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Marketing Application

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## Executive Summary

The Virginia SBDC is an organization of 27 local Small Business Development Center offices across Virginia providing professional business advising, training, and business resources to help grow and strengthen Virginia businesses (Virginia SBDC, 2020). SBDC - Lynchburg Region is one of the 27 offices. Their objective is to help develop small businesses throughout the Lynchburg Region, which serves Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford & Campbell Counties, and the City of Lynchburg (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

SBDC - Lynchburg Region is growing its team to provide more advisors and educational opportunities to business owners in the Lynchburg Region looking to grow and develop their businesses.

The organization is also developing its brand awareness to reach more businesses. This is being done through social media marketing, speaking at events, and printed pamphlets. The goal is to aid and guidance to all small businesses.

The goal of the Marketing Application is to review the benefits of the marketing strategy. There will be a review of the target audience and how to best reach them. This document will include information about implementing a marketing plan, budgeting, and expected ROI.



## Introduction

### Company History, Purpose, Mission, Vision

#### **Company History**

The Virginia SBDC is an organization of 27 local Small Business Development Center offices across Virginia providing professional business counseling, training, and business resources to help grow and strengthen Virginia businesses.

Thousands of business owners and managers received one-on-one counseling every year, and twice as many business owners attended a training program offered by a local SBDC. SBDC professionals assist with business planning, marketing, financial analysis, access to capital, business start-up, and other specialized services as requested. And companies report successes and impacts as a result of their SBDC relationship.

#### **Purpose/Mission**

The Virginia SBDC Network is the most extensive business development program in the Commonwealth. The Network is a partnership between the U.S. Small Business Administration, George Mason University, and premier local host organizations throughout Virginia. These vital partners include universities, community colleges, chambers of commerce, municipalities, economic development organizations, and private companies.

The Small Business Development Center – Lynchburg Region’s mission is to promote small business growth, entrepreneurship, and the strengthening economy by providing advising and training to our region’s small businesses (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

The SBDC - Lynchburg Region is a free, confidential advising and training service. It is open to any small business in the region – no membership is required. All programs of the Virginia SBDC are open to the public on a non-discriminatory basis (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

#### **Vision**

To be the most effective provider of consulting, education, and resources to Virginia’s business community (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.).



## Product/Service Goals & Strategic Objectives

The Lynchburg Region SBDC Program is designed to deliver up-to-date advising, training, and technical assistance in all aspects of small business management.

Topics include:

- Financial review
- Marketing
- Organizational management
- Startup assistance
- Customer development
- Government contracting
- Access to capital and investment

Training ranges from Start Smart program which answers the most basic questions for those new to business to specialized training in industries like healthcare and early childhood education.

## Market Research

### Current Market Situation

#### Emerging Market Opportunity – Food & Beverage

The tax for prepared food and beverages is 6.5% of the sale, and one of the largest employment sectors includes food services (Lynchburg Economic Development Authority, 2022). In 2021 craft beer has gone up 7.9% in the U.S. with 9,247 total breweries (Brewers Association, 2022). In 2020 The City of Lynchburg went from having zero breweries to expecting a third to open in spring 2021 (WFXRtv, 2020). The downtown area has also seen a growth of new restaurants. Restaurants and brewery owners are a market that SBDC reaches to help them to develop their business.

#### FOOD & BEVERAGE ACCELERATOR



- Establish Your Unique Value Proposition
- Develop and Position Your Brand
- Identify Sales and Growth Opportunities

#### Emerging Market Opportunity – Business Expanding/Second Stage Businesses

Expanding business in the Lynchburg region is another emerging market for SBDC - Lynchburg Region to reach. Since 1972, the corporate income tax in Virginia has not been raised from 6%, which is one of the lowest rates in the country (Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance, 2021). Depending on locality, the state and local tax combined is 5.3% or 6% (Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance, 2021).

The Port of Virginia has invested \$1.5 billion in infrastructure creating a sixth terminal network to handle any type of cargo Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance, 2021). By 2024, it will be the deepest port with 55 channels and two-way traffic for the largest vessels on the U.S. East Coast (Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance, 2021). Low taxes and development of the Port of Virginia entice growing businesses that will need guidance, making it another marketing opportunity for SBDC – Lynchburg Region.

