



**Black
Country
2.0**

Re-Booting Re-Building Re-Bounding

POWERING RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY ACROSS THE REGION



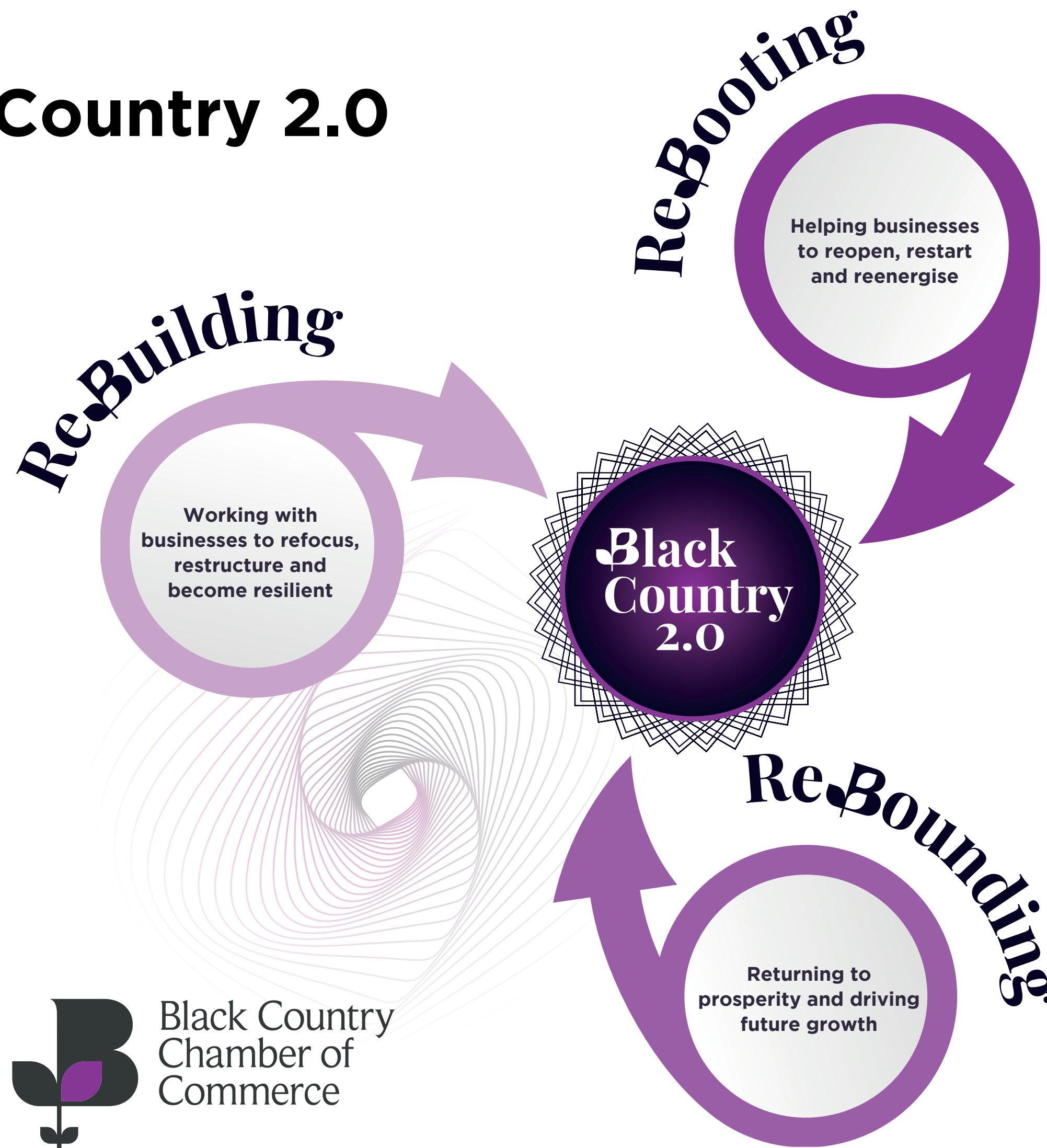
Introducing Black Country 2.0

Last year saw significant disruption to how we live and do business with COVID-19 continuing to overshadow many of our plans and operations for some time to come. For employers and businesses throughout the region, the effects of the COVID-19 emergency and its economic impact are also taking place during a period when the post-Brexit trading landscape is shaping around us. It has never been more important for us to work together, learn from one another and demonstrate to the world that the Black Country remains firmly and resolutely open for business.

