

EMERGING STRONGER

2020 EDPNC ANNUAL REPORT

FROM OUR GOVERNOR

As I start my second consecutive term as governor, I am encouraged by the state's continued recruitment of companies bringing significant investments and jobs to North Carolina. Even in the midst of a pandemic, North Carolina has remained on the short list of companies actively looking for the best place to locate or expand.

State-supported project wins in 2020 are expected to create \$6.3 billion in new investment and more than 20,000 new jobs in North Carolina. Both tallies are among the state's highest for any single year in over a decade, and both will play a vital role in our path to full recovery from the economic impacts of COVID-19.

Our working together to successfully recruit businesses — and the jobs they create — is one reason why North Carolina consistently ranks among the top five states in well-regarded business rankings. We have been *Forbes*' pick as the No. 1 Best State for Business for three years running. In 2020, we rose to No. 1 on *Site Selection* magazine's list of the nation's top state business climates, tying for first with only one other state. *Business Facilities* magazine also named North Carolina its 2020 State of the Year. In addition, site consultants most frequently cited the EDPNC as the "best in class" statewide economic development organization in the country in a survey conducted by Development Counsellors International.

Since I first took office in 2017, more than 80,000 new jobs have been announced in North Carolina through projects won with state support. So I'm very pleased to call attention to all the economic development partners — local and state, public and private — who work together to achieve such results. They include the state Department of Commerce, the General Assembly, and the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC), as well as the local and regional economic development organizations and private-sector organizations and companies that support our efforts.

Economic development is critical to the state's recovery from the pandemic, as well as to the goal of making North Carolina a place of opportunity and prosperity for everyone. And that remains one of my top priorities as governor.

Sincerely,
Governor Roy Cooper



FROM OUR CHAIRMAN & CEO

The Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, along with the entire state, faced unprecedented headwinds in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To meet these historic challenges, the EDPNC deployed innovative solutions to support our hard-hit tourism industry, small-business exporters, and existing manufacturers. We did this even as we continued to successfully recruit new corporate facilities to the state.

In 2020, the EDPNC, working closely with our local and state partners, helped close 147 new corporate location and expansion deals expected to create 20,026 jobs and \$6.3 billion in capital investment.

The announced new investment total was the state's largest in any year over the past decade, and well above the prior decade-topper of \$4.4 billion in 2019.

Equally important, the number of new jobs connected to state-supported project wins in 2020 was only slightly less than the 21,675 jobs announced in 2019, which itself is the high-water mark going back the past 10 years.

Our business-recruitment results typically get the most public attention. But as we look back over 2020, we're equally proud of our work to support the state's economy in other ways, much of it in direct response to the pandemic.

Most notably, when people became unwilling to risk long-distance travel during the pandemic, our Visit NC tourism promotion division quickly shifted its primary focus away from marketing to out-of-state visitors. Instead, Visit NC focused on educating hospitality businesses on how to safely reopen, and residents on how to venture out in a safe, socially distant way.

Visit NC developed and managed marketing of the \$15 million "Count On Me NC" public health initiative, in collaboration with the North Carolina Restaurant & Lodging Association, the state Department of Health & Human Services, and the N.C. State University Extension Program.

This campaign delivered high-visibility messaging across radio, TV, digital, print, and outdoor display channels, encouraging hotels, restaurants, attractions and other hospitality businesses to sign up for free COVID-related online safety training that would help reassure customers and patrons. The training reached thousands of businesses across the state. The campaign also targeted North Carolina residents and prospective travelers from contiguous states, promoting their awareness and safe patronizing of participating businesses listed on the CountOnMeNC.org website.

Also during the pandemic, the EDPNC's international trade team helped North Carolina exporters pivot to online sales development at a time of closed borders, travel shutdowns, and canceled in-person trade events. For example, we helped companies participate in newly emerging virtual trade shows and trade missions. We leveraged federal funding to assist exporters in paying for website translation and search-engine optimization to facilitate effective selling strategies in international markets.

At the outset of COVID-19, our existing industry support team, which supports the retention and growth of manufacturers already operating in the state, helped manufacturers understand how they could be designated as essential and therefore maintain continuity of operations.

Throughout the year, this same team served as an information clearinghouse by helping manufacturers navigate the dizzying array of COVID recovery grant and loan programs. They also referred manufacturers to databases of potential new partners when their supply chains experienced disruption from the pandemic.

Our annual report provides more detail about EDPNC's performance and activities in 2020. Our successes are shared with members of the state's diverse economic development team, led by Governor Roy Cooper and including the North Carolina Department of Commerce, the General Assembly, regional and local economic developers, and private-sector allies.

We are honored to work with these partners every day, especially as North Carolina continues to bounce back from the economic impacts of the pandemic. And we look forward to continuing to work with them as we all begin to navigate the new normal of a post-COVID world.

Sincerely,



Frank E. Emory, Jr.
EDPNC Board Chairman (2017-2020)



Christopher Chung
EDPNC Chief Executive Officer



OUR MISSION

The Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC) improves the economic well-being and quality of life for all North Carolinians. We do this by collaborating with state, regional, local, and private-sector partners in new business recruitment, existing industry support, international trade and export assistance, small business start-up counseling, and tourism promotion.

We are a team of economic development professionals who take pride in:

- Performing at a high level and holding ourselves accountable for our results.
- Building strong partnerships and collaborating both inside and outside the organization.
- Providing excellent customer service through every interaction.
- Being an accessible, innovative, knowledgeable resource for all our stakeholders.
- Serving as ambassadors for North Carolina through our work.

BUSINESS RECRUITMENT & DEVELOPMENT

In 2020, the EDPNC and partners recruited projects announcing the highest total of planned capital investment and the second-highest number of anticipated new jobs in any year over the past decade.

[Read About Our Year](#)

**“WHEN COVID ENDED MY
HOSPITALITY CAREER, I FOUND
RESCUE WITH TOP-NOTCH
BIOAGILYTIX.”**

Jesse Cerna,
BioAgilytix

BioAgilytix, a leading life science testing company in Durham, recently hired Jesse Cerna as a payroll accountant. Her job is one of 878 being created as part of a \$61.5-million expansion recruited in 2020 by the EDPNC and partners.



OUR PROJECT WINS

The EDPNC, working with local and state partners, helped close deals on 147 business recruitment projects in 2020. These wins are expected to create the following in North Carolina over the next several years:

20,026

ANNOUNCED NEW JOBS

\$6.34 BILLION

ANNOUNCED CAPITAL INVESTMENT

\$1.37 BILLION

NEW ANNUAL PAYROLL

[View Detailed Project Breakdown](#)

TOURISM

When people became unwilling to risk long-distance travel during the pandemic, Visit North Carolina, part of the EDPNC, shifted its marketing focus from attracting out-of-state visitors to educating businesses on how to safely reopen and people on how to venture out in a socially distant way.

[Read About The Campaign](#)

**“VISIT NC CO-OP MARKETING
HELPED US PROMOTE OUR
GRANVILLE HAUNT FARM IN A
TIGHT BUDGET YEAR.”**

Angela Allen,
Granville County Tourism Director

The Granville County Tourism Development Authority used \$10,650 in Visit NC co-op marketing program credits to promote the drive-through Granville Haunt Farm, drawing nearly 18,000 visitors after COVID canceled other fall events.



COUNT ON ME NC HIGHLIGHTS

In 2020, Visit NC marketed the Count On Me NC public health initiative, which gave hospitality businesses access to free online COVID-related safety training as they reopened. Consumers turned to CountOnMe.org to identify and patronize participating businesses. As part of the campaign, Visit NC issued cooperative marketing credits to local tourism offices so they could advertise safe visitation to their communities.

65,336

PEOPLE COMPLETED SAFETY TRAINING FOR THEIR NC BUSINESSES

479,932

VISITS TO THE COUNT ON ME NC WEBSITE

1 IN 4

NC RESIDENTS SURVEYED AWARE OF COUNT ON ME NC

284.6 MILLION

PAID MEDIA IMPRESSIONS GENERATED

1.5 BILLION

EARNED MEDIA IMPRESSIONS GENERATED

EXISTING INDUSTRY

Our existing industry expansions managers work to retain businesses already operating in the state by helping them identify and clear obstacles to growth.

[Read About Our Year](#)

**“OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN AND
ADVANCE ARE LIMITLESS. SARA
LEE HAS TRULY BEEN GOOD TO
ME.”**

Sharnelle Arrington,
Sara Lee Frozen Bakery

Sara Lee Frozen Bakery in Tarboro hired Sharnelle Arrington in 2020 under a 108-job, \$19.8 million expansion. The EDPNC existing industry team helped connect Sara Lee to \$1 million in state incentives supporting its growth.



EXISTING INDUSTRY NUMBERS

The existing industry team helps assemble local and state resources that support an existing manufacturer’s success and growth. Those resources range from workforce development programs to expertise on implementing more cost- and energy-efficient manufacturing practices. The team also helps businesses navigate state incentives to support an expansion.

1,322

**BUSINESSES ASSISTED BY EXISTING
INDUSTRY MANAGERS**

71%

**OF BUSINESSES SERVED WERE IN TIER 1
& 2 COUNTIES**

3,601

**JOBS ANNOUNCED THROUGH
EXPANSIONS SUPPORTED BY MANAGERS**

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Trade show support has always been a core service of our international trade team. But when COVID-19 shut down in-person trade conferences and slashed international travel, we emphasized some new approaches to help North Carolina exporters sell internationally.

[Read About Our Year](#)

"OVER THE YEARS, EDPNC HAS HELPED US GENERATE GLOBAL SALES IN AEROSPACE, FURNITURE-MAKING AND OTHER INDUSTRIES."

Alyson Onsrud-Strickland,
C.R. Onsrud, Director of Project Management

Free EDPNC exporting workshops helped C.R. Onsrud, a Troutman-based CNC machinery manufacturer, stay current in 2020 on topics including duty-free exporting and grants that help manufacturers conduct international business online during COVID-19.



