

# Program Focus Area

Existing Business Activity — Business Recruitment — Real Estate Development

## Project Averages

*Active and Missed*

66 Missed Project Over 12 Months



**37**

JOBS  
239



**13**

THOUSAND  
SQUARE FEET  
170K



**5**

ACRES  
59



**\$14**

MILLION  
INVESTMENT  
\$198M

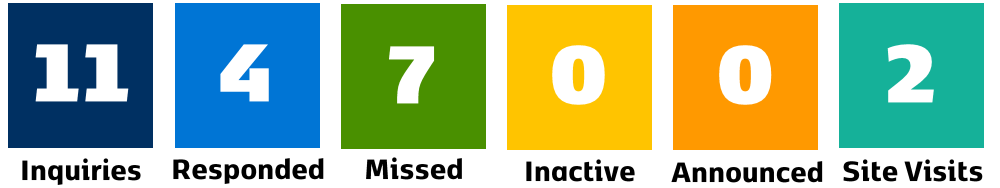
### March Unemployment Rate

**3.9%** = same percentage as February  
Regional March Rate is 3.5%  
State March Rate is 3.5%

To learn more, visit the link below.

[High Country WDB Overview | LEAD Analytics \(nccommerce.com\)](#)

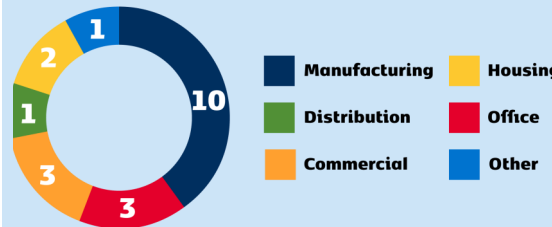
## Project Activity Stats



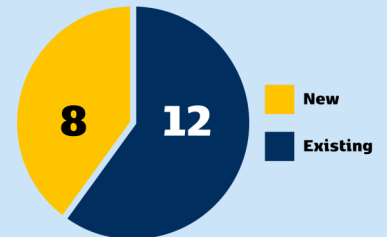
## Active Projects

**20**

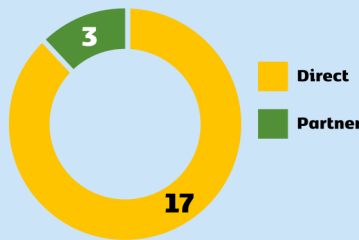
### Project Industries



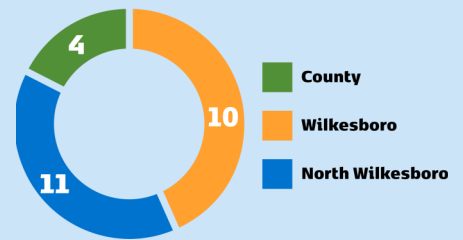
### Projects by Type



### Projects by Source



### Projects by Location



## Existing Business

Current and YTD Total  
Activity since July 1, 2023



**9**

UNIQUE VISITS  
68



**7**

FOLLOW UP VISITS  
45

## Program Stats



**9**

PARTNER  
MEETINGS  
121



**10**

REAL ESTATE  
DEVELOPMENT  
65



**41**

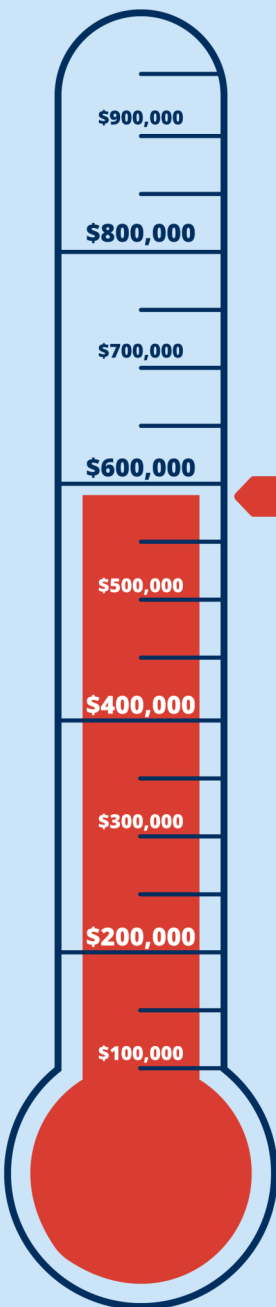
SOLUTIONS  
PROVIDED  
299

# LEAP Forward

## Local Expansion & Attraction Program

*Together We Can Grow!*

**\$1,000,000**  
 Over 5-Years



**59.5%**  
 (\$595,100)

The Wilkes Economic Development Corporation works closely with businesses and the community to find unique solutions to economic challenges. Since 2010, Private LEAP funds have been instrumental to ensure this mission is possible. It is time to request your help replenishing the funds to continue moving Wilkes forward.

The need for investment builds upon the traditional program of work of the EDC: existing business retention and expansion, marketing and new business recruitment, and real estate development. Special Projects focus on Wilkes Commercial Business Center(s), Housing, Childcare, Outdoor Economy, and Talent Retention and Attraction, which are critical for ensuring a strong economy and building Wilkes County capacity.

### Will you invest in Wilkes County's future?

Wilkes EDC expresses our gratitude to those who have already committed to the LEAP Forward Campaign and mission of the EDC! Below is a list of our investors to date.

- Alex and Amy Blair
- Andrew Palmer
- Arnold and Becky Lakey
- Blair Properties
- Blue Ridge Ranch
- Cam Finley
- Champion Towing
- Dale and Michelle Isom
- Duke Energy
- ECS Southeast, LLC
- Eddie and Anna Holland
- Fortress Management Group, Inc.
- Hampton Inn
- Holiday Inn Express
- Holly Minton
- Jim Smoak
- Joe and Debbie Johnston
- Ken Noland
