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Creating Entrepreneurial Communities

Lessons from 10 rural demonstrations in North Carolina

Rural Center Project Team

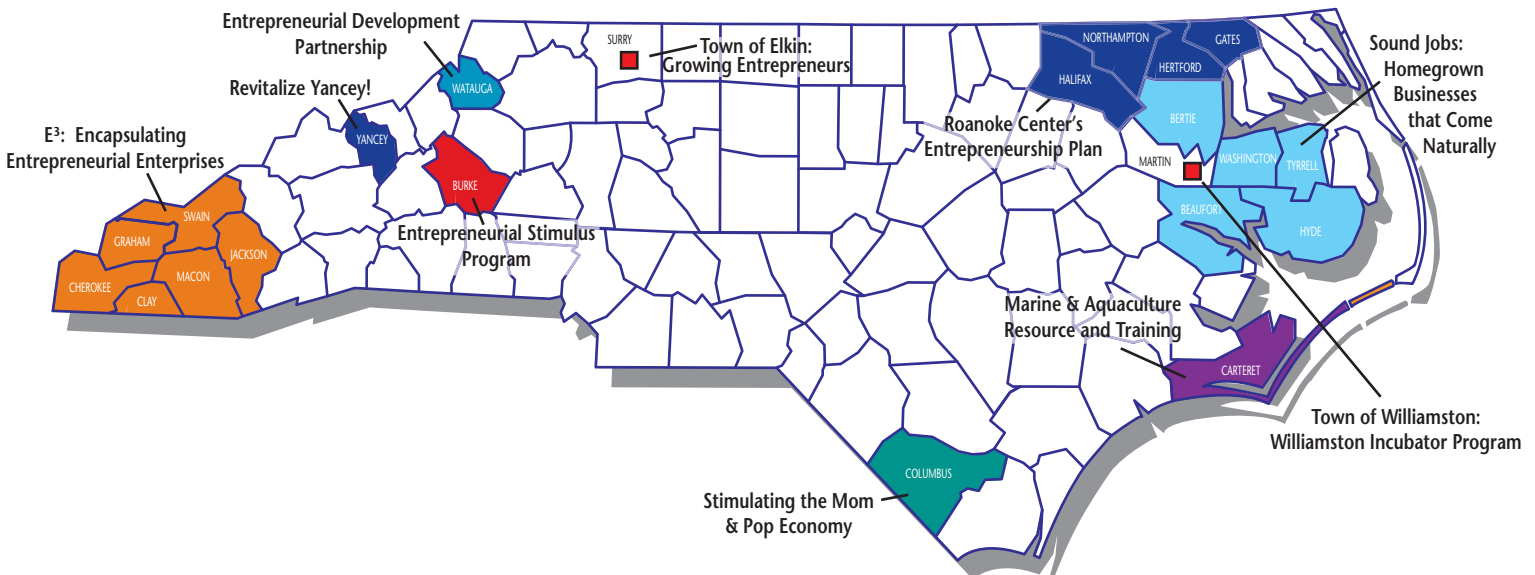
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At a glance: In recent months, 10 economically distressed communities in North Carolina have accomplished something rather remarkable. Using a small public investment from the N.C. Rural Economic Development Center and N.C. Department of Commerce, the communities have established results-oriented entrepreneurship development programs that have trained local entrepreneurs, grown businesses and produced jobs. From August 2004 through fall 2005, the 10 communities helped nearly 400 people gain access to entrepreneurial skills training or other types of business services. Most impressive, they created 49 new businesses and 75 jobs in 22 rural counties, with most of the jobs going to low and moderate income workers. This report is a snapshot taken in early 2006 of the demonstration programs. The communities are expected to continue their efforts well beyond the first year, demonstrating that entrepreneurship can be supported at the community level. The report highlights the activities of each demonstration team and offers lessons for other rural North Carolina communities interested in starting programs of their own.

"This program is much bigger than the initial jobs that will be created with the grant funds. It's about establishing a culture of entrepreneurship that will sustain small business development in rural communities for years to come."