INTERNATIONAL TRADE NUMBERS

Our services include helping North Carolina businesses access international market intelligence, meet new distributors, connect to export financing, and tap federal grants that enable small businesses to exhibit at key international trade events. We also host export-education workshops on topics ranging from export documentation to how the pandemic is affecting the state's key export markets.

633

BUSINESSES ASSISTED BY TRADE TEAM IN 2020

\$1.14 BILLION

IN EXPORTS LINKED BY BUSINESSES TO OUR SUPPORT

SMALL BUSINESS ADVISORS

Our team of small-business advisors counsels entrepreneurs about the licensing and permitting requirements of starting a business in North Carolina, primarily through its toll-free number.

[Read About Our Year](#)

**“WHAT A GREAT SERVICE. BLNC
ASKED ME SOME SIMPLE
QUESTIONS, THEN PROVIDED
THE INFORMATION I NEEDED.”**

Robel Mamo,
Free Zone Home Care

EDPNC's small-business advisory services, formerly known as Business Link North Carolina (BLNC), helped Robel Mamo understand the state registration and licensing requirements to establish Free Zone Home Care in Charlotte in fall 2020. Mamo and friends from his church, Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Charlotte, founded the venture.



SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT NUMBERS

The number of inquiries to EDPNC small-business advisory services was slightly higher in 2020 than the prior year. Much of the increase was due to businesses seeking referral to loan programs that could help them survive the pandemic.

24,948

**CASES HANDLED BY SMALL-BUSINESS
ADVISORS**

71%

OF CALLS CAME FROM STARTUPS

100

**NC COUNTIES HAD PEOPLE SERVED BY
SMALL-BUSINESS ADVISORS**

ONWARD AS ONE

The EDPNC conducted an intensive two-month marketing campaign in 2020 to expand awareness of the free services we offer that can help North Carolina businesses meet the challenges of COVID-19. Campaign messaging included the video below.

[Read About The Campaign](#)

ONWARD AS ONE HIGHLIGHTS

“Onward as One,” an integrated advertising and public relations campaign, targeted North Carolina business leaders to drive awareness of EDPNC resources available to assist them during the pandemic and beyond. The campaign included hosting and generating media coverage of eight regional virtual roundtable discussions featuring local businesses assisted by the EDPNC.

7 MILLION

PAID DIGITAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS GENERATED

2.7 MILLION

VIEWS OF CAMPAIGN VIDEOS

900,108

EARNED MEDIA IMPRESSIONS GENERATED

826

**PEOPLE REGISTERED TO ATTEND THE ONWARD AS ONE
ROUNDTABLES**

INVESTORS & FINANCIALS

The Catalyst investor newsletter. *Investor Spotlight* videos. Our *Fireside Chat* webinar series. *Five Questions With* profiles of business influencers. In 2020, the EDPNC introduced new ways to engage businesses across the state with our organization.

[Read About Our Year](#)

**“WE INVEST IN EDPNC BECAUSE
WE RECOGNIZE THAT NORTH
CAROLINA’S FUTURE IS
EVERYONE’S SHARED
RESPONSIBILITY.”**

Benjamin Teague,
Biltmore Farms

Benjamin Teague is vice president of strategic development at Asheville-based Biltmore Farms LLC. The premier community development firm and EDPNC investor cultivates sustainable communities, capital investment and jobs in Western North Carolina.



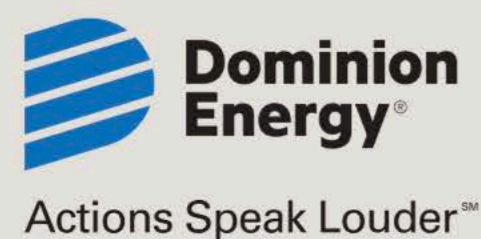
THANK YOU TO OUR EDPNC INVESTORS

The following list includes the companies, organizations and individuals that invested in our fundraising campaign ending in December 2020.

CHAIRMAN'S COUNCIL (\$100,000+)



CORPORATE COUNCIL (\$50,000+)



EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (\$25,000+)



FLOW LEXUS



NORTHWOOD OFFICE



ROBINSON
BRADSHAW



**The Joseph M. Bryan
Foundation Of Greater
Greensboro, Inc.**

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL (\$10,000+)

Agracel, Inc.

Alliance Consulting Engineers

Bell Foundation

Chatham Park

Crescent Communities

Curi

ECS Southeast, LLP

Edifice

First National Bank

Gray Construction

Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton

Moore & Van Allen

Nexsen Pruet

PNC

Poettker Construction

Samet Corporation

Shelco, LLC

SteelFab, Inc.

Truist

Z.V. Pate, Inc.

DIRECTORS COUNCIL (\$5,000+)

AT&T

Carroll Industrial Development

Jeffery & Linda Turner Charitable Foundation

Lee-Moore Capital Company

Lincoln Harris

Parker Poe

Pfizer, Inc.

Southern Industrial Constructors, Inc.

FRIENDS OF EDPNC (\$500+)

Armstrong Relocation

Fidelity Bank

Gilbane

Joan Higginbotham

Jones-Onsow Electric Membership Corporation

Larry McAdams

Metcon, Inc.

Sheila Knight

Ward and Smith, P.A.

BUSINESS RECRUITMENT & DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW

2020: A DECADE-TOPPING YEAR FOR PROJECT INVESTMENT

Despite many companies putting expansion plans on hold during the pandemic, the EDPNC and its partners closed deals on 147 corporate relocation and expansion projects resulting in the announcement of 20,026 new jobs and \$6.3 billion in capital investment in 2020.

The announced investment, in fact, was North Carolina's highest in any year in over a decade, eclipsing the \$4.4 billion announced in 2019.

“Even more importantly, the number of jobs announced in 2020 was only slightly below the 21,654 state-recruited jobs in 2019. And that was a decade-topping year for new jobs associated with project wins,” said Melissa Smith, EDPNC vice president of business recruitment and development. “Job creation will play a role as the state continues to recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic.”

COVID-19 did affect the overall number of projects the state actively competed for in 2020. Forty companies in the EDPNC's active-project pipeline placed their plans on hold, including international companies unable to travel for in-person site visits. But new projects continued to enter the potential project pipeline.

Overall, the state's business-recruitment success in 2020 contributed to *Site Selection* magazine ranking North Carolina as the nation's top state business climate in 2020 (in a two-way tie with Georgia) and *Business Facilities* magazine naming North Carolina its 2020 State of the Year.

Top investment-generating announcements included Centene Corp.'s choice of Charlotte for its \$1-billion East Coast headquarters and technology hub, a project committed to creating 3,237 jobs with company expectations of up to 6,000.

Other investment leaders included Pratt & Whitney's \$650-million, 800-job high-tech turbine airfoil production facility in Asheville and Eli Lilly & Company's \$474-million, 462-job plant in Research Triangle Park, the company's first manufacturing facility in North Carolina. There's also Nestlé Purina PetCare's \$450-million, 300-job plant in Eden; Grifols Therapeutics' \$351.6-million, 300-job expansion in Clayton; and United Parcel Service's \$262.2 million, 451-job main hub in Mebane.

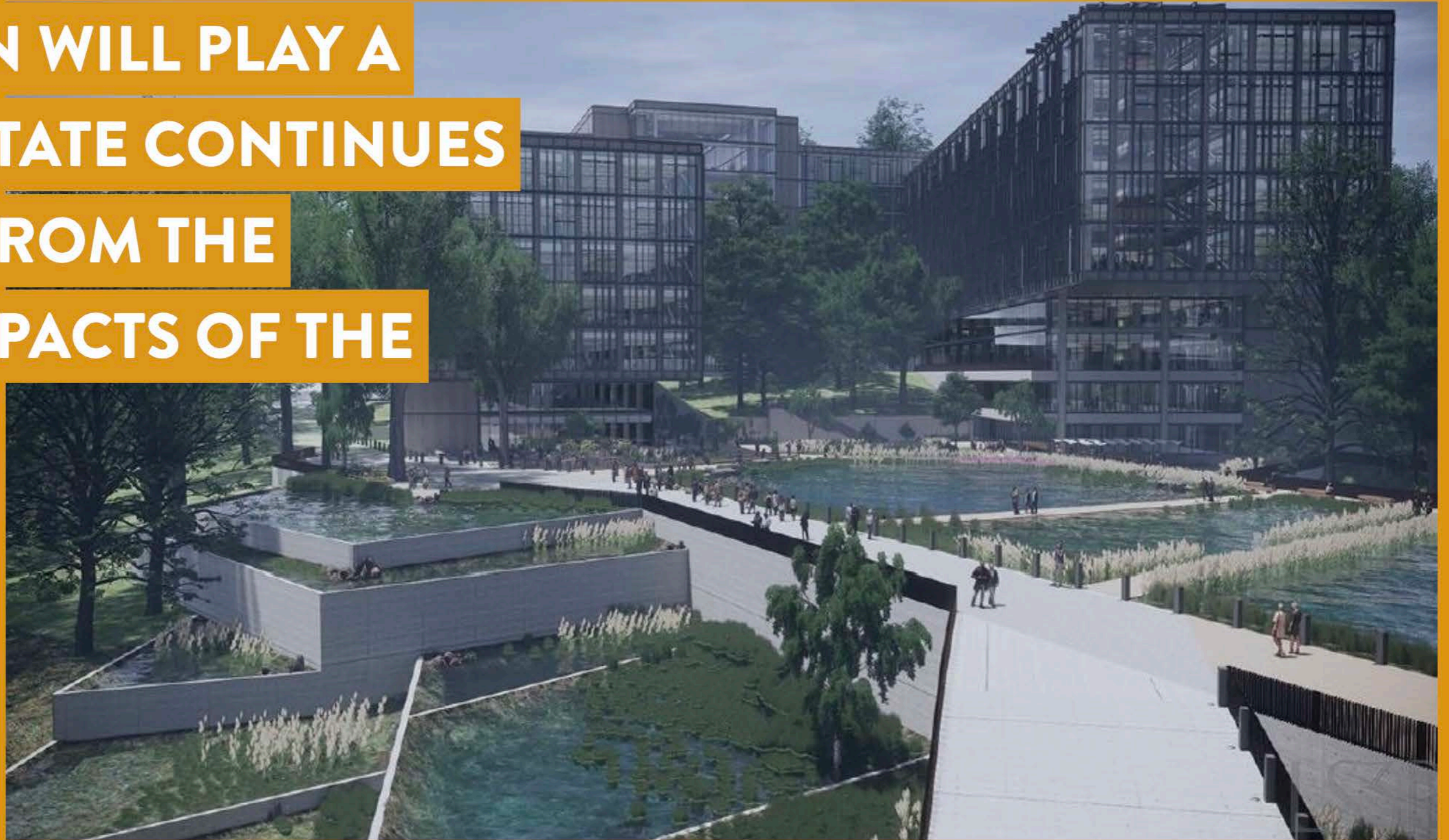
The Centene, Pratt, Eli Lilly, and UPS wins were also among the top job-creating projects announced in 2020. Joining that list were Bandwidth, Inc.'s 1,165-job, \$103.4-million expansion of its Raleigh headquarters; BioAgilytix Labs' 878-job, \$61.5-million expansion in Durham; Grail Inc.'s new 398-job, \$100-million laboratory facility in Research Triangle Park; and Ontex Group's 352-job, \$73-million plant in southern Rockingham County.

