Year of Growth, Innovation, and Community Impact

As we reflect on the significant strides made in 2024, we are proud to share the remarkable achievements that have fueled our continued growth and success. This past year has been one of expansion, innovation, and collaboration—milestones that we are excited to highlight throughout this report. We are deeply grateful for your unwavering support, from our members, Regional Benefactors, as well as our volunteers and wonderful dedicated staff. Their contributions have been instrumental in advancing our

mission and completing our Innovation Center.

A key area of focus for us this year has been settling into the New London Chamber office and launching our Regional Innovation Center. This achievement would not have been possible without the generous support of our founding partners, Regional Benefactors, the City of New London, as well as the support we received from our state and federal government. We recognize these dedicated contributors on a unique founders' wall in our lobby, sourced and designed in-house. Together, we've created a dynamic space where businesses of all sizes can thrive.

The Center, designed to meet the needs of entrepreneurs and startups, offers flexible workspaces, private offices,

meeting rooms, and modern amenities that foster collaboration and creativity. In 2024, the center hosted nearly 300 meetings, drawing businesses from throughout New England plus two Australian delegations who are working with Electric Boat on the AUKUS submarine project.

We are pleased to report that all our offices are currently fully occupied. The Center has quickly become an important business hub for the region and is now the home to eight organizations, buzzing with monthly workshops and programs drawing experts across all industries.

During 2024, for the first time in our Innovation Center, we organized and presented our Entrepreneur Academy, an eight-week program designed to educate



and assist start-up businesses. We had 87 applicants for the 40 available positions - clearly a much-needed program. Also, our Leadership ECT Program once again filled to capacity.

Other important Chamber activities during 2024 included our administrative management for the Eastern Regional Tourism District and the Southeastern Connecticut World Affairs Council. We are also proud of our management of the Chamber's Foundation. During 2024, under the tutelage of Chairman Lou Ziegler, the Foundation raised approximately \$125,000 to fund education and economic programs, especially for children and families, as well as college scholarships. In 2024, 52 organizations benefitted from these efforts, and we are eager to

increase this impact in the year ahead.

Last year, we also welcomed new team members; their expertise has enabled us to respond to the new demands of the Innovation Center and to launch new programs, campaigns, and initiatives, as well as grow our new membership by nearly 30% over 2023. Your participation, ideas, and support are essential to our ongoing efforts to strengthen the business community and contribute to the region's economic vitality.

Thank you for your continued partnership and commitment to the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut. Together, we are stronger and will continue to create a sustainable business climate that benefits all.



Anthony Joyce
Board Chair



Tony Sheridan
President and CEO



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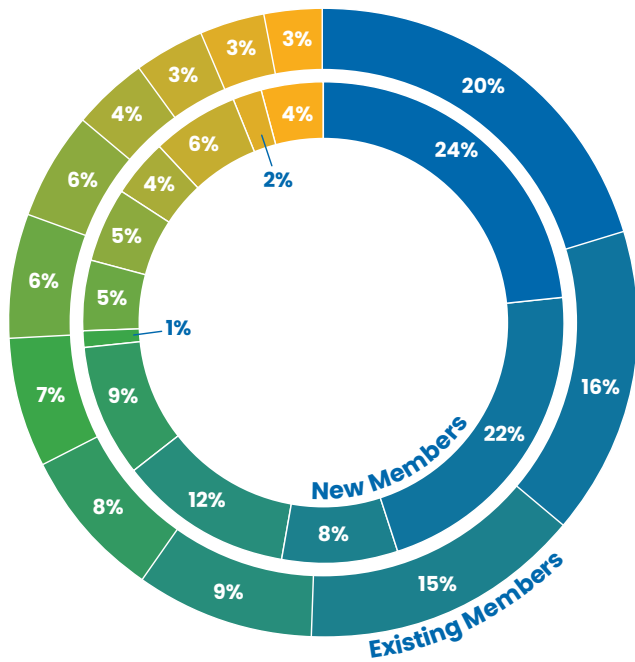


