BUILDING A SERVICE BUSINESS

The father-son team at Honest-1 Auto Care relies on top-notch service to build business.

International success
Relationships help drive local and international success at Thermcraft.

A leap into business
This military retiree could have landed a corporate job but chose entrepreneurship.

A new breed of farmers
Agripreneurs change the N.C. landscape.
GO AHEAD, BE THE BOSS. WE’LL HELP!

Starting a business takes passion, purpose and the right people to support you as you successfully launch and grow your dream. Connect with your local Small Business Center for help with loan preparation and marketing assistance. Take advantage of free confidential business counseling, as well as resource and referral information for a variety of business needs. To aid in your success, we also offer free high-impact small business seminars and classes. So, go ahead with your plans to be your own boss. INVEST IN YOUR FUTURE and join the thousands of people who have figured out North Carolina’s best kept secret for small business success. Call us today!

The NC Community Colleges
SMALL BUSINESS CENTER NETWORK

FACILITATES ECONOMIC IMPACT IN 92% OF ALL NC COUNTIES EACH YEAR
RANKS NUMBER 1 IN THE US FOR TOTAL BUSINESS SEMINARS & PARTICIPANTS
HELPS START AN AVERAGE OF 700+ BUSINESSES EVERY YEAR
WORKS TO CREATE & RETAIN 3800 JOBS ANNUALLY FOR NORTH CAROLINA

Creating success for small business. | ncsbc.net
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Dear Readers,

Each year we are pleased to produce the *North Carolina Small Business Handbook*. This year’s edition features articles on successful North Carolina small businesses and highlights topical areas of broad interest to existing business owners and those contemplating the startup of their own business.

**Optimism and growth are high**

The state of small business here in North Carolina and nationwide is quite positive. There has been modest growth in the level of new business startups, and existing small-business growth has been quite strong. According to the Kauffman Foundation’s 2018 State of Entrepreneurship, “entrepreneurs are very optimistic. … This carries over to their satisfaction with the current economic climate, their profits and belief that conditions will continue to improve for business owners.”

**Small business continues to be big business in North Carolina**

North Carolina, like most states, is a small-business state. There are nearly 850,000 small businesses in North Carolina employing 1.6 million people. Just under 98% of these businesses are classified as small businesses (under 500 employees); roughly 60% of the private-sector workforce and slightly more than 45% of the Gross State Product are attributed to these small firms.

**Key challenges for small firms**

All small firms have, at some point or another, faced challenges related to access to capital, workforce to grow their businesses, and the state and federal regulatory environment.

The Federal Reserve Banks’ most recent Small Business Credit Survey presents some very interesting findings. For instance, a larger share of existing business loan applicants received the full amount of requested financing (46% compared to 40% a year earlier). But, most microfirms (with sales of $100,000 or less) and young startups (from 0-5 years) received considerably less financing than requested from banks. Nearly a quarter of these firms sought financing from online lenders; these firms had just over 70% approval rates. The borrowers, however, cited the challenges of high interest rates and unfavorable repayment terms.

Beyond access to capital, the next most pressing concern of small-business owners across North Carolina is access to and retention of people. This is a nationwide challenge driven by near record low unemployment rates of 4%. Firms are finding it necessary to be more creative in attracting and keeping talent. These challenges are felt in both high-growth metro areas where talent pools are very competitive and in rural areas where the available labor pool may lack the skills required.
North Carolina’s resources for small businesses

There are, however, knowledge gaps among those in business and those starting businesses as to where to go for assistance. Our state has some of the very best resources available in the country to help individuals start and grow successful businesses. These include:

The N.C. Community College System’s Small Business Center Network has an office based at each of its 58 campuses statewide. They provide a broad grassroots presence through which information, high-impact training and business advice is provided to startups and microbusinesses.

The Small Business and Technology Development Center is a business advisory service of The University of North Carolina System. With offices at 16 campuses across the state, its professional staff provides in-depth business counseling to small and midsize companies in all 100 counties. This ranges from broad general business advice to specialized expertise in securing debt and equity capital, expanding into international markets, accessing government contracts, and creating new strategies and organizational capacities for growth.

The expertise and support of these two leading state resources for small businesses are readily accessible. Services are free and confidential. Modest fees are charged for training programs and in some cases for in-depth specialized services. Further information about these and other resources in North Carolina are included in this Small Business Handbook.

Call on us if we can help make your business better.

Scott Daugherty has led the SBTDC since its founding in 1984.

Duke Energy’s Small Business Energy Saver Program

We have programs to help small businesses make investments to save both energy and money. Our Small Business Energy Saver Program helps business owners by paying up to 80 percent of the upfront cost for energy efficiency upgrades. Over 15,000 small business customers in the Carolinas have already taken advantage of this program. Why wait? Visit duke-energy.com/sbes to get started.
NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS

Thermcraft has become a success at home and abroad by keeping up with the times and building individual relationships.

Tom Crafton is not a fan of voicemail. The owner of custom furnace and oven manufacturer Thermcraft Inc. insists a real person answer the phone during business hours. He also responds to emails as soon as he sees them.

"I’ll move heaven and Earth to help that customer," he says. "That’s your first impression. I want to at least show that we care." His Winston-Salem business thrives on personal attention. The items he manufactures — laboratory furnaces, ceramic fiber heaters, ovens, kilns and such — often require an individualized sale. Having that timely, human connection is imperative. And being able to supply products and parts quickly and made-to-order has put Thermcraft’s name on merchandise around the world.

"We are very diverse in our customer base. Many are Fortune 500 companies and many are OEMs, where we supply components to go into a complete system. The industry var-
ies from one end to the other,” he says. “One thing that’s been good for us is our diversity from glass to fiber optics to metal. … It’s letting us maintain a pretty strong business.”

Thermcraft works with companies such as DuPont, Westinghouse and Corning. “They would have a facility in Europe or Asia. Back in the early 2000s or so, we would deal with the semiconductor industry, and much of that moved offshore to China or Taiwan, and we followed that along.”

His staff of 62 in the shop and office includes some employees who have been on board for 20 years. The company started in 1971 and has 70,000 square feet of manufacturing space and 3,600 square feet of offices on a 12-acre campus. Two off-site warehouses are used for storage.

“What we do is not necessarily something you go to school for,” Crafton says. “We’ve been in business over 45 years, so experience is a lot of it. We had a large company that was a competitor, and they didn’t really support their customers, and we really supported what the customer needed. That service really helped our business. We build furnaces and systems to customer specification. Most have a standard line, but we do custom designs. We would take an application or need that a customer had and work to design a system that meets their qualifications. So, the customized business developed our business throughout the county and nation-wide.” Thermcraft participates in trade shows, including an annual event in Dubai, but also adheres to the global demands of instant-access.