### **Emerging Market Opportunity – Recovering from Covid**

On April 30, 2020, the Economic Development Authority of the City of Lynchburg voted to carve out a portion of the existing Revolving Loan Fund to create a Business Recovery Loan for COVID-19 impacted businesses (Lynchburg Economic Development Authority, 2021). The Commonwealth of Virginia offers multiple business recovery resources. These resources are another avenue to market, by providing businesses with the tools and guidance to find and use those services.

### **Industry Trends**

Patterns or trends that occur within a specific industry that relate to price, cost, manufacturing, consumer purchasing, sales methodology, marketing, or any number of areas are industry trends (Worth, 2021). E-learning industry has grown since the COVID-19 pandemic, along with work-from-home practices (Global Market Insights, 2022). In addition to the e-learning industry, we must also look at trends in the consulting industry. Some of these trends include:

- Digitalization and AI for business performance improvements
- Cloud expansion capabilities
- Recruitments for specialist positions globally
- Revamped retention strategies
- Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) compliance measures (InfoDesk, 2022).

Today, we are seeing a decline in the market and a rise of inflation are trends that can not only effect SBDC - Lynchburg Region, but our clients as well.

## Industry Analysis

How consumers purchase products can help the decision process for allocating funds and labor (Worth, 2021). Because SBDC - Lynchburg Region offers online classes it is important to track the e-learning industry. Monitoring industry trends can help businesses remain competitive (Worth, 2021). We must also monitor industry trends in other industries to better serve our customers.

## Product/Service Description

The Lynchburg Region SBDC Program is designed to deliver up-to-date advising, training, and technical assistance in all aspects of small business management (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

### Topics Include:

**Financial Review**

**Marketing**

**Organizational Management**

**Startup Assistance**

**Customer Development**

**Government Contracting**

**Access To Capital & Investment**

Training ranges from our Start Smart program which answers the most basic questions for those new to the business to specialized training in industries like healthcare and early childhood education (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

## Programs & Resources

### Start Smart

Do you want to open your own business? Do you have an idea for a product or service that you want to bring to market? Maybe you have people ready





to buy your products, or customers ready to sign up for your services, but you're not sure how to start getting paid. You may have an idea of what your concept is but you're not sure if it will make a profitable company. We'll cover the importance of creating a business plan, figuring out how to determine which licenses and permits you really need, and what other resources are available to launch your new venture. Register for one of these dates – new dates and locations are added frequently (America's SBDC Virginia - Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

**Business Game Plan**

Business Game Plan is a multi-week seminar designed to help owners and leaders of businesses plan to grow and scale their business. Facilitators will coach participants to help businesses make positive adjustments as we move past a COVID-19 pandemic economy. Participants will meet with professionals in various fields such as Legal, HR, Banking, Marketing, and Finance, and create relationships with other business owners or leaders and mentors from the SBDC - Lynchburg Region. Businesses will come away with a strategic plan for their business.

**Craft Beverage Assistance Program**

CBA services are designed to promote sustainable growth and resilience among Virginia-based producers, from start-ups to established and expanding companies (America's SBDC Virginia - Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

**Services:**

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**Market Analysis**

**Sales Strategy**

**Back-of-House Operations**

**Distribution & Logistics**

**Marketing & Promotion**

**Expansion & Exports**

**Early Education Business Program**

In partnership with [Early Education Business Consultants](#), the Virginia SBDC is offering an 8-week, training program that will provide childcare businesses with the necessary management and business tools to improve the profitability and sustainability of their childcare business and the long-term relationships needed to support them as business owners. Childcare businesses will be given the tools to expand their business while learning the fundamentals of small business management (America's SBDC Virginia - Lynchburg Region, n.d.).