- Leonard G. Herring Family Foundation
- Lesa Hensley
- Luke Mathis
- McNeill Chevrolet & Nissan of Wilkesboro
- MECI & Associates, Inc.
- Mountain View Hardware, LLC
- Omega Construction
- Riverstone Land and Equipment, LLC
- Scott Nafe
- Shelmer Blackburn
- *And Additional Anonymous Donors*

Ready to make a pledge? Visit the [link](#) or scan the QR code to invest or call (336) 838-1501.

Investors of our LEAP Forward Campaign will be recognized on our website, monthly Activity Reports, Newsletters, and at our Annual Meeting.



## MerleFest 2024

Wilkes EDC enjoyed participating in MerleFest 2024 as a sponsor, host, and participant in the festival. The team joined Wilkes Chamber of Commerce's Chamber Night on the first day, enjoying the refreshments and engaging with local government, resource partners, and businesses from Wilkes.

MerleFest is an excellent opportunity for the EDC to welcome guests we have worked or engaged with during the 2023-24 year. This year's guests included representatives from NC Carolina Core, The Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, Energy United, JavaMaster International LLC, ECS Southeast LLC, Select Steel Buildings, and other businesses.

Wilkes EDC recognizes MerleFest as an excellent opportunity for visitors to explore our outdoors, amenities, and local businesses in Wilkes. We thank Wilkes Community College, Sponsors, and volunteers for making this festival possible. Click the link to view more highlights from the festival: [MerleFest 2024 draws rave reviews | News | journalpatriot.com](https://www.journalpatriot.com/news/merlefest-2024-draws-rave-reviews)



## Wilkes EDC is Getting Race-Ready!

Wilkes EDC looks forward to participating in the NASCAR All-Star Race as a sponsor, attendee, and race fan! The EDC has partnered with Wilkes TDA in a sponsorship package to display a video promoting Wilkes County as a destination for leisure and business; this includes a 15 to 30-second Public Announcement message. Both will play daily at North Wilkesboro Speedway during Race Week and the NASCAR All-Star Race.

Wilkes EDC has also partnered with both towns to promote Fan Fest in the 'boros! This event will be held on Thursday, May 16, 2024, from 5 to 9 p.m. Both towns will have family-friendly activities, food trucks, live music, driver appearances, and interviews leading up to the Hauler Parade, which will begin at 6:00 p.m. See the route details of the parade in the image to the right. Learn more about the upcoming event by visiting [FanFest in the 'boros \(allstarraceweek.com\)](https://www.allstarraceweek.com). The website includes a festival map, parking, and more!