Billy Ray Hall,
N.C. Rural Center President, early 2004

Community Entrepreneurship Demonstrations



Bertie County is participating in both the Sound Jobs and Roanoke Center's Initiatives

Entrepreneur: A person who organizes, operates and assumes the risk for a venture.

- American Heritage Dictionary

Entrepreneurship: The process of identifying, developing and bringing a vision to life. The vision may be an innovative idea, an opportunity or simply a better way to do something. The end result is the creation of a new venture.

- Jay Kayne, The Entrepreneurship Center at Miami University of Ohio

Community Entrepreneurship Demonstration

In late 2003, the Rural Center and the N.C. Department of Commerce's Division of Community Assistance (DCA) joined in a collaborative venture to determine if a small public investment in rural entrepreneurship development would lead to jobs and business creation in distressed communities. The Commerce Department contributed \$440,000 from the North Carolina Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) toward the project, and the Rural Center contributed \$160,000 from its research and development budget. The center also offered its new Institute for Rural Entrepreneurship to guide and staff the demonstration.

Communities interested in competing for demonstration grants were invited to participate in two-day workshops to learn about the steps involved in designing an entrepreneurial support project. Fifty-nine communities sent some 200 local leaders to the workshops. As part of the application process, communities were required to form a local team to lead their project and to design programs that build on the assets of their communities and address specific local challenges.

Of the 59 interested communities, 24 followed up with grant requests and eleven projects were funded. Three projects tackled issues on a regional scale; seven focused on individual towns or counties. (One community withdrew, but is now developing an entrepreneurship effort as part of a regional economic development hub.) The grants were awarded to:

- **Encapsulating Entrepreneurial Enterprises (or E³)**, covering six counties in the far west, plus the Qualla Boundary, Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation
- **Roanoke Center's Entrepreneurship Plan**, involving five counties in the northeast
- **Sound Jobs: Homegrown Businesses that Come Naturally**, covering five counties bordering on the Albemarle and Pamlico sounds
- **Entrepreneurial Stimulus Program** of Burke County
- **Marine and Aquaculture Resource Training (MART)** of Carteret County
- **Stimulating the Mom and Pop Economy** of Columbus County
- **Growing Entrepreneurs**, led by the town of Elkin in Surry County
- **Entrepreneurial Development Partnership** of Watauga County
- **Williamston Incubator Program** of Martin County
- **Revitalize Yancey!** of Yancey County

Grants ranged from \$30,000 to \$100,000, depending on the scope of the project. Funds were made available for the projects in August 2004, with up to 15 months to complete the work. During the demonstration, representatives of all 10 projects gathered twice to share experiences and advice.

Four Steps Toward Entrepreneurial Development

In designing and carrying out their projects, the Rural Center encouraged the local teams to consider four major steps in entrepreneurship program development:

Strategy: Pursue a realistic economic opportunity

Leadership: Build and connect local capacity

Implementation: Create value for the entrepreneurs

Sustainability: Leverage resources to maintain momentum

Following is a brief overview of how the project teams put these principles to work.

1. Strategy: Pursue a Realistic Economic Opportunity

Each project team built an entrepreneurship strategy based on local assets, including emerging clusters of entrepreneurs not already receiving business assistance. Some of the efforts were sector-focused, such as Carteret County's emphasis on boat-builders and Elkin's on tourism businesses. Other projects focused on the stage of development: Columbus County on start-up "mom and pop" businesses, E³ on small business owners with growth aspirations.

The Sound Jobs team focused its strategy on emerging markets – evident in the prevalence of bed and breakfast owners, retailers and tour guides in the region – and the region's commitment to the natural environment. It then incorporated leadership training and community development. Although the strategy focused on natural resource-based businesses, the partnership remained flexible enough to work with other types of entrepreneurs in developing sustainable businesses.



2. Leadership: Build and Connect Local Capacity

The 10 demonstration teams showed that a variety of organizations have the potential to lead an effective entrepreneurship development program. The local community college played the lead role in both Carteret and Columbus counties and figured prominently in Burke County. A regional university, Appalachian State, led the Watauga County effort. A local government was the central player in the towns of Elkin and Williamston. Nonprofits took the lead role in the Sound Jobs and Yancey County projects; these included a community development corporation, conservation groups and a cultural resources commission. A regional electric membership cooperative led the Roanoke Center effort and three experienced entrepreneurs led the E³ project.

