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A REGIONAL APPROACH TO GROWTH: BCA, LAUNCH PARTNERSHIP SIGN MOU TO ALIGN NORTH ALABAMA FOR THE FUTURE

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MOU SIGNING BETWEEN JIM PAGE (LAUNCH) AND HELENA DUNCAN (BCA)

A REGIONAL APPROACH TO GROWTH: BCA, LAUNCH PARTNERSHIP SIGN MOU TO ALIGN NORTH ALABAMA FOR THE FUTURE

North Alabama is an economic engine that continues to build momentum. From Huntsville's global leadership in aerospace and defense to expanding manufacturing and logistics operations throughout surrounding counties, the region has become one of Alabama's most dynamic regions.

The region's leaders understand something important: North Alabama's future success depends not just on individual communities, but on how the entire region works together.

That understanding led to the creation of Launch Regional Partnership,

an organization designed to bring together business leaders, local governments, educators, and economic development professionals to align strategies and plan for the region's long-term growth.

"Business and civic leaders in North Alabama recognized that the region's long-term economic success depended on stronger collaboration across county lines," said John Allen, CEO of the Huntsville Committee of 100 and member of the Launch Board of Directors.

Launch was formed in 2014 through the Launch 2035 initiative, which encouraged leaders to think beyond local boundaries and begin planning for the region's economic future over the next two decades.

At the time, workforce initiatives, economic development efforts, and infrastructure discussions were

happening in silos, but over the last 12 years they have begun happening in conjunction across the Tennessee Valley.

"Launch was designed to serve as a neutral convener that connects public, private, and nonprofit partners across the region," Page said.

The next step in that convening role was a statewide partnership.

In early March, the organization agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Business Council of Alabama. This MOU will create new opportunities that align regional priorities with broader economic policy conversations across the state.

"Our mission has always been to serve as a unifying force for North Alabama," Page said. "This partnership with BCA reinforces our shared commitment



JIM PAGE (LAUNCH), ALABAMA HOUSE SPEAKER NATHANIEL LEDBETTER, CYNTHIA CRUTCHFIELD (CEO OF INNOVATE ALABAMA), AND JEFF SAMZ (CEO OF THE HUNTSVILLE HOSPITAL HEALTH SYSTEM) AT THE ANNUAL STATE OF THE REGION EVENT IN AUGUST 2025

to collaboration, innovation, and long-term economic vitality. Together, we can better connect local efforts to statewide priorities.”

Through the partnership, Launch will help elevate North Alabama’s priorities, such as workforce development, infrastructure investment, and economic competitiveness, to a broader audience of business leaders, elected officials, and policymakers.

“Regional collaboration is essential to Alabama’s long-term economic success,” said Helena Duncan, President and CEO of the Business Council of Alabama. “Launch has built a strong foundation in North Alabama by bringing business and community leaders together around shared goals. We are proud to formalize this partnership and work alongside them to further strengthen the region’s economic momentum.”

The partnership reinforces the idea that regional innovation and statewide economic strategy can complement one another.

ONE ECONOMIC ECOSYSTEM

Today, Launch serves a 13-county footprint across North Alabama, helping communities align priorities, share research, and coordinate initiatives that strengthen the region’s overall competitiveness.

While North Alabama includes dozens of cities and counties, its economy functions as a single interconnected system.

Workers commute across county lines each day. Employers recruit talent from throughout the region. Infrastructure systems, from transportation networks to utilities, serve communities that rely on one another.

“North Alabama functions as a single economic ecosystem even though it is governed by many separate jurisdictions,” Page said.

Because of that reality, collaboration has become essential to addressing the region’s most pressing needs.

“Collaboration allows the region to address workforce shortages, infrastructure demands, and quality-of-life needs in ways no single community could accomplish alone,” Page said.

A UNIQUE REGIONAL ECONOMY

North Alabama’s economy is distinct from many other regions of the state. Anchored by Redstone Arsenal, Cummings Research Park, and a growing network of advanced manufacturers and technology companies, the region has become a hub for innovation and high-skill industries.



REGIONAL FOCUS GROUP THAT LED TO ROADMAP FOR THE REGION



REGIONAL FOCUS GROUP SESSION

At the same time, Launch's 13-county region includes both rapidly growing metropolitan areas and rural communities with different economic profiles and workforce needs.

"Our workforce strategies have to support both high-skill innovation sectors and traditional industries such as manufacturing, logistics, and agriculture," Page said. "Launch helps bridge those differences by bringing regional partners together to develop solutions that benefit the entire region."

PLANNING FOR THE NEXT CHAPTER

In 2025, Launch completed a comprehensive strategic planning process designed to guide the organization's work in the years ahead.

The process, facilitated by the University of North Alabama, included extensive research, data analysis, and focus groups with community leaders across the region. The result was a new long-term strategic framework known as the Roadmap for the Region.

"The Roadmap for the Region aligns our 13-county footprint around shared priorities like workforce development, entrepreneurship, infrastructure planning, leadership cohesion, and regional advocacy," Page said.

LOOKING AHEAD

As North Alabama continues to attract investment and population growth, Launch leaders say regional collaboration will remain critical to sustaining that momentum.

Future priorities for the organization include strengthening workforce pipelines for high-growth industries, expanding collaboration around infrastructure and transportation planning, supporting entrepreneurship, and ensuring the region speaks with a unified voice on issues affecting economic competitiveness.

All of which align with BCA's mission.

Ultimately, the goal remains the same as when Launch was first created: helping communities across North Alabama work together to build a stronger region.

"Regional collaboration is the single most powerful driver of economic success," Page said.

The Business Advocate is published by the Business Council of Alabama, a non-partisan, statewide business association representing the interests and concerns of nearly 1 million working Alabamians through its member companies and its partnership with the Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama. For more information on the Business Council of Alabama, please contact us at (334) 834-6000 or visit us online at bcatoday.org.