MEMBERSHIP

Strength in Numbers



Membership by Region



| Region | Existing | New |
|---|----------|-----|
| ● Groton, Mystic, or Stonington | 20% | 24% |
| ● New London | 16% | 22% |
| ● Norwich, Preston, or Greater Norwich | 15% | 8% |
| ● Waterford | 9% | 12% |
| ● East Lyme, Old Lyme, or Lyme | 8% | 9% |
| ● Ledyard, Mashantucket, or North Stonington | 7% | 1% |
| ● Colchester, Salem, or Montville/Uncasville | 6% | 5% |
| ● Hartford County | 6% | 5% |
| ● Tolland, New Haven, Fairfield, or Litchfield County | 4% | 4% |
| ● RI, MA, NY, or Other States | 3% | 6% |
| ● Windham County | 3% | 2% |
| ● Middlesex County | 3% | 4% |

114
different towns and cities in CT and beyond are represented in our membership

91%
of our members are small businesses
(employing 100 people or fewer)

98,230+
people employed by our members in CT and beyond

29%
increase in new memberships over 2023

Top 5 Membership Categories Existing Members

1. Finance & Insurance
2. Food & Beverage
3. Health & Wellness
4. Family, Community & Civic Organizations
5. Business & Professional Services

Top 5 Membership Categories New Members

1. Business & Professional Services
2. Family, Community & Civic Organizations
3. Arts, Culture, & Entertainment
4. Finance & Insurance
5. Shopping & Retail

Building Tomorrow's Leaders



Leadership Eastern CT

For more than three decades, Leadership Eastern CT has been equipping future community leaders with the skills and vision to address the region's challenges. This commitment to leadership in action was exemplified by the Class of 2024 through their class project—constructing an outdoor patio for The Arc Eastern CT. Their effort showcased the power of collaboration, problem-solving, and determination. Despite obstacles along the way, their teamwork and resourcefulness transformed their vision into a beautiful, functional space that will benefit the community for years to come.

Leadership ECT Class of 2024

Miria Gray
Chelsea Groton Bank
Class co-president

Craig Koenigs knecht
General Dynamics Electric
Boat
Class co-president

Lisa Aschenbrenner
Pfizer

Lisa Bickford
Charter Oak Federal Credit
Union

Michele Brezniak
Hartford HealthCare

Courtney Burns
Scient Federal Credit Union

Amanda Cleveland
Silver Petrucelli + Associates

Mark Cook
Tobin, Carberry, O'Malley,
Riley & Selinger, P.C.

Alison Davenport
Dominion Energy

Emily de Labry
Project Oceanology

James DeMaio
Pat Munger Construction

Aaron Domingo
Charter Oak Federal Credit
Union

Michael Doyle
Reliance Health, Inc

Kevin Fitzgerald
Town of Groton

Lorraine Galvis
Lorraine K. Galvis, Esq.

Carli Herz
United Way of Southeastern
Connecticut

Maurice Jackson
Mashantucket Pequot
Museum & Research Center

Nikki Johns
Dime Bank

Katherine Kobyluck
Dime Bank

Tracy Lewis
CorePlus Credit Union

Russell MacGregor
Norwich Public Utilities

Rebecca Magner
Chelsea Groton Bank

Mairim Martinez
Mystic Aquarium

Kimberly Mulligan
Mystic Aquarium

Daniela Ness
Chelsea Groton Bank

Brittany Ninman
General Dynamics Electric
Boat

Nazmie Ojeda
Safe Futures

Theodore Panagiotis
Foxwoods Resort Casino

Jennell Ricard

Faith Silva
Scient Federal Credit Union

Allison Smith
Mystic Seaport Museum

Veronica Sullivan
Community of Hope, Inc.

Nicole Sweeney
Eastern CT Savings Bank

Nicole Thomas
New London Homeless
Hospitality Center

Tabitha Tinnel
Thames Valley Council for
Community Action, Inc.

Stefanie Wierszchalek
Fuss & O'Neill, Inc.

Lauren Willard
Mohegan Sun

Leslie Williams
Connecticut Municipal
Electric Energy Cooperative

Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board (EWIB)

The workforce development partnership between EWIB and the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern CT has been instrumental in providing a dedicated Business Services Representative role. In 2024, the business services team in eastern CT supported hundreds of employers with their hiring and retention efforts. Connections were made with a wide range of resources, including CONNSTEP, CCAT, CTDOL, Regional Sector Partnerships, Chamber resources, training providers, and job fairs. The American Job Center facilitated over 25 recruitment events, serving over 200 employers and connecting them with thousands of job seekers.