“The millennial generation will find what they want on the internet rather than at a trade show, so the market world is changing. Five or six years ago, I hired a guy to monitor the website traffic, to keep our name high on search engines,” he says. “There’s a publication called Thomas Register [a manufacturing industry directory], and we had a set of catalogs that literally would take up a 10-foot wall, but now it’s all online. I’m 65, and I’m not nearly as well-versed as the millennials, but I have people that can get it done. You have to adapt to stay in business.”

In a typical 50-hour workweek, he’ll see orders ranging from a few hundred dollars to a million. “Some weeks, we can ship a big quantity of orders for less dollars. We can work a large job for 16 or 20 weeks, or where some of the smaller components can go out in 30 days, so that mix has kept us profitable,” he says. “We look at shipping in dollars, not quantity. So we may have one big thing that takes up 1,000 square feet. Our products can be in the $10 million-plus a year, but there may be one job that’s a half-million, then 10 other jobs that are $5,000 apiece. The only thing that’s consistent is nothing is consistent.”
The Small Business and Technology Development Center helped Crafton's business make its connections.

“Between them and the chamber of commerce, they’ve helped a lot with export sales. They bring different programs to use, different grants we can qualify for, so we can use the money that’s available to us to pay expenses, like to Dubai every year for that trade show. That can be a $10,000 out-of-pocket expense,” he says.

“The biggest thing is, we provide a specialty product for a pretty niche market. We could spend $100,000 on advertising and [it] would not impact sales, because it’s a consumer-type market. Our thing is custom design, and the customer support. We also have a standard line, and we have promoted that through trade shows, and the Small Business and Technology Development Center helped us to raise our visibility.”

The whole process comes back to that initial contact and customer service.

“We’ve developed a lot of relationships and have customers that have orders year after year,” he says. “We have voice-mail, but during business hours, a live person will answer the phone. The small businesses are a real boon to the U.S., and there are more of them than the bigger businesses, and we’re looking to help the small guy out. Our people here, especially from the sales standpoint, are very sensitive to that.”

Tom Crafton, owner of custom furnace and oven manufacturer Thermcraft, will “move heaven and Earth” to help a customer.

We’ll help you rise above the competition.

Managing a business means making important decisions; but you don’t have to do it alone. Since 1984, the SBTDC has helped more than 135,000 North Carolina entrepreneurs make their businesses better.

In addition to assistance with finance, marketing, and management we have targeted programs that can help you:

- sell to the government
- start exporting worldwide
- commercialize technology
- gain access to equity capital
- reach your full potential

Small Business and Technology Development Center
A business and technology extension program of the UNG System
(800) 258-0862 | info@sbtdc.org | www.sbtdc.org
International business

North Carolina Exports and Jobs

88% (9,544)
OF N.C. EXPORTERS ARE SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES (SMES)

92%
MANUFACTURING COMPANIES

$35 billion

158,222 export-related jobs

GETTING STARTED WITH EXPORTING

1. Evaluate your product’s export potential
2. Determine your company’s export readiness
3. Research and identify potential foreign markets and customers
4. Find and evaluate potential export sales representatives
5. Research supply chain options, including freight forwarders
6. Determine international pricing and payment arrangements
7. Consider trade finance options

BENEFITS OF EXPORTING

Exporting can help your business:

- Increase sales and profits
- Gain global market share
- Enhance domestic competitiveness
- Reduce dependence on existing markets
- Exploit technology and know-how
- Extend the sales potential of existing products
- Stabilize seasonal market fluctuations
- Sell excess production capacity
- Gain information about foreign competition

TRADE-OFFS OF EXPORTING

Your business may be required to:

- Use short-term profits to achieve long-term gains
- Modify your product or packaging
- Develop new promotional material
- Incur added administrative costs
- Dedicate personnel for export sales / traveling
- Wait longer for payments
- Apply for export financing or credit insurance
- Obtain special export licenses

Export Assistance Resources

- N.C. Department of Commerce, International Trade Division: nccommerce.com/trade
- U.S. Export Assistance Center (USEAC): export.gov/northcarolina/
- SBTDC International Business Development Program: sbtdc.org/programs/export
- U.S. Small Business Administration: sba.gov
- U.S. Commercial Service: trade.gov/cs
- Overseas Private Investment Corporation: opic.gov

RESOURCE:

International Market Research Guide

The SBTDC created this step-by-step guide to provide an introduction to international market research for companies new to exporting or current exporters looking to break into new markets. In this guide, the process of market research is broken down into four main steps including product classification, industry analysis, identifying target markets and market analysis.

Download the guide at: sbtdc.org/pdf/guide-international-market-research.pdf
OUT OF THE MILITARY, INTO BUSINESS

Brent Johnson could have easily found a job when he left the military. Instead, he chose the path of entrepreneurship.

There’s a building on Highway 64 in Manteo, on Roanoke Island in unincorporated Dare County, where patrons can spring high from a floor of trampolines, soar through the air onto a 5-foot-deep airbag, navigate a climbing wall, muscle through three lanes of American Ninja Warrior-like obstacle courses, play a bouncy-version of dodgeball and use cushioned jousting gear to bop the bad guys off a padded balance beam into foam-pit trenches below.

Jumpmasters Trampoline Park opened in June in a space that used to house a lumber company. Owners Brent and Lauren Johnson saw opportunity in the vacant building near their home on the island.

“I was hearing all the stories about being an entrepreneur, stories about successes and failures, and the freedom of creating something from nothing really inspired me to do something on my own,” Brent Johnson says. “So about a year and a half ago, when there was a good chance I was getting out of the military, my wife and I started talking about what our next steps would be. I could always be on the safe side and go into a corporate job. I had all these degrees and a top-secret security clearance, so finding...
employment was not a difficult thing for me. But I wanted to be an entrepreneur.”

Johnson graduated from high school in Hampton, Va., and attended Old Dominion University on an ROTC scholarship. He earned a master’s degree in engineering management from the University of Missouri through an Army program and has a master’s in construction management from East Carolina University in Greenville.

“I kept looking at things to do, and I threw out a couple of ideas, like maybe opening a distillery. But then ‘trampoline park’ popped up on Facebook, and I thought this would be a great fit for the Outer Banks. It started as a small snowball at the top of a hill, and I just kept going with it and going with it,” he says.

Johnson, 33, had been an Army paratrooper since 2004 and a certified jumpmaster since 2011. He served as an Army engineer for 10 years and did two tours of Afghanistan. As a jumpmaster, he was the person in the plane who would inspect the parachutes, control the in-air mission, get troops to jump, then jump behind them. He medically retired as a Major.