We are excited about Race Week! Wilkes EDC encourages Wilkes Community to give our visitors the Wilkes Warm Welcome during Race Week. See you all out there!



## Wilkes EDC 2024 Spring Entrepreneur Grant Program

North Wilkesboro, N.C. — Six local businesses received Entrepreneur Grants from the Wilkes Economic Development Corporation (EDC) at the EDC's Board Meeting on Friday, May 10, 2024. This grant program is held twice a year thanks to EDC's private/public investors and the sponsorship of the Small Business Center (SBC) at Wilkes Community College. Ten businesses of various types have applied for this year's program, representing several industry sectors: agriculture, retail, food services, and woodworking.

Submissions were judged based on the potential funding impact on the business and the sustainability of each respective recipient. Applicants submitted a video pitch in addition to their business plans and financial summaries to give the judges insight into their proposed use of funds. The grant amount totaled \$14,500, distributed between the six winners.

Bright Barrel, LLC, is owned and operated by Caleb Drown. Caleb participated in the Idea Expo at Masthead Coworking. It was an opportunity to test the feasibility of a product or business plan, receive mentorship, and develop potential partnerships and funding at that time after completing the series and pitch competition. Caleb received funding for research and product development conducted by Appalachian State University's Fermentation Science program. Bright Barrel, LLC crafts and distributes their line of non-alcoholic craft beer. The brand appeals to outdoor enthusiasts and health-conscious consumers. They received \$1,500 for a commercial refrigerator for a product showcase. To learn more, visit [Bright-Barrel.com](http://Bright-Barrel.com) today!



Chad Sale and his family operate CS Farming. They are a former grant recipient of the 2018 Entrepreneur Grant Program. CS Farming's operations paused due to illness but started back up last year, expanding their farm to include fresh fruits. This year, they plan to include 5,000 greenhouse strawberry plants, 120 blueberry plants, 30 blackberry canes, and more in their productions. CS Farming received \$3,700 towards labor and construction of a USDA-compliant packing house for their products. Follow them on Facebook to stay up-to-date on events and activities: [CS Farming | Facebook](#).

Good Morning Baby is an online children's clothing company operated and manufactured by Meghan and Andy Benesh. They aim to continue enhancing their online presence and eventually open shops regionally and statewide. Good Morning Baby received \$1,000 for lighting and tripod equipment for social media and marketing. Visit their website, [GoodMorning-Baby.com](http://GoodMorning-Baby.com), to learn more and to view their products.



Russell Flower Farm is a flower farm expanding to agritourism farming, offering u-cut experiences, events, and educational classes. It is owned and operated by Brittany Russell. Their goal is to make their farm and activities handicap accessible. They have been awarded \$4,800 towards a cement pad and materials to create two accessible parking spaces and a walkway leading to their activity's location. Visit [RusselFlowerFarm.com](http://RusselFlowerFarm.com) to learn more about their business.

Brittany Anderson and her family operate Scoops N More. They offer premium hand-dipped ice cream at events and festivals around Wilkes County and plan to operate at the North Wilkesboro Speedway All-Star Race for their second year in a row. \$2,000 was granted to Scoops N More towards a Soft Serve Ice Cream Machine, which will help them during fast-paced events such as the 2024 All-Star Race. Follow them on Facebook to stay up-to-date on events and activities: [Scoops N More | Facebook](#)



Upscale Structures is a business that specializes in custom hand-built chicken coops, dog kennels, and run-in horse barns. Matthew Sturgill is the owner and started his operations last year. His services include a delivery service with loading, unloading, and structure setup. Upscale Structures received \$1,500 towards a trailer for delivery. Matthew previously rented trailers for his deliveries. Having his own will help cut expenses and create flexibility in his schedule and delivery time. A website is underway and will be available by the third quarter of 2024. To learn more or make

inquiries, email: [mailto:upscalestructures@gmail.com](mailto:mailto:upscalestructures@gmail.com)