Joelle Garrett, Business Services Representative, attending job fair.

Program & Event Highlights

Chamber of Commerce of Eastern CT Career Pathway Expo

The Career Pathway Expo offered hundreds of local high school students insights into diverse career pathways, emphasizing the educational, training, and skill requirements essential for success in respective fields.

Leadership Eastern CT Class of 2024 (graduation), 2025 (year 2 of 2) and 2026 (year 1 of 2)

Business Luncheon: Women in Leadership

- Dr. Karen M. Walters, Associate Research Fellow, Pfizer
- Heather M. Ridout AO, Consul-General New York
- Maria Hanna, President and CEO, Survival Systems USA, Inc
- Tricia Cunningham, Executive Director, Always Home Inc.

ADVOCACY

Your Voice in Action



Legislative Affairs Council

In 2024, the Chamber's Legislative Affairs Council actively advocated for a positive business environment to support regional business interests, monitoring legislation on the state and federal levels that had the potential to impact the region's businesses. The Chamber offers real-time updates via weekly email briefings on legislative developments with customized tracking and reporting, keeping members well-informed and actively engaged in shaping pro-business policy. The Chamber regularly reaches out to elected officials at the local, state, and federal level to advocate for member projects or concerns.

16+

**Testimonies
Presented**

39

**Legislators
Engaged**

36

**Bills
Tracked**



Tony Appleton speaks on panel at Chamber's Offshore Wind Forum.

Program & Event Highlights

**Business Luncheon featuring
U.S. Congressman Joe
Courtney**

**Business Luncheon featuring
Governor Ned Lamont**

**Connecticut Offshore Wind
Forum: Industry Perspectives**

- Nicole M. Verdi, Esq., New England Head of Government Affairs and Policy, Ørsted
- Paul S. Lavoie, Chief Manufacturing Officer for Connecticut
- Richard Jude Hine, President, ThayerMahan Offshore
- Tony Appleton, Offshore Wind Director, Burns & McDonnell
- Kelli-Marie Vallieres, PhD Chief Workforce Officer, CT Office of Workforce Strategy; Vice Chair, Governor's Workforce Council
- Richard Baldwin, Senior Scientist, McAllister Marine Engineering
- Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner, CT DEEP

State of Stonington & Groton

- Danielle Chesebrough, First Selectman, Stonington
- John Burt, Town Manager, Groton
- Keith Hedrick, Mayor, City of Groton

**State of Waterford & East
Lyme**

- Rob Brule, First Selectman, Waterford
- Daniel Cunningham, First Selectman, East Lyme

Showcasing Eastern CT



Seasonal Offerings

In 2024, the Chamber introduced a Seasonal Offerings news feed, giving members a platform to share holiday events, special sales, festive menus, and more. Recognizing that anyone traveling 25 miles is considered a tourist, this initiative helped spread member happenings throughout the region. By promoting the feed through social media, the Chamber increased engagement and interactions, driving more visibility for local businesses and events.

18,891
Views on
Facebook and
Instagram

12,578
Reach on
Facebook and
Instagram

Member Events Calendar & New Member Dashboard

Late in 2024, the Chamber transitioned its customer relationship management (CRM) software to a more capable platform for the organization's current scale. The new database enhances the membership experience in a variety of ways, including a new Member Events Calendar to promote members' events more effectively. By sharing these events through social media and our e-newsletter, we're increasing visibility and engagement. We look forward to continuing to highlight member happenings and fostering connections throughout the region.

Eastern Regional Tourism District (ERTD)

The Chamber is proud to be the Administrative Partner of the Eastern Regional Tourism District, one of three districts established and funded by the State of Connecticut to market regional tourism opportunities.

In 2024, ERTD again offered its Regional Marketing Partnership Program and granted \$70,000 to 17 collaborative projects across the District's footprint. This public infusion was matched by private funds, resulting in an influx of \$140,000 in tourism marketing dollars in the region. Funding benefited branding campaigns, festivals, historic landmarks, brochures and guides, outdoor recreation opportunities, and overall interconnection between tourism assets in eastern Connecticut's portfolio.

