

Institute for **Rural**
Entrepreneurship

Report Card

October 2003 - September 2004



10 Point Program of Work

As part of our launch of the Homegrown Jobs Initiative in October 2003, the Rural Center announced the Institute for Rural Entrepreneurship and committed to a ten-point program of work to foster homegrown business development in rural North Carolina. This report card shows our accomplishments over the past year.

Done	
1. Coordinate the new statewide alliance of business service providers	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Expanded the alliance to 40 organizations that provide business development services. These organizations include state and federal agencies, universities, state associations, entrepreneurial non-profits, and private capital providers.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jointly developed a position paper endorsing entrepreneurship as a key part of a balanced portfolio of economic development investment for North Carolina. Those ideas were endorsed by the entire alliance membership and presented to two Joint Select Committees of the General Assembly: Small Business and Economic Growth and Development.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Brought members together to collaborate on a \$2 million joint proposal to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to create a comprehensive entrepreneurship development system to reach rural and minority entrepreneurs.
2. Serve as the leading information source on rural entrepreneurship in North Carolina, through data and outreach	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Distributed the "North Carolina Business Data Sourcebook," containing data on business activity and ownership for 100 counties.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Trained 192 local leaders from 59 North Carolina communities in ways to support <i>homegrown jobs</i> through entrepreneurship development; more than 200 people attended regional meetings in Washington (NC) and Morganton to talk with one another about entrepreneurship development opportunities.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Recruited and led a team of five North Carolina professionals to receive national certification in Energizing Entrepreneurship for Rural America, a train-the-trainer academy for community leaders in entrepreneurship development. E-NC staff and telecenter managers later received the same training.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Taught entrepreneurship fundamentals to economic development professionals in the annual Basic Economic Development Course at UNC's School of Government.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Released the report, "Understanding the Environment for Entrepreneurship in Rural North Carolina," based on commissioned research.
3. Improve access to business information and assistance	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Developed and distributed the 100-county "North Carolina Business Resource Directory."
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Posted a searchable version of the Business Resources Directory on the center's website.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Advocated for a small business ombudsman in the N.C. Department of Commerce and an expansion of its Business ServiCenter to provide web- and phone-based assistance.
4. Promote high-quality entrepreneurship education and training opportunities	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hosted a forum with national experts in entrepreneurship education and training in K-12 schools and community colleges. The forum challenged North Carolina to expand its educational offerings in entrepreneurship, especially for youth.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Developed and released the "Directory of Entrepreneurship Education and Training Resources" based on commissioned research.

5. Expand business finance services in rural communities	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Recruited an outreach coordinator to the center staff to expand the network of micro loan intake professionals across the state. Reconnected seven professionals to that network.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Microenterprise Loan Program held three professional development meetings to increase loan usage and completed technical assistance workshops for 492 small business owners.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Supported 164 small business loans worth over \$8 million through the Capital Access Program. Created or retained 1,494 jobs.
6. Expand use of information technology in rural communities	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Advocated for and secured \$2 million for the e-NC Authority to develop up to four additional Business and Technology Centers (BTCs) in Tier 1 and 2 counties.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Supported the existing four BTCs in becoming active regional centers for entrepreneurship services and networking.
7. Expand opportunities for agricultural entrepreneurs	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Supported demonstration projects in shared-use commercial kitchens and dairy pasteurizers to reduce the costs for agricultural entrepreneurs, partnering with the N.C. Department of Agriculture.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Secured funding and initiated research to investigate policy, market and legal barriers faced by producer-owned cooperatives.
8. Create self-employment opportunities for laid-off workers	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Pioneered the New Opportunities for Workers (NOW) program for dislocated workers using federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funding.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Piloted NOW in 13 Small Business Centers. Based on the pilot, redesigned the program to better meet the needs of the dislocated workers through stronger outreach and greater program flexibility.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Announced 22 colleges to offer the redesigned program in FY2005.
9. Advocate for policies that benefit rural entrepreneurs	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Conducted research and produced the report, "Health Insurance in North Carolina," describing the challenges facing rural small businesses in providing health benefits.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Collaborated with legislative staff to draft the legislation that established the N.C. Health Insurance Innovations Commission.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Received a \$5 million state appropriation for vacant building reuse, agricultural innovation, and other R&D projects to improve rural infrastructure for small businesses.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Developed a proposal with alliance partners to the Kellogg Foundation to expand the rural and minority outreach of business development assistance.
10. Demonstrate promising entrepreneurship development models	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Selected and funded eleven community-led demonstrations of entrepreneurship as an affordable and effective economic development strategy, in partnership with the N.C. Department of Commerce. Average funding was \$60,000 for one-year projects started in late July.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Developed a program with the N.C. Department of Commerce for support of business incubation as a tool to strengthen economic development through entrepreneurship.