

PRESS RELEASE



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Spring 2026 Entrepreneur Grant Winners Awarded by Wilkes EDC

North Wilkesboro, N.C. — Four local businesses were awarded grants through the Spring 2026 Entrepreneur Grant Program during the Wilkes Economic Development Corporation's (EDC) Board Meeting on Friday, April 17, 2026. Operated by Wilkes EDC with the support of our local government partners, this program supports small business growth and development across Wilkes County. We are able to fund this program thanks to our [LEAP Forward Investors](#), the private side of our funding along with sponsors. Thank you to [Wilkes Community College Small Business Center](#) and [Wilkes Chamber of Commerce](#) for assisting us as sponsors to make this program possible.

This cycle drew in nine applicants, each submitting a video pitch along with a business plan and financial summary, giving judges a well-rounded view of their vision and growth strategy. Four recipients were selected based on the potential impact of funding their business and the sustainability of their proposed plans. A total of \$14,000 was awarded, supporting the growth and development of these local businesses. Applicants represented a range of industries, including Hospitality, Agriculture, Agritourism, and Personal Services.

C'est La Vin, Wine & Provisions — Owned by Paula Horton, C'est la Vin is a wine bar and bottle shop offering a curated selection of wines, small bites, and locally sourced artisanal provisions in a sophisticated yet welcoming setting. Located at 718 Main Street in North Wilkesboro, the business opened on April 11 of last year. A previous recipient of the Spring 2025 Entrepreneur Grant Program, C'est la Vin reapplied after completing the required waiting period, and demonstrated continued growth and impact through the Spring 2026 application process. The business was awarded \$5,000 to expand its outdoor seating area, including covered seating and lighting, increasing overall capacity and enhancing customer experience. To learn more, visit [CestlaVin.com](#)

Half Acre Farm — Owned and operated by Kelsey Crawford, Half Acre Farm is a diversified vegetable farm located in Deep Gap, serving Wilkes County as its primary market. The business will launch production in Spring 2027 following a year of planning, fundraising, and land preparation in 2026. Half Acre Farm was awarded \$4,500 to support infrastructure development, including a modern irrigation system and essential materials needed for production. Follow along at [Half Acre Farm | Facebook](#)

Late Bloomers Flower Farm — Owned and operated by Barbara Cason and Stacy Sikes, Late Bloomers Flower Farm is a 4-acre boutique tulip, lavender, and peony farm blending agritourism, education, edible blooms, and botanical wellness. Located at 1143 Cool Springs

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Church Road, Elkin, the farm serves as a destination for both the community and visitors to Wilkes County. Late Bloomers Flower Farm received \$2,000 to purchase a lavender distillation unit, allowing the business to expand its capacity for value-added agricultural products. Learn more at LateBloomersFlowers.com.

Rooted Beauty Collective LLC — Owned and operated by Kristina Church, Rooted Beauty Collective LLC is a high-end salon located in downtown North Wilkesboro at 825 Main Street, offering hair services, professional products, and a luxury salon experience. Rooted Beauty Collective LLC was awarded \$2,500 to install a blow-dry bar and additional seating. This expansion will allow clients to book dedicated blowout services or visit on a walk-in basis. Follow [@RootedBeautyCollective_NC](https://www.instagram.com/RootedBeautyCollective_NC) on Instagram for updates.

Wilkes EDC President LeeAnn Nixon expressed gratitude to this cycle’s judges. “We’re incredibly grateful to this cycle’s judges for their time, expertise, and thoughtful feedback,” said LeeAnn. “Their insights not only help us select strong recipients, but also provide meaningful guidance to all applicants, connecting them with resources and opportunities that can support their long-term success.”

The Spring 2026 Entrepreneur Grant Program judges were: Cindy Thompson, President of Wilkes Chamber of Commerce; Ariana Williamson, Director of Grants & Strategic Partnerships at Wilkes Community College; Becky Martinez oowner of Insightful Financials; Taylor Berry, Community Development Director for the Town of North Wilkesboro; and Thomas Salley, Tourism Director for Wilkes TDA. Special thanks also go to Laurie Brintle-Jarvis, Director of the Wilkes Community College Small Business Center for her continued support in assisting applicants with business plans and financial summaries throughout the grant cycle.

“It’s exciting to see the continued growth of this program and the entrepreneurs it supports,” said Francisco Martinez, Marketing Manager for Wilkes EDC. “Each cycle brings new ideas and opportunities, and we’re committed to helping these businesses take meaningful steps toward long-term success.”

“Since launching this program in 2015, it’s been incredible to see how it continues to evolve and support local businesses,” said Robin Hamby, Vice President of Wilkes EDC. “We’re thankful for our sponsors and partners who make this work possible. Their investment allows us to keep strengthening the program and supporting entrepreneurs across Wilkes County for years to come.”

Program sponsorships are available, and we welcome support at any level. Sponsors receive recognition through program marketing and communications, highlighting their investment in entrepreneurship and small business growth across Wilkes County. Those interested in supporting the program can contact Wilkes EDC to learn more.

ABOUT

The Wilkes EDC’s Entrepreneur Grant Program is held twice a year, in the Spring and the Fall. Application materials for the program are available year-round at WilkesEDC.com. Stay up to

date with information by subscribing to our [newsletter](#), following us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

The **Wilkes Economic Development Corporation**, a 501c3 public-private partnership, aims to facilitate the creation of new jobs and capital investment in Wilkes County through the retention and expansion of existing businesses and the recruitment of new businesses. The EDC is located at 213 Ninth Street in historic downtown North Wilkesboro, North Carolina. For more information about Wilkes EDC, visit [WilkesEDC.com](#) or contact LeeAnn Nixon at 336-838-1501 or lnixon@wilkesedc.com.

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