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Exhibitors

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BL COMPANIES
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CAROLINA WATER SERVICE

DESTINATION BY DESIGN
DMJPS CPAS + ADVISORS
INSIGHT CONSULTING GROUP
NORTH CAROLINA
RAILROAD COMPANY
RESEARCH CONSULTANTS
INTERNATIONAL

Agenda

Wednesday, June 17

10:30 am – 4 pm	OPTIONAL NETWORKING ACTIVITIES (<i>separate registration required</i>)
9:30 am – 4 pm <i>Castle Bay</i>	Golf Outing <i>Tee times starting at 9:30 am</i>
11:30 am – 4 pm <i>Whipsaw Charters</i>	Half-Day Fishing Excursion
1 – 3 pm	E-Bike Tour de Wilmington
1:30 – 3:30 pm <i>Wrightsville SUP</i>	Kayaking or Stand-Up Paddleboard Waterway Tour
1:30 – 3:30 pm	CineSpace Studio Tour
2 – 4 pm	Wilmington Pedal Pub Beer Trolley
3 pm <i>Lower Lobby</i>	CONFERENCE REGISTRATION DESK OPENS Refreshments Sponsor: NORTH CAROLINA BIOTECHNOLOGY CENTER
4:45 – 5:30 pm <i>Terrace</i>	CONNECTOR'S NETWORK RECEPTION <i>For Board of Directors, Past Presidents, Emerging Executives, New Members, and Mentorship Program Participants</i> Reception Sponsor: ALLIANCE CONSULTING ENGINEERS
5:30 – 7 pm <i>Grand Ballroom / Terrace</i>	WELCOMING RECEPTION Reception Sponsor: TERRACON CONSULTANTS

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7 pm – until

DINNER ON YOUR OWN

7:30 – 9 pm

OPTIONAL NETWORKING ACTIVITY (*separate registration required*)

Wilmington Water Tours

Sunset Cruise

Thursday, June 18

6 – 7 am

OPTIONAL NETWORKING ACTIVITY (*separate registration required*)

Wilmington Riverwalk

NCEDA Fun Run

Fun Run Sponsors: **CREATIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONSULTING • GASTON COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

7 am

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION DESK OPENS

Lower Lobby

7 – 8:30 am

NETWORKING BREAKFAST

Grand Ballroom Concourse

Breakfast Sponsor: **DESTINATION BY DESIGN • INSIGHT CONSULTING GROUP**

8:30 am – 12:30 pm

GENERAL SESSION

Grand Ballroom

8:30 – 8:40 am

Welcoming Remarks

ANDRÉ LENNON

Group Leader – ESP Associates

NCEDA Vice President / Annual Conference Committee Chair

8:40 – 9 am

NCEDA Business Session

Board of Directors Update

BRITTANY BRADY

President – Henderson County Partnership for Economic Development

NCEDA President

Legislative Update

TIMOTHY DOWNS

Regional Director, North Carolina Economic Development – Thomas & Hutton

NCEDA Board of Directors / Legislative Committee Chair

Foundation Update

RANDALL JOHNSON

Executive Director, Southeastern Office – North Carolina Biotechnology Center

NCEDA Foundation Chair / NCEDA Past President

9 – 9:25 am

Award Presentation Segment – Deals of the Year

9:25 – 9:55 am

Ethics in Economic Development: Leading with Integrity

Ethics and transparency are essential to successful economic development. This session will explore real-world ethical challenges while offering practical strategies for maintaining integrity and public trust.

DANA CRATER

Director, Advisory Services – International Economic Development Council

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9:55 – 10:10 am

Networking Break / Move to Breakout Sessions

Break Sponsor: [ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COALITION FOR ASHEVILLE–BUNCOMBE COUNTY](#)

10:10 – 10:40 am

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Session One:

Funding the Future: Site Readiness & Grant Strategies

Ready sites and strong funding strategies are critical to winning projects in today's competitive environment. This interactive breakout session will explore how communities can leverage and layer funding sources to support site readiness, infrastructure improvements, workforce initiatives, and small business growth. Attendees will gain practical insights into current grant opportunities, incentive programs, and strategies for stacking or sequencing funding to move economic development projects forward.