**Services:**

**Strategic Planning**

**Using Technology**

**Financial Management**

**HR Management**

**Marketing**

**Networking**

**Small Town & Merchant Program (STAMP)**

STAMP is a comprehensive collection of webinars, workshops, virtual one-on-one sessions, hands-on initiatives, and resources designed to address the specific needs of main street retail and restaurant businesses (America's SBDC Virginia - Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

Local organizations such as the Virginia Main Street program, chambers of commerce, retail and restaurant associations, and others work with STAMP to sponsor and deliver targeted and relevant guidance that business owners and managers can use immediately (America's SBDC Virginia - Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

**STAMP offers:**

**Individual one-on-one  
consulting sessions**

**Complete confidentiality**

**On-site and virtual business visits**

**Webinars and seminars**

**Individual, retail business and restaurant check-ups in person and online**



### **Cybersecurity**

Whether you are a retailer or restaurant who is responsible for customer data or a business moving online for the first time the SBDC provides support for small companies to keep your business secure by offering one-on-one counseling, assessments, and webinars to learn how to protect your businesses from cyber threats (America's SBDC Virginia - Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

Our team can work directly with very small business owners who do not have a managed IT service provider or who self-manage as well as provide professional suggestions and guidance to IT teams (America's SBDC Virginia - Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

## Services

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**Counseling**

**Build Your Cyber Risk  
Program**

**Recorded Webinars**

# Customer Identification & Description for Product/Service

## Consumer/Customer identification & Description

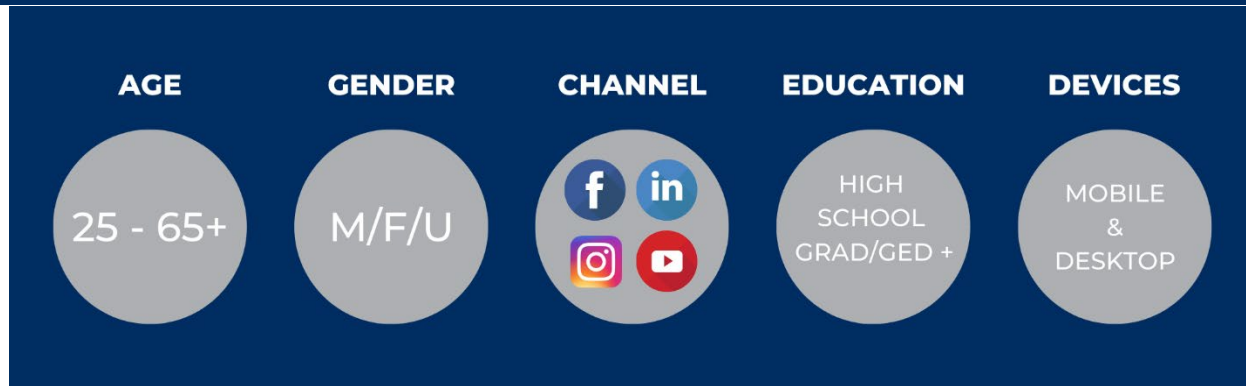
A lead is an individual who has shown interest in a company's product or service and has provided some basic information that suggests potential interest in buying (Enterprise, n.d.).

Anyone that provides information such as a name, phone number, or email is constituted as a lead for SBDC - Lynchburg Region. When someone shows interest in learning more about what SBDC - Lynchburg Region has to offer and provides a way to contact him or her, that person becomes a lead.

These leads are nurtured through the buyer's journey to become a customer. A customer is considered anyone that has attended one of our events or uses our resources.

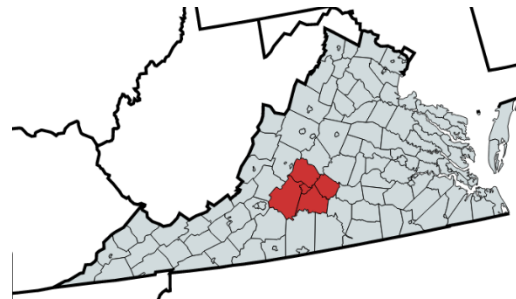
## Demographics & Psychographics

SBDC - Lynchburg Region aims to reach people who are looking to expand their knowledge in the business world. Within those aspects, the target age ranges from 25 to 65+ with minimum high school education. Leads that fall within the range of these demographics will also display an interest in business development.