In accordance with the state's fiscal year, election of officers was held at the fourth quarter Board of Directors meeting, with Chris Regan of Olde Mistick Village once again appointed to the role of Chair for fiscal year 2025. The Chamber was also very proud to facilitate a perfect audit for FY24.

Facebook Growth

Reach
↑69%

Interactions
↑35%

Page Visits
↑92%

Instagram Growth

Reach
↑174%

Interactions
↑100%

Page Visits
↑80%

Link Clicks
↑4.3K%

Program & Event Highlight

Business Luncheon: CT Tourism Update with Anthony Anthony & Rachel Lenda

- Anthony Anthony, Chief Marketing Officer, State of CT
- Rachel Lenda, Director of Tourism, State of CT
- Jillian Lozier, Director of Operations, Quinn & Hary Marketing

COMMUNITY

Connecting & Celebrating



In 2024, the Chamber demonstrated robust regional community impact, from honoring outstanding members with regional awards to fostering connections through networking events and collaborating closely with community partners.

32

**Networking
Events**

25

**Ribbon
Cuttings**

4,000+

**Event
Attendees**

115

**Event
Sponsors**

Ribbon cutting celebrating the Habitat for Humanity of Eastern CT ReStore.



Partners

Southeast CT World Affairs Council (SECWAC)

SECWAC aims to foster an understanding of issues of foreign policy and international affairs. The Chamber provides administrative support and promotion for SECWAC.

Cultural Coalition

The Cultural Coalition joined the Chamber's Annual Meeting to present their Arts & Culture Awards, recognizing the impact of the creative sector in our region. Together, we also manage CORE, an online calendar showcasing regional business and cultural events. Additionally, the Chamber participated in Make Music Day, a community-wide celebration of music organized by the Cultural Coalition in eastern CT.

CT Small Business Development Center (SBDC)

The Chamber partners with CT SBDC in eastern CT to offer professional, confidential, and expert business advice for business owners to overcome challenges and reach their goals. SBDC has free resources, tools, and online trainings to offer business help along the way.

Southeast CT Enterprise Region (seCTer)

The Chamber regularly collaborates with SECTER to support key regional economic development projects, and connects our members with services such as financing or technical advising. SECTER provided support for the 2024 Entrepreneur Academy. Chamber leadership served on SECTER's Board of Directors and Economic Development committee in 2024.



73rd Citizen of the Year Mike Buscetto poses with friend Katherine Verano, CEO of Safe Futures.

73rd Citizen of the Year Mike Buscetto

In May, we celebrated our 73rd Citizen of the Year, Michael “Mike” Buscetto, III honoring his remarkable contributions to southeastern Connecticut’s growth, philanthropy, and community development. The event at Mohegan Sun was a vibrant and memorable evening, thoughtfully tailored to reflect Mike’s passion, leadership, and enduring impact on the region.



2023 Regional Chamber Awards

New Business Award
The Drip Bar

Small Business of the Year
Miranda Creative

Business of the Year
Mystic Seaport Museum

Industry Innovator
Wonderlosity

Community Revitalization
High Tide Capital

Volunteers of the Year
Heather Ford Bunn & Dale Bunn

Nonprofit of the Year
Project Oceanology

Young Professional of the Year
Keith Turner, Homestead Funding

Best Place to work
Eversource

Tourism Leader of the Year
Hilton Mystic

Social Service Recognition Breakfast

Board Member of the Year
Lonnie Braxton, Public Library of New London

Executive Director of the Year
Wendy Lusk, South East CT Community Center of the Blind