TREY CASH & BAYLEE FOX, session emcees

DUKE ENERGY

Adrienne Elder

EDPNC PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Katy Parker and Garrett Wyckoff

ELECTRICITIES OF NORTH CAROLINA

Carl Rees

GOLDEN LEAF FOUNDATION

Scott Hamilton and Ted Lord

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Will Best and Mark Poole

NORTH CAROLINA RAILROAD COMPANY

Manuel Muñoz, Jamar Nixon and Patrick Pierce

NORTH CAROLINA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

Ann Fitts

Session Two:

The Art of Partnership: Politics, Policy & Economic Development

Successful economic development projects depend on strong public-private partnerships and effective government relations. This interactive session will explore how to navigate political dynamics, build institutional credibility, communicate financial and economic impact, and manage community expectations in an increasingly complex environment. Attendees will gain practical strategies for working across differing perspectives while building support for impactful economic development initiatives.

BRITTANY BRADY, moderator

President & CEO – Henderson County Partnership for Economic Development
NCEDA President

CHARLA DUNCAN

Director of Economic Development – Granville County

STEVE YOST

President – North Carolina's Southeast
NCEDA Past President

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10:10 – 10:40 am

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Session Three:

Building Vibrant Communities: Talent, Entrepreneurship & Non-Industrial Growth

This breakout session will explore how communities can drive economic growth beyond traditional industrial recruitment by investing in quality of place, talent attraction, entrepreneurship, and community partnerships. Panelists will share best practices in supporting non-industrial growth, workforce development, and company expansion, with practical strategies for building collaborative, vibrant communities that attract both businesses and talent.

CHRISTINA HALEY

President & CEO – Wilmington Downtown iNC.

ELISABETH MUEHLEMANN

Economic and Workforce Development Supervisor
North Carolina Department of Commerce

THOM RUHE

President & CEO – NC IDEA

Session Four:

Leadership in Action: Managing High-Impact Teams

Strong leadership is a key driver of successful economic development organizations, yet formal management training is increasingly limited. This breakout session will feature experienced managers sharing practical guidance on hiring, retaining, and leading high-performing teams. While especially valuable for emerging executives, it will offer insights for professionals at all levels seeking to strengthen their leadership and people-management skills in today's fast-paced environment.

BRENT CHRISTENSEN

President – Greensboro Chamber of Commerce

ANDREW TATE

Managing Director, Economic Development – North Carolina and South Carolina
Duke Energy
NCEDA Past President

10:40 – 10:55 am

Networking Break / Move to General Session

Break Sponsor: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COALITION FOR ASHEVILLE-BUNCOMBE COUNTY**

10:55 – 11:05 am

Award Presentation Segment – Innovator of the Year

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11:05 – 11:50 am

Winning Together: North Carolina’s Competitive Advantage

North Carolina continues to rank among the nation’s top states for business – but what will it take to maintain that edge? This panel will explore the strengths, opportunities, and challenges shaping the state’s economic future, including workforce, infrastructure, innovation, business climate, and quality of life, while highlighting strategies to sustain long-term growth and competitiveness.

CHRISTOPHER CHUNG, moderator

CEO – Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina

KENNY FLOWERS

Chief Deputy Secretary – North Carolina Department of Commerce

DIANNE JONES

Managing Director – JLL

LISA LEATH

Chief People Officer – Vantaca

11:50 am – Noon

Award Presentation Segment – Emerging Leader of the Year

Noon – 12:25 pm

2026 North Carolina Certified Economic Developer Recipients Recognition

KELLY ANDREWS

Director – Pitt County Economic Development

NC Certified Economic Developer Program Capstone Director

CHARLES HAYES

Senior Fellow in Residence – East Carolina University

NCEDA Past President

BRITTANY BRADY

President – Henderson County Partnership for Economic Development

NCEDA President

12:25 – 12:30 pm

Closing Remarks / Adjourn

ANDRÉ LENNON

Group Leader – ESP Associates

NCEDA Vice President / Annual Conference Committee Chair

12:30 – 5 pm

OPEN AFTERNOON (lunch on your own!)

1:30 pm – 4 pm

OPTIONAL NETWORKING ACTIVITIES (*separate registration required*)

1:30 – 3:30 pm
Wilmington Port

NC Ports Tour (*no fee*)

1:15 – 5 pm

Wrightsville Beach Shuttle (*no fee*)

Shuttle Sponsor: **NORTH CAROLINA’S SOUTHEAST**

2 – 4 pm

Cornhole Tournament

Tourney Sponsors: **ECS SOUTHEAST • MCADAMS & ASSOCIATES**

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6:30 – 9:30 pm
Grand Ballroom

NCEDA 2026 AWARDS CEREMONY AND DINNER RECEPTION
Honoring NCEDA Past Presidents

6:30 – 7:30 pm

Dinner Reception

Dinner Sponsors: **BL COMPANIES • DUKE ENERGY • NC RAILROAD COMPANY • SBTDC**

Award Presentations – Career Achievement, President’s Award, and Economic Developer of the Year

BRITTANY BRADY

President – Henderson County Partnership for Economic Development
NCEDA President

7:30 – 9:30 pm

Desserts and Dancing!