The location of the target audience covers:

- Amherst
- Bedford Counties
- Campbell Counties
- The City of Lynchburg



### Consumer/Customer Analysis

A consumer/customer analysis identifies the target customers, ascertains their needs, and specifies how the product or service satisfies those needs (East Bay SBDC, 2021). Our consumers are entrepreneurs and small business owners that are looking for insight on how to grow their business in the Lynchburg Region. Ages typically range from 25 to 65, with a wide range of business experience. From starting a new business to looking to grow and expand their current one, our customer needs are met through our services. We provide resources and classes to teach our customers the ins and outs of business.

## Current Competitive Situation

The current competitive situation is free online resources by organizations outside of the Lynchburg Region. With just a quick Google search, a person can find endless free resources for learning how to grow their small business. There are blogs, certifications, videos, podcasts, and more. All offering advice for growing a business.



## Competitor Analysis

One competitor is Opportunity Lynchburg. Opportunity Lynchburg assists and advises entrepreneurs in Lynchburg (Lynchburg Economic Development Authority, 2021). Even though they offer similar services, we were able to partner with them to better service the Lynchburg Region Community.

## Distribution Channels



### Organic Channels

such as our website and blog



### Paid Campaigns

on social media and search engines for targeted small business owners and entrepreneurs in Lynchburg, VA.



### Print Advertising

with pamphlets, brochures, and flyers



### Guest Speaking

at business events in partnership with Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance

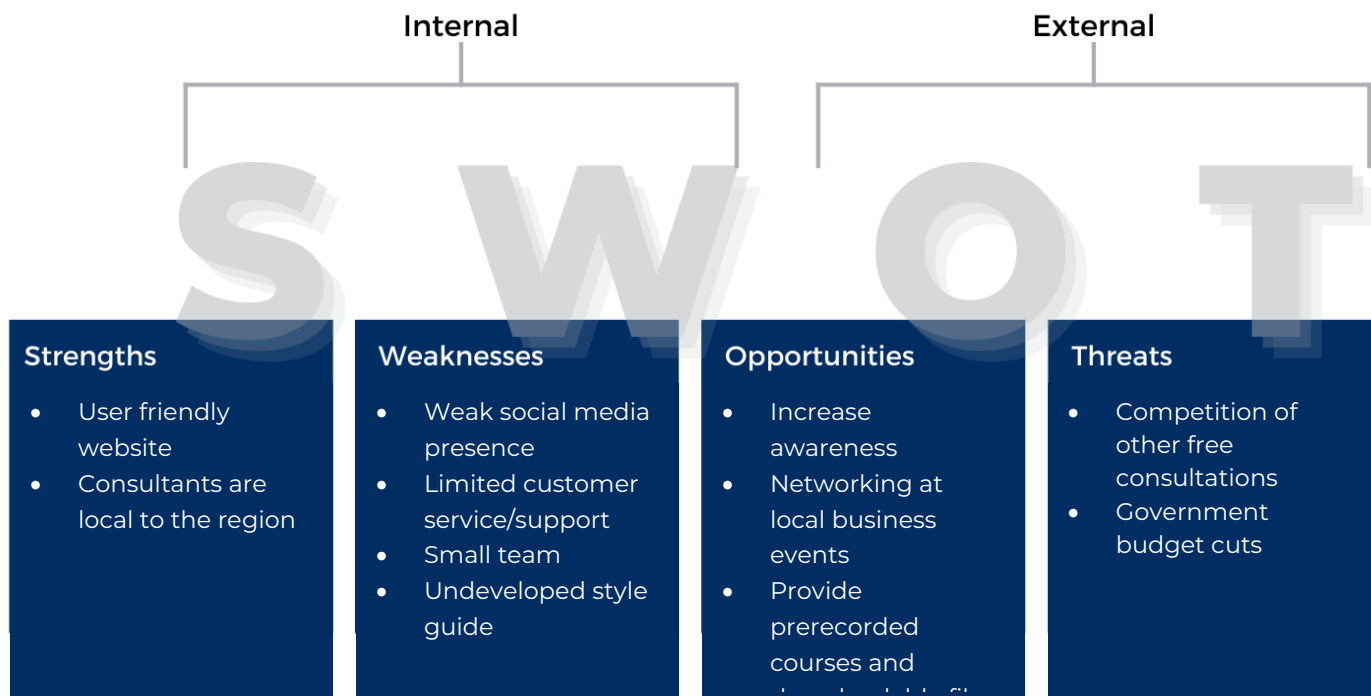


### Affiliate Marketing

with Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance promoting SBDC on their website