“I had some bad landings, and it messed some things up,” he says. “It’s unfortunate and unexpected, but someone had a plan, I guess, and here we are today.”

To turn the old lumberyard into a safe, family-friendly adventure zone took some work. Johnson sought advice from the Veterans Business Outreach Center in Fayetteville, which helped put his dream in motion and introduced him to the Small Business and Technology Development Center. Working with the staff at the SBTDC’s Elizabeth City office, Johnson saw his plan materialize.

“There’s nothing really out there about who to get a loan from, how to approach a bank, anything about funding. That’s what the SBTDC did — they read my business plan, did my financials, did the stress test on them,” Johnson says. “And Matt [Byrne, an SBTDC business counselor] was able
“There’s nothing really out there about who to get a loan from, how to approach a bank, anything about funding. That’s what the SBTDC did — they read my business plan, did my financials, did the stress test on them.”

Brent Johnson
Jumpmasters

to coach me and mentor me through the banking process. It’s like buying a car for the first time. You never know what’s out there, and he helped with really mentoring me through it and double-checking my calculations.”

Through a local bank, the Johnsons were able to secure an $800,000 loan. While part of the funding went toward equipment, Johnson says, much went toward refitting the building, which had been vacant 10 years.

He also had to ensure the indoor park met safety guidelines and regulations. He provides a safety video, which patrons watch before jumping. And staff members take a three-day safety-certification course.

“When you think about trampolines, you can’t think about trampolines in the backyard with the neighborhood kids jumping five at a time,” he says. “We’re actually very restrictive about the activities. There’s no double-bouncing, you can’t play games like ‘popcorn,’ you have to sign a waiver, or if the child is younger than 18, their parent or guardian has to sign.”

The Johnsons, who have three young children, plan to add other features to the park. They hope to start a dodgeball league and offer fitness classes. They already have instituted a Toddler Time, when children 6 and younger can jump without worrying about big people.

The staff has grown to 45, mostly part-timers. During business hours, 12 safety-certified members are on-site. A recent zoning ordinance allows a food truck at the park, and Lachine Cuisine of Manteo has filled the need. Johnson says local businesses and rental agencies are helping with advertisement flyers, passes and website information, and the SBTDC has followed the park’s start and assured Johnson he’s on course.

“Business is taking off. We were able to do the entire construction process in three months, and the numbers keep increasing. We want to provide something for the community and the kids in a safe, controlled environment,” says Johnson, who has family ties to Manteo. “We are not a franchise. That’s probably one of the biggest things. I stated a year-and-a-half ago that if we decided to do this, we were on our own. There will be some growing pains, but we’ve put an awful lot of blood, sweat and tears into it, and it looks professionally done. We had the right people coaching us, and they did it well and made it what it is today.”
What a lender looks for:

**CAPITAL**
How much of your own money do you have invested in the business?

**COLLATERAL**
What is the fair market value of the security that you are offering to guarantee repayment of the loan?

**CAPACITY TO REPAY**
Will your cash flow provide you with enough money to cover repayment of the loan?

**CONDITIONS**
What are the economic, demographic and regulatory trends that impact your business?

**CHARACTER**
What is your track record – personal and professional – in managing finances and paying credit obligations?

5 Financial Management Strategies

1. Benchmark financial performance against similar companies.
2. Regularly review financial statements, focusing on key metrics.
3. Institute financial controls.
4. Set firm credit policies and monitor accounts receivable.
5. Review all costs for potential reductions.

Types of small business financing used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Financing</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal/Family Savings</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Loan from Bank</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal/Business Credit Card</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Personal/Family Assets</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Equity Loan</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Guaranteed/Direct Loan</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venture Capital</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Profits/Assets</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None Needed</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SBA-Employer Firms

Small Business Financial Challenges and Actions

**TYPES OF FINANCIAL CHALLENGES (% EMPLOYER FIRMS)**
- Credit availability or securing expansion funds: 44%
- Paying operating expenses: 36%
- Making payments on debt: 25%
- Purchasing inventory or supplies to fulfill contracts: 17%
- Experienced none of these challenges: 39%

**ACTIONS TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO FINANCIAL CHALLENGES**
- Used personal funds: 76%
- Took on additional debt: 44%
- Made a late payment: 44%
- Cut staff, hours and/or downsized operations: 43%
- Negotiated terms with lender: 21%
- Did not pay — debt went to collections: 8%

SBA loan guarantees

Except in rare circumstances (primarily disaster assistance), the U.S. Small Business Administration does not make loans directly to business owners but instead provides loan guarantees to commercial lenders and others who make and administer loans. The business applies to a lender, not the SBA, for financing. The SBA backs those loans with a guaranty that will eliminate some of the risk to the lending partners. Therefore, when a business applies for an SBA loan, it is actually applying for a commercial loan, structured according to SBA requirements, that receives an SBA guaranty. To find out more information about SBA-guaranteed loans, go to [sba.gov/financialassistance/](http://sba.gov/financialassistance/).

RESOURCE:

Capital Opportunities for Small Business
The SBTDC’s Capital Opportunities for Small Businesses guide is a great resource for businesses seeking start-up or expansion funding, and organizations that help small business obtain financing. Learn about bank financing, federal government loan guarantees, state government sources, angel and venture capital and not-for-profit programs. Available at [sbtdc.org/publications/capital-opportunities/](http://sbtdc.org/publications/capital-opportunities/).
Bob and Jon Adams and their crew at Honest-1 Auto Care are building business by treating customers right.

CUSTOMER CARE

Honest-1 Auto Care relies on a family vibe and top-notch service to woo customers.

The lobby of Bob Adams’ business in Mooresville has complimentary gourmet coffee, a children’s play area, a big-screen TV, free Wi-Fi and cushy leather chairs and couches, draped in blankets when the weather’s cold. His website says, “family friendly,” and, “we would love to chat with you,” and mentions company donations to Toys for Tots and Samaritan’s Purse. If customers can’t get to the shop, there’s a complimentary shuttle. And if your vehicle’s dreaded ‘check engine’ light is on, they’ll trouble-code report that for free.

Honest-1 Auto Care is a family business run by Adams and his son, Jon. When the two started planning two years ago to combine their work knowledge and family beliefs, the automotive franchise was on the list. Adams has a human resources, training and recruiting background from his former career with a lumber and building-supplies firm. His son has more than 25 years’ experience in automotive repair and management. They opened the Honest-1 doors last December, with a reception for friends and family.

“We wanted a business that met what we stand for, and Honest-1 met our criteria,” Bob Adams says. “We began looking into it in 2016 and started searching for a location.”