Continued Below

**“JOB CREATION WILL PLAY A
ROLE AS THE STATE CONTINUES
TO RECOVER FROM THE
ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE
PANDEMIC.”**

Melissa Smith
Vice president of business recruitment,
EDPNC

A rendering of health-insurer Centene Corp.'s planned \$1-billion, 1-million-square-foot East Coast headquarters and technology hub in Charlotte. The project, committed to creating 3,237 jobs and expected to grow to 6,000, is the largest announced in North Carolina in 2020.





Officials announce that Nestlé Purina PetCare will invest \$450 million to renovate a shuttered Eden brewery into a pet food manufacturing facility. From left to right: state Sen. Phil Berger, Eden Mayor Neville Hall, Purina Vice President of Manufacturing Nolan Terry, then-state Commerce Secretary Anthony Copeland, Purina President Nina Leigh Krueger, and Mark Richardson, chairman of the Rockingham County Board of Commissioners. Courtesy of Nestlé Purina PetCare.

Business development: Our prospecting team

In addition to its business recruiters who pursue active projects on the state's behalf, the EDPNC has an international business development team. Our business developers proactively reach out to companies poised for U.S. expansion and generate project leads from those relationships.

The team, based in Raleigh, includes offices in Europe, India, China, South Korea, and Japan. It also has a business developer dedicated to growing the state's outdoor recreation industry and another focused on the defense industry.

In 2020, the team developed 46 leads into qualified active recruitment projects pursued by EDPNC business recruiters. Overall, during the year, the team identified 387 business leads.

Major project wins the team sourced in 2020 include two in rural Rockingham County. One was Belgium-based Ontex Group, which is locating a \$73-million personal hygiene product manufacturing plant that will create 352 new jobs in southern Rockingham County. The other was Italy-based Farmina Pet Foods Holding, which is putting its North American headquarters and manufacturing plant in Reidsville. The \$28.5-million facility is expected to create 129 new jobs.

The team also developed the lead that resulted in packaging provider American Fuji Seal Inc., part of Japan's Fuji Seal International, announcing a \$52-million plant in Hickory that will create over 100 new jobs.

When COVID-19 hit, the team could no longer rely on travel and trade shows as a key tool in generating business leads. So they found other ways to connect to companies. The team invested in Gazelle.ai, a business intelligence platform that harnesses big data and artificial intelligence to help identify growth companies. It also hosted webinars to get in front of targeted industry audiences. For example, the team coordinated a Japanese-language webinar on COVID-relief resources that drew more than 300 Japanese-based companies in the U.S.

2020 Project Highlights

OUR PROJECT WINS

In 2020, the EDPNC, working with state and local partners, supported recruitment of new corporate location and expansion projects that resulted in the following:

OVERALL TOTALS

20,026

ANNOUNCED NEW JOBS

\$6.3B

ANNOUNCED CAPITAL INVESTMENT

147

PROJECT WINS

NEW FACILITY PROJECTS

12,636

ANNOUNCED NEW JOBS

\$4.14B

ANNOUNCED CAPITAL INVESTMENT

69

PROJECT WINS

EXPANSION PROJECTS

7,390

ANNOUNCED NEW JOBS

\$2.19B

ANNOUNCED CAPITAL INVESTMENT

78

PROJECT WINS

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT

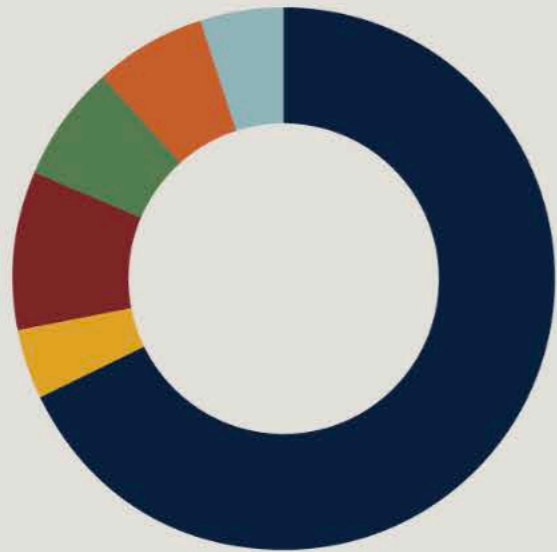
2,609

ANNOUNCED NEW JOBS

\$1.36B

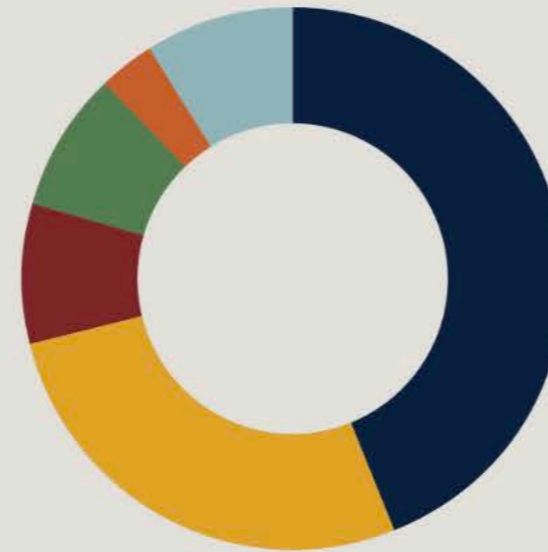
ANNOUNCED CAPITAL INVESTMENT

ANNOUNCED PROJECTS BY CATEGORY



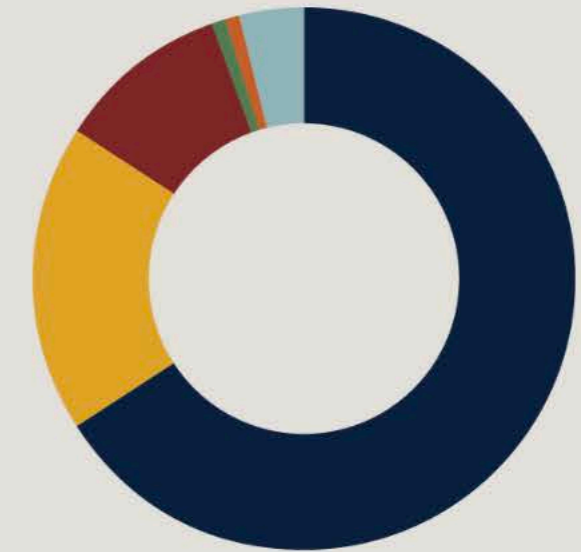
- Manufacturing/Assembly - 100
- Corporate Office/Shared Services - 6*
- Warehouse/Distribution - 14
- Corporate Headquarters - 10
- Service/Sales - 10
- Other - 7

ANNOUNCED JOBS BY CATEGORY



- Manufacturing/Assembly - 8,806
- Corporate Office/Shared Services - 5,445*
- Warehouse/Distribution - 1,704
- Corporate Headquarters - 1,672
- Service/Sales - 634
- Other - 1,765

ANNOUNCED INVESTMENT BY CATEGORY



- Manufacturing/Assembly - \$4.18B
- Corporate Office/Shared Services - \$1.15B*
- Warehouse/Distribution - \$659.2M
- Corporate Headquarters - \$46.5M
- Service/Sales - \$49.6M
- Other - \$244.1M

**This category includes large project announcements by Centene Corporation and Bandwidth Inc. referenced in "Highlighted Project Wins" below.*

ACTIVE PROJECT PIPELINE

As of Dec. 31, 2020, North Carolina was actively being considered for the following:

158

**POTENTIAL BUSINESS RECRUITMENT OR
EXPANSION PROJECTS.**

34,837

**POTENTIAL JOBS CONNECTED TO ACTIVE
PROJECTS.**

\$9.14B

**POTENTIAL CAPITAL INVESTMENT
CONNECTED TO ACTIVE PROJECTS.**

HIGHLIGHTED PROJECT WINS

The EDPNC works closely with the state Department of Commerce, governor's office, local economic development organizations and other partners to win projects that create new employment and capital investment in communities across North Carolina. Here are just some of those projects announced in 2020. (Asterisks denote companies moving into the state for the first time or existing businesses adding another facility here).