Each type of organization offered different strengths in leadership. Appalachian State had access to faculty at the Walker College of Business who helped create and teach the small business workshop series. Carteret Community College linked boat-builders with its Marine Training and Education Center. Roanoke Electric Membership Cooperative was well connected to community leaders

through its broad membership base. Elkin's active arts council was able to mobilize the arts community for strong participation in events. The entrepreneurs in the E³ project were able to attract like-minded business people to their effort.

As these examples suggest, four key ingredients in creating a successful team are: 1) access to training programs, teachers and educational resources; 2) ties to community leaders to help create

an environment where entrepreneurship is understood and valued; 3) knowledge to find and connect credibly with entrepreneurs; and 4) one person to inform and connect all the partners and entrepreneurs. Team leaders must recognize their own strengths and weaknesses and seek out partners for the team with complementary skills and experiences.

The demonstration teams learned that partnerships should be established early, with each cooperating organization assisting in project design. It was important that each team member be committed to the project – to their own role as well as the overall mission. One person may fill more than one role, but that person should not fill all roles. New partners should be engaged as needed to create broader impact and fill gaps identified over time.

Lesson 1:

Organize the entrepreneurship support team to include individuals and groups with diverse and complementary skills, knowledge and contacts.

3. Implementation: Create Ongoing Value for the Entrepreneurs

Just as entrepreneurs pursue opportunities, build networks, create value in their products and services, and leverage resources, so must their supporters and service providers. Each community team started out by marketing their services to the types of entrepreneurs prevalent locally – such as

craftspeople in Yancey County and minorities wanting to become self-employed in the Roanoke region – but learned that as the clients advance, their needs changed. The community teams themselves had to become more entrepreneurial to remain relevant to their entrepreneurs. The community college in Columbus County responded by helping the entrepreneurs create an entrepreneur club for ongoing mutual support after completing education and technical assistance programs. They also tapped into e-commerce and digital literacy training from the e-NC Authority to help their home-based entrepreneurs. Principals from

the Burke and Sound Jobs teams pursued their own continuing education in entrepreneurship through such programs as Cooperative Extension's Creating Business Opportunities program and the Energizing Entrepreneurship curriculum offered by the Institute for Rural Entrepreneurship.

Three powerful ways the demonstration communities learned to create value for the entrepreneurs were:

- involving experienced entrepreneurs as mentors and program recruiters;
- creating continuous feedback loops for entrepreneurs; and
- raising community awareness through newspaper articles, radio spots, business plan competitions, or entrepreneur expos.

Lesson 2:

Focus on the local entrepreneurs. Continue to adapt and add value as their needs change.

4. Sustainability: Leverage Resources to Maintain Momentum

Each of the demonstration communities looked for ways that individual aspects of their projects could continue after the grant program concluded. Burke County, for example, leveraged the resources of the local economic development partnership and community college to create and maintain a new position of enterprise facilitator. The facilitator is now on the staff of Western Piedmont Community College's Small Business Center. Watauga County's economic development leadership has committed to helping fund continuing training workshops with the Appalachian Regional Development Institute. Lead organizations also used the program activities as a way to strengthen relationships across partner organizations, as E³'s lead entrepreneur did with Mountain Microenterprise Fund and others in southwestern North Carolina.

The organizations looked to entrepreneurs for assistance in creating and carrying on mentoring and networking opportunities, which are now ongoing among Harkers Island boat-builders in Carteret County and Burnsville's ceramic tile-makers in Yancey County. Columbus County's client entrepreneurs have created their own independent club. The High Country Business Network, an outgrowth of the Watauga project, now has dozens of entrepreneurs who enjoy free networking events sponsored by local chambers and banks.

In building momentum for the longer-term future of a community-based entrepreneurship effort, a few of the demonstration teams began to reach the youth in their communities. Sound Jobs and Carteret County's teams both offered summer youth entrepreneurship camps in 2005 using training provided by N.C. REAL (the Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning program).

