

Kerr-Tar Regional Council Of Governments

ANNUAL UPDATE FFY 2024

The Kerr-Tar Regional Council of Governments Economic Development District released its five-year update for the U.S. EDA Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) on December 9, 2022. The data was gathered through focus groups, interviews, and an online survey. There were six focus groups and nine CEDS Committee members. The local economic developers submitted names for their county focus groups, and included a wide cross section of their communities. The responses indicated what participants believe is important about the community as well as what challenges must be overcome to reach desired growth and enhance quality of life.

After a thorough analysis of the data, dominant themes and trends were found. The impacts of these items are short, medium, and long term.

GOAL 1

Build on the Region's
Competitive
Advantage & Leverage
Marketplace

- Branding/Marketing
- Leveraging Existing Industry

GOAL 2

Establish & Maintain
Robust Regional
Infrastructure

- Product Development & Triangle North

GOAL 3

Create Revitalized,
Healthy, & Vibrant
Communities

- Small Business/ Entrepreneurial Development
- Downtown Revitalization
- Promotion of Niche ED Strategies
- Recreational Enhancements

GOAL 4

Engage in Labor
Force
Enhancements

- Labor Force Enhancements

Throughout the year, the Kerr-Tar EDD team has been working to advance the CEDS in 2024, which includes 9 recommendations and 42 action items based on current regional needs. We have initiated 16 of these action items and are updating a few of the action items. We will begin working on the remaining 26 action items between 2025-2026 with the most urgent items starting in 2025.

Advancing Action Items

GOAL 1

Build on the Region's Competitive Advantage and Leverage the Marketplace

Branding/Marketing

- A meeting date is set for December 16, 2024 with Tourism Directors in the region to discuss branding/marketing for the region. Other stakeholders will be added to the group. This is an ongoing action item.
- Promoting through local Agricultural Extension Offices and Tourism Development Authorities, and the Visit NC Farms mobile app.

Leverage Existing Industry

- Providing continuous technical assistance to the five-county region in the form of statistics, demographics, labor market analysis, and workforce trends for industry recruitment at the request of regional partners.
- Assisting local governments with researching and applying for eligible grant opportunities, including EDA, NC Department of Commerce, Golden Leaf Foundation and many other public and private funders.
- IEDC representative, Lynne Stein Benzion, CEcD, Director of Economic Development in Maryland visited during Business Retention & Expansion week in November 2023. The visit began with a training session on business retention and expansion (BRE) best practices, followed by meetings with industry partners throughout the region.
- Partnered with Vance-Granville Community College on their bi-annual event, Business and Industry Connect to focus on important topics and to hear directly from industries. Smaller industry specific quarterly meetings will spin off of this to stay abreast of needs and concerns.

GOAL 2

Establish and Maintain a Robust Regional Infrastructure

Product Development

- All five counties received funding through the Growing Rural Economics with Access to Technology (GREAT) Program.
- Working with Kleinfelder on a Regional Building Inventory and Assessment which will establish a regional inventory of buildings (businesses, offices, and industrial spaces.) It will also assist in identifying opportunities to modify them with more sustainable elements. Final report is due in early 2025.

- Worked with NCDOT to assess the road at Triangle North Granville for a built to standards opinion.
- Administered a contract for Granville and Warren Counties with a professional firm for the development of a conceptual site plan for Triangle North Granville Commercial property.
- Assisted the City of Henderson with successful grant application to fund a low pressure pump station.
- The COG collaborated with Central Pines Regional Council to submit an application to HUD for the PRICE grant. If awarded, it will advance, support, and drive long-term solutions for the preservation and development of manufactured housing.

GOAL 3

Create Revitalized, Healthy, and Vibrant Communities

Small Business/Entrepreneurship Development

- Assisted the Town of Warrenton with successful grant application for an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Program at Frontier Warrenton.

Downtown Revitalization

- During the 2024 Regional Summit “Cultivate” a large portion was centered around Downtown Revitalization. The theme for the segment was Transformative Stories–Towns Reimagined. The panel discussion included Steven Hayes–Developer, Joe Farrell–Developer and Rick Houser–Benchmark Community Bank to discuss downtowns, such as Franklin County, that have been revitalized and the benefits for economic development in our communities.