Company	County	Jobs	Investment	Description
Centene Corporation*	Mecklenburg	3,237	\$1.03B	East Coast headquarters / tech hub
Bandwidth Inc.	Wake	1,165	\$103.4M	Information technology
BioAgilytix Labs*	Durham	878	\$61.5M	Life science testing company
Pratt & Whitney*	Buncombe	800	\$650M	Turbine airfoil manufacturing
Thermo Fisher Scientific	Pitt	500	\$500M	Life science manufacturing
Eli Lilly and Company*	Durham	462	\$474M	Pharmaceutical manufacturing
UPS*	Guilford and Alamance	592	\$316.4M	Warehouse and distribution
Ontex Group*	Rockingham	352	\$78.3M	Personal hygiene manufacturing
Nestlé Purina Petcare Company*	Rockingham	300	\$450M	Pet food manufacturing
Xiamen GoldenHome Co.*	Cabarrus	257	\$86M	Cabinetry maker / N.A. headquarters
Prime Beverage Group*	Cabarrus	231	\$68M	Contract beverage co-packing
Unix Packaging*	Burke	226	\$19M	Beverage bottling and packaging

ONTEX GROUP CASE STUDY

RELATIONSHIPS HELP WIN PLANT FOR ROCKINGHAM COUNTY

The state's recruitment of the Ontex Operations USA plant expected to create more than 350 new jobs in Rockingham County started in 2017 with the equivalent of a cold call from the EDPNC's office in Germany.

Ontex Operations, based in Alpharetta, Ga., is a subsidiary of the Belgium-based Ontex Group, a global manufacturer of disposable hygiene products for babies, women, and senior adults.

"Luigi Mercuri, our representative in the EU, did some research and recognized that here was a large European manufacturer in the nonwovens industry — where North Carolina excels — that had a sales and marketing office in the U.S. but no manufacturing here," said Colin Kiser, international business development manager with the EDPNC.

"So he sent Ontex an email, and that started our high-level discussions about North Carolina's value proposition."

Jim Skinner, U.S. general manager for Ontex, said the EDPNC's early outreach "was a good starting step in helping a European company understand what it might look like to do business in North Carolina."

Ontex Group had entered the North American market a year earlier by acquiring a Mexican hygienic disposables maker, Grupo Mabe, and its U.S. affiliate, Valor Brands. Ontex was already considering opening its first U.S. manufacturing site when it first heard from the EDPNC.

Continued Below

**EDPNC BUSINESS RECRUITER
ELLEN TAI “LISTENED TO US,
HEARD OUR CONCERNS — SHE
WAS LIKE OUR PARTNER ALL
ALONG THE WAY.”**

Jim Skinner
U.S. General Manager, Ontex Group

*Jim Skinner, U.S. general manager for Ontex
Operations USA, right, chats with an engineer
at the company's plant in Reidsville.*



“The EDPNC’s foreign direct investment offices in Europe, Greater China, India, Japan, and South Korea work to proactively develop new project leads by identifying and building relationships with companies on the cusp of expansion,” said Korey Howard, EDPNC director of business development.

In 2018, Ontex officially launched its search for potential U.S. factory sites. Its familiarity with North Carolina was some advantage, but the competition remained keen. Ontex looked at 30 sites across 10 states and northeast Mexico before focusing on North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

EDPNC senior business recruiter Ellen Tai managed North Carolina’s recruitment of Ontex, working with local and state partners to provide site options to meet Ontex’s priorities. They included a location along the I-85 corridor close to Ontex’s supply chain and within easy access to U.S. customers. Ontex also stressed availability of workforce talent and affordable costs of doing business.

“Ellen listened to us, heard our concerns,” Skinner said. “She was like our partner all along the way.”

By January 2020, the company had narrowed its North Carolina finalists to two sites. Then, The Carroll Companies proposed its brand-new South Rockingham Corporate Park.

The Rockingham County park had a good location, off I-73 north of Piedmont International Airport. But local officials and Carroll had to work quickly to put together a proposal assuring water and sewer access would be provided within a timeline enabling the plant to open by the third quarter of 2021.

In the end, the rural county landed the \$73 million plant expected to hire 352 new employees earning, on average, \$40,511 a year — well above the county’s average of \$35,146.

“Working on the project with the EDPNC was great because they had such a long relationship with the company,” said Leigh Cockram, Rockingham County economic development director. “They already knew Ontex was the real deal.”

Soon after the announcement, Ontex further expanded its Rockingham County footprint by acquiring the feminine hygiene production assets of Albaad corporation in Reidsville, where Ontex now has more than 40 employees.

PRATT & WHITNEY CASE STUDY

MEGAPROJECT RAISES WESTERN N.C.'S AVIATION INDUSTRY PROFILE

Jet-engine maker Pratt & Whitney's choice of Asheville for a \$650-million, 800-job plant not only marks one of the largest projects ever in Western North Carolina but also raises the global profile of the region as a prime location for advanced aviation manufacturing.

"It's a great validation for our story, it's a great validation for the workforce of our region," said Clark Duncan, executive director of the Economic Development Coalition for Asheville-Buncombe County, one of the partners who worked with the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC) to win the 1-million-square-foot plant. Asheville is already home to a GE Aviation advanced-manufacturing facility.

Connecting to Pratt & Whitney, which makes engines for commercial and military aircraft, began on a global stage — at the 2019 Paris Air Show in June. That's when Christopher Chung, EDPNC chief executive officer, met with a senior company executive to discuss North Carolina's business assets at a very high level.

By mid-July 2019, EDPNC business recruiter Austin Rouse was actively pursuing the project on the state's behalf, working with local partners to assemble roughly a dozen sites for initial consideration.

Connecticut-based Pratt & Whitney needed a new advanced manufacturing facility to produce high-pressure turbine airfoils (blades) for its next-generation geared turbofan engine. The engine's revolutionary design allows the front and back of the engine to spin at different rates, which significantly improves fuel efficiency and reduces engine noise and carbon emissions.

The facility would house an advanced casting foundry as well as airfoil machining, coating and finishing operations. Site-search priorities included having access to advanced manufacturing and foundry workforce talent; being in an aerospace-centered region with a quality of life that would attract talent; and finding a site that could accommodate a 1-million-square-foot building.

Continued Below

**“IT’S A GREAT VALIDATION FOR
OUR STORY, IT’S A GREAT
VALIDATION FOR THE
WORKFORCE OF OUR REGION.”**

Clark Duncan
Executive director, Economic Development
Coalition for Asheville-Buncombe County

Pratt & Whitney’s planned 1-million-square-foot plant in Asheville will house an advanced casing foundry to produce turbine airfoils as well as airfoil machining, coating, and finishing operations. The airfoils will be found in the engines of commercial and military aircraft including the Airbus A220. Photo Courtesy of Pratt & Whitney



As part of its search in August 2019, Pratt & Whitney's team went on an EDPNC-coordinated helicopter tour of about 10 locations in the state in a single day. One of the roughly 25-minute stops at each site was a wooded 100-acre parcel in south Buncombe County, part of a 1,000-acre master-planned development by Biltmore Farms LLC in Asheville.

Biltmore Farms leadership had already decided that this site should be used to create sustainable well-paying jobs for the region, said Ben Teague, the firm's vice president of strategic development. Meanwhile, Pratt & Whitney wanted its new facility to be a model of manufacturing innovation, a community partner, and an employer of choice.

In October 2020, the company announced its selection of the Buncombe County site, committing to creating 800 jobs there through 2027 with an average annual salary of \$68,000, well above the \$43,134 county average. The plant is expected to draw workers commuting from at least a dozen Western North Carolina counties.

Teamwork among local and state officials and economic developers, as well as the private sector and the Golden Leaf Foundation, addressed many of the company's biggest priorities.

Access to a talented workforce was one priority. While the Asheville area already has a strong workforce, five community colleges in Western North Carolina — led by Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College — are coming together to offer classes specific to Pratt & Whitney's needs.

The Golden LEAF Foundation assisted with an infrastructure issue, awarding \$12 million to the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce Community Betterment Fund to help fund construction of a five-lane bridge across the French Broad River to provide site access.

In addition, the state awarded the project a Job Development Investment Grant of up to \$15.54 million over 12 years. The county also provided incentives. And Biltmore Farms gifted the company the site.

TOURISM OVERVIEW

VISIT NC DRIVES \$15M STATEWIDE PUBLIC HEALTH INITIATIVE

When people became unwilling to risk long-distance travel during the pandemic, Visit North Carolina's marketing focus shifted from attracting out-of-state visitors to educating businesses on how to safely reopen and people on how to venture out in a socially distant way.

"The idea was to get people more comfortable with traveling, even if it's local, and have them do it in the right way," said Wit Tuttell, vice president of tourism for Visit NC, part of the EDPNC. "But we had to get travelers, residents, and businesses to work together."

So Visit NC developed and managed the marketing of a collaborative public health initiative, branded as Count On Me NC, in partnership with the North Carolina Restaurant & Lodging Association, the state Department of Health & Human Services, and NC State Extension, whose services include educational programs that address public health issues.

The main thrust of the \$15-million communications effort, supported by state-appropriated federal CARES Act funds and delivered in English and Spanish, provided free, easy-to-follow online training modules to help restaurants, hotels, attractions and other hospitality businesses learn the best ways to protect customers and employees from COVID-19.

In turn, consumers could search a database on CountOnMeNC.org to find and patronize businesses that had completed the training. They could also sign a pledge to follow the three Ws (wear a mask, wash hands, wait 6 feet apart) and download a personalized pledge badge.

Visit NC began marketing the initiative in May, targeting North Carolina residents and businesses as well as prospective travelers in contiguous states. The advertising channels included radio, digital/mobile device, print, YouTube, digital outdoor advertising, and streaming, broadcast and cable TV.

Visit NC also partnered with high-profile brands to promote the initiative, including legendary NASCAR driver [Richard Petty](#) and Gray Gaulding's Team Pure Racing. Count On Me NC was a primary sponsor of the Drive For the Cure 250 Xfinity race at the Charlotte Motor Speedway in October, where Gaulding's car showcased Count On Me NC's sea-green branding.

Some of the results? More than 65,000 people completed the online safety training for their North Carolina businesses, and the campaign website drew more than 470,000 visits. The campaign also generated nearly 1.5 billion earned media impressions and 284.6 million paid media impressions in 2020.

Continued Below

“THE IDEA WAS TO GET PEOPLE MORE COMFORTABLE WITH TRAVELING, EVEN IF IT’S LOCAL, AND HAVE THEM DO IT IN THE RIGHT WAY.”

