

Annual Report

A Year-In-Review

2025



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Dear Friends, Partners, and Emerging Leaders

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we are proud to share the NextGen Chamber of Commerce Annual Report.

This past year marked a period of meaningful growth and evolution for our organization. Together with our staff, partners, and community, we expanded our national footprint, deepened our research and policy voice, and strengthened our commitment to centering emerging business leaders in conversations about the future economy.

Through convenings, research, youth entrepreneurship programming, and thought leadership, NextGen Chamber continued to elevate the perspectives of those too often left out of traditional economic decision-making. Our work this year demonstrated not only what we do — but why it matters: to ensure that opportunity, innovation, and leadership are accessible to all.

We are especially proud of the organization's continued momentum across programs, partnerships, and financial sustainability. These achievements reflect both strong execution and a growing trust in NextGen Chamber's role as a national connector between business, policy, and community.

Looking ahead, we are energized by what's next. The coming year will build on this foundation with expanded research, new partnerships, and deeper engagement across regions. Our vision remains clear: to equip the next generation of business and civic leaders with the tools, voice, and influence to shape a more inclusive economy. We are grateful to our supporters, partners, board members, advisory council, and staff who make this work possible. Your belief in this mission continues to move it forward.

Thank you for being part of the NextGen Chamber community. We invite you to explore this report and join us in shaping what comes next.

With gratitude and determination,



Adama Iwu & Roy Lee
Co-Chairs, Board of Directors

Who We Are



2019

NextGen Chamber
Launch



100M

Workforce
Representation



06

Staff and Board
Members



3

Policy Priorities

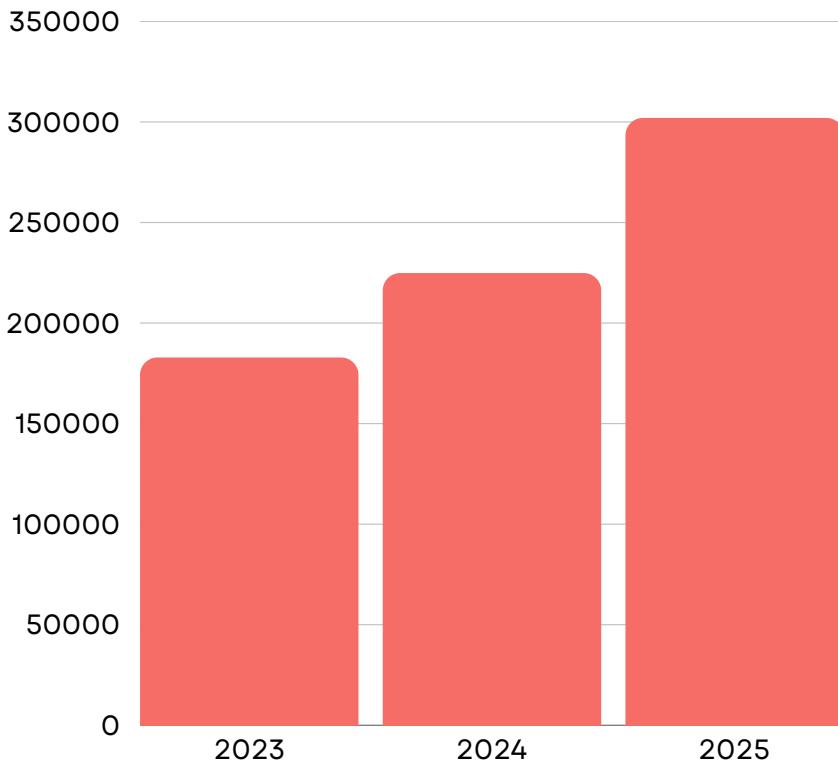


Our Mission and Vision

We are the **leading** **voice** for emerging business leaders

The NextGen Chamber of Commerce empowers emerging business leaders by generating insights, encouraging engagement, and nurturing leadership development to shape the future economy.