Promotion of Niche Economic Development Strategies

- The Community & Economic Development Manager and the Workforce Board Director presented at an event at FlexDesk 360 where they were able to share various resources such as the Revolving Loan Fund and Workforce Training programs available to local small business owners.
- Met with three niche businesses to provide information about the Revolving Loan Fund and assist them with the process.

Recreational Enhancements

- Have begun developing a regional asset map of all recreational venues and activities.
- Assisting McAdams with NC Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP.)
- The COG staff is actively convening the regional tourism directors to discuss and enhance regional assets. The Community & Economic Development Manger is working with the Marketing Director with EDPNC to identify goals and determine how we can accomplish this and develop a regional marketing plan. The first meeting is scheduled for December 16, 2024.
- The Town of Warrenton was awarded the NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grant (submitted by the COG) for the Warrenton Nature Trail.

GOAL 4

Develop Talented and Innovative People

Labor Force Enhancements

- Kerr-Tar in partnership with NC Commerce Division of Workforce Solutions, Capital Area Workforce Development, and Durham Workforce Development were awarded \$9.9 million federal grant. The grant was funded under the First Step Act Initiative to develop a partnership called, Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD) and is actively serving in the Butner Correctional Facility. The initiative is a three-stage program and increases federally incarcerated individuals' work readiness at the time of release, increasing employment in sustainable wage positions after release, and reducing recidivism through the initiative's three-stage program approach.
- The NCWorks Career Center continues to host innovative job fairs including hybrid events (employers virtual and job seekers in person,) multi-employer events, annual Young Adult Hiring events, Workforce Wednesdays, and many more events to meet job-seekers where they are and assist employers in connecting with qualified candidates.
- The Kerr-Tar Workforce Development Board was awarded funding to support the creation of a Local Reentry Council (LRC.) The LRC will collaborate with workforce development partners, the NC Dept of Adult Correction and others in their communities to support justice-involved individuals in making a successful transition to employment.
- The Kerr-Tar Workforce Development Board collaborated with Ken Spellman, the creator of the M.M.E.A.T. (Ministry, Management, Entrepreneurship, Accountability, and Training) Mentoring Program to offer the class to students with Kittrell Job Corp. The program helps at risk and justice-involved individuals enter back into society . The Kerr-Tar Workforce Development Board received the NADO Aliceann Woulbruck Impact Award for the program.
- Acquired JobsEQ license to assist Economic Development with obtaining a wide spectrum of data including demographic and labor market data. Each EDC Director has the option to have direct access.

- The Community & Economic Development Manager serves on the AdvanceNC Executive Committee This multi-regional consortium is a driving force to workforce readiness in advanced manufacturing and was initiated by the rapid growth in the EV industries. The AdvanceNC committee consists of Workforce Development Boards and Community Colleges across 19 counties.

Completed Activities

GOAL 1

Leverage Existing Industry

- Assisted Granville County with grant applications to assist with the expansion of CertainTeed, which included an investment of over \$118,000 and the creation of 37+ jobs.
- In Vance County officials broke ground at the Henderson-Vance Industrial Park on the shell building on Commerce Drive. The COG assisted the county in securing funding for the expandable 50,000 square foot facility. Assisted Vance County in securing funding for a 50,000 square foot shell building at the Henderson-Vance Industrial Park.
- A questionnaire was distributed to existing industries to determine needs, threats, potential for growth, obstacles, vendors and suppliers. A Regional Needs Forum was held on July 22, 2024 where 3 industry leaders attended from each of our five counties.

GOAL 2

Project Development

The COG assisted Franklin County with an infrastructure grant application to NC Dept of Commerce. The grant was funded to assist the county with water, sewer and road access. This will help accelerate the life science manufacturing sector in the area.

Triangle North

- Held meeting with all regional economic development partners to discuss the current status of Triangle North sites and next steps.

GOAL 3

Small Business/Entrepreneurial Development

- Hosted two IEDC volunteers for regional meetings around topics of Small Business Entrepreneurship and Business Retention/Expansion.

