

Governor Cooper Announces Eight Grants to Rural Communities to Attract 120 New Jobs and over \$365 Million in Private Investment

N.C. Rural Infrastructure Authority approves more than \$1.4 million in funding

RALEIGH, N.C.

The North Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA) has approved eight grant requests to local governments totaling \$1,465,000, Governor Roy Cooper announced today. The requests include commitments to create a total of 270 jobs, 150 of which were previously announced. The public investment in these projects will attract more than \$365.6 million in private investment.

“These funds make strategic investments in our rural communities to help them seize opportunities to prosper,” Governor Cooper said. “We are committed to improving the economy in all parts of our state.”

The RIA is supported by the rural economic development team at the North Carolina Department of Commerce. RIA members review and approve funding requests from local communities. Funding comes from a variety of specialized grant and loan programs offered and managed by N.C. Commerce’s Rural Economic Development Division, led by Assistant Secretary for Rural Development Kenny Flowers. Grants support a variety of activities, including infrastructure development, building renovation, expansion and demolition, and site improvements.

“I will forever be proud of the investments we’re making in our state's rural communities with these grants,” said N.C. Commerce Secretary Mabelle Baker Sanders. “They demonstrate North Carolina’s unwavering dedication to uplifting rural areas, creating opportunity, and building an equitable, sustainable economy.”

The RIA approved 7 grant requests under the state’s Building Reuse Program in three categories:

Vacant Building Category

Town of Boiling Springs (Cleveland County): A \$25,000 grant will support the reuse of an 800-square-foot building, where Hannah's Coffee House plans to establish a second location. The company sells locally-made coffee and sweet treats and has been in business for 10 years. This project is expected to create five jobs, with a private investment of \$37,369.

City of Lexington (Davidson County): A \$200,000 grant will support the reuse of a 65,000-square-foot building in Lexington. The building has been vacant for six months, and will be occupied by Millwork Brands, Inc., a retailer and wholesaler of doors, frames, and hardware for commercial construction. The company, which is a premier supplier to the single-family, multifamily, student, and senior housing industry, plans to create 27 jobs and invest \$1,231,074 in this project.

Lenoir County: A \$450,000 grant will support the reuse of a 26,820-square-foot building in Kinston. Infinity Link Communications, Inc., a high-speed internet, telephone, and television provider that currently serves customers in Greene, Lenoir, Wayne, Pitt and Edgecombe counties, will establish a new facility at this location. The company plans to install more than 700 miles of fiber in unincorporated areas in Lenoir County. The project is expected to create 51 jobs, with an accompanying private investment of \$46,579,538.

Swain County: A \$25,000 grant will support the reuse of a 9,952-square-foot building in Bryson City. Wise Guyz Grille, a full-service burger and pizza restaurant, will establish its fourth restaurant here. The project is expected to create five jobs and bring in \$352,250 in private investment.

Existing Business Building Category

City of Burlington (Alamance County): A \$100,000 grant will support the 60,000-square-foot expansion of Matthews International's facility in Burlington. Matthews International is a manufacturer of high-tech custom energy storage, marking, coding and industrial automation technologies and solutions, with over 11,000 employees in 200 locations worldwide. The company expects to create 14 jobs and invest \$4,900,000 in this project.

Stanly County: A \$90,000 grant will support the 4,000-square-foot expansion of an existing building in Locust. The building is currently occupied by Flextol, a family-owned company that specializes in fabrication of jacketed valves, pipe flexible metal hoses, and PTFE (polytetrafluoroethylene) hose and expansion joints. The company expects to create 11 jobs and invest \$329,645 in this project.

Rural Health Category

Town of Spencer (Rowan County): A \$75,000 grant will support the 2,366-square-foot expansion of Cabarrus Rowan Community Health Centers, Inc.'s facility in Spencer. The primary health clinic expects to create seven jobs and invest \$2,185,120 in this project.

The Building Reuse Program provides grants to local governments to renovate vacant buildings, renovate and/or expand buildings occupied by existing North Carolina companies, and renovate, expand

or construct health care facilities that will lead to the creation of new jobs in Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties, as well as rural census tracts of Tier 3 counties.

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

City of Thomasville (Davidson County): A \$500,000 grant will enable the city to extend sewer capacity to Nucor's new steel product manufacturing facility in Thomasville. As previously announced, the company plans to create at least 180 jobs and invest \$350 million in the overall project, with 150 jobs and an investment of \$310 million tied to this grant.

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

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

Visit the Rural Economic Development Division webpage for more information.

CONTACT

David Rhoades

drhoades@commerce.nc.gov

(919) 814-4611