

Rural Communities Receive Grants To Attract 225 New Jobs And \$82 million In Private Investment

By Administrator

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The North Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA) approved 17 grant requests to local governments totaling \$5,535,271, Governor Roy Cooper announced today. The requests include commitments to create a total of 436 jobs, 211 of which were previously announced. The public investment in these projects will attract more than \$82 million in private investment.

“Rural North Carolina needs investments in water and sewer systems and buildings to attract better paying jobs,” said Governor Cooper. “These grants will help improve the quality of life and put more money in the pockets of rural North Carolinians.” The North Carolina Department of Commerce’s team of rural economic development professionals supports the RIA’s work. RIA members review and approve funding requests from local communities. Funding comes from a variety of specialized grant and loan programs offered and managed by N.C. Commerce’s Rural Economic Development Division, led by Assistant Secretary for Rural Development Kenny Flowers. Grants can support a variety of activities, including infrastructure development, building renovation, expansion and demolition, and site improvements.

“These new grants will help rural communities attract jobs and investment while building capacity for growth,” said Assistant Secretary Flowers. “The Rural Economic Development Division at Commerce and the Rural Infrastructure Authority are proud to engage and collaborate with local leaders to bring economic success to every corner of our state.”

The RIA approved nine grant requests under the state’s Building Reuse Program in three categories:

Vacant Building Category

- **Town of Edenton (Chowan County):** An \$80,000 grant will support the reuse of a 49,000-square-foot building, where Nebraska Plastics, Inc., a manufacturer of vinyl fencing, decking and railing, plans to locate. Overall, the company expects to create 22 jobs with a \$1.08 million investment, while an investment of \$84,656 is tied to this grant.

- **Cleveland County:** A \$140,000 grant will support the reuse of a 117,000-square-foot building in Shelby. Riddley Retail Fixtures, Inc., a manufacturer of custom store fixtures and displays for the retail marketplace, plans to locate operations at this facility, creating an expected 23 jobs while investing \$3,569,373 in the project.

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- **City of Rocky Mount (Edgecombe County):** A \$300,000 grant will support the reuse of a 47,000-square-foot building. Armorock, a manufacturer of polymer concrete corrosion-proof manholes and other structures, plans to locate in this facility. The overall project is set to create 55 jobs with an investment of \$6.6 million, while 41 jobs are tied to this grant.

Existing Business Building Category

- **Cherokee County:** A \$50,000 grant will support the expansion of a building in Murphy, where Aegis Power Systems, Inc., a supplier of AC/DC power supplies for custom applications in a variety of markets, plans to add 2,000 square feet to the existing facility. The company expects to create eight jobs and invest \$249,180 in the project.

- **Town of Tarboro (Edgecombe County):** A \$500,000 grant will support the renovation of a 425,000-square-foot building that is occupied by Sara Lee Frozen Bakery, LLC, a manufacturer of a variety of baked goods. As the company increases its capacity to meet demands through this project, it expects to create 108 jobs and invest \$19.8 million, with \$18.5 million of that investment tied to this grant.

- **Lincoln County:** A \$200,000 grant will support the renovation of a 235,000-square-foot building in Lincolnton that is occupied by Robert Bosch Tool, a manufacturer of power tools, power tool accessories and measuring tools. With this project, the company expects to create 28 jobs and invest \$25,214,443.

- **Randolph County:** A \$230,000 grant will support the expansion of a building in Thomasville, where Lawrence Industries, Inc., an injection molding company that manufactures hardware for windows, plans to add 15,000 square feet to the existing facility. The company expects to create 29 jobs and invest \$2,445,000 in the project.

Wayne County:

A \$400,000 grant will support the expansion of a building in Goldsboro. Atlantic Casualty Insurance Company, which provides specialty lines property and casualty insurance products, plans to add 30,000 square feet to the company's existing facility at this location. The project is expected to create 40 jobs, with a private investment of \$10,429,595.

Rural Health Category

- **Cherokee County:** A \$115,000 grant will support the reuse of a 7,000-square-foot building in Andrews. Erlanger Western Carolina Hospital plans to transform the building into an urgent care center that will include diagnostic capabilities and will operate seven days a week. This project is set to create 12 jobs and attract \$419,072 in private investment.