With help from the Small Business and Technology Development Center’s Hickory office, Adams acquired a former...
“We spent lots of time talking about what we’d need, if we were to do financing and how that would work, and the SBTDC was really helpful, from planning to legal issues to setting up our operating agreement between my son and myself. Some things you don’t think of, coming out of a corporate background, or if you’re a sole proprietor.”

Bob Adams
Honest-1 Auto Care

Goodyear building with 10 bays and began repurposing the shop, customer area and office space.

“Even though it was a franchise, there were questions about where to locate, and so on. We spent lots of time talking about what we’ll need, if we were to do financing and how that would work, and the SBTDC was really helpful, from planning to legal issues to setting up our operating agreement between my son and myself,” Bob Adams says. “Some things you don’t think of, coming out of a corporate background, or if you’re a sole proprietor.”

One topic the SBTDC tackled was seemingly simple, but more in-depth than Adams realized: Who is your customer?

“The easy answer is, anyone with a vehicle. But that’s not the case. We hit a specific demographic,” he says. “We are here because we are not just selling parts; we accommodate the customer who is looking for a clean place, some of the values we share and are going to be appreciated.”

Depending on renovations, an Honest-1 franchise can cost from $250,000-$450,000 to set up, buy equipment and obtain two loaner vehicles and a shuttle. One piece of alignment equipment, for example, can run $30,000.

“We got the shell of the building. There were lifts, but they all had to be certified, and some repairs done,” Adams says.

The staff — five full-time, two part-time — handles heat and A/C repair, brakes, engine repair, exhaust systems, oil changes, timing belt replacements, transmissions, tune-ups and alignments. They also perform inspections and assist customers with free towing with approved repairs and discounts on rental cars.

Adams’ role is focused on sales, marketing, paying the bills and “keeping the pipeline full in case we need people.”

He also tries to be as helpful as possible when the phone rings.

“When someone calls, if they’re on the side of the road, they don’t want to know if they can get in next week. We ask them, ‘Are you safe? Do you need a ride? Do you need a tow truck?”

Honest-1 is seeing more repeat customers.

SBTDC was invaluable in setting up an operating agreement for Bob Adams and his son, Jon.
We're starting to see more and more repeat customers, which is good,” he says. Sometimes, attracting repeat customers means shooting straight about bad news. Adams recalls a woman whose BMW was in rough shape. “We had to tell her that her engine needed replacement, and she wasn’t real happy, because she had spent some money on the vehicle elsewhere. But we found some leaks, and the motor had been worked on poorly,” he says. “What was done was really beyond repair, and we told her we could put it together or replace it, but if we put it back together it was going to leak again. Two weeks later, she came back. We told her it wouldn’t be in her best interest to do the same repair again. She sold it and brought us a new vehicle to inspect. When we have people come back, it’s very gratifying.”

Adams says having a shop in a town with a lot of competition, as well as opening in December, put a crimp in his expected profits. “That will change as volume increases. On the other hand, we’re doing the right thing, and the feedback is great,” he says. “The preparation that the SBTDC helped with was extremely valuable, and it helped us prepare for the major things we needed to focus on. So I want to emphasize that their help, and the materials they were able to provide us with, positioned our mindset toward a successful opening. We have had a few months when we’ve made a profit. So even though we’re not there all the time, profitability-wise, we’re where I thought we would be.”

While steady profits are still pending, there are perks. One practice, Adams says, is to call customers after their visit, to thank them for their business. “One guy was so happy, he asked one of our service guys, ‘What kind of wine do you drink?’ And he brought in some Pinot Noir. We had another customer who came in with a Mercedes after he had some work done elsewhere, and he had the transmission rebuilt. Obviously, it was not done properly, so we suggested we take a look at it, and our suggestion was that we work with him to replace the transmission, and we did and it runs fantastic. So every time he comes by, he brings us doughnuts. It’s a great thing.”

Wake Tech gives small business owners the tools they need to compete, thrive and grow.

Our Small Business Center offers —
• Seminars on business planning, marketing, and financing
• Free, one-on-one, confidential business counseling
• Workshops and networking opportunities
• Self-paced entrepreneurship training

With locations throughout Wake County — including our new RTP campus — and plenty of online options, it’s never been easier to put Wake Tech to work for your business. So think big — look into our Small Business Center today.

smallbusinesscenter.waketech.edu
Franchise 101

Franchising has emerged as a popular way for potential business owners to start a new business. A franchise offers advantages in name and product recognition, proven operation procedures, and volume purchasing power. In this arrangement, the provider, or franchisor, contracts with you, the franchisee, to give you the right to sell or distribute a service or product under the franchisor’s system in a particular area.

**ADVANTAGES OF A FRANCHISE**
- Initial corporate support for start-up
- Continuous management training and counseling
- Existing goodwill and brand-name appeal
- Proven business model
- Proven products and standardized quality
- Some opportunities require no prior experience in that business field
- Buying power and programs
- Development of advertising and promotions programs (both local and national)
- Site analysis

**DISADVANTAGES OF A FRANCHISE**
- Franchising fees
- Required to share portions of business profits with corporation (sales/royalties)
- Potentially complicated legal negotiations
- Loss of personal control over some aspects of operation (e.g., use of name/logo for advertising, territory, uniforms, product purchasing requirements)
- Less freedom and opportunity for creativity
- Limited control over pricing, product lines, and suppliers
- Actions by the corporation may affect business of franchisee (especially new store locations close to yours)

**THE FRANCHISE MANAGEMENT TEAM.**
Do they know the industry, have a proven track record, and have the ability to provide good training?

**THE FRANCHISE BUSINESS MODEL.**
Is this business just a fad, or will it be viable over the long term?

When can you expect to be profitable?

What’s the franchise’s failure rate?

**FEEDBACK FROM CURRENT FRANCHISEES.**
Visit existing franchises and ask the owners about their experience starting the business, and the quality and availability of support along the way.

Check out their online reviews as well.
Marketing

Why social media?
It’s important to have an integrated strategy attached to your social media. Here are some worthy marketing objectives where social media tactics can excel:

• Spread your content and expertise to new audiences.
• Network with like-minded individuals and companies.
• Build a community of evangelists.
• Involve your customers and prospects in co-creation.
• Reach new audiences in the exact way they choose to communicate.
• Be seen as a thought leader in your industry.
• Easily hear literally everything that’s being said online about your brand, products or industry.
• Be seen as a trusted source of information.

source: Let’s Talk: Social Media for Small Business

Developing a digital marketing plan

Define your target customer
Define your objectives
Design and create content
Create a messaging calendar
Determine your success metrics
Execute your plan

Tips for

Building a Brand

Define the key messages you want to communicate about your brand. All employees should know them.