The Chamber has been here for the regional business community for nearly 200 years; helping firms of all sizes and sectors to prioritise and overcome obstacles which limit growth and productivity. Our economy now stands at a crossroads and Black Country 2.0 will frame all of our activity and support services over the next 12 months and into 2022 as we help businesses to navigate in these challenging times.

Black Country 2.0 is more than just a campaign, it is a joined-up call to action and a rallying cry for businesses, business owners, industry leaders and decisionmakers to come together and work with the power of our Chamber network to ensure that, as a region we can reboot, rebuild and rebound.


Corin Crane, CEO
 Black Country Chamber of Commerce



YOUR REGION NEEDS YOU!

Time and time again, the Chamber has proved its credentials as the leading business support agency within the region, a natural partner and a thought leader.

The Chamber has remained a constant point of strength and seal of confidence many regional businesses have turned to over the last two centuries. During that period, we have continued to do what we do best – acting as an enabler, partner and champion for the local economy and our businesses no matter what their size or sector.

We are the respected and valued voice of the Black Country business community and Black Country 2.0 is a focused and comprehensive programme which celebrates the strengths of our local firms and ensures that those making decisions which will impact our firms are fully aware of our needs and challenges.

Jude Thompson, President
 Black Country Chamber of Commerce



HELP US DELIVER BLACK COUNTRY 2.0

Your region needs your help and you can play a vital role in helping to drive forward our economic priorities. Whether you are looking for the perfect opportunity to gain maximum exposure for your brand, looking to upskill your managers and future leaders or want to help reach policymakers and influencers there are a range of ways you can get involved with Black Country 2.0.

CONTACT calumnisset@blackcountrychamber.co.uk
 or call **0330 024 0820** for more information.

SUPPORTED BY THE FOLLOWING BUSINESS PARTNERS



WHY OUR REGION NEEDS BLACK COUNTRY 2.0

As we progress through the 21st Century, the local economy and its businesses are facing significant pressures from a number of factors. Black Country 2.0 will provide businesses with the analysis and information they need to ensure that our collective regional business needs are being listened to at the highest levels.

THE BLACK COUNTRY ECONOMY AT THE START OF THE 2020s

Before the pandemic, the West Midlands and the Black Country region had a population whose living standards were improving following the 2008 economic crisis. Whilst there had been a slow and steady progress over the previous decades, the region was still tackling long standing economic inequalities during this period.

- GVA per head in 2018/2019 is 65% lower than the national average
- Upskilling and training was limited with businesses reluctant to take on apprenticeship responsibilities
- The Black Country is underinvested in terms of major infrastructure projects
- The region continued to face high levels of unemployment

Action is needed to plug skills gaps, make the case for investment and combat longstanding inequalities

THE BLACK COUNTRY COMPETING IN A GLOBAL MARKET

Since the 2016 Referendum on the UK's membership of the EU, businesses across the region lacked the clarity, direction and detail needed to remain competitive and do business overseas with markets both within and outside of the European Union in a post- Brexit world. With the new UK and EU Trade & Co-operation Agreement now in place, importers and exporters are now entering the real transition phase and dealing with a legacy of:

- Investment and spending decisions deferred by businesses for nearly 6 years
- Expensive contingency plans needed to deal with the uncertainty and minimise disruption to supply chains
- Consequences of trading in an environment of new restrictions, increased bureaucracy and systems being tried, tested and implemented in real time

Importers and exporters need to be able to get their goods and services to global markets quickly and profitably

COVID-19

The COVID-19 emergency further exposed the vulnerabilities and weakness within our local economy and had a profound impact on the way businesses operate with entire sectors remaining at risk and the health and wellbeing of our families, friends and employees continuing to be affected.