N.C. REAL also trained three middle school teachers in the Burke County community of Valdese. The enthusiasm of young participants helps get parents and teachers motivated and supportive of entrepreneurship. Furthermore, while such programs may seed future entrepreneurial ventures, they also help young people understand the demands of entrepreneurship, increasing their potential value as employees for other business owners.



"The workshop was a chance for me to bounce my idea off of people to tell me honestly what I would need to do to make this business successful. It was the opportunity of a lifetime for me and a real blessing for the community." Lisa Clements, owner of the new Paradise Chocolatier in Boone.

"We saw a great interest on the part of the young people to start businesses here in the county."

Mavis Hill,
Tyrrell County Community Development Corporation

Measures of Success

While the ultimate goal of the Community Entrepreneurship Demonstration was job creation, the first step was the establishment of partnerships that would provide the necessary long-term support and encouragement for start-up companies and other small businesses. Most of the communities succeeded in this effort. Through entrepreneurial networks, local funding for full-time facilitators and other measures, they have committed to continuing the work of the demonstration. Most also are now active partners in the Institute for Rural Entrepreneurship's ongoing work to build an entrepreneur development system in each rural region of the state, in a project funded by the Kellogg Foundation.

Snapshot of Demonstration Communities

Project Name	Area Served	Targeted Entrepreneurs	Education & Training
Encapsulating Entrepreneurial Enterprises (E³)	Swain, Jackson, Macon, Clay, Cherokee and Graham counties and the Qualla Boundary	Existing small firms with growth potential	Foundations of Business course from Mountain Microenterprise Fund (MMF), referrals to education programs at community colleges and WCU.
Roanoke Center's Entrepreneurship Plan	Northampton, Halifax, Gates, Hertford and Bertie counties	Start-ups and microenterprises, primarily minority-owned	Roanoke Center hosts small business workshops led by the local community college.
Sound Jobs: Homegrown Businesses that Come Naturally	Tyrrell, Washington, Hyde, Bertie and Beaufort counties	Start-ups and microenterprises, including natural resource-based	Customized series of business start-up classes from Good Work, Inc.
Entrepreneurial Stimulus Program	Burke County	Start-ups and small businesses	Classes from the Small Business Center.
Marine and Aquaculture Resource and Training (MART)	Carteret County	Potential aquaculture and boat building entrepreneurs	Community college offered customized workshops to boatbuilders on Harkers Island in strengthening business skills.
Stimulating the Mom and Pop Economy	Columbus County	Start-ups and microenterprises	Business classes from the Small Business Center.
Growing Entrepreneurs	Town of Elkin (Surry County)	Arts, tourism and food-based start-ups and microenterprises; focus on fine and heritage crafts	Workshops from Yadkin Valley Craft Guild.
Entrepreneurial Development Partnership	Watauga County	Start-ups and small businesses	New series of small business workshops developed by ASU faculty.
Williamston Incubator Program	Town of Williamston (Martin County)	Downtown start-ups and small businesses	Business classes at Small Business Center; e-commerce classes at e-NC telecenter.
Revitalize Yancey!	Yancey County	Artisans and craftsmen	Business classes from the Small Business Center; art and design instruction from local craftsmen.

Strategies for supporting local entrepreneurs through education and training, technical assistance, access to capital, business networking and local culture and policy