## SWOT Analysis

To evaluate SBDC - Lynchburg Region’s competitive position and develop the strategic planning we use the SWOT framework (Kenton, 2022). SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The analysis is assessing internal and external factors to facilitate a realistic and data-driven look at the strengths and



weaknesses of our industry.

### Converting the Weaknesses to Strengths

As a non-profit, and government-funded organization, it would be difficult to hire more employees for the company. However, by hiring strong and diversely skilled workers a small team can accomplish a lot. By establishing a customer support process that can be managed by everyone on the team then we will be able to assist customers more quickly and seamlessly. Currently, the social media presence is growing, however, through proper marketing strategies, we would be able to increase our brand awareness. Making increases to the brand, will also expand to the improvement of the style guide. By adding secondary colors, more font options, and additional guidelines we can produce more inviting graphics.

## Converting the Threats to Opportunities

Some way to convert the competition into opportunities is by finding ways to partner with other organizations. Our main goal is to help grow small businesses, therefore through partnerships, we can help reach more businesses. Budget cuts from the government can sometimes be inevitable. By providing success stories and analysis reports on the spending, we can show growth in the program. With this proof, we can stand to advocate for a larger budget.

## Marketing Strategies

Positioning	The positioning is a strategic exercise used to establish the image of our brand in a customer’s mind (Bilardi, 2022). We want people to see our brand as a free resource that can be accessed at any time and any stage of their small business development.
Product	The Lynchburg Region SBDC Program is designed to deliver up-to-date advising, training, and technical assistance in all aspects of small business management.
Pricing	All classes, consultations, and resources are <b>FREE</b> .
Distribution	SBDC - Lynchburg Region offers its services to Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford & Campbell Counties, and the City of Lynchburg.

## Communication Strategies

### Advertising

Advertising can significantly increase brand exposure, boost ROI, and improve sales and revenue (Yelp for Business, 2021). This report gives details on ad campaigns that focus on different medians from online and print to in-person advertising. Our key goals for advertising are:

- Build awareness
- Educate consumer
- Boost your reputation
- Acquire new customers
- Retain current customers
- Stay ahead of competition
- Make sale

Advertising will be done both digitally and in print. Digital advertising through social media and display ads will help drive traffic to the website. The print will be pamphlets and information cards that can be distributed at events.

### Public Relations

For SBDC - Lynchburg Region public relations (PR) is woven into our mission. The purpose of PR is to guide and manage the perception our business must attract new customers and strengthen the loyalty of existing ones (The Queensland Government, 2019). PR differs from marketing and advertising by taking advantage of unpaid communication channels like business networks and local media (The Queensland Government, 2019). Our involvement within the community and partnership with organizations like Opportunity Lynchburg and the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance are part of our PR strategy. PR focuses on promoting awareness, attitudes, and behavior change, compare to marketing that promotes the product or service (The Queensland Government, 2019).



### Promotion

Promotion is the way the product is presented to increase demand and differentiate it from competitors (SendPulse, 2022). The difference between promotion compared to advertising is that promotion typically involves an immediate incentive for a customer (Diffen, n.d.). Promotions are typically less expensive, and results are seen sooner, which directly relates them to sales (Diffen, n.d.). An example of this can be hosting or attending networking events to encourage people to register for one of our services.