By the Numbers



200+

Participants Engaged
through insight generating
initiatives in FY25

800+

Contact List Growth in
FY25

1,600+

New Social Media
Followers in FY25

250+

Annual Youth
Entrepreneurs Supported
in the Summit/Fellowship
Program in FY25

“
Year-over-year saw **an increase of revenues of 34%, and a growth of 62% over the past two fiscal years.** With this growth and other growth we made in 2025 send us a clear message. What this tells us: the more people know about NextGen Chamber, the more they want to strengthen our impact.

Our 2025 Portfolio

NextGen Chamber's 2025 programming laid the foundation for future growth by strengthening national engagement, refining our narrative, and deepening cross-sector collaboration.

Beyond documenting activities, this report now highlights the tangible and qualitative outcomes of our work — including how our programs influenced policy conversations, strengthened partnerships, catalyzed repeat engagement, and created downstream opportunities for emerging business leaders.

**Don't Stop
Thinking
About
Tomorrow**

NextGen Listening Tour & Narrative

The Listening Tour and the NextGen Narrative together form the backbone of NextGen Chamber's insight-driven work, capturing perspectives from emerging business leaders across regions and translating those voices into a cohesive national narrative.

Through structured dialogue and analysis with over 200 emerging business leaders, this work surfaces shared challenges, regional nuances, and emerging trends shaping the future economy. These insights inform the organization's strategic direction, strengthen external partnerships, and ensure that NextGen Chamber's voice remains grounded, credible, and responsive to the communities it serves. The Listening Tour translated local business leader experiences into a national narrative now being used in foundation conversations, corporate partnership discussions, and policy-adjacent strategy development. It shifted the organization from anecdotal storytelling to evidence-informed research.



NextGen Youth Entrepreneurship Summit



The NextGen Youth Entrepreneurship Summit is a convening designed to expose high school and college-aged students to entrepreneurship, leadership, and the future of work. Through panels, workshops, and direct engagement with business leaders, policymakers, and practitioners, the Summit provided 250+ participants with real-world insights, inspiration, and practical tools to explore entrepreneurial pathways and civic-minded leadership. The Summit also serves as a key entry point into NextGen Chamber's broader youth entrepreneurship ecosystem. The Summit strengthened participant confidence, expanded professional networks, and reinforced youth entrepreneurship as a viable leadership pipeline — not just a skills program.



→ Networking

Connect directly with peers, entrepreneurs, and industry leaders to build meaningful relationships and expand professional networks.

→ Mentorship

Gain access to experienced business and civic leaders who provide guidance, insight, and real-world perspective.

→ Insights

Explore how public policy shapes entrepreneurship, workforce opportunity, and economic mobility—and how emerging leaders can engage.



NextGen Youth Entrepreneurship Fellowship



Finance

Fellows build core financial skills, including budgeting, pricing, and understanding the fundamentals of sustainable business models.

Policy

Fellows explore how local, state, and federal policy impacts entrepreneurship, economic opportunity, and emerging business leaders.

Marketing

Fellows learn how to tell their story, identify audiences, and develop practical strategies to promote their ideas and ventures.

Showcase

Fellows present their projects and ideas to community leaders, mentors, and partners, celebrating growth, learning, and real-world impact.

The NextGen Youth Entrepreneurship Fellowship is a 15-20 student cohort-based experience that supports emerging entrepreneurs and student leaders as they deepen their skills, ideas, and professional networks. Fellows engage in guided learning, mentorship, and applied projects that strengthen their understanding of entrepreneurship, economic systems, and community impact. The Fellowship emphasizes leadership development, peer learning, and long-term capacity building, helping participants translate ideas into action beyond the program itself. The Fellowship moved participants from passive program involvement to active leadership ownership — strengthening business clarity, confidence, and long-term engagement with NextGen Chamber.