Technical Assistance	Access to Capital	Business Networking	Local Culture and Policy
Intensive, industry-specific coaching from diverse team of experienced entrepreneurs. E ³ also examines other assistance providers prior to making referrals.	Entrepreneurs are actively investigating angel and venture capital sources. MMF is a startup lender and Sequoyia Fund assists Native American clients.	MMF maintains an active network of all graduates. Entrepreneurs refer clients to various networks including Blue Ridge Entrepreneurial Council.	Demo team leveraged a Cherokee Preservation Foundation grant to MMF to create a web-based referral system among service providers.
One-on-one confidential assistance for minorities interested in entrepreneurship.	The Northeast Asset Builders Coalition established seventeen volunteer Earned Income Tax Credit Sites for 2005.	Attendees to the Roanoke Construction Group training developed a network which increased business and construction opportunities.	Developed local, state, private and public partnerships and leadership development workshops through Roanoke-Chowan New Choices program.
Resources on environmental stewardship from Conservation Fund and Partnership for the Sounds.	Lead staff is an intake professional for the Rural Center's Microenterprise Loan Program.	Peer group from classes continues to meet within region. Networks include local churches.	NC REAL summer camp for youth hosted by 4H of Eastern North Carolina.
One-on-one assistance and referrals from a newly hired entrepreneurial facilitator who has owned a small business.	Entrepreneurial facilitator trained by N.C. Rural Center as a micro intake professional. Morganton has city-wide loan fund available to the program.	Town chambers offer meeting space for networking events.	Trained middle school teachers to teach NC REAL's youth entrepreneurship curriculum.
One-on-one business counseling from community college referrals to SBTDC, SCORE, university aquaculture scientists.	Lead staff is a Microenterprise Intake Professional.	Boat-builders together in workshops conduct business networking. Experienced business owners act as advisers to startups.	NC REAL summer camp for youth. Core Sound Waterfowl Museum hosts festivals that celebrate local culture and the self-employed economy.
One-on-one assistance and referrals from entrepreneurial facilitator. A woodcarver benefited greatly from a referral to web-based marketing help.	Countywide business plan competition with prizes.	Entrepreneurs created a local club for networking and mentoring.	Held a well-publicized business plan competition with community members as judges.
Apprenticeships with certified crafts professionals.	Lead staff trained as an intake professional for the Rural Center's Microenterprise Loan Program.	Craft guild and its senior members are an informal support network for local artisans.	Strategy builds on crafts heritage of Yadkin Valley and ties to wine industry.
One-on-one assistance from an experienced business owner as a mentor from the Entrepreneurial Facilitation Council.	ASU's SBTDC office helps find capital as needed.	Leaders of Entrepreneurial Facilitation Council helped form the new High Country Business Network.	HCBN's well-attended events have helped elevate local awareness and support for entrepreneurs. Watauga County will sustain the \$50,000 investment the CDBG made in the first year of the program.
One-on-one assistance from local business owner.	Downtown rental subsidies with match from landlord.	Telecenter in Williamston offers networking opportunities.	Use local radio and TV to highlight local entrepreneurs. Part of broader effort in Martin County to build entrepreneurial economy.
Hands-on help from master craftsman in use of ceramic tile-making equipment in crafts incubator. Cultural Resources helped launch new company Yancey Crafted Tiles.	Crafts incubator cost-saving way for clients to share the use of high-end tile-making equipment by the hour or day.	Yancey County Mountain Heritage Center is a joint marketing center for people in the crafts industry.	Held county-wide business plan competition. This grant leverages a broader effort in Yancey County to build a craft-based entrepreneurial economy.

It is also noteworthy that while only 10 communities received grant funding, 59 communities were interested enough in the demonstration to send representatives to two-day introductory workshops. Positive results also are evident in the activities and outcomes of the demonstration projects. During the 15-month period of the demonstration, 390 people availed themselves of the training, technical assistance and consultations offered through the 10 projects. More specifically:

- 275 people consulted with project teams about their business ideas
- 201 received referrals for professional business services
- 216 completed an entrepreneurial skills training program

Furthermore, even in this short time, the demonstrations documented the creation of 49 new businesses growing out of their programs. These businesses created the equivalent of 75 full-time jobs. Many more of the nearly 400 people who received help or training also are on the path to starting or growing businesses in the coming year.

The demonstration offered an especially hopeful sign for impoverished local communities. Low-to-moderate income individuals accounted for approximately half of the people who received some type of assistance through the demonstrations and benefited from two-thirds of the jobs created through the project.