## Communication Plan

A communication strategy helps communicate change requirements, project initiatives, and business needs consistently and clearly (Lucidchart, 2020). Business analysts use the communication plan to document:

- What information needs to be shared
- Who needs to receive the information
- When information should be delivered
- How information will be shared (platform and setting)
- Required stakeholder actions (sign off, review, give feedback)
- Next steps after stakeholder actions (Lucidchart, 2020)

## Crisis Management Plan

A crisis management plan (CMP) is an outline for responding to critical situations that can negatively affect the company's profitability, ability to operate, or reputation (Crocetti, 2020). The CMP includes preparation, development of processes, testing, and training. Steps to create a CMP include:

- Identify team members and roles
- Document criteria for determining a crisis
- Establish monitoring systems to detect early warning signs of potential crisis situations
- Specify who the spokesperson will be
- List key emergency contacts
- Document who will be notified and how
- Identify the assessment process of an incident
- Identify response procedures
- Develop strategy for social media posting and responses/public announcements
- Provide a process to test effectiveness and update regularly

## Marketing Budget

### Sales projections (for 12 months)

Based on the projected outcome of the marketing strategies, we can expect around 2,250 registrations for the year for the classes.



### Expense projections (for 12 months)

The expense budget for the year will be \$5,800, and the estimated spend for the year is \$5,642. With being a small organization, the main focuses will be video, social media, search, and display ad placements. The monthly budget spending covers those campaigns to start with and will be adjusted as the data is analyzed about what the audience responds to. Below is a chart representing the total budget and a breakdown of monthly spending for the ads.

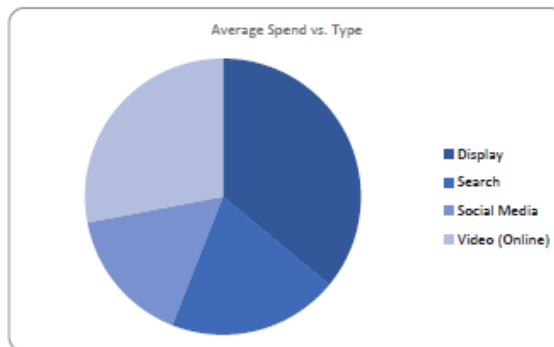
	Estimated Price	
Marketing Programs		\$1442
Mail Chimp	\$204	
Hootsuite – Professional	\$588	
CDP Data Services	\$650	
Ad Spend Budget		\$4200
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$5642</b>

**Paid Media Monthly Budget Planning and Reporting**

<b>Business Goal</b>	Increase lead conversion
<b>Monthly Budget</b>	\$350.00
<b>Total Spent</b>	\$325.00
<b>Remaining Budget</b>	\$25.00

Type	Date(s)	Name of Platform, Site, or Publication	Description	Spend	Clicks/ Acquisitions	CPC/CPM/CPA
Video (Online)	January 1 - January 10	YouTube	Video Ad for Product	\$70.00	10	\$7.00
Social Media	January 4	Facebook	Event Promotion Ad	\$40.00	20	\$2.00
Social Media	January 4	LinkedIn	Event Promotion Ad	\$30.00	15	\$2.00
Social Media	January 4	Instagram	Event Promotion Ad	\$35.00	10	\$3.50
Social Media	January 4	Spotify	Brand Awareness	\$10.00	2	\$5.00
Search	January 12 - January 28	Google	Google Search Ads	\$50.00	60	\$0.83
Display	January 14 - January 30	Google	Display Network Ad	\$90.00	70	\$1.29

Type	Total Placements	Total Spend	Average Spend	Total Clicks/ Impressions	Average Clicks/ Impressions
<b>Display</b>	1	\$90.00	\$90.00	70	70
<b>Search</b>	1	\$50.00	\$50.00	60	60
<b>Social Media</b>	1	\$40.00	\$40.00	20	20
<b>Video (Online)</b>	1	\$70.00	\$70.00	10	10