- Confidence in consumer spending, depressed trade growth, business failures and redundancies will continue to impact liquidity and debt
- Young people are twice as likely to work in sectors severely affected by lockdown measures
- Low earners are seven times more likely to work in sectors which have shut down
- The visitor and night-time economy continue to be impacted

Calling on businesses and their employees to receive the support needed to ensure that the region builds back stronger

Black Country 2.0 will be the Chamber's Flagship Campaign

Throughout 2021 and into 2022, the campaign will have focus on three distinct phases

Re-Booting

February 2021 - April 2021

Helping businesses to restart, reenergise and reopen

Re-Building

May 2021 - October 2021

Working with businesses to refocus, restructure and build resilience

Re-Bounding

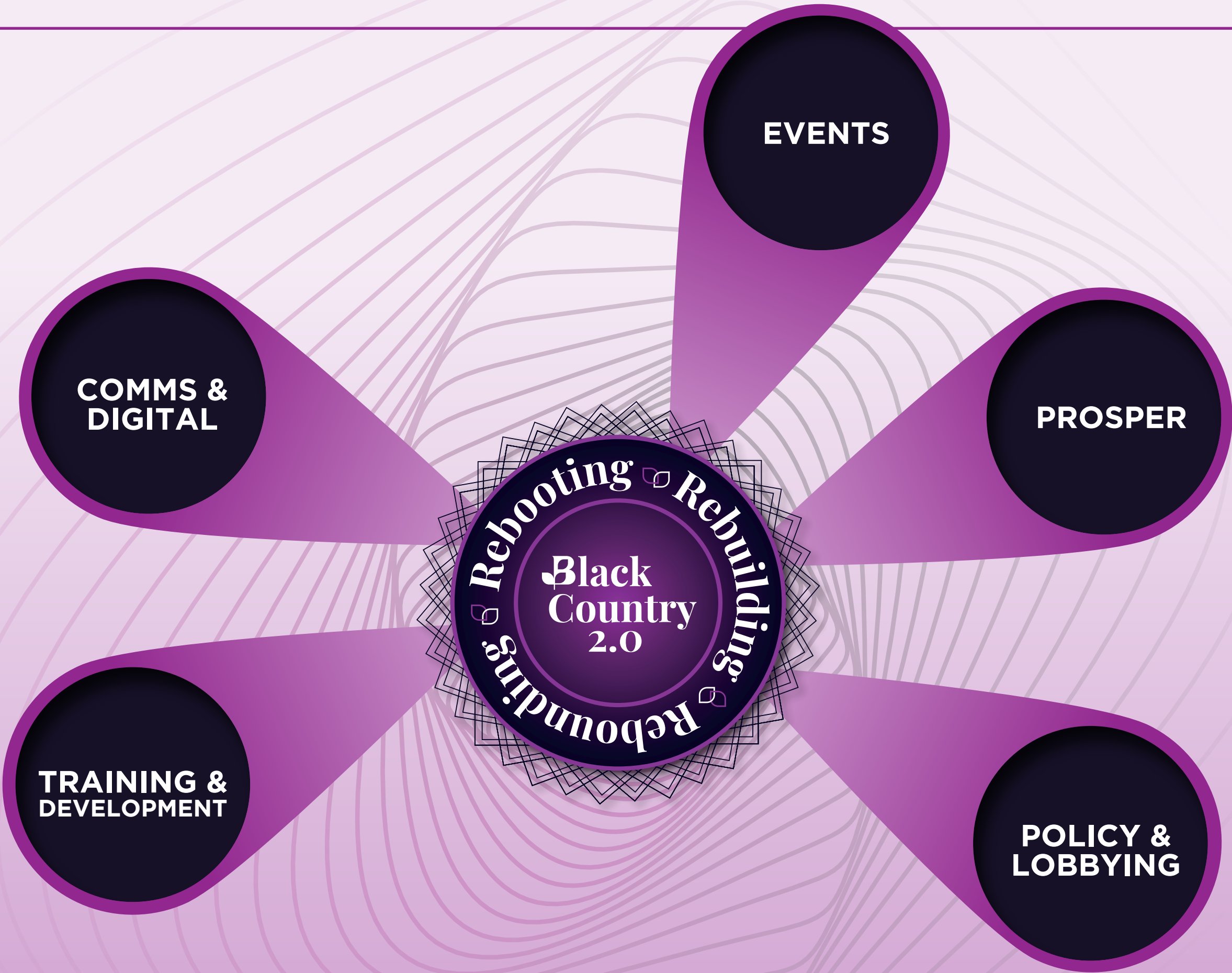
November 2021 - February 2022

Working with sectors businesses to return to prosperity and growth

The campaign will encompass a number of the Chamber's work

Black Country 2.0 will be brought to life through the Chamber's existing channels which have some of the highest levels of business to business reach and engagement in the region.

- Raising awareness of the issues which matter to the Black Country and its businesses
- Providing Chamber members with the latest news, information and analysis
- Enabling a joined up, sector-wide regional call to action
- Priming and enabling Chamber members to respond positively and effectively to a challenging and evolving trading landscape
- Shining a spotlight on the needs of the regional business community to grow resilience and further economic prospects across sectors and industries





ReBoot (FEBRUARY 2021 - APRIL 2021)

COVID-19 has amplified the vulnerabilities and weakness within the regional economy (exacerbated by decreasing levels of business investment, BREXIT uncertainty, cashflow and confidence). The ability of the local economy to recover and adapt is linked to levels of liquidity and debt, consumer spending and trade growth. Barriers to returning optimum trading levels include local lockdowns, redundancies, skills shortages and lack of clarity.