Develop a tagline. A concise and memorable statement that captures the essence of your brand.

Create brand standards for your marketing materials. Logos, color schemes, templates.

Be consistent. It takes ongoing effort and time to develop a recognized brand.

Deliver on your brand promise. Your brand is ultimately defined by the experience your customers, suppliers, employees and other stakeholders have with your company.

Market Research Resources
Good business decisions are supported by good data. Two excellent resources are:

NC LIVE (www.nclive.org) — Free through public and college libraries, business resources include Reference USA, Simply Analytics, and ABI First Research. Identify competitors, potential customers, and more. Create lists and maps of the results.

U.S. Census Quick Facts (www.uscensus.gov/quickfacts) — Provides comprehensive demographics for all states and counties, and for cities and towns with a population of 5,000 or larger.

Marketing Strategy Tips
• Keep in touch with current customers to thank them for their business and remind them of your products and services.
• Identify ways to solve problems for old and new customers.
• Re-examine your unique selling proposition.
• Consider your pricing strategy.
• Make sure that your image and message are consistent.
• Ask for recommendations and referrals.
UNWAVERING ADVICE FOR ALL OF LIFE'S FINANCIAL QUESTIONS

liveoakprivatewealth.com
There are almost 50,000 farms in North Carolina, spread across almost 9 million acres. That agriculture is a large part of our economy and way of life is no surprise. What you might not know is that almost 70% of our farms are 99 acres or less. Small farming is not only a way of life in our state; it is also a business. Many small farmers don’t see themselves as entrepreneurs … but they are! Farmer-entrepreneurs, or agripreneurs, are an important and significant part of our small-business community.

There are a lot of reasons why farmers do what they do — tradition, sense of pride, providing for themselves and others — but make no mistake, it’s a competitive and often difficult business. Farmers face the same challenges as any small business, such as cost pressures, changes in local market demand, and integrating new technologies. However, they also must contend with Mother Nature, global price pressures and competition, and an ever-changing regulatory environment. It’s certainly not for the faint of heart.

The N.C. Small Business Center Network (NCSBCN) recognizes these special entrepreneurs and stands ready to support them as they work to grow and improve their small farm businesses. The NCSBCN is uniquely qualified to help these farm-to-table entrepreneurs with 58 small business centers strategically located at our community colleges. In fact, there is an SBC within 30 minutes of every small farmer
agripreneurs who are willing to plow their time, talent and energies into food and farming businesses. However, navigating these new opportunities is challenging. The Small Business Centers are uniquely positioned to help them leverage those resources to successfully start and grow their agribusiness.

Ronald Simmons, founder and CEO of Master Blend Family Farms, is the perfect example of a small family farmer who combined his own hard work and determination with assistance from the Small Business Center to start and sustainably grow his farm, ultimately earning an award-winning reputation for his products and services. Ronald was recently recognized as North Carolina A&T State University’s 2018 Small Farmer of the Year. In addition, Ronald was the 2017 Duplin County Martin Luther King Entrepreneur Award winner. Master Blend Family Farms was also the 2016 winner of The New Biz - Duplin County Small Business Challenge.

Ronald first visited the SBC when he began growing pasture-raised pigs. He faced several challenges, as well as opportunities, and was seeking help to better understand where to invest his time and resources to ensure the best return on investment and create efficiencies in the business. In his search for help, he also found that there were lots of agencies and organizations that could provide assistance, but he wasn’t sure how to navigate these resources to maximize his time and efforts. That’s when he turned to the Small Business Center for help.

After meeting with Ronald, James Sprunt Community College’s SBC Director, Lee Woodard, recognized that the starting point for Master Blend Family Farms was the ever-critical financials, with a focus on the proper mix of inventory and breakeven points. “Once we understood the optimal mix of hogs in the farm’s inventory, we could begin to improve cash flow, mitigate risk and begin to think about new market opportunities. … But, as with most small business owners, we first had to stem the cash crunch caused by the inventory issues. Once stabilized, we could then begin to look at all the other aspects of the farm and identify the most promising growth opportunities. As importantly, we could develop a plan to grow organically without taking on additional debt. It was also vital to help connect Ronald to other outside resources that could help him develop and launch his new ideas.”

According to Woodard, “North Carolina is fortunate to have extensive resources dedicated to helping agripreneurs thrive. The key is knowing what they need and leveraging our network to make the connections. In addition to offering free workshops and seminars, as well as confidential one-on-one counseling, the NCSBCN prides itself on its network and partnerships with other experts that can provide additional needed assistance to agripreneurs.” With connections to the Center for Environmental Farming Systems, N.C. Growing Together, N.C. Cooperative Extension, USDA/FSA, N.C. Department of Agriculture, N.C. Department of Commerce and others, they work diligently to meet the specific needs of clients, he says.

Simmons recently took stock of all the ways the SBC has provided support. “Two years ago, we won The New Biz - Duplin County Small Business Challenge. That would not have been possible without the help of Lee Woodard at the JSCC Small Business Center. Today, we are meeting our sales growth and profitability targets, controlling our costs with a better mix of inventory, leveraging the benefits of a real accounting system, using a functional operating agreement, identifying and penetrating new markets, operating an on-farm retail store, using a formal process for evaluating employee performance, and so much more. Our future is bright and I’ll be forever grateful to the JSCC SBC for their past and ongoing assistance.”

The Master Blend Family Farms story is inspiring, but what’s even more exciting is that Ronald’s story is being replicated across the state. With strategic locations at each of the North Carolina Community College’s 58 campuses, aspiring entrepreneurs AND agripreneurs can get the help they need. Whether the focus is agriculture or any other business niche, the SBC can assist with high-impact training, confidential business counseling, and information and referral services. Harvesting your business’ success starts with your local Small Business Center.