Wit Tuttell
Vice president of tourism,
Visit North Carolina



Visit NC enlisted prominent NASCAR drivers as Count On Me NC ambassadors, including Richard Petty, above, and Gray Gaulding, left. Gaulding's car showcased Count On Me NC's branding at the Drive For the Cure 250 Xfinity race at the Charlotte Motor Speedway.

The overall campaign also included Visit NC offering cooperative marketing credits to local tourism offices across the state. The credits helped those offices encourage safe travel to their communities by advertising through Visit NC's extensive co-op program offerings. Nearly 130 local tourism offices in 75 counties took advantage of \$5.1 million in marketing credits.

In a separate program, Visit NC worked with the North Carolina Travel Industry Association to distribute \$1.5 million in CARES Act funding as grants to local tourism offices to further support their marketing efforts as the state reopened. Local partners in more tourism-dependent areas were eligible for up to \$30,000 while those in less dependent areas could receive up to \$25,000.

A total of 120 grants were distributed to 82 different tourism organizations in 71 counties. Ninety-three of the grants went to local tourism partners in the state's more economically distressed Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties.

"Many partners used it to build up marketing assets that relate to COVID-safe travel and activities," Tuttell said. "Video and photos of people enjoying the outdoors, dining outdoors. Of people practicing social distancing. The types of marketing materials they didn't have but immediately needed."

The cooperative marketing credits and grants were essential in a year when the marketing budgets of many local tourism organizations were slashed because of steep declines in hotel occupancy rates, Tuttell said. "Their budgets, which rely on revenue from room occupancy taxes, were devastated by COVID," Tuttell said.

During the final two months of 2020, Visit NC also conducted three digital trade shows (one local, one regional and one national) that connected 80 meeting planners across the nation with cities, regions, and suppliers in North Carolina. "We needed to get out in front of the people who are making decisions and let them know everything we're doing to keep their groups safe as soon as they are ready to bring meetings, conferences, and travel to our state," Tuttell said.

COUNT ON ME NC

BREWERY JOINS THOUSANDS OF COUNT ON ME NC-CERTIFIED BUSINESSES

Liquid Roots Brewing Project in Lenoir is one of thousands of businesses across the state that signed up to participate in the Count On Me NC public safety initiative launched in May 2020 by a coalition of partners including Visit North Carolina.

The brewery and taproom establishment is also among roughly 20 Lenoir businesses certified as completing Count on Me NC's free online safety-training modules to support their safe reopening during the pandemic, said Kaylynn S. Horn, director of Lenoir's Downtown Economic Development Department. Those businesses range from retail shops and restaurants to banks, a bookstore, a fitness center and a large family entertainment center.

"We had been talking with our chamber of commerce about how we could let the public know that as a community, we would be implementing safe strategies so that people would feel safe coming here," Horn said. "And then the Count on Me NC program was announced. It was exactly what we needed when we needed it."

The initiative provided training modules to restaurants, hotels, and other businesses on best practices to help protect their guests from the spread of COVID.

Visit NC's role included branding and marketing the initiative, targeting North Carolina residents and businesses as well as prospective travelers in contiguous states. Consumers could turn to the CountOnMeNC.org website to find businesses that had completed the voluntary training.

The program was conceived by the North Carolina Restaurant & Lodging Association Foundation and developed in collaboration with the state Department of Health and Human Services and N.C. State University Extension Program.

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**“THE COUNT ON ME NC
TRAINING WAS VERY HELPFUL.”**

Katie Brummett
Co-owner,
Liquid Roots Brewing Project

Katie Brummett, pictured with tray, is co-owner of Liquid Roots Brewing Project in Lenoir. She says the Count On Me NC training modules helped reinforce measures her business took to protect both guests and employees as the brewery reopened for patio patrons in May 2020.



A Campaign Complementing a Business' Values

Liquid Roots Brewing Project is truly a family affair. The taproom and brewery, which opened in November 2018, is co-owned by Katie Brummett, her husband, Taylor, and her brother and sister-in-law, Tommy and Jamie Brubaker.

“We’re all Indiana natives who moved here to start the business after we found the building we now own in Lenoir,” said Katie Brummett, 40. “My husband is the brewer. I handle social media and events. Tommy is the bar manager and Jamie does merchandise ordering. She’s also a full-time nurse.”

The family- and dog-friendly brewery quickly became known for its dozen-plus craft beers, live-music nights and hosted food trucks. But it voluntarily shut down in March, just days before the state made that mandatory for many businesses.

“We had watched what was going on in other states and we just felt that it was not safe to be open and serving people,” Brummett said. “My dad has COPD [a chronic inflammatory lung disease], so we knew how dangerous the virus could be to some people.”

Phased reopening allowed Liquid Roots and other businesses to resume operating in May, with certain restrictions. With guest safety always in mind, Liquid Roots stuck to takeout window service only for beers or growlers. It provided socially distant patio seating but kept its small taproom closed, required patrons to wear masks, and instituted practices reinforced by the training provided through Count On Me NC.

The training covers everything from seating that adheres to social distancing guidelines, to health surveys of employees before each shift, to sanitization of common areas as well as seats and tables after each use.

“The Count On Me NC training was very helpful,” Brummett said. “The videos included much of what we were already doing after we reopened, but they reminded us of things we might not have thought of without the training.”

“It was also easy to do and not very time-consuming,” she added. “You could easily go to what was specific to your type of business.”

A Western NC City Welcomes the Help

For her part, Horn also appreciated the \$10,000 in Visit NC cooperative marketing credits the Lenoir Tourism Development Authority received as part of the Count On Me NC campaign. The credits funded Facebook and Instagram promotion of activities in Lenoir that people could safely enjoy. Those activities ranged from strolling through Lenoir’s downtown outdoor sculpture garden to driving through its Hope Shines Brightly holiday lights show.

The local tourism authority tapped another Visit NC resource separate from Count On Me NC. The authority received an \$18,000 tourism recovery grant out of \$1.5 million in CARES Act funding administered statewide by Visit NC. The authority used some of the money to create marketing assets to promote opportunities for safe visitation and activities in Lenoir through 2021.

“Even with vaccines being released, people will still be prioritizing safe activities, safe destinations as they feel more comfortable traveling again,” Horn said. “We really needed the additional funds to create these new marketing materials, especially in a year when a steep drop in hotel occupancy tax revenue cut our local tourism marketing budget by more than a third.”

EXISTING INDUSTRY SUPPORT OVERVIEW

HELPING MANUFACTURERS CONNECT TO COVID-19 RESOURCES

In 2020, the EDPNC's team of existing industry managers tapped the relationships they have built with hundreds of businesses over the years to spread the word about various COVID-relief resources and serve as a clearinghouse for their questions.

Our eight regional managers reached out repeatedly to their extensive network of clients via email, phone, e-newsletters, webinar presentations and social media — to help them navigate COVID-19 grant and loan opportunities and refer them to the right resources. The team also helped manufacturers understand the requirements of being deemed essential, so they could continue operating during the pandemic.

“When a state or federal program that could support North Carolina manufacturers during COVID was launched or changed, we contacted our clients and local economic developers,” said John Loyack, EDPNC vice president of global business services. “We also fielded countless questions from manufacturers. And if we didn't know the answer, we worked hard to connect them to the specific agency or person who did.”

The team also supported North Carolina manufacturers whose supply chains were broken by

pandemic-related shutdowns, referring them to state, federal and industry-specific databases of potential alternative suppliers.

As manufacturers pivoted to producing personal protective equipment (PPE), we shared resources for product testing — such as the Manufacturing Solutions Center in Conover and RTI International in Research Triangle Park — as well as websites and databases that could help manufacturers find PPE buyers.

The resources we shared included the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services' [PPE procurement website](#). We also referred manufacturers to matchmaking databases such as the [Supply Connector](#) website, an entirely volunteer collaboration of North Carolina businesses and organizations including the NC Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry, which is part of the EDPNC. Other resources for connecting PPE suppliers with buyers included the North Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership, the Carolina Textile District, and the Charlotte-region Carolinas Alliance COVID-19 Match Site.

Continued Below

**“EDPNC GIVES US A PERSON TO GO TO WITH
REALLY ANYTHING WE NEED, AS FAR AS THE
STATE, LOCAL OR COUNTY, TO HELP ON
ISSUES.”**

Paul German,
President and CEO, Nebraska Plastics

“We were able to quickly help roll out COVID-19 resources to manufacturers because of the one-on-one relationships we’ve built with them over the years,” Loyack said.

Each regional EDPNC manager works within one of eight multicounty regions across the state. Each manager visits roughly 165 plants in a typical year — to tour operations and identify any barriers to growth. Then the manager works to assemble the local, regional, state or federal resources that can help manufacturers clear those obstacles.

Our free assistance could mean connecting businesses to programs that provide workforce development, grants to upgrade manufacturing equipment or renovate buildings, and expertise to implement more cost- and energy-efficient manufacturing practices. The team also supports these businesses when they launch an expansion, including helping them navigate state incentives.

In 2020, the team assisted 1,322 businesses overall. Many were small- to mid-size businesses in the state’s more rural communities. Our regional industry managers supported 938 businesses in Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties, which are designated by the state as more economically distressed than Tier 3 counties such as Wake and Mecklenburg.

The team’s assistance to businesses included coordinating state support for 73 expansion projects expected to create 3,601 jobs and \$1.24 billion in investment.

BRIGHT VIEW CASE STUDY

SUPPORTING A DURHAM MANUFACTURER'S QUICK PIVOT TO PPE

When Bright View Technologies decided to make face shields for health care workers and others at the outset of the pandemic, the company had all the ultraclear plastic it needed.

The Durham manufacturer uses the plastic in making highly engineered optical components for a variety of LED-based applications — ranging from lighting to autonomous vehicle 3D-sensing systems.

The company also had the equipment to cut the face shields. But it needed help connecting to its first buyer for the personal protective equipment (PPE) needed by first responders and hospital workers — the state of North Carolina.