During this period, we will:

Support businesses to return to physical delivery / operations or evolve to a blended approach and concentrate activity which drives skills, minimises job losses / business failures, rebuild supply chains and instilling confidence.

POLICY	EVENTS	PROSPER	CHAMBER FOCUS
<p>Analyse announcements and translate this into what this means for members.</p> <p>Key pressure on Number 11 and develop a 'Black Country Business Asks' in advance of budget.</p> <p>Highlight and maintain focus on 'Black Country Business Needs' in the run up to local elections and the WMCA Mayoral election.</p>	<p>Regular Virtual Briefings for members which go through the latest news and analysis.</p> <p>Live reactions and activities exploring announcements and updates.</p> <p>Events including West Midlands Expo, Legal & HR Updates, Contract and Tender Opportunities from Big Infrastructure Projects</p>	<p>February: 2021 - Looking Ahead, Doing Business a COVID-19 World: Year 2; New EU & Black Country Relationship.</p> <p>April - What the Budget Means for Black Country Businesses; Cashflow; Access to Finance; Liquidity; Equity</p>	<p>Digital awareness campaigns and communications activity which support the focus aims above.</p> <p>Launch of Director Development Programme, Chamber Think Tank</p>



ReBuilding REBUILDING (MAY 2021 - OCTOBER 2021)

For businesses to compete locally, nationally and globally they need a firm competitive footing and confidence. The Black Country needs a recovery built on the basis of a society and economy which won't necessarily be operating as they did just 12 months previously. To rebuild effectively and stay competitive, businesses and certain key sectors will need to find new levels of efficiency and productivity whilst trading in conditions prone to disruption.

During this period, we will:

Provide businesses with the tools and information to stay enabled, motivated and energised during periods of uncertainty, support our members in vulnerable businesses / sectors to build resilience and work with them to lay the foundations and build the frameworks to stay open and stay responsive.