From the mountains to the sea, farmers are becoming agripreneurs. Go to farmfoodportal.com for information on N.C. Food & Farm Agripreneur.
Regional Service Centers:

1. SBTDC at Appalachian State University
   828-262-2492 (Boone) • 828-345-1110 (Hickory)
   Serving counties: Alleghany, Alexander, Ashe, Avery, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston, Lincoln, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey

2. SBTDC at Western Carolina University
   828-227-3504 (Cullowhee) • 828-251-6025 (Asheville)
   Serving counties: Buncombe, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain and Transylvania

3. SBTDC at UNC Charlotte
   704-687-0440 (Charlotte)
   Serving counties: Anson, Cabarrus, Southern Iredell, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Rowan, Stanly and Union

4. SBTDC at Winston-Salem State University, N.C. A&T State University
   336-750-2030 (Winston-Salem) • 336-256-9300 (Greensboro)
   Serving counties: Caswell, Davidson, Davie, Forsyth, Guilford, Northern Iredell, Randolph, Rockingham, Stokes, Surry and Yadkin

5. SBTDC at UNC Chapel Hill, N.C. Central University
   919-962-0389 (Chapel Hill) • 919-530-7386 (Durham)
   Serving counties: Alamance, Chatham, Durham, Lee, Orange and Person

6. SBTDC at N.C. State University
   919-513-1500 (Raleigh)
   Serving counties: Franklin, Granville, Halifax, Johnston, Nash, Northampton, Vance, Wake and Warren

7. SBTDC at Fayetteville State University, UNC Pembroke
   910-672-1727 (Fayetteville) • 910-775-4000 (Pembroke)
   Serving counties: Bladen, Cumberland, Harnett, Hoke, Moore, Richmond, Robeson, Sampson and Scotland

8. SBTDC at UNC Wilmington
   910-962-3744 (Wilmington)
   Serving counties: Brunswick, Columbus, Duplin, New Hanover, Onslow and Pender

9. SBTDC at East Carolina University
   252-737-1385 (Greenville)
   Serving counties: Beaufort, Carteret, Craven, Edgecombe, Greene, Jones, Lenoir, Martin, Pamlico, Pitt, Wayne and Wilson

10. SBTDC at Elizabeth City State University
    252-335-3247 (Elizabeth City) • 252-335-3334 (Nags Head)
    Serving counties: Bertie, Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Hertford, Hyde, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Tyrrell and Washington

The Small Business and Technology Development Center is a statewide business advisory service of the University of North Carolina system, operated in partnership with the U.S. Small Business Administration. Since 1984, the SBTDC’s experienced counselors have helped more than 135,000 small and midsized business owners make better decisions, become more competitive and improve the economy of North Carolina. National studies show that SBTDC client companies increase revenue and create jobs at significantly greater rates than the average North Carolina business.

800-258-0862  sbtdc.org
LET'S GROW YOUR BUSINESS TOGETHER.

At EDPNC, our mission is to help North Carolina businesses grow. We're matchmakers, connecting your business to resources and services for workforce training, exports and imports, financing and everything in between. Whether you're just getting your company off the ground or are ready to expand, we're here to help. Let's get started.  |  1.800.228.8443
The N.C. Small Business Center Network, operated through the N.C. Community College System, is the largest state-supported small business assistance program, serving more than 70,000 North Carolinians each year. The 61 centers located at community colleges throughout the state are aligned with the state’s eight Prosperity Zones. Potential or current business owners can take advantage of high-quality, readily accessible assistance that includes resource and referral information for a variety of business needs; free confidential one-on-one business counseling services; and high-impact seminars and classes available free of charge or for a minimal registration fee. ncsbc.net
State Director: Anne Shaw, SBCN state director, N.C. Community Colleges, office: 910-938-6319, cell: 910-545-3679, shawa@nccommunitycolleges.edu.

North Central

Central Carolina Community College
1105 Kelly Drive, Sanford, NC 27330
919-718-7544
Durham Technical Community College
400 W Main St., Suite 300, Durham, NC 27701
919-536-7241 x4501
Edgecombe Community College
2099 W Wilson St., Tarboro, NC 27886
252-823-5166 x269
Johnston Community College
135 Bestwood Drive, Clayton, NC 27520
919-209-2015
Nash Community College
105 N Main St., Roxboro, NC 27573
336-539-0032
Piedmont Community College
PO Box 7488, Rocky Mount, NC 27804
252-461-8233
Vance-Granville Community College
PO Box 917, Henderson, NC 27536
252-738-3240
Wake Technical Community College
1534 Kildaire Farm Road, Cary, NC 27518
919-335-1007
Wilson Community College
PO Box 4305, Woodard Station, Wilson, NC 2789
252-246-1232

Northeastern

Beaufort County Community College
5337 Highway 264 East, Washington, NC 27889
252-940-6306
College of The Albemarle
PO Box 2327, Elizabeth City, NC 27906
252-335-0821 x2370
Guilford Technical Community College
PO Drawer 7007, Greensboro, NC 27406
336-334-4822 x2303
Nash Community College
2664 Highway 70 SE Hickory, NC 28602
336-334-4822 x62003
Piedmont Community College
1105 Kelly Drive, Sanford, NC 27330
919-718-7544
Roanoke-Chowan Community College
109 Community College Road, Ahoskie, NC 27910
252-862-1279
Vance-Granville Community College
PO Box 2327, Elizabeth City, NC 27906
252-335-0821 x2370
Wake Technical Community College
1534 Kildaire Farm Road, Cary, NC 27518
919-335-1007
Wilson Community College
PO Box 4305, Woodard Station, Wilson, NC 2789
252-246-1232

Northwest Region
Jeff Neuville, regional director
2664 Highway 70 SE Hickory, NC 28602
828-337-7000 x4102
jneuville@cvtcc.edu

North Central Region
Theresa Peaden, regional director
522 N Old Carriage Rd., Rocky Mount, NC 27804
252-451-8233
trpeaden297@nashcc.edu

Western Region
Jill Sparks, regional director
910-296-2431, cell: 910-545-3679
reneehode@cpcc.edu

Sandhills Region
Todd Lyden, regional director
Bismarck Community College
PO Box 266, Dublin, NC 28332
910-879-5572
trpeaden297@nashcc.edu

Southeast Region
Lee Woodard, regional director
James Sprunt Community College
PO Box 398, Kenansville, NC 28349
910-296-2431