Staff Member of the Year
Denisse Mateo, The Arc Eastern CT

Volunteer of the Year
Elizabeth Shilosky, Alzheimer's Association, CT Chapter

Collaboration of the Year
Community Foundation of Eastern CT

Honorable Mention
Petra, The Therapy Horse, High Hopes Therapeutic Riding Center

Military Appreciation Breakfast

Military Community Support Awards
Habitat for Humanity of Eastern Connecticut

Ocean Beach Park
Service Person of the Year
MU1 Robert Durie, USCG

Service Person of the Month
CSS1 Jonathan Zamora, USN

LT Cory Murallo, USCG

SSG Joseph Leonard, CTNG

FT2 Kolten Flook, USN

HM3 Ciara Farmer, USN

MR2 Luke Newhouse, USN

ND2 Evan Smith, USN

HS3 Aryn Wise, USCGA

RP1 Christian Zahler, USN

IT2 Marti Ramirez, USN

ND1 John Ahnen, USN



32
Awards Presented

◀ *Volunteer of the Year, Elizabeth Shilosky of the Alzheimer's Association at the 2024 Social Service Recognition Breakfast.*

Inspiring Creativity & Fueling Growth



Orange Elephant Press, first place winner of Entrepreneur Academy Final Pitch Night, receives check for \$2,000 from Academy sponsor seCTer.

The Regional Innovation Center had an incredible year in 2024, its first full year of operation, serving as a resource hub for entrepreneurs, innovators, and business leaders dedicated to growth and collaboration.

100%
Offices
Occupied

300
Meetings &
Events Hosted

The Innovation Center attracted businesses from across New England and even hosted delegations from **Australia**.



The Regional Innovation Center took part in Make Music Day 2024 hosting musicians on the patio.



◀ Innovation Center's founders wall was unveiled in October of 2024. Special thanks to Yankee Remodeler and ABC Signs.

Community Engagement

Community engagement and networking were at the heart of the Center's mission this year. A new networking event series was piloted on Friday afternoons, creating a space for local community members to forge deeper connections by sharing personal stories beyond their professional lives. Small business owners also benefited from a variety of open office hours programs and workshops covering essential topics like team building, banking, and marketing.

Entrepreneur Academy

87
Applicants

40
Participants

75%
Women

50%
Minority

25%
Immigrant

This year's Entrepreneur Academy shattered records as a collaborative effort between 25 organizations and subject matter experts, supporting a diverse and a diverse and driven cohort of aspiring business owners.

Made possible by Liberty Bank, Waterford Hotel Group, the Coppa Family (In Loving Memory of Robert Coppa), and Southeastern CT Enterprise Region (seCTer), this initiative provided essential business guidance, connecting local businesses with funding sources and equipping them to navigate the complexities of growth.

The Access to Capital session was opened to the public and enhanced through partnerships with Liberty Bank, seCTer, CIC, DECD, SBA, EWIB, CTSBDC, WBDC, CTDOL, HEDCO, and the City of New London.

\$4,500

Awarded to
top three ventures

1. Orange Elephant Press
2. Lady Copacabana Authentic Brazilian
3. Angelic Hall & Events

Celebrating 30 Years of Impact



2024 grant recipients posing on the Regional Innovation Center's patio after receiving their checks.

Raising Funds

In 2024, the Holiday Gala celebrated the Foundation's 30th anniversary with an enhanced experience featuring live music, modernized online bidding, and exciting new auction items, raising approximately \$125,000 for future grants. Also held annually, the Bowl-a-Thon supports the Foundation's scholarship program, providing essential funding for local high school students.