POLICY	EVENTS	PROSPER	CHAMBER FOCUS
<p>Analyse announcements and translate this into what this means for members.</p> <p>Campaign on issues that make the cost of doing international business prohibitive.</p> <p>Raise awareness of the key skills shortages and ensure that no group or generation is adversely affected in a future economy.</p>	<p>Regular Virtual Briefings for members which go through the latest news and analysis.</p> <p>Recruitment, Retention and Restructuring</p> <p>Boosting productivity through Workplace Wellbeing and Skills</p> <p>Exploring Governance, Leadership</p> <p>Brexit Transition - Six Months On</p>	<p>June: 2021 - Leading the Black Country; Leadership, Governance and Boards; Family Businesses - The Next Generation of Leadership</p> <p>August 2021 - Investing in Our People; Tackling the Skills Gaps in the Black Country; Learning & Development</p> <p>October 2021 - Black Country Around the World; Black Country Products and Services in the Global Marketplace</p>	<p>Digital awareness campaigns and communications activity which support the focus aims above.</p> <p>Launch of the Black Country Business Top Five Priorities for Policymakers and Influencers</p>



BUSINESS IS DONE BETTER TOGETHER



ReBouncing REBOUNDED (NOVEMBER 2021 - FEBRUARY 2022)

Driving sustained future growth is essential for long term business viability and the region's economic recovery. The Black Country can not be left behind when it comes to investment, infrastructure, connectivity and access to national and global markets.

During this period, we will:

Help businesses to have the plans, systems and capacity to stay responsive and resilient to tackle the challenges and embrace the opportunities of 2021 and beyond and champion the necessary change to overcome longstanding economic barriers.

POLICY	EVENTS	PROSPER	CHAMBER FOCUS
<p>Analyse announcements and translate this into what this means for members.</p> <p>Lobbying for policy restructure to legislation which holds back businesses including planning systems, R&D investment, sustainable business</p>	<p>Regular Virtual Briefings for members which go through the latest news and analysis.</p> <p>Green Business</p> <p>Technology and Cybersecurity</p> <p>Black Country Business Awards</p> <p>Black Country Business Festival</p>	<p>December: 2021 - Towards a New Black Country Economy; What Will the Region Look Like in 5 Year's Time?; Painting the Black Country Green</p> <p>February 2022 - The Year Ahead; Commonwealth Games Shines a Spotlight on the Region</p> <p>October 2021 - Black Country Around the World; Black Country Products and Services in the Global Marketplace</p>	<p>Digital awareness campaigns and communications activity which support the focus aims above.</p> <p>Launch of the Black Country Business Manifesto 2021 - 2023</p>



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BLACK COUNTRY 2.0 CONFERENCE

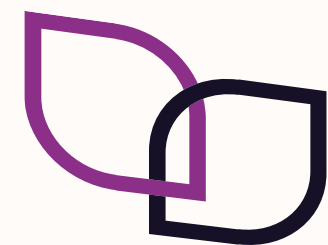
BLACK COUNTRY 2.0: TOWARDS A NEW BLACK COUNTRY ECONOMY

A blended virtual and in-person conference featuring keynote speakers, Q&As and presentations from economists, business leaders and influencers to explore the progress the region has made following the disruption caused by COVID-19 and BREXIT, successes and best practice in an altered trading landscape and setting the economic focus for future prosperity.

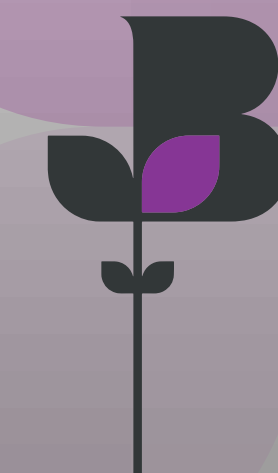
Full-details, line-up and opportunities for businesses to get involved will be announced closer to the time.

MAY 2021*

*subject to COVID-19 restrictions



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Black Country
Chamber of
Commerce

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