The Future Economy Series

The Future Economy Series is a digital storytelling initiative that highlights the trends, technologies, and policies shaping the next era of work and business. Through conversations with industry leaders, policymakers, and practitioners, the series translates complex economic shifts into accessible insights for emerging business leaders and the broader public. The series established NextGen Chamber as a national thought-leadership platform connecting corporate, policy, and entrepreneurial perspectives.

Preparing NextGen Businesses for the Future Economy



Gil Pontes
Executive Director,
NextGen Chamber of Commerce

Shaina Ross
Senior Program Manager,
Amazon Seller External Relations

The role of e-commerce in the future economy

Tomorrow Begins Today

In 2026, NextGen Chamber of Commerce will deepen its investment in emerging business leaders through expanded youth entrepreneurship programming, original research, and digital storytelling.

Building on insights from the Listening Tour and the NextGen Narrative, our 2026 plans focus on equipping the next generation with the skills, networks, and policy understanding needed to lead in a rapidly evolving economy—while strengthening cross-sector partnerships that drive inclusive, long-term impact.

Economic Transformation and Emerging Business Leaders Across the Regions

NextGen Chamber's multi-year research project examines how economic transformation—digitalization, workforce shifts, and policy change—is impacting emerging business leaders across regions. Through mixed-methods research and place-based insights, the project elevates lived experience, informs decision-makers, and helps shape more inclusive economic and workforce strategies over time.

The project will unfold in phases, beginning with regional data collection through surveys, focus groups, and roundtables with entrepreneurs, students, and local leaders. Findings will be synthesized into regional briefs and national insights, supported by convenings and digital storytelling to test and validate themes in real time.

The final phase will translate insights into actionable recommendations for policymakers, funders, and business leaders, creating a sustained feedback loop between research, practice, and policy.



Year One: Appalachia

Year Two: The American South & Midwest

Year Three: Interior West and East

Year Four: National Synthesis and National Symposium

Youth Entrepreneurship Summit & Fellowship Expansion



In 2026, NextGen Chamber will expand its Youth Entrepreneurship Summit & Fellowship into San Antonio alongside Flint, bringing place-based entrepreneurship, leadership development, and policy engagement to two distinct yet deeply connected communities. This expansion reflects our commitment to meeting emerging business leaders where they are—tailoring programming to local economic realities while building a shared national network of young entrepreneurs equipped to lead in the future economy.



The Future Economy Series

Season two of the Future Economy Series builds on the momentum of the inaugural season with deeper conversations on economic transformation, innovation, and policy. Featuring new voices from business, government, and community leadership, the next season will continue translating complex economic shifts into clear, actionable insights for emerging business leaders and partners shaping the future of work.

FinTech Evolution

Explores how fintech innovation, digital wallets, and open banking can expand financial inclusion.

The New Public-Private Compact

Examines how businesses and policymakers can co-create inclusive economic strategies.

Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide

Spotlights regional innovation hubs, entrepreneurship ecosystems, and infrastructure investment across the U.S., including Appalachia.

Purpose-Driven Profit: Rethinking Corporate Citizenship

Highlights how brands are investing in inclusive economies, digital access, and community resilience.