### Financial Analysis

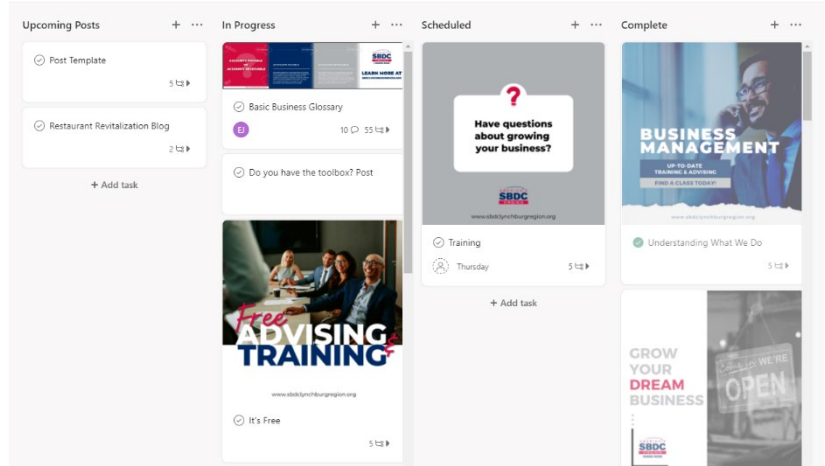
The data shown above is the expected costs for the yearly spending. The Paid Media Monthly Budget Planning and Reporting shows the results of the campaigns that will run. With a budget of \$5800, we can expect to have 2,250 registrations.

## Implementation Strategy

## Action Plan and/or Next Steps

### Media plan

Asana is a free organizational and task management tool that we use to manage the content that is produced and published on our social media platforms. Within Asana I have created a workflow process to ensure that posts move from the creative phase to the completed phase of the process.

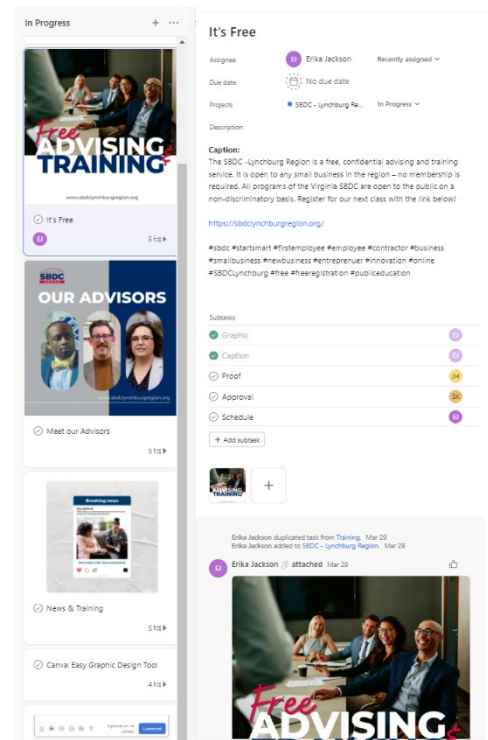


**Upcoming Posts** section includes all the ideas and concepts that are to be created into posts

**In the Progress** section is the pending area where graphics, descriptions, and captions are uploaded for proofing and approval. Within the In Progress stage of the posting, there are subtasks assigned to team members to ensure there are no errors before scheduling the post. The graphic and caption are first created before being proofed and approved.