On March 23, 2020, Harry Swendsen of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina provided Bright View contacts at the North Carolina Emergency Management division of the state Department of Public Safety. It had mobilized to identify PPE sources for the state.

Bright View got its first state order three days later. Over the next few months, the company produced 350,000 disposable face shields for North Carolina's inventory, said Jennifer Aspell, Bright View president.

"I think Harry's ability to help us make connections for this project was immensely valuable," Aspell said. "His list of resources really kicked the project up."

Swendsen is part of the EDPNC's existing industry support team, which has helped manufacturers connect to potential partners and buyers that can support their pivot to PPE production during the pandemic.

"In March," Aspell recalled, "so many businesses were trying to make PPE because of the great need... It was just heartbreaking to see what health-care workers had to deal with."

Continued Below



Darryl Barron, process engineer at Bright View Technologies, packs lenses for face-shield assembly kits. The company provided the kits to contractors who assembled the shields during the pandemic.

“SO MANY BUSINESSES WERE TRYING TO MAKE PPE BECAUSE OF THE GREAT NEED... IT WAS JUST HEARTBREAKING TO SEE WHAT HEALTH-CARE WORKERS HAD TO DEAL WITH.”

Jennifer Aspell

President, Bright View Technologies in Durham

Bright View’s pivot to PPE started on March 21, a Saturday, when one of Aspell’s engineers e-mailed her. He asked if the company could use some of its optical grade plastic to make face shields. Two days later, Bright View had developed a prototype. The first state order came within a week. By early April, the shield was certified by an independent lab for occupational face and eye protection.

Bright View also moved quickly to recruit 30 independent contractors for home assembly of the shield, giving hiring preference to anyone who had lost a job or work hours because of COVID-19-related closures. The company relied on its employees to spread word of the available work.

“Bright View really emphasized helping those in their community who had immediately lost income during the first difficult months of the pandemic,” Swendsen said.

Bright View has fulfilled its large state orders, and its core business of optical components has remained stable. But it is still producing disposable face shields for individual and well as bulk purchase.

“I think we’ll be making face shields for a while,” Aspell said. “I can see them for retail stores, in schools, in coffee shops, the hospitality industry. Anywhere where seeing someone’s face, their smile, is important.”

CAROLINA TEXTILE DISTRICT CASE STUDY

RALLYING BUSINESSES TO MAKE MASKS AND GOWNS

In March 2020, the Morganton-based Carolina Textile District (CTD) began seriously considering the health and employment impact a growing global pandemic could have in Western North Carolina.

After being approached by local doctors, CTD, a member-governed network of textile manufacturers in North and South Carolina, immediately saw the need to begin producing cloth face coverings that could be worn over disposable N95 medical masks — to help extend their life. Medical personnel facing N95-mask shortages were reusing them.

Moreover, CTD knew patients and the general public also needed cloth masks that might help stem the virus' spread. Disposable gowns, too, were among the personal protective equipment (PPE) in short supply at clinics, hospitals, and nursing homes.

So CTD decided to quickly assemble a large network of textile and furniture manufacturers to make masks and gowns, and in the process help people keep working during the pandemic, said Sara Chester, director of the Carolina Textile District.

“Bill Slagle and the EDPNC were instrumental in sharing what CTD was doing with other manufacturers and economic developers across the state, which resulted in a large number of firms getting connected and registered with CTD,” she said.

Slagle is EDPNC's regional existing industry manager in Northwest North Carolina. He also supervises the EDPNC's team of eight regional managers working throughout the state. Each one visits roughly 165 businesses during a typical year within their regions.

**“BILL SLAGLE AND THE EDPNC WERE
INSTRUMENTAL IN SHARING WHAT CTD WAS
DOING WITH OTHER MANUFACTURERS AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS ACROSS THE STATE.”**

Sara Chester

Director, Carolina Textile District



“We used the relationships that we have established over the years with existing industry,” Slagle said. “We emailed and called hundreds of companies and individuals and encouraged them to register with the CTD as potential producers of PPE or spread the word.”

By early April, the CTD had assembled over 300 manufacturers. That number was trimmed down to 60 textile and furniture manufacturers with 600 sewers who were ready to produce. They would receive fabric and supplies, kits, technical specifications and other support from the CTD to make masks and gowns. Then they would return the finished product to the CTD for shipping.

But assembling the network was only one step. The CTD also consulted doctors to quickly develop mask and gown prototypes. Working with the Manufacturing Solutions Center in Conover and others, CTD tested and sourced all the fabric, standardized patterns, and created mask and gown specifications.

“Burke County Schools and our local hospital, Carolinas HealthCare System Blue Ridge, were also great partners because they were among the first to buy our masks,” Chester said.

The CTD began producing masks in April, with gowns soon to follow. Its 24-week intense COVID response saved 96 jobs and produced more than 410,000 masks and nearly 145,000 gowns, according to the CTD. The gowns were delivered to the North Carolina Emergency Management stockpile.

As medical shortages eased, CTD ramped down its PPE production. But it is still selling pedestrian masks from its inventory, many customized for their buyers. Meanwhile, the EDPNC continues to refer potential bulk buyers to the CTD and others.

MDI CASE STUDY

TEAMWORK WINS MDI'S HIGH-TECH EXPANSION IN CALDWELL COUNTY

Projects that both preserve jobs while creating new ones are ideal in the economic development world.

That's just one reason why the successful local and state effort to win a \$120-million expansion by wholesale grocery distributor Merchant Distributors LLC (MDI) is among the most notable projects announced in rural North Carolina in 2020.

MDI distributes grocery items to more than 600 supermarkets in the U.S. and elsewhere. The rapidly growing company is adding a 200,000-square-foot automated expansion to its main distribution facility, located in a portion of southern Caldwell County inside Hickory city limits. MDI is the largest employer in the city and the county.

The expansion by MDI, a subsidiary of Hickory-headquartered Alex Lee, will incorporate a sophisticated automatic sort and retrieval system. As MDI receives goods on inbound pallets, the automated system will efficiently sort them into individual cases in preparation for store orders. As store orders come in, the system will retrieve individual cases to build outbound pallets tailored to the order.

"This expansion, which was competitive with sites in Georgia and South Carolina, will create 111 new jobs — including 60 truck drivers being added to MDI's fleet," said Bill Slagle, EDPNC existing industry expansions manager who represented the state in supporting local recruitment of the project. "But it will also assure retaining 120 jobs at MDI that might have gone elsewhere if Caldwell County and the city of Hickory hadn't won the expansion."

Wages for the new jobs will vary by position, but the average salary will be \$51,634, well above the county's current average wage of \$40,124. Overall, MDI employs about 1,400 people at its distribution hub in Caldwell County.

The project marks the largest in Hickory's history, in terms of capital investment, according to city officials. The expansion also ranks among the top three largest in Caldwell County, said Deborah Murray, executive director of the Caldwell County Economic Development Commission.

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**“THE BUSINESS SUPPORT FROM
NORTH CAROLINA AND OUR
LOCAL COMMUNITY MAKES
CALDWELL COUNTY AND THE
CITY OF HICKORY AN IDEAL
LOCATION TO CONTINUE TO
GROW OUR BUSINESS.”**

Kimberly George
Senior vice president of communications and
corporate citizenship, Alex Lee



*MDI's main distribution facility in southern
Caldwell County.*

Murray first started discussing the project with Alex Lee in October 2019. Caldwell County had advantages including the MDI complex being a main distribution hub close to corporate headquarters. But the expansion “was ours to lose,” Murray said, because Alex Lee was also exploring sites closer to major transportation arteries in other Southeast states.

The county and city could provide local incentives to support the project. But Murray also wanted to know what state incentives might be available, including the possibility of a Job Development Investment Grant (JDIG). So she turned to Slagle and state Department of Commerce officials for further information and discussion. The question was part of a May 2020 conference call including Murray, Slagle, and Commerce and Hickory officials.

During that call, it became evident that adding dozens of truck drivers earning solid pay would be part of the expansion. That would help the company reach job-creation requirements for JDIG support, Murray said. Ultimately, the state awarded MDI a JDIG of up to \$1.34 million over 12 years, assuming the company meets annual job-creation and investment commitments.

“The offer of the JDIG was essential to winning this project,” Murray said.

The JDIG joined local incentives including Caldwell County approving \$2,000 for each of the 111 new jobs created and \$2,000 for each of the 120 preserved jobs, as well as a 10-year property tax grant providing a 75% return of new property taxes assessed on the expansion. The city of Hickory also approved local grant and tax incentives.

Alex Lee, a family-owned company founded in Hickory in 1931, praised the teamwork that helped support its choice of where to launch a major cutting-edge expansion in 2020.

“The business support from North Carolina and our local community makes Caldwell County and the city of Hickory an ideal location to continue to grow our business,” said Kimberly George, senior vice president of communications and corporate citizenship at Alex Lee.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE OVERVIEW

HELPING EXPORTERS DO BUSINESS VIRTUALLY DURING THE PANDEMIC AND BEYOND

Trade show support has always been a core service of the EDPNC international trade team. But when COVID-19 shut down in-person trade conferences and slashed international travel, we emphasized some new approaches to help North Carolina exporters sell internationally.

They included supporting business participation in newly emerging virtual trade shows and missions; expanding our website globalization program that helps exporters develop new international sales online; and dramatically increasing access to EDPNC export-education workshops through an extensive offering of expert-led webinars.

Through those services and others, the EDPNC's international trade managers and foreign offices assisted 633 North Carolina companies across the state in 2020. Those businesses credited EDPNC support with helping them make \$1.14 billion in export sales.

Our services include helping North Carolina businesses access international market intelligence, meet vetted distributors, and connect to export financing. We locally

administer federal grants that enable small-business exporters to exhibit at key international trade events. We also host export-education workshops on topics ranging from export documentation and licensing requirements to how the pandemic is affecting markets for specific North Carolina products.

In 2020, the trade team hosted 30 export-education webinars attended by more than 800 people representing 300 companies, according to Mike Hubbard, EDPNC international trade director.