Entertainment Sponsor: **EDIFICE CONSTRUCTION**

9 – 11 pm

OPTIONAL NETWORKING ACTIVITY (separate registration required)

Bourbon Tasting and Cigar Rolling Experience

Activity Sponsor: **ESP ASSOCIATES**

Friday, June 19

6 – 7 am
Ballast Pool Deck

OPTIONAL NETWORKING ACTIVITY (separate registration required)

Yoga

7 am
Lower Lobby

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION DESK OPENS

7 – 8:30 am
Grand Ballroom Concourse

NETWORKING BREAKFAST

Breakfast Sponsors:

365 DEGREE TOTAL MARKETING • CLANCY & THEYS CONSTRUCTION COMPANY

8:30 am – 12:30 pm
Grand Ballroom

GENERAL SESSION

8:30 – 8:40 am

Welcoming Remarks

ANDRÉ LENNON

Group Leader – ESP Associates

NCEDA Vice President / Annual Conference Committee Chair

8:40 – 9 am

NCEDA Business Session

Nominating Committee Report

GARY LANIER

NCEDA Immediate Past President / Nominating Committee Chair

Board Member Recognition / Passing of the Gavel

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9 – 9:40 am

Roads, Rail & Ports: Moving North Carolina Forward

North Carolina's transportation network is evolving to meet the demands of a growing economy. This session will include updates on major transportation initiatives shaping North Carolina's economic future, including the new transportation study, updated rail and freight plan, and the Ports Authority's new strategic plan. Learn what these efforts mean for infrastructure investment, supply chains, site competitiveness, and economic growth across the state.

DANA MAGLIOLA, moderator

Senior Director of Infrastructure Competitiveness – North Carolina Chamber

JONATHAN GRAHAM

CFO – North Carolina Ports Authority

JASON ORTHNER

Director, Rail Division – North Carolina Department of Transportation

JULIE WHITE

Deputy Secretary for Multi-Modal Transportation

North Carolina Department of Transportation

9:40 – 9:50 am

Emerging Executives Report and Mentorship Program Spotlight

This session will celebrate the accomplishments and momentum the Emerging Execs had during the 2025-26 year, introduce the 2026-27 Emerging Executives Vice Chair, recognize the impact of the mentorship program through participant testimonials, and This session will highlight the program's continued investment in developing the next generation of economic development leaders across North Carolina.

Emerging Executives Report

ANNA WALKER

Economic Development Manager – North Carolina's Electric Cooperatives

NCEDA Emerging Executives Chair

JAMES CARTER

Talent Development Program Manager – City of Charlotte

NCEDA Emerging Executives Vice Chair

Mentorship Program Spotlight

BRYN COVINGTON

Business Development Specialist

Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina

ANDRÉ LENNON

Group Manager – ESP Associates

NCEDA Vice President

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9:50 – 10:15 am

Beyond Healthcare: The Statewide Impact of NC Children’s Hospital

Join us for an inside look at the NC Children’s Hospital project—a transformative investment that will expand pediatric care, create jobs, strengthen communities, and position North Carolina as a leader in healthcare innovation and life sciences.

JOANNA HELMS, moderator

Director – Apex Economic Development
NCEDA Past President

IAN BUCHANAN

Chief Operating Officer and Chief Project Officer – North Carolina Children’s Hospital

10:15 – 10:45 am

Networking Break

Networking Break Sponsor: **PITT COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

10:45 – 10:55 am

Interactive Session

10:55 – 11:30 am

Business Development That Works: Prospecting, Partnerships, and Pipeline Strategy

Business development in economic development is about more than networking. It’s about identifying opportunities, building long-term relationships, and positioning communities and services to solve real challenges. This session will highlight practical strategies from state, local, consultant/allied, and private-sector perspectives.

RACHEL BRUMFIELD, moderator

Business Development Specialist – S.C. Hondros & Associates

JUSTYN BELLITTO

Business Development Manager – Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina

BAYLEE FOX

Business Development Consultant – Hickey Global Economic Development Consulting

AMY SULLIVAN

Director of Business Development – SeamonWhiteside

11:30 am – Noon

Keynote Address: Three Keys to Unlocking Your Potential

NATE SALLEY

President – Audible Coaching and Consulting
Former Carolina Panthers Player and NFL Veteran

Noon

Closing Remarks / Adjourn

ANDRÉ LENNON

Group Leader – ESP Associates
NCEDA Vice President / Annual Conference Committee Chair

Candy Basket Sponsor: **NORTH CAROLINA’S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES**

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