North Carolina Small Business Handbook
2018
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<th>Region</th>
<th>College Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute</td>
<td>2855 Hickory Blvd., Hudson, NC 28638</td>
<td>828-726-2200</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Catawba Valley Community College</td>
<td>2550 Hwy 70 SE, Hickory, NC 28602</td>
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<td>Mayland Community College</td>
<td>PO Box 547, Spruce Pine, NC 28777</td>
<td>828-766-1295</td>
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<td>McDowell Technical Community College</td>
<td>54 College Drive, Marion, NC 28752</td>
<td>828-652-0634</td>
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<td>Western Piedmont Community College</td>
<td>2128 S Sterling St., Morganton, NC 28655</td>
<td>828-449-6719</td>
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<td>Wilkes Community College</td>
<td>PO Box 120, Wilkesboro, NC 28697</td>
<td>336-838-6168</td>
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<td>Piedmont/Triad</td>
<td>Alamance Community College</td>
<td>1304 Plaza Drive, Burlington, NC 27215</td>
<td>336-506-4312</td>
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<td>Davidson County Community College</td>
<td>297 Community College Road, Thomasville, NC 27360</td>
<td>336-224-4557</td>
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<td>Forsyth Technical Community College</td>
<td>2100 Silas Creek Parkway, Winston-Salem, NC 27101</td>
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<td>Guilford Technical Community College</td>
<td>1451 S Elm-Eugene St., Suite 1201, Greensboro, NC 27406</td>
<td>336-334-4822, x62003</td>
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<td>Randolph Community College</td>
<td>413 Industrial Park Ave, Asheboro, NC 27205</td>
<td>336-633-0240</td>
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<td>Rockingham Community College</td>
<td>PO Box 38 Wentworth, NC 27375</td>
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<td>Surry Community College</td>
<td>1461 N Bridge St., Elkin, NC 28621</td>
<td>336-386-3865</td>
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<td>Sandhills</td>
<td>Bladen Community College</td>
<td>PO Box 266, Dublin, NC 28332</td>
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<td>Fayetteville Technical Community College</td>
<td>PO Box 35236, Fayetteville, NC 28303</td>
<td>910-678-8462</td>
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<td>Montgomery Community College</td>
<td>1011 Page St., Troy, NC 27371</td>
<td>910-576-6222, x216</td>
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<td>Richmond Community College</td>
<td>PO Box 1189, Hamlet, NC 28345</td>
<td>910-410-1687</td>
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<td>Robeson Community College</td>
<td>PO Box 1420, Lumberton, NC 28359</td>
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<td>Sampson Community College</td>
<td>PO Drawer 318, Clinton, NC 28329</td>
<td>910-592-4881, x2032</td>
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<td>Sandhills Community College</td>
<td>3395 Airport Road, Pinehurst, NC 28374</td>
<td>910-695-4538</td>
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<td>Southeast Community College</td>
<td>PO Box 151, Whiteville, NC 28472</td>
<td>910-642-7141, x419</td>
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<td>Brunswick Community College</td>
<td>2050 Enterprise Blvd., Leland, NC 28451</td>
<td>910-755-7306</td>
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<td>Cape Fear Community College</td>
<td>411 N Front St., Wilmington, NC 28401</td>
<td>910-362-7489</td>
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<td>Carteret Community College</td>
<td>3505 Arendell St., Morehead City, NC 28577</td>
<td>252-222-6127</td>
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<td>Coastal Carolina Community College</td>
<td>444 Western Blvd., Jacksonville, NC 28546</td>
<td>910-938-6319</td>
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<td>Craven Community College</td>
<td>800 College Court, New Bern, NC 28562</td>
<td>252-638-1088</td>
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<td>James Sprunt Community College</td>
<td>PO Box 398, Kenannville, NC 28349</td>
<td>910-296-2431</td>
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<td>Lenoir Community College</td>
<td>327 N Queen St., Box 209, Kinston, NC 28501</td>
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<td>Wayne Community College</td>
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<td>919-733-6941</td>
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<td>Southwest</td>
<td>Central Piedmont Community College</td>
<td>PO Box 35009, Charlotte, NC 28235</td>
<td>704-330-6832</td>
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<td>Cleveland Community College</td>
<td>137 S Post Road, Shelby, NC 28152</td>
<td>704-609-4146</td>
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<td>Gaston College</td>
<td>201 Highway 321, South Dallas, NC 28034</td>
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<td>Mitchell Community College</td>
<td>701 W Front St., Statesville, NC 28677</td>
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<td>Rowan-Cabarrus Community College</td>
<td>PO Box 1595, Salisbury, NC 28145</td>
<td>704-216-3534</td>
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<td>South Piedmont Community College</td>
<td>4209 Old Charlotte Highway, Monroe, NC 28110</td>
<td>704-993-4242</td>
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<td>Stanly Community College</td>
<td>143 N 2nd St., Albemarle, NC 28001</td>
<td>704-991-0355</td>
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<td>Western</td>
<td>Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College</td>
<td>1465 Sand Hill Road, Suite 1060, Candler, NC 28715</td>
<td>828-398-7949</td>
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<td>Blue Ridge Community College</td>
<td>180 W Campus Drive, Flat Rock, NC 28731</td>
<td>828-694-1766</td>
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<td>Haywood Community College</td>
<td>185 Feedfnder Drive, Clyde, NC 28721</td>
<td>828-627-4512</td>
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<td>Isothermal Community College</td>
<td>PO Box 804, Spindale, NC 28160</td>
<td>828-395-1667</td>
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<td>Southwestern Community College</td>
<td>447 College Drive, Sylva, NC 28779</td>
<td>828-339-4211</td>
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<td>Tri-County Community College</td>
<td>21 Campus Circle, Murphy, NC 28906</td>
<td>828-835-9564, x203</td>
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State agencies

N.C. Department of Commerce
919-814-2600 • nccommerce.com

The N.C. Department of Commerce is the state’s lead agency for economic, community and workforce development. NCDOC works with local, regional, national and international organizations to fulfill its mission to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for all North Carolinians. The department provides local communities with grants and planning services to spur infrastructure development and economic growth and administers the state’s economic incentive programs. NCDOC also is responsible for recruiting companies to the state, helping existing North Carolina companies expand, encouraging business startups, enabling companies to export and marketing North Carolina as a business and visitor destination. The department also publishes data, statistics, information and reports for citizens and policymakers interested in the state’s economy.

N.C. State University’s Industry Expansion Solutions
800-227-0264 • ies.ncsu.edu

Industry Expansion Solutions, an outreach and extension organization affiliated with the N.C. State College of Engineering, was established in 1955 to help North Carolina industries grow and prosper. IES’ tailored solutions, university and community connections, and engineering know-how can help companies stay abreast of the latest technologies and best practices in engineering and business management. Its mission is to help business owners increase productivity, efficiency, safety and quality, with expertise in lean enterprise and quality initiatives such as ISO management systems and Six Sigma, environmental and energy concerns, and safety and health management.

N.C. Division of Employment Security
919-707-1150 • desncc.com

The N.C. Division of Employment Security oversees state and federal unemployment tax collections and payment of unemployment insurance benefits. Business owners can use the Employment Security website to file their Quarterly Tax and Wage Reports, apply for an unemployment insurance tax account number and make tax payments.

N.C. Secretary of State’s Office – Corporations Division
919-807-2225 • sosnc.gov/corporations

The Corporations Division is responsible for the examination, custody and maintenance of the legal documents filed by more than 400,000 corporations, limited partnerships and limited liability companies. The office ensures uniform compliance with the statutes governing the creation of business entities, records the information required to be kept as a public record, and provides that information to the public.

N.C. Department of Labor
800-625-2267 • nclabor.com

The N.C. Department of Labor is charged with promoting the “health, safety and general well-being” of more than 4 million workers in the state. The department administers the state’s workplace safety program and enforces employment discrimination and wage legislation. Employers can request training and technical assistance through the Education, Training and Technical Assistance Bureau. The services of the bureau, including on-site visits and telephone assistance, are free.