Grant Recipients

| | | | |
|---|----------|--|---------|
| Tommy Toy Fund | \$10,000 | Horizons, Inc | \$1,500 |
| UCFS Healthcare | \$7,500 | Interfaith Human Services of Putnam | \$1,500 |
| Gemma E Moran United Way/Labor Food Center | \$5,000 | New London Area Food Pantry, Inc. | \$1,500 |
| Covenant Shelter of New London, Inc. | \$3,500 | New London Youth Affairs | \$1,500 |
| New England Science & Sailing Foundation | \$3,500 | Norwich Public Schools Education Foundation Inc. | \$1,500 |
| Safe Futures, Inc. | \$3,500 | Our Piece of the Pie, Inc. | \$1,500 |
| EASTCONN Transition Academy | \$2,512 | S.T.E.P.S., Inc. | \$1,500 |
| Cultural Coalition | \$2,500 | Spark Makerspace | \$1,500 |
| FRESH New London | \$2,500 | Stonington Community Center | \$1,500 |
| Groton Community Meals | \$2,500 | Thames River Community Service, Inc. | \$1,500 |
| Junior Achievement of Southwest New England, Inc. | \$2,500 | Thompson Ecumenical Empowerment Group, Inc. | \$1,500 |
| Madonna Place, Inc. | \$2,500 | Yellow Farmhouse Education Center | \$1,500 |
| New London Homeless Hospitality Center | \$2,500 | SARAH Inc. | \$1,160 |
| Project Oceanology | \$2,500 | Connecticut College | \$1,000 |
| Public Library of New London | \$2,500 | Eastern Connecticut Ballet | \$1,000 |
| The Samaritan House Incorporated | \$2,500 | Girls on the Run of Southeastern CT | \$1,000 |
| The Last Green Valley, Inc. | \$2,300 | Goodspeed Opera House Foundation, Inc. | \$1,000 |
| Child and Family Agency of Southeastern Connecticut | \$2,100 | Jewish Federation of Eastern Connecticut | \$1,000 |
| Habitat for Humanity of Eastern Connecticut | \$2,000 | Norwich Rotary Foundation | \$1,000 |
| Higher Edge | \$2,000 | Pro Bono Partnership | \$1,000 |
| Montessori Discovery School | \$2,000 | Southeastern CT Robotics, Inc | \$1,000 |
| The Haitian Community Center of Greater Norwich | \$2,000 | Stonington Free Library | \$1,000 |
| The Riverfront Children's Center, Inc. | \$2,000 | The Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries | \$1,000 |
| Always Home, Inc. | \$1,500 | | |
| Catholic Charities, Diocese of Norwich, Inc. | \$1,500 | | |
| Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra | \$1,500 | | |
| Elevate to Even Plus Incorporated | \$1,500 | | |
| High Hopes Therapeutic Riding, Inc. | \$1,500 | | |

52 Grants Distributed
(Largest To Date)

\$109,072
Awarded

Scholarship Recipients

Gianni Drab, Northeastern University
Stephanie Flores Aguilar, University of Connecticut
Aeracura Harney, Florida Institute of Technology
Brianna Harris, Eastern Connecticut State University
Grace Peil, University of Massachusetts-Amherst
Ivan Rodriguez, University of Hartford
Alyssa Tomasso, Eastern Connecticut State University
Sadeya Zakaria, University of Connecticut

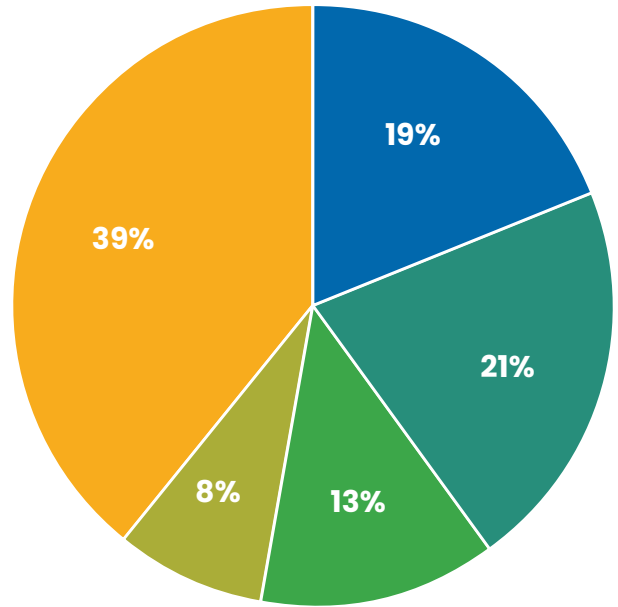
8 Students Funded
(Largest To Date)

