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## **Chattanooga Chamber Appoints Alexis Willis Director of Small Business and Entrepreneurship**

*Willis to direct INCubator at the Hamilton County Business Development Center*

**Chattanooga, Tenn. (Dec. 4)** - Alexis Willis will join the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce as Director of Small Business and Entrepreneurship beginning Jan. 8, a Chamber spokesperson announced today. Willis will direct the activities of the INCubator, which is located in the Hamilton County Business Development Center on the North Shore.

“Alexis is a dynamic leader with a great background in our entrepreneurial ecosystem,” said Charles Wood, Vice President of Economic Development for the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce. “Her energy and enthusiasm will play a critical role in helping move the INCubator to the next level as we continue this critical partnership between the Chamber and Hamilton County.”

Willis will lead a dynamic and passionate team of five members at the INCubator. Most recently, Willis served as Director of Business Support for The Company Lab, also known as CO.LAB. During her tenure there, she built foundational support for the strong partnership between CO.LAB and LAUNCH Chattanooga. As a certified CO.STARTERS facilitator, she has trained dozens of startup owners and in 2016 was nominated Startup Advocate of the Year by the community through the Chattanooga Startup Awards program.

Willis serves on the boards of the Virginia College of Business as well as Stove Works, a multi-use venue for artists. She’s a founding member of the Greater Chattanooga Sankofa Fund for Civic Engagement, a giving circle committed to supporting Chattanooga’s communities of color; and she served as a board member for the Leadership Chattanooga Alumni Association for two years, having graduated the program in 2014.

Her first company, Natural Beautiful Me, was founded in 2011 as a platform to empower women to value their identity and embrace their natural beauty. Her second brand, The Red Lipstick Experiment, launched in 2013. Willis earned a B.A. in English-Writing from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga with a minor in Business Administration, along with several professional certifications.

At any given time, about 70 businesses call the Hamilton County Business Development Center home. Clients generally stay for up to three years before graduating. A [recent economic impact survey](#) reported INCubator clients generated \$17 million in revenues and investment over a 12-month period. Of that, \$13 million represents new dollars brought into the Hamilton County economy.

Next year the INCubator will celebrate 30 years of providing businesses the support services they need to succeed through a three-year, progressive development program.

At the INCubator, clients share administrative services, manufacturing and office space, training workshops and use of the building's Technology Conference Center, as well as access to free onsite business counseling from the Tennessee Small Business Development Center (TSBDC).

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