



## Small Businesses

An entrepreneurial spirit that fosters innovation and supports businesses during and after the pandemic will help Alexandria thrive.

### The Opportunity

Our businesses are vital to our City's continued success. Unfortunately, many business owners are struggling in the wake of COVID-19, whose many effects will be felt for years to come. These hardships are particularly felt by women-owned and people of color-owned businesses, which due to structural barriers and discriminatory financial lending practices, have been deprived of federal economic relief. We need to support our business community every step of the way, from planning and opening, to growing and weathering crises like COVID-19. Infrastructure, capital improvements, and access to capital through a variety of initiatives, including public-private partnerships, will help small businesses thrive.

### Goals

- Cultivate partnerships with Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), community banks, credit unions, and other organizations with expertise in servicing underrepresented communities. This will ensure that all local grant programs for business owners include set asides for resident-owned, women-owned, and people of color owned businesses, and that solutions for business preservation are prioritized
- Continue to provide tax relief for business owners that are unable to make payments due to the pandemic
- Extend favorable regulatory changes that support businesses' ability to operate during phased reopening
- Partner with local business owners and Visit Alexandria to expand support for destination marketing, buy-local promotions, advertising, placemaking, storefront and capital improvements, and other public relations activities
- Work directly with Alexandria's new Racial and Social Equity Officer to ensure that the design of our local contracting and procurement programs result in government spending and economic opportunities that are inclusive of a variety of Alexandria small business owners
- Engage the private sector to create programs that allow businesses to shift toward digital operations and business models that enable businesses to stay in operation beyond COVID-19
- Support businesses that want to expand their access to broadband services and deploy new technology to make their establishments more competitive
- Establish business incubators in areas like the West End to foster workforce development and support for *existing* business owners while the market recovers from COVID-19
- Use data to assess whether we are sufficiently supporting our small business community and be open to pivot strategies as needed

## Let's Work Together

- How can we expand opportunities to listen directly to the needs of small business owners?
- How can we measure and report business data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and income to understand the makeup of our business community?
- How can we ensure our efforts as a city are equitable, and identify and resolve any barriers to success?
- How might we set clear goals and specific timeframes to achieve them? Will we hold ourselves accountable through annual public performance reports and learn lessons from those results?
- Given the ongoing response to COVID-19, how do we help small business owners adapt their business models to comply with health regulations to keep us all safe and healthy?

## Alyia's Approach

Alyia is committed to advancing equitable results. Alyia knows that the people who are affected by a problem are most likely to know what's needed to fix it. She is prepared to reach out, ask questions, hear all perspectives, and review the data. She will work with the community to marshal our collective imagination to figure out next steps and implement a plan.