**The scheduled** section allows the team to see what items have been scheduled to post.

**Complete** section lists all the posts that have been successfully posted to the platforms.



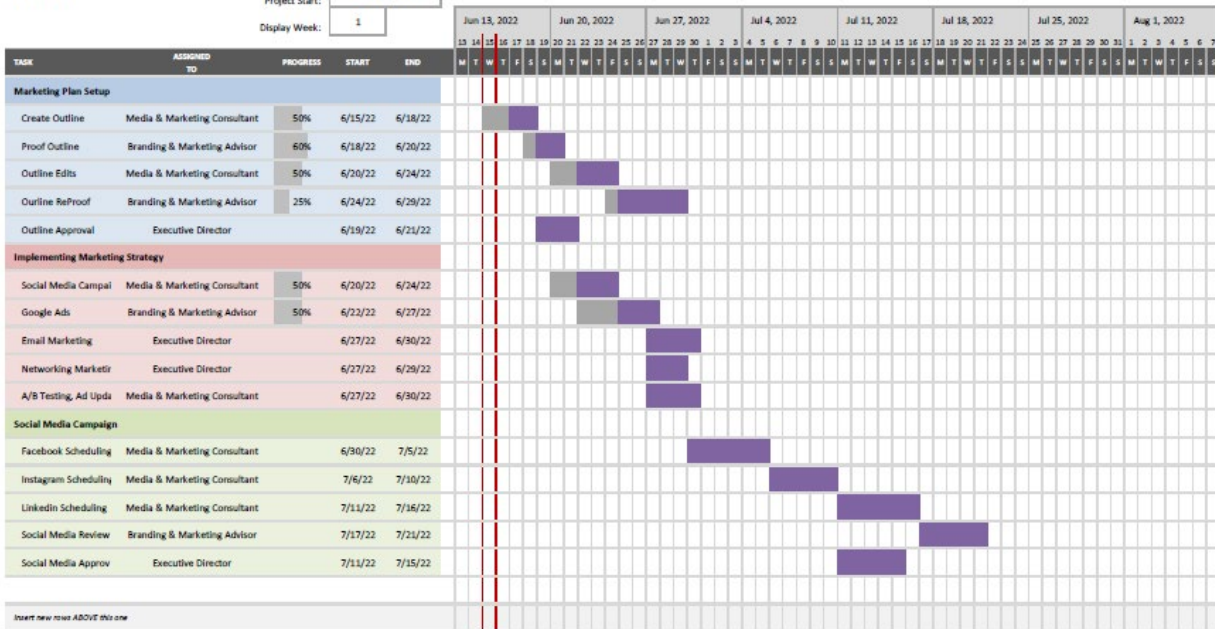
This process will be the same for running ads, with information in the description about the duration of the ads and budgets

## Schedule (Gantt Chart)

### SBDC Lynchburg Region Marketing Plan

SBDC Lynchburg Region  
Project Lead

Project Start:   
 Display Week:



## Assignments (Who does what when)

### Media & Marketing Consultant:

- In charge of the social media marketing
- Create graphics for ads and social posts
- Write copy for blog, posts, and ads

### Branding & Marketing Advisor:

- Advisor for customers that register for classes
- Review and proof campaign & marketing strategies
- Outline curriculum for classes

### Executive Director:

- Oversee campaigns and budget
- Approve final posts and ads
- Manage email marketing
- Attend/host event networking

## Evaluation Method

How do you know if your marketing plan is working?

To track if the marketing plan is working the following equation is used to calculate the success rate of lead conversions to customers.

$$\text{Conversion Rate} = \frac{\text{Total number of interactions}}{\text{Total number of event attendees}}$$

For example, if there were 50 conversions out of 1,000 interaction the rate would be 5% because  $50 \div 1,000 = 5\%$  (Google, n.d.). As the percentage increases that informs the company that they are on the right track.

### Lead tracking systems

Leads can come from various locations:

- In-Person Meetings – having a face-to-face conversation can generate potential leads. These meetings often take place at various events and workshops, such as ones hosted at the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance.
- Content Marketing – social media is a two-way street that allows both the organization and potential leads to reach out to one another.
- Company Website – leads can be generated when filling out information on the company website, such as subscribing to the mailing list.

When a lead is established the company will begin nurturing the lead to convert them into a customer. To track the online leads we would use Google Analytics. Google Analytics provides a ton of data that is useful for tracking website metrics and goals, like form competition (Holmes, 2022). For the leads that are made in person, a spreadsheet can be created where we document where the lead is in the buyer's journey.

### Sales reviews

Sale is tracked by how many people register for the events. We will track the attendance to evaluate the success of our services.



## Other

While an increase in the conversion rate shows that the marketing plan is working a decrease means that there need to be adjustments in the plan. By doing A/B testing SBDC - Lynchburg Region can track what working and what isn't. A/B testing, or split testing, is an experiment where the audience is split to test several variations in a campaign to determine which performs better (Cox, 2022). Some of these adjustments may include:

- Updating target audience
- Changing/redesigning graphics
- Refocusing ad spend
- Altering verbiage of ads

Running multiple tests when creating ads, can allow a company to understand what their audience responds to more and adjust their plan as needed.

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## Appendices

“Lynchburg Region” is used throughout the document to represent the inclusion of the areas served by SBDC - Lynchburg Region. The region includes Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford & Campbell Counties, and the City of Lynchburg.

Currently, SBDC - Lynchburg Region already has a Facebook and Instagram page. For this project, I focused more on LinkedIn, a platform that we currently do not utilize.