In 2019, by comparison, the EDPNC hosted 10 in-person export-education events across the state, each drawing roughly 16 companies, Hubbard said.

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**“AS A SMALL DEFENSE CONTRACTOR OUR
MAIN FOCUS HAD BEEN THE DOMESTIC U.S.
MARKET FOR MANY YEARS... WITH EDPNC’S
HELP AND GUIDANCE, WE HAVE PENETRATED
FOREIGN MARKETS WE ONCE THOUGHT WERE
OUT OF REACH.”**

Carl Beene,

President, Tactical Support Equipment in Fayetteville

“We knew increasing our educational outreach was even more important in a year when the global trade landscape was being deeply disrupted by the pandemic and reshaped by newly launched US-Mexico-Canada and US-China Phase 1 trade agreements,” Hubbard said. “So we turned to webinars to triple our workshops and cover many more topics.”

Also in 2020, our website globalization program helped businesses seeking new ways to conduct international business virtually during the pandemic and beyond. Through the program, businesses translate their website into the languages of their targeted international markets. And those sites are hosted on local domains with search-engine optimization that makes them easy to find in other countries.

Through the EDPNC, businesses with fewer than 500 employees are eligible for \$10,000 federal grants to support localizing their website in other countries. In 2020, 24 North Carolina businesses applied for the program.

“We had only one company apply for website globalization in 2019, so that shows you how the pandemic has made doing international business virtually top of mind,” Hubbard said.

In 2020, the team also helped businesses participate in virtual international trade events. For example, the EDPNC made sure North Carolina companies filled five of the only 10 seats available nationally for a virtual trade mission to Saudi Arabia, organized by the U.S.-Saudi Business Council.

The mission not only provided an overview of the Saudi market — an important one for North Carolina exports — but also gave North Carolina businesses the opportunity to meet one-on-one with vetted potential business partners in the region.

ADVANCED SUPERABRASIVES

EXPORTER GLOBALIZES HIS WEBSITE WITH EDPNC SUPPORT

Even before COVID shut down international travel and trade shows, Jonathan Szucs was exploring how to make his manufacturing company's website a better sales tool in other countries.

Two years ago, Szucs said, the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina's trade team began "gently nudging" him to pursue translation, search-engine optimization and foreign domain hosting of his company's website in his targeted global markets.

"The EDPNC saw an opportunity for growing our exports through our website," said Szucs, president and owner of Advanced Superabrasives Inc. (ASI), which makes high-performance, customized grinding wheels sold in the U.S. and 28 other countries.

The EDPNC connected ASI to a \$6,000 federal grant to defray the \$12,000 cost of localizing its website in two international markets and a company qualified to do the work — IBT Online.

The State Trade Expansion Program grant was funded through the U.S. Small Business Administration. The EDPNC has since worked with the SBA to raise the website-globalization grant limit to \$10,000. North Carolina businesses with fewer than 500 employees can apply through the EDPNC, choosing any company to do the website work.

In January 2020, the Mars Hill, N.C.-based manufacturer began the work of localizing its website in Mexico and Canada. ASI did so through the EDPNC's North Carolina Online Global Program.

Continued Below

“THE TRADE TEAM HAS SUPPORTED US FROM A TO Z OVER THE YEARS, WHETHER IT’S MARKET RESEARCH, LOOKING FOR POTENTIAL DISTRIBUTORS, OR GLOBALIZING OUR WEBSITE.”

Jonathan Szucs
President, Advanced Superabrasives



“When COVID really hit in March, we went into overdrive to get our website globalized because we couldn’t travel anymore,” Szucs said. “We had to find new ways to continue to get in front of our existing and potential customers.”

ASI decided to redesign its U.S. website before localizing it in Canada and Mexico. In September 2020, the company launched its new international sites, as well as online marketing to promote them.

“IBT Online worked with our representatives in Canada and Mexico to make sure we were using the same key words on our websites and marketing that our potential customers would use in their online searches,” Szucs said.

“The initial feedback from our buyers and representatives in Canada and Mexico has been 100% positive,” he added. “Our rep in Mexico is using the website to break down barriers to getting new business there.”

Szucs wants to localize ASI’s website in other markets. ASI expects website globalization will grow sales enough to scale back exhibiting at in-person international trade shows. Their costs including booth registration, staffing, airfare, and lodging “are a huge expense for a small business,” he said.

For example, exhibiting at the six-day International Manufacturing Technology Show in Chicago costs ASI \$80,000 to \$90,000. “I redesigned my U.S. website AND localized and marketed it in two other countries for roughly a third of that,” he said. “Our best ROI in the long run is with website globalization.”

“We’ll keep working with the EDPNC to help hit our goal of having 35-45% of our sales international in 2021,” Szucs added. “The trade team has supported us from A to Z over the years, whether it’s market research, looking for potential distributors, or globalizing our website.”

**EDPNC SMALL BUSINESS
ADVISORS**

THE FIRST STEP TO STARTING A SMALL BUSINESS IN NORTH CAROLINA

The EDPNC Small Business Advisors team provides one-on-one counseling to entrepreneurs about the licensing and permitting requirements of starting a business in North Carolina, primarily through the team's toll-free number.

“There is lots of information on the internet about starting a business, but unless you are looking at North Carolina it does not often apply,” said Holly Yanker, director of the team. “So we help callers who are starting a small business in North Carolina, or moving one here, to quickly identify what applies to their specific industry — whether it’s for a landscaping business, cleaning service, consulting firm, food truck, retail shop or something entirely different.”

The volume of inquiries to EDPNC Small Business Advisors, formerly known as Business Link North Carolina (BLNC), was slightly higher in 2020 than the prior year. The team handled 24,948 cases in 2020 vs. 23,639 in 2019. Much of the increase was due to businesses seeking referral to loan programs that could help them survive the pandemic.

Our advisors provide access to forms for business structures, registration, tax ID numbers, employer payroll filings, and much more. They also make sure small businesses know how and where to submit those documents with local, state, or federal agencies.

The team’s conversations with entrepreneurs often expand into what else their business needs to succeed. Perhaps the client wants help writing a business plan or figuring out how to market the new enterprise. Or maybe the entrepreneur needs to connect to a nonprofit lender willing to work with a startup with little revenue history.

Our advisors can refer new businesses to a variety of programs that can help them access grants, alternative lending, small-business mentoring, and other resources.

The team also participates in educational outreach activities to support entrepreneurship, including events that target rural areas and minority-, women-, and veteran-owned startups. In 2020, for example, our small-business advisors partnered with the state community college system’s Small Business Center Network to conduct webinars on how to start a business. They were offered in both English and Spanish.

**“WE HELP CALLERS WHO ARE STARTING A
SMALL BUSINESS IN NORTH CAROLINA, OR
MOVING ONE HERE, TO QUICKLY IDENTIFY
WHAT APPLIES TO THEIR SPECIFIC INDUSTRY.”**

Holly Yanker
Director, EDPNC Small Business Advisors

CASE STUDY

OPENING THE DOOR TO A SECOND CAREER

Case Study: Cutie Pies of Raleigh

[Read Full Case Study](#)



CUTIE PIES CASE STUDY

OPENING THE DOOR TO A SECOND CAREER

Thomas Milloway worked in corporate America for more than 20 years but still sometimes dreamed of a career involving cooking.

So when he was laid off from his IBM project manager position at the age of 51, he began a four-year journey that would lead to the July 2020 opening of his own storefront bakery, Cutie Pies of Raleigh, at 1213 Hillsborough St.

Along the way, Milloway turned to the EDPNC Small Business Advisors team, then known as Business Link North Carolina (BLNC). The team helped him navigate the legal requirements of opening his bakery and referred him to resources including a free small-business mentoring program.

“For someone who’s an entrepreneur just starting out, especially in an area where they have little experience, BLNC is great,” Milloway said. “They are a doorway to all sorts of information.”

Milloway had never opened a bakery, but he did have decades of corporate business experience and degrees in business management and economics from North Carolina State University. Most importantly, he had a persistent passion for cooking that started in childhood.

“I’d always do the desserts, cook for family meals, Thanksgiving,” Milloway recalled. “When I was around 14, I made veal scallopini for a relative’s 25th wedding anniversary.”

Years later, at the outset of his IBM career, he and his wife, Susie, who passed away in 2007, even had something of a home-based baking enterprise. “She was an artist, with a concentration in sculpting,” Milloway said. “She did the frosting, the gum paste flowers, and I baked the cakes.”

With that history, it’s no surprise Milloway chose entrepreneurship once he’d left the corporate world.

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Thomas Milloway
Owner, Cutie Pies of Raleigh

“I started pursuing a certificate of baking and pastry arts at Wake Tech,” he said. “But as much as I loved cooking, I had never worked in a restaurant. So in 2017, I began as a steward at Seasons 52. Then I moved up to prep cook because I wanted to see how they managed inventory.”

Milloway earned his certificate and began to explore running his own business. His first call to EDPNC’s small-business advisors was in January 2019, when he envisioned a home-based bakery. He reached out again in May 2020, after he’d decided on his full bakery with staff of four and commercial ovens, mixers, and a dough sheeter adequate for larger-scale production.

Our small-business advisors provided Milloway information related to registering his business name, local permitting, and understanding payroll tax withholding requirements. They also discussed bakery-business inspections required by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services.

“They also referred me to SCORE, where I went over my business plan with retired business people,” Milloway said. SCORE is an organization of volunteers dedicated to mentoring entrepreneurs.

On July 15, 2020, Cutie Pies of Raleigh officially opened. On any particular day, visitors stopping by might choose from garlic and rosemary bread, apple and lemon chess pies, chocolate chip cookies with candied nuts, scones, cakes and so much more.

ONWARD AS ONE

MARKETING TO CONNECT BUSINESSES TO EDPNC DURING COVID-19

In response to the pandemic, the EDPNC conducted an intensive two-month marketing campaign in 2020 to expand awareness of the free services we offer that can help North Carolina businesses meet the challenges of COVID-19.

