



March 21, 2025

Steven Contente
Town Administrator
Town of Bristol
10 Court Street
Bristol, RI 02809

Dear Mr. Contente

I am writing today to request the Town of Bristol's continued support of Connect Greater Newport, the Economic Development Division of the Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce.

Connect Greater Newport's mission is to support the growth of the region's economies and to serve as a resource for existing businesses and new companies. With support from the region's municipalities and partners, we have been able to make considerable progress toward creating a competitive environment for regional economic development.

This year, Connect Greater Newport will continue the progress of implementing the 10-year strategy with lessons learned from the past year and business outreach guiding our focus. Below is an overview of these strategic areas.

- **Business Retention and Expansion:** Continue growing our outreach programs and gathering data that can be used to inform programs, policies and strategies to address business concerns and create a business-friendly climate for our region.
 - Outreach to minority and disadvantaged business enterprises in the region to identify growth needs.
 - Utilize business engagement findings to develop programs that focus on the professional development of minority business owners.
 - Resource programming for defined business needs including technology, finance, human resources, and more.
 - Direct outreach to businesses in the region and providing economic growth-focused concierge services.
 - Work with municipal officials and partner organizations to provide information to the business community and serve their committees as a resource.

- Collaborate with Commerce RI on assisting local businesses with their growth plans with a special focus on Blue Economy, Defense, and Professional, Scientific, and Technical firms.
 - Conduct Annual Business Walk, which serves as a source of business intelligence and awareness building for the region's business community needs and opportunities.
 - Conduct a business survey over a 3-week period in October-November of 2025.
- **Small Business and Talent Recruitment Support:** Develop the infrastructure for improved talent recruitment to combat a growing loss of the working-age population. Launch a 'soft-landing' program to serve as a business recruitment initiative.
 - Work with the region's core service organizations e.g. education, healthcare, childcare, social and human services, and industry sectors to identify ways to support the recruitment and retention of employees, as well as identify regional programs of need and support implementation.
 - Work with the region's colleges and universities to better connect students/soon-to-be graduates to employers in the region.
 - Develop marketing materials that define the benefits for small businesses/ corporate divisions to locate in the region.
 - Develop materials that demonstrate how the region is attractive to individuals in the Professional, Scientific and Technical fields.
 - Develop welcome and engagement materials and programs for trailing spouses and those relocating to the area from NOAA and USCG growth.
 - Identify the current resources in our region, enhancing our ability to serve as a 'soft landing' site, and more effectively communicate to the region's small business community about the resources available. A Network Innovation Grant was received from Commerce RI that will support a portion of this work.
- **Economic Development and Business Intelligence Infrastructure:** Provide research, analysis, and grant-writing services in support of economic growth. This will include activities directly associated with CGN and committee efforts as well as for municipal and nonprofit partners.
 - Planning: CGN will provide overall project management of the recently awarded Compatible Use planning grant and coordination of engagement activities including a Technical and Advisory Committee.

- Housing: Utilize results of housing analysis to inform municipalities as they conduct targeted planning efforts, and advocate for new approaches to the development of workforce housing - the greatest need identified by the region's employers.
 - Grant development support: Develop proposals for other grant opportunities from philanthropic and government entities that can support regional priorities. Support communities seeking grants by providing data and engagement services as needed.
- **Quarterly Leadership Convenings and Annual Reporting:** The CGN Advisory Committee provides an opportunity for regional leaders and stakeholders to come together to focus on specific areas of interest and to engage in planning and exploration of community opportunities and needs. We look forward to leaders from Bristol participating in these meetings.
 - CGN will host Quarterly meetings with regional leaders and stakeholders that will focus on key topics and discuss what statewide and local efforts are underway, along with what community leaders are seeing and planning for. This will include a longer-format annual meeting to be held in December.
 - CGN will develop an annual report that provides an update on the various topics covered during the year as well as a state of the economy report. This information will serve as a jumping-off point regarding conversations and prioritization of the work of CGN in the next calendar year, and as the baseline for policy and white papers to be shared with key stakeholders and leadership.

We are hopeful that the Town of Bristol will continue to join us in this partnership and consider supporting this effort in your Fiscal Year 2026 budget in the amount of \$5,000.00.

I am available at your discretion to provide a formal presentation to detail our progress and plans further. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need additional information. You can reach me at 401-847-1608. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Erin L. Donovan-Boyle

Erin Donovan-Boyle, President & CEO

Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce and Connect Greater Newport