Creating Entrepreneur Development Systems

As the demonstration communities learned, many business support services in North Carolina are largely unknown by rural entrepreneurs or not used because they find them confusing. The Rural Center heard this clearly in statewide focus groups conducted in 2003, just before the center established its Institute for Rural Entrepreneurship. (See the report *Understanding the Environment for Entrepreneurship in Rural North Carolina* on the center's website for more information.) A frustration expressed in those early focus groups was that information is organized by agency or program and not by the type of need, which is how business owners shop for help. One of the early activities of the Institute for Rural Entrepreneurship was to convene organizations active in North Carolina's current system of entrepreneur development. This group of organizations grew into the North Carolina Business Resource Alliance, whose members are working to make the support system more accessible by looking at their programs and organizations through their clients' eyes.

From what the Institute knew about entrepreneurs then and now, entrepreneurs want clear options and high-impact services they can access quickly at different points in their development. The research of the Institute and national entrepreneurship economists points to five main types of assistance that an effective entrepreneur development system at the state, regional or local level includes. Institute staff promoted and discussed these elements with the demonstration communities in the joint learning sessions held twice during the demonstration.

- Entrepreneurship education and training
- Technical assistance and counseling
- Access to capital
- Entrepreneurial networking
- Supportive culture and policy

Depending on the needs of the entrepreneurs they identified in their region, the rural demonstration sites emphasized some of these elements over others, but they all provided referrals

Demo Results at a Glance

- Between August 2004 and December 2005, the 10 rural entrepreneurship demonstration projects served a total of 390 people in rural North Carolina, 192 of whom were low to moderate income citizens.
- 75 new full-time jobs were created, 56 of them for low to moderate income people.
- 49 new businesses were started in rural North Carolina.
- 275 people received counseling about their business ideas.
- 216 people completed an entrepreneurial skills training program.
- 201 people were referred to business services.

to local services their own project team did not provide. See table on pages 6-7 for highlights of the entrepreneurship supports provided.

Each of the five elements is important to the individual development of entrepreneurs and the success of their enterprises. For maximum impact, the support elements must fit with the way entrepreneurs work and seek information – 24/7 – and the nature of the support and information must evolve over time along with the development of the business. For example, a startup entrepreneur might take a Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning (NC REAL) class to help develop the initial business idea and its feasibility. Once the firm is up and running, the owner may encounter a major opportunity to grow the business and seek a management coach and an equity investment.

Lessons for Community Entrepreneurial Development

The 10 demonstration communities learned that building an entrepreneurial support system requires a thorough, carefully developed plan. They grappled with how to devise a community-based strategy, with building leadership and implementation teams, and with ensuring the sustainability of their programs. If the 15-month demonstration could be boiled down into a few essential lessons, they would be these:

- Organize the entrepreneurship support team to include individuals and groups with diverse and complementary skills, knowledge and contacts, ensuring that the essential components of a comprehensive program are represented.
- Focus on the entrepreneurs themselves – starting with an understanding of their vision and abilities, and continuing to adapt and add value as their needs change. Even as the demonstration projects began to create their programs, they quickly realized they had to be flexible, open to new opportunities to better serve individual entrepreneurs and to build the local entrepreneurial culture.

Other rural communities interested in entrepreneurship as an economic development approach can benefit from the examples set by these 10 communities. More specifically, they should:

1. Initiate a local entrepreneurship effort following the basic four steps outlined here.
2. Attend a training session that focuses on team building and creating an actionable plan. Among the training possibilities are the Energizing Entrepreneurship program offered by the Rural Center's Institute for Rural Entrepreneurship. Local government officials also have the option of attending entrepreneurship seminars from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Government.
3. Create relevancy and value for entrepreneurs by working the way entrepreneurs must to survive – being proactive and flexible and leveraging community resources – to maximize economic benefit to both the business and community.

Entrepreneurial Resources for Communities

Program sponsors

[Institute for Rural Entrepreneurship](#) www.ncruralcenter.org/entrepreneurship
This arm of the N.C. Rural Center provides community-based entrepreneurship strategy and policy for rural community leaders throughout the state.

[N.C. Division of Community Assistance](#) www.ncdca.org
A division of the N.C. Department of Commerce, the agency assists local governments with community development, economic development, smart growth management and downtown revitalization.