N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
919-707-3000 • ncagr.gov

The N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services can assist business owners in planning, expanding or financing new or existing agribusiness-related industries. The Marketing Division leads the “Got To Be NC” campaign, which promotes North Carolina-made products across the state. The department also oversees the issuance and regulation of licenses and permits for a wide variety of industries.

NCWorks Online
ncworks.gov

NCWorks Online is a powerful online job seeker/workforce services system, designed specifically for job seekers, students, employers and job trainers. The system provides fast access to a complete set of employment tools in one website. Business owners can use the site to post jobs, recruit employees, research salaries and labor market information, and communicate with job trainers.

N.C. Department of Administration — Office for Historically Underutilized Businesses
919-807-2330 • ncadmin.nc.gov/businesses/hub

The HUB Office was established to promote economic opportunities and eliminate barriers for historically underutilized businesses in state government contracting and procurement. HUB’s primary mission is to educate HUB firms and certify them to “do business” with the State of North Carolina. In addition, it encourages purchasing officers and capital project coordinators within the state agencies, departments, universities and community colleges to identify and utilize HUB vendors, contractors and service providers.

N.C. Department of Revenue
877-252-3052 • dornc.com/business/index.html

The Department of Revenue oversees collection of state business taxes and provides information on changes to tax laws that concern business owners. DOR offers online filing and payment services, as well as an online business registration, which allows business owners to electronically register for an account ID number for income tax withholding, sales and use tax, and machinery and equipment tax.
Public/private nonprofits

North Carolina Biotechnology Center
919-541-9366 • ncbiotech.org

The North Carolina Biotechnology Center is a private, nonprofit corporation established in 1981 as the United States’ first statewide initiative in biotechnology. The center’s primary focus is to strengthen the biotechnology research capabilities of the state’s universities; assist biotechnology business development; educate the public about the science, issues and application of biotechnology; encourage collaborations among the state’s universities, industry and government; and strengthen North Carolina’s national and international leadership in biotechnology.

Regional offices:
- Piedmont Triad: 336-725-6772 (Winston-Salem)
- Southeastern N.C.: 910-793-1747 (Wilmington)
- Western N.C.: 828-209-1432 (Candler)

N.C. Rural Economic Development Center
919-250-4314 • ncruralcenter.org

The Rural Center’s mission is to develop, promote and implement economic development strategies that improve the quality of life of North Carolinians in the state’s 85 rural counties, with a special focus on individuals with low to moderate incomes and communities with limited resources. Key programs include capital access and microenterprise funding initiatives, entrepreneur and youth business counseling and a leadership development institute.

Council for Entrepreneurial Development
919-549-7500 • cednc.org

The CED provides education, mentoring and capital formation resources to new and existing high-growth entrepreneurs through annual conferences, forums, workshops and programs on entrepreneurial management and finance.

Veteran’s Business Outreach Center
910-672-2683 • fsuvboc.com

The Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) Program is designed to provide entrepreneurial development services such as business training, counseling and resource partner referrals to transitioning service members, veterans, National Guard & Reserve members and military spouses interested in starting or growing a small business. Located at Fayetteville State University, the VBOC serves all of North Carolina.

North Carolina Institute of Minority Economic Development
919-956-8889 • ncimed.org

NCIMED – the only organization of its kind in the country – offers 30 years of experience helping clients harness the power of diversity to achieve business and economic objectives. They bring deep industry knowledge of how to help business owners turn barriers of race, gender and disability into opportunity; companies diversify their supply chains; and communities broaden their business base. NCIMED helps clients focus on three core elements – money, markets and management – to create diverse, globally competitive companies.

Service Corps of Retired Executives
800-634-0245 • score.org

SCORE is a national nonprofit dedicated to helping businesses get started and grow, supported by the U.S. Small Business Administration. Retired business executives provide mentoring, counseling, local workshops, and online webinars to business owners.

Women’s Business Center — North Carolina
sba.gov/offices/district/nc/charlotte/resources/resources-women-business-owners

The U.S. Small Business Administration provides funding for four WBC in North Carolina in conjunction with local partners including NCIMED, The Support Center and the N.C. Center for Economic Empowerment and Development. WBCs seek to “level the playing field” for women entrepreneurs, who still face unique obstacles in the business world. They provide entrepreneurs (especially women who are economically or socially disadvantaged) comprehensive training and counseling on a variety of topics.

North Carolina Military Business Center
877-245-5520 • ncmbc.us

NCMBC was created to leverage military and other federal business opportunities to expand the economy, grow jobs and improve quality of life in North Carolina. NCMBC’s Business Development Team includes 12 experienced business development and procurement specialists operating from 10 community colleges across the state to identify lucrative federal contract opportunities, notify firms of specific opportunities and help businesses prepare winning proposals. NCMBC also administers the state’s official web portal for federal contracting – www.MatchForce.org.

North Carolina Lawyers for Entrepreneurs Assistance Program
800-662-7407 • ncleap.ncbar.org

NC LEAP provides pro bono legal services to low-wealth entrepreneurs who are starting or expanding their businesses in North Carolina. Through one-on-one representation, community education and self-help materials, NC LEAP empowers low-wealth business owners to build businesses in North Carolina that create jobs, improve communities and boost participants out of the poverty cycle. Services range from basic transactional legal needs as struggling entrepreneurs strive to establish their businesses and create jobs, to potential long-term client-counselor relations as their businesses grow.

Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina
919-447-7777 • edpnc.com

In October 2014, the N.C. Department of Commerce entered a contract with a new public-private organization, EDPC, to take the lead in recruiting and marketing functions. EDNC oversees the state’s efforts in business and job recruitment and retention, international trade, and tourism, film and sports development. The partnership fosters collaborations between business and government, and provides a robust analysis of facilities and sites available for relocation.

Business Link North Carolina
800-228-8443 • edpnc.com/start-or-grow-a-business

BLNC is a division of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina and offers a central source for consultations, information and referrals. BLNC counselors provide customized license information, employer and business structure forms, referrals to state agencies and state occupational licensing boards, local governments and federal agencies, and contacts for local, state and federal business programs and resources. BLNC business counselors are available to answer questions during regular business hours.

Imagine your business improved with our money. Explore the possibilities.

The Small Business Energy Saver Program can help you reduce your energy bill by 20 percent, and we’ll give you money upfront to make energy efficiency upgrades. We’ll pay up to 80 percent of the costs to upgrade your lighting, refrigeration and HVAC system. Some things are really as good as they seem.