The Building Reuse Program provides grants to local governments to renovate vacant buildings, renovate and/or expand buildings occupied by existing North Carolina companies, and renovate, expand or construct health care facilities that will lead to the creation of new jobs in Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties and in rural census tracts of Tier 3 counties. The RIA approved one request under the state's Economic Infrastructure program:

- **Town of Wallace (Duplin County):** A \$60,000 grant will help the Town make infrastructure improvements to a site, which Murphy Family Ventures, LLC, will develop to accommodate the construction of an 86-room Fairfield Inn. The improvements are set to include increased capacity of the existing pump station along with upgraded electronic controls and power supplies. This project is expected to create 12 jobs and attract \$139,144 in private investment.

The Economic Infrastructure Program provides grants to local governments to assist with infrastructure projects that will lead to job creation. The program gives priority to jurisdictions in the 80 most economically distressed counties (Tiers 1 and 2) and can help build water and sewer lines, wastewater treatment plants, natural gas lines, public broadband infrastructure, roadways, rail spurs, and other infrastructure allowed under program guidelines. The RIA approved one request under the state's Rural Demolition grant program:

- **Richmond County:** A \$75,000 grant will assist Richmond County in the demolition and removal of a 52,540-square-foot building that has asbestos, along with dilapidated structures surrounding the building. Infrastructure available to the site, which formerly housed a manufacturing company, includes water, sewer, natural gas, fiber and power.

The Rural Demolition program provides grants to local governments to support the demolition of a publicly-owned, persistently vacant building to encourage site rehabilitation and site availability for economic development purposes. Eligible applicants are units of local government located in either a Tier 1 or Tier 2 county, or a rural census tract in a Tier 3 county.

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The RIA approved one request under the state's federally-funded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) - Economic Development program:

- **Town of Tabor City (Columbus County):** A \$150,000 grant will support improvements to road access and drainage to meet the needs of Atlantic Packaging's manufacturing and distribution operations. Founded in Tabor City, the company produces a variety of packaging equipment and related products for business and industry clients. The company expects to create 10 jobs and invest \$140,000 with support from the infrastructure improvements.

The Community Development Block Grant program is a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program administered in part by N.C. Commerce. CDBG's economic development funds provide grants to local governments for creating and retaining jobs. Project funding is based on the number of jobs to be created and the level of economic distress of applicant communities.

The RIA approved five requests under the state's Industrial Development Fund - Utility Account program:

- **Elizabethtown (Bladen County):** A \$248,960 grant will assist the Town with the extension of water and sewer infrastructure to a section of the Elizabethtown Airport Industrial Park that contains three industrial incubator facilities. In addition to serving existing companies, the infrastructure improvements will open an additional 50 acres for future development and are expected to result in the creation of new jobs and approximately \$4 million in new investment.

- **Craven County:** A \$352,500 grant will assist the County in the extension of water and sewer infrastructure to the county's 60-acre industrial park. The addition of this infrastructure is expected to enhance the County's ability to successfully recruit companies to locate on-site.

- **Cumberland County:** A \$1,946,511 grant will support the County in providing sewer infrastructure to a site along Interstate 95 that serves as a critical piece of the County's economic development strategy. The infrastructure would immediately serve 100 acres and represents a joint venture with the private sector that could support up to 1.1 million square feet of new industrial space.

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- **City of Kinston (Lenoir County):** A \$187,300 grant will support the City in an effort to increase water pressure to meet the fire suppression needs for Jetstream Aviation's facility in the Global TransPark. The aircraft maintenance and refurbishment company expects to create 103 jobs over the first two years and invest \$1 million after the water upgrades are made to the building.

- **Wayne County:** A \$500,000 grant will help the County provide a second point of industrial road access at ParkEast Industrial Park in Goldsboro. The site is currently home to seven companies, and the road infrastructure improvements will particularly support Atlantic Casualty Insurance Company as it expands its operations there.

The Industrial Development Fund – Utility Account provides grants to local governments located in the 80 most economically distressed counties of the state, which are classified as either Tier 1 or Tier 2. Funds may be used for publicly-owned infrastructure projects that are reasonably expected to result in new job creation. The IDF – Utility Account is funded through a process tied to the state's signature Job Development Investment Grant (JDIG) program. When JDIG-awarded companies choose to locate or expand in a Tier 2 or Tier 3 county, a portion of that JDIG award is channeled into the Utility Account.

In addition to reviewing and approving funding requests, the N.C. Rural Infrastructure Authority formulates policies and priorities for grant and loan programs administered by N.C. Commerce's Rural Economic Development team. Its 17 voting members are appointed by the Governor, Speaker of the House and Senate President Pro Tem. The North Carolina Secretary of Commerce serves as a member of the Authority, ex officio. For additional information about N.C. Commerce's Rural Economic Development Division, visit www.nccommerce.com/rd.