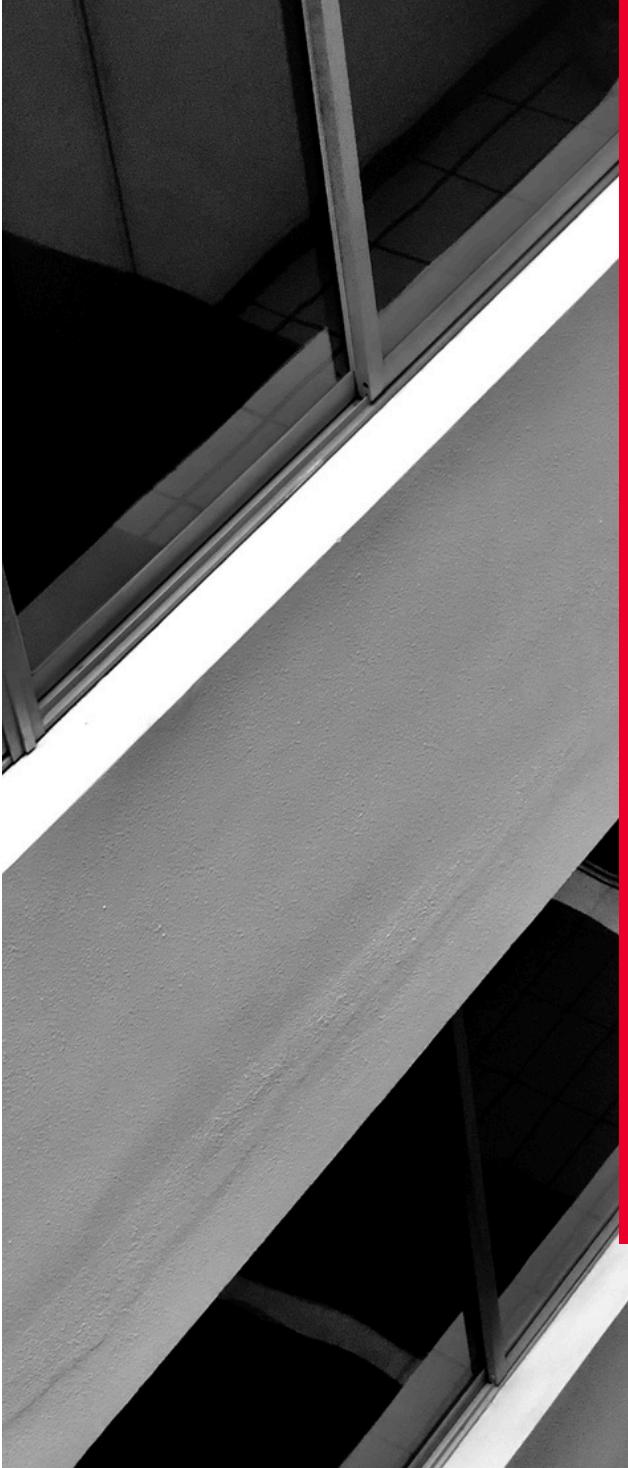
The New Main Street: Entrepreneurs in the Digital Age

Explores how small and emerging business leaders are adapting to e-commerce, AI, and fintech solutions.

Capital for All: Reimagining Access to Finance and Credit

Focuses on inclusive financial products, small business credit access, and public-private partnerships.

Thank You



We extend our sincere thanks to our board members, funders, advisory council, partners, and supporters whose leadership, generosity, and belief in our mission made 2025 a truly impactful year for NextGen Chamber. Your guidance, collaboration, and investment helped advance our programs, research, and storytelling—reaching emerging business leaders and communities across the country. Together, you have strengthened our capacity to drive inclusive economic opportunity, and we are grateful to carry this momentum forward into the year ahead.

2025 was a big year for the NextGen Chamber. Partnerships shifted from transactional sponsorships to relationship-based collaboration grounded in shared thought leadership and research priorities. The organization transitioned from primarily program delivery to a platform for research, policy dialogue, and national convening.

While some outcomes are still emerging, the consistent result across all programs has been a shift in how emerging business leaders are seen—not as future stakeholders, but as present-day contributors to economic strategy, policy conversation, and innovation leadership.

Our Board of Directors



Roy Lee, Co-Chair



Adama Iwu, Co-Chair



Rhett Buttle, Treasurer



Aram Nadjarian, Member



Casey Oakes, Member

Join Us



Gil Pontes



Gil@NextGenChamber.org



www.NextGenChamber.org

NextGen Chamber invites partners, supporters, and emerging leaders to engage across our research, programs, and storytelling initiatives. Whether through collaboration, mentorship, sponsorship, or participation, there are multiple pathways to help shape a more inclusive and forward-looking economy—together.