- Assisted Warren County and Town of Warrenton with State Economic Infrastructure Grants (non-construction) from SCRC.
- Partnered with Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments and Triangle J Council of Governments through an EDA-EAA grant for Tri-COG Food Ecosystem Economic Development Strategy (Tri-COG Feeds,) a multi-organizational project supporting local food coalitions across NC. The COG hosted two Ameri-Corp members who actively work with community partners and farmers to address supply chain gaps and expand accessibility.

Annual Regional Summits

- On March 23, 2023 the Kerr-Tar Regional Council of Government and the Kerr-Tar Workforce Development Board hosted Innovate 2023 -Question. Design, Thrive. It was held at the Lakeland Cultural Arts Center (LCAC) in Littleton. This event focused on challenging ourselves and our ideas on education, hiring practices, and our thinking about systems through expert led panel discussion and workshop facilitation. A total of 133 attendees from across the region and beyond attended.
- On September 12, 2024 the 4th annual Regional Summit "Cultivate 2024" was held at the Jones Performing Arts Center - Louisburg College with 200 people in attendance. Topics included Tourism & Marketing, Champions of Change, Transformative Stories, and Fueling Growth. The featured speaker was Jennifer Pharr Davis who shared a powerful message about her experiences of hiking the Appalachian Trail.

Grant Support

- Wrote and submitted cybersecurity grants for Town of Warrenton (**AWARDED**) and the Town of Franklinton (**NOT AWARDED.**)
Provided technical assistance for cybersecurity grants for Warren County and Vance County.
- The COG continues to provide administration of the EDA funded infrastructure project at the Henderson-Vance Industrial Park. Project is near completion.
- The COG continues to collaborate with Franklin County on the administration of an infrastructure grant to install water, sewer, and road access in the mid-section of 85-acre Triangle North Franklin Business Park.
- Assisted the City of Henderson and Town of Warrenton with successful grant application for low pressure pump station and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Program. **AWARDED**
- Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) Program (All Five Counties) - **AWARDED**
- Federal grant-U.S. Dept of Labor and U.S. Dept of Justice under the The First Step Act Initiative to support Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD.) **AWARDED**
- Wrote and submitted a Rural Transformation grant for the Town of Franklinton. **AWARDED**

Community Framework

- Monthly Newsletter distributed to an audience of over 500 individuals and groups.
- Bi-monthly grants and training e-newsletter distributed to over 350 individuals.
- Kerr-Tar Staff serves as the Zoning Administrator for the Town of Bunn; a small Town located in Franklin County.
- The Community & Economic Development Manager serves on the Henderson-Vance Chamber of Commerce Executive Board of Directors.
- The Community & Economic Development Manager serves on the United Way of Vance County Board of Directors, which serves Vance and Warren Counties.
- The Community & Economic Development Manager serves on the Edmonds Tennis & Education Foundation (ETEF) Board which serves multiple counties in the region.

Looking Ahead to 2025

- Quarterly reports on data from the Department of Commerce and the EDPNC as to site and building size
- Perform region-wide site identification and evaluation of potential industrial sites and identify sites for further action.
- Work with downtown development directors to determine potential and desire for revitalization and hold a meeting to determine best practices.
- Assisting local governments with researching and applying for eligible EDA grant opportunities under the agency's EAA and Public Works Programs.
- Assist local governments with grant writing assistance for infrastructure and other economic development opportunities.
- Meet frequently with Tourism Directors and other leaders to discuss tourism and develop a Regional Marketing Plan.
- Assess and study existing industries, trends, and target select businesses.
- Hold quarterly regional industry led roundtables that are industry specific
- Attend NCEDA Annual Conference in 2025
- Attend EDPNC Event
- Hold a regional meeting with brokers/realtors to bring awareness to the region.

In conclusion the Kerr-Tar EDD is committed in cultivating regional economic growth through the implementation of the CEDS. The CEDS builds upon past gains, with goals that will positively impact the economic development potential for the COG's EDD and the local government constituencies of the COG. In implementing these goals , the COG EDD will be

"Building on a Strong Past, Focused on an Extraordinary Future."

Approved by the Kerr-Tar Regional Council of Governments Executive Board on December 5, 2024.