Other resources and partners

[Appalachian Regional Development Institute](#) www.ardi.appstate.edu
This outreach arm of Appalachian State University makes faculty and professional staff available to address economic and business issues in northwestern North Carolina. The institute also convenes the new High Country Business Network.

[Center for Rural Entrepreneurship](#) www.ruraleship.org
The national center, an affiliate of the national Rural Policy Research Institute, conducts practice-driven research and evaluation of entrepreneurial development strategies in rural communities throughout the U.S.

[CFED](#) www.cfed.org
The national think tank combines community practice, public policy and private markets to expand economic opportunity. It concentrates on communities traditionally excluded from or limited by the mainstream economy.

[N.C. Cooperative Extension](#) www.ces.ncsu.edu
North Carolina Cooperative Extension gives our state's residents easy access to the resources and expertise of N.C. State University and N.C. A&T State University. Through educational programs, publications and events, Cooperative Extension delivers unbiased, research-based information to North Carolina citizens.

[e-NC Authority](#) www.e-nc.org
Based in the Rural Center, this authority is helping entrepreneurs in remote rural areas access and use information technology to improve their businesses, in part through Business and Technology Telecenters located in distressed counties.

[Good Work Inc.](#) www.goodwork.org
A nonprofit organization based in Durham, Good Work helps people start and expand small businesses through business training and ongoing assistance.

[Institute of Government](#) <http://ncinfo.iog.unc.edu>
A component of the School of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the institute provides education, advice and research support for state and local government leaders. Economic development has been added as an area of special focus.

[Junior Achievement of Eastern North Carolina](#) www.juniorachievement.net
The largest economic-education organization in the world, Junior Achievement works with business executives to educate and inspire young people to value free enterprise and understand business and economics.

Mountain Microenterprise Fund

www.mtnmicro.org

The non-profit organization provides business training, loans and one-on-one support to Western North Carolinians who want to start, expand or strengthen a small business.

N.C. REAL (Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning)

www.ncreal.org

The non-profit supports entrepreneurship and small business creation through youth and adult training programs and curricula offered through high schools, post-secondary institutions and community-based organizations.

N.C. Small Business and Technology Development Center

www.sbtdc.org

A service of the University of North Carolina system at 17 offices statewide, SBTDC's focus is improving the competitiveness of existing businesses through management counseling.

Small Business Center Network

www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/businesssupportservices

Small Business Centers are housed in each of the state's 58 community colleges and are often the first stop for rural business owners seeking professional assistance. Among the services they offer are education and training programs, business counseling, information and referrals.

The Institute for Rural Entrepreneurship would like to thank the N.C. Department of Commerce's Division of Community Assistance for its financial support and administration of this project, the demonstration community teams for their enthusiasm and good sportsmanship throughout this experiment, and the many organizations that partnered with the communities in assisting North Carolina's rural entrepreneurs to realize economic opportunity.

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Progress Energy • RBC Centura • RJR Tobacco • Sanford Holshouser
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Observations from Participating Communities

Education

"People with a dream to start a business often don't have the skills to reach the dream."

"Free seminars at the Small Business Center and the NC REAL training program both can be very helpful for guiding people through the basics."

Technical Assistance

"The facilitator/coach position is a big help to those folks who just need to be nudged, referred, or assisted."

"Go to the entrepreneurs. Focus on profit improvement. Be patient, flexible and determined."

"Don't give up. Don't miss any opportunities. Every small improvement helps."

Access to Capital

"Our two biggest needs are loan capital and affordable space."

Entrepreneurial Networks

"How critical is the need for mentoring and networking opportunities for new and potential entrepreneurs!"

Supportive Culture and Policy

"The entire community needs to embrace enterprise development, from the grassroots to the business and elected leaders."

"There is a large network of regional support, but there are holes in the network. Each community needs to identify the holes and connect the network."

The mission of the Rural Center is to develop, promote and implement sound economic strategies that improve the quality of life for rural North Carolinians, with special focus on individuals with low to moderate incomes and communities with limited resources.

A program of the Rural Center, The Institute for Rural Entrepreneurship works with numerous partners to stimulate and support the development of micro, small and medium-size enterprises in North Carolina's 85 rural counties.

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