“Onward as One,” an integrated advertising and public relations campaign supported by state-appropriated federal CARES Act funding, targeted North Carolina business leaders and drove traffic to the [campaign website](#) for information about EDPNC programs and resources available to assist them during the pandemic and beyond.


That support includes connection to state and federal grants and loans, manufacturing reshoring resources and potential new supply-chain partners; export assistance; and small-business startup counseling.

The advertising portion of “Onward as One” included [in-state television commercials](#) opening with “Good morning, North Carolina, it’s a new day!” Campaign messaging, including videos of different durations, appeared in television, radio, print and digital advertising, as well as social media outreach.

Strong results included more than 2.7 million of views of campaign videos, with 80% of viewers watching the entire video. The campaign also generated more than 7 million digital paid media impressions.

Paid social media had an impressive 13% engagement rate, reflecting the number of times viewers engaged with the content through likes, comments, and shares (versus an average engagement rate of 3-4% for similar content on Facebook). LinkedIn drove nearly 400,000 video views and over 4,600 clicks to the website.

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**TURN
CHALLENGES
INTO TRIUMPHS.**

Your challenges are our challenges. Your victories are our victories. No matter what, EDPNC has the ability to help you and your business forge ahead. From COVID recovery resources to loan and grant expertise, we're moving onward as one.

Let us help you. Visit [EDPNC.com/onward](https://www.edpnc.com/onward)



The Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina is a public-private entity created by the NC Department of Commerce with the purpose of helping businesses launch, grow and locate in and across NC.

Denise Desatnick
Vice president of marketing and research,
EDPNC

“The engagement with our advertising and response to our public relations efforts showed us that there is a strong appetite for information about COVID recovery resources among North Carolina businesses,” said Denise Desatnick, EDPNC vice president of marketing and research. “This was an important opportunity for us to increase awareness of the free services that the EDPNC offers to existing businesses and start-ups in the state, for pandemic recovery and beyond.”

The campaign’s public relations component focused on hosting eight regional virtual roundtable discussion during November and December. The panelists included local economic developers and companies who discussed how they have achieved diverse goals working with the EDPNC, both before and during the pandemic.

Each roundtable also introduced attendees to the EDPNC existing industry manager serving that specific region. These managers work on the state’s behalf to connect local businesses to a wide variety of support. The managers, for example, help shape successful applications for state grants that will support a business expansion that includes creating new jobs. They can also connect businesses to international trade expansion resources within the EDPNC and at the state and federal levels.

All told, 826 people registered for the eight regional roundtables. Media coverage resulted in 27 earned media placements generating more than 900,000 earned media impressions.

INVESTORS & FINANCIALS

EDPNC LAUNCHES NEW INVESTOR RELATIONS PROGRAM

The EDPNC raised \$1,155,725 during its fundraising period ending in December 2020 and introduced a new investor relations program to engage businesses across the state with our organization.

We also added 11 new investors to the roster of companies, organizations and individuals supporting the EDPNC and participating in initiatives to advance North Carolina's economic development.

Early in 2020, we surveyed our investors to better understand their needs and expectations. As a result, we created a focused investor relations program to engage investors with other business leaders in North Carolina and across the U.S., amplify their brand and business activities, provide research-based intelligence on economic development, and connect investors to services to help their organizations expand and grow.

We also introduced a range of new offerings such as *The Catalyst* quarterly investor newsletter, the *Fireside Chat* webinar series, *Investor Spotlight* videos, *Five Questions With* profiles of business influencers, and a new website destination for investors.

Our new landing page, [EDPNC.com/Invest](https://edpnc.com/invest), provides investors access to a range of exclusively curated marketing and business development opportunities, VIP events with recruitment and expansion prospects, and insights from leaders who are shaping North Carolina's future growth.

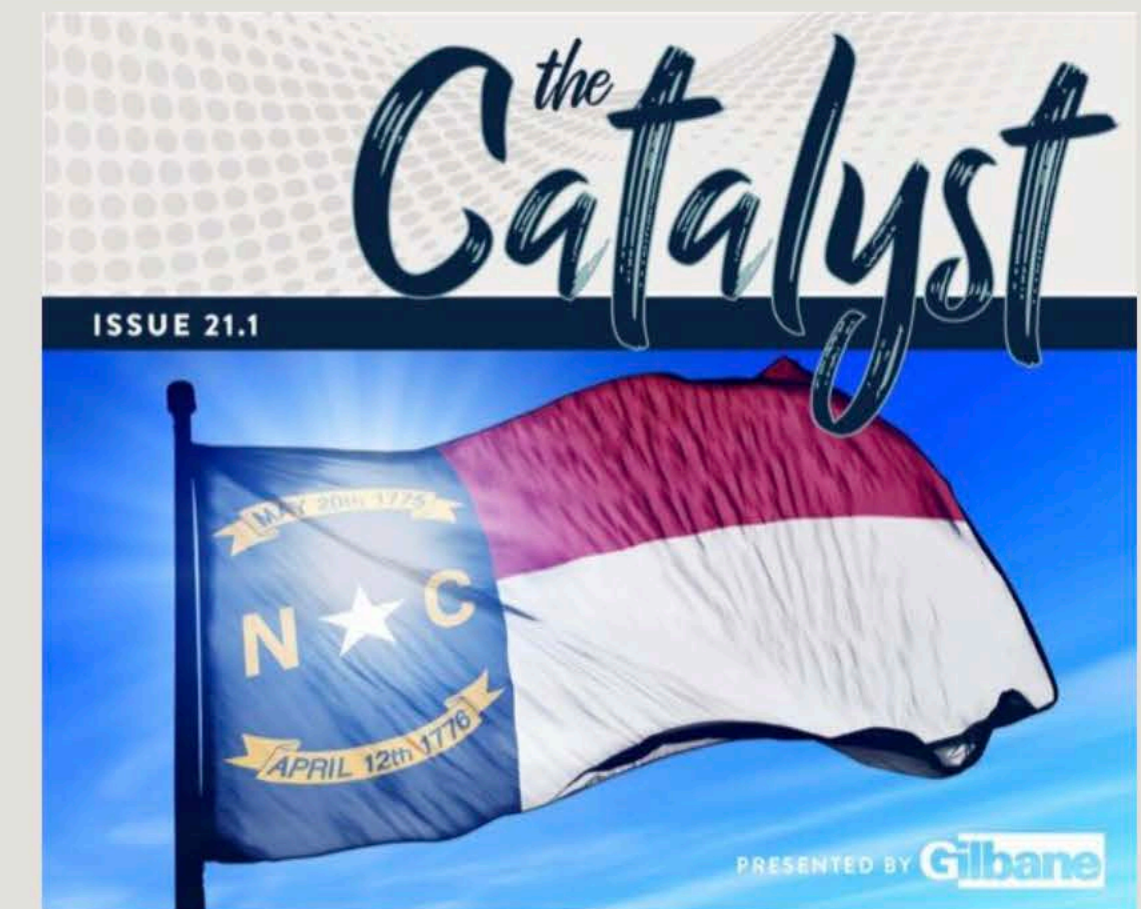
We are grateful to our investors for supporting EDPNC's mission to improve the economic well-being and quality of life of all North Carolinians.

To learn more about investing in EDPNC, contact:

Ann R. Turnbill

Director, Investor Relations

ann.turnbill@edpnc.com

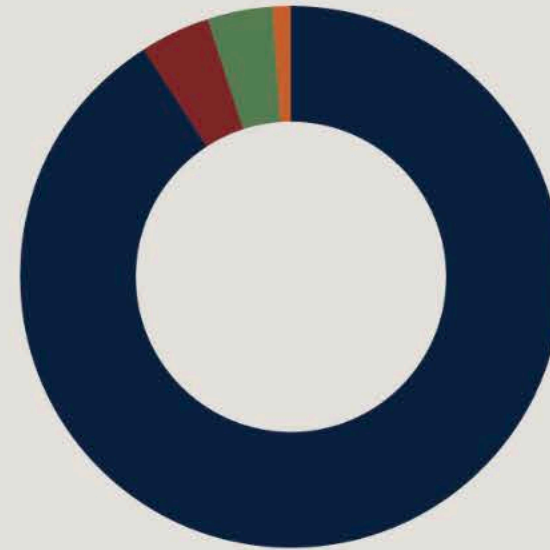


BY THE NUMBERS

The Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina receives state funding through its contract with the North Carolina Department of Commerce and private investment from companies, individuals, and foundations.

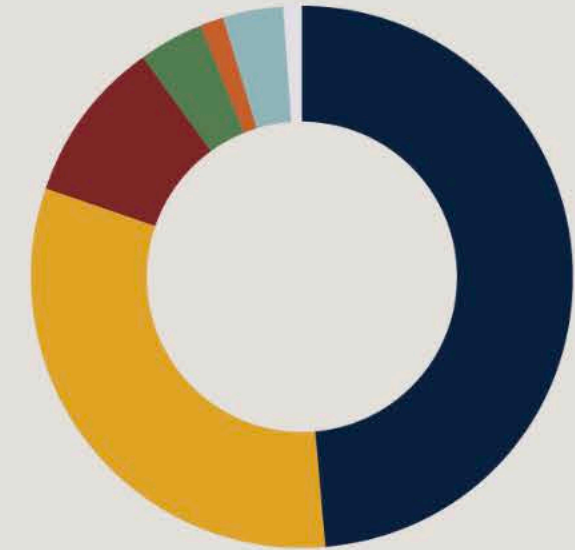
In fiscal year 2020, running from July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020, the partnership received \$20,932,514 in total revenue and had expenses totaling \$20,327,472.

FY 2020 FUNDING SOURCES



- State contract revenue - 90.9%
- Other state funding - 0.2%
- Federal grants - 4.1%
- Private funding - 3.9%
- Other - 0.9%

FY 2020 EXPENSES



- Advertising and promotion - 48.8%
- Personnel - 31.6%
- Professional fees - 9.8%
- Travel and prospect hospitality - 3.7%
- Information Technology - 1.5%
- Facilities and utilities - 3.6%
- General office expenses - 1%