\$10,000
Distributed

Financials*

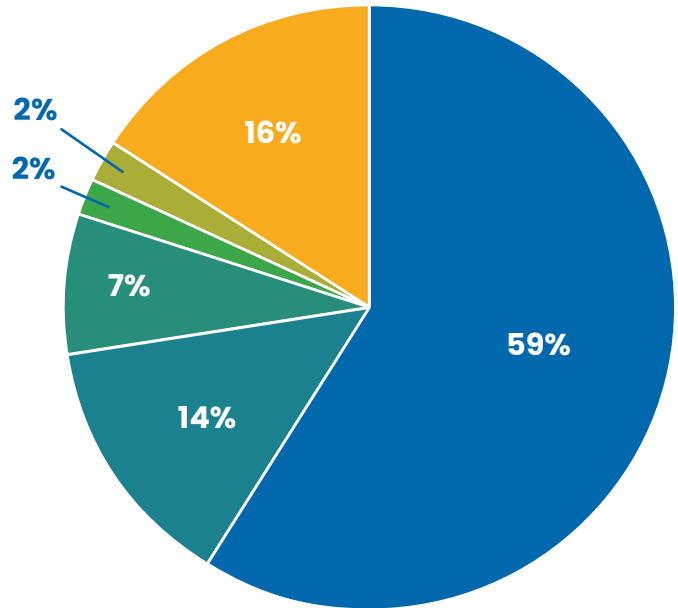
Revenue

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| ● Dues Revenue | \$310,496 |
| ● Programs & Events | \$346,373 |
| ● Partnerships & Grants | \$208,262 |
| ● Other Non-Dues Revenue | \$136,811 |
| ● Innovation Center, Inc. Capital Campaign | \$650,205 |
| | \$1,652,147 |



Expenses

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| ● Operations, Inc. Personnel | \$771,626 |
| ● General Expenses, Inc. Events | \$177,958 |
| ● Office & Technology | \$96,129 |
| ● Professional & Admin. Fees | \$26,800 |
| ● Property Taxes | \$28,327 |
| ● Innovation Center | \$204,318 |
| | \$1,305,157 |



Balance Sheet

| | 2024 |
|-------------|-----------|
| Assets | 2,943,795 |
| Liabilities | 204,760 |
| Equity | 346,990 |

*Financials as presented are unaudited. Assets stated above include the value of the Chamber's Innovation Center/office building.

Board of Directors 2024

CHAIR

Anthony Joyce
Chelsea Groton Bank

VICE CHAIR

Marguerite Driscoll
Pfizer, Inc.

VICE CHAIR

Dave Meisinger
*Connecticut Municipal Electric
Energy Company (CMEEC)*

VICE CHAIR

Anna Lathrop
*Gourmet Galley Catering
& GG at Home*

TREASURER

Heather Roberts
Total Mortgage Services, LLC

SECRETARY

Jeffrey Godley
Lahan & King, LLC

PRESIDENT

Tony Sheridan
Chamber of Commerce of Eastern CT

Peter Armstrong
Mystic Seaport

Tai Au
*Pink Basil, Spice Club, Bleu Ginger
Asian Bistro*

Blair Bendel
Foxwoods Resort Casino

Charles Bunnell
The Mohegan Tribe

Eric Callahan
Suisman Shapiro Attorneys-at-Law

Raymond Collins
Eversource

Tina Couch
Mystic Aquarium

Katherine Ericson
LEARN

Laurie Finan
CENTURY 21 Shutters & Sails

Donna Handley
*Backus and Windham Hospitals/
Hartford HealthCare*

Richard Lisitano
*Lawrence + Memorial Hospital/
Yale New Haven Health*

Greg Rose
General Dynamics Electric Boat

Brian Orenstein
Charter Oak Federal Credit Union

Lou Ziegler
*Chamber Foundation/Mohegan
Tribal Housing Authority*

Staff

Tony Sheridan
President and CEO

Megan Gilbert
Vice President

Ciera Alston
Administrative Assistant

Jane Davis
Director of Membership
& Engagement

Denise Desrochers
Program & Event
Manager

Julia Florence
Communications
Manager

Joelle Garrett
Business Services
Representative

Andrea Manning
Administrative
Partnerships Manager

Lori Thompson
Office Manager

Emily Wilkins
Creative Manager

Kevin Zhang
Community Manager

*Thank you to our spring
intern, Austen Linicus!*



Chamber staff at 2024 Chamber Foundation Holiday Gala.

Regional Benefactors

The Chamber's Regional Benefactors contribute over and above the standard membership dues structure to support important programs produced annually for the small businesses and nonprofits of the region. These community-oriented companies are committed to responsible economic growth, leadership development, job creation, and bringing our regional voice to Hartford and beyond.

