



2026 PRACTITIONER WORKSHOP

August 26–27 • High Point

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Meeting Locations

BASE HOTEL / RECEPTION: JH Adams Inn

1108 North Main Street– High Point, NC 27262

WORKSHOP:

The Blue Heron Event Venue

4130 Mendenhall Oaks Parkway – High Point, NC 27265

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Agenda

Wednesday, August 26

6 – 7 pm

Welcoming Reception

7 pm – Until

Dinner on Your Own

Thursday, August 27

8 – 9 am

Arrival / Continental Breakfast / Networking

9 – 9:15 am

Opening Remarks / Ice Breaker

ANDRÉ LENNON

Group Manager – ESP Associates

NCEDA President

9:15 – 10 am

Beyond the Headlines: Strategic Messaging for Economic Developers

KAT SAUNDERS

Partner / Head of Strategy and Leadership – Economic Leadership

Community perception can influence whether a project advances – or whether your community is considered at all. This interactive session will explore how economic developers can effectively communicate their community's strengths, address potentially negative perceptions, and navigate conversations about local decisions that may raise concerns for site selectors, investors, and business leaders.

10 – 10:30 am

Advocacy Starts Here: Understanding the NC Legislative Process

TREY CASH, moderator

COO – NC Global TransPark Economic Development Region

NCEDA Legislative Committee Chair

LEIGH COCKRAM

Executive Director – Rockingham County Economic Development

NCEDA Legislative Committee Vice Chair

JOSH GRANT

Director of Public Policy and Government Relations – Smith Anderson Law Firm

NCEDA Government Relations Counsel

DAVE HORNE

Attorney – Smith Anderson Law Firm

NCEDA Government Relations Counsel

Economic developers don't have to be policy experts, but understanding the legislative process is an important part of the job. This interactive session will cover the fundamentals of how the General Assembly operates, how to follow legislation, and how to effectively engage with lawmakers. Participants will also learn how NCEDA advocates on behalf of the profession and how they can support those efforts at the local level.

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10:30 – 11 am

Networking Break

11 – 11:15 am

Connection Session

11:15 am – Noon

Making the Deal: Industrial Real Estate Essentials

LEIGH COCKRAM, moderator

Director – Rockingham County Economic Development
NCEDA Board of Directors

JENN BOSSER

President & CEO – Iredell County Economic Development Corporation
NCEDA Board of Directors

JON HARDISTER

President – Triad Real Estate Building Industry Coalition (TREBIC)

DON MOSS

Vice Chair, Industrial – Colliers

Gain a practical understanding of how industrial real estate transactions come together. This panel discussion will explore the roles of brokers, developers, property owners, and economic developers throughout the site selection and development process. Attendees will learn how industrial deals are structured, key considerations during negotiations and site acquisition, and hear real-world case studies from a local economic development practitioner highlighting lessons learned and best practices.

Noon – 12:15 pm

NC Critical Technologies Alliance Spotlight: Strengthening North Carolina's Innovation Economy

BILL FIELDS

Co-Founder and Vice Chair – North Carolina Critical Technologies Alliance

Learn about the NC Critical Tech Alliance and its mission to advance North Carolina's leadership in critical and emerging technologies. This spotlight session will introduce the Alliance's priorities, highlight the First in Defense initiative, and discuss how local economic developers can engage with and support efforts to attract investment, strengthen the state's innovation ecosystem, and grow defense-related industries.

12:15 – 1 pm

Networking Lunch

1 – 1:30 pm

Incentives 201: Legal Guardrails and Creative Local Strategies for Winning Competitive Projects

DAVE EFIRD

Partner – Womble Bond Dickinson

Communities across North Carolina and beyond are finding innovative ways to structure local incentives that support economic growth while meeting community priorities. However, many are uncertain about what types of incentives are allowed or permissible. This session will discuss the current legal guardrails for local government incentives, as well as explore creative approaches to local incentive packages, discuss considerations for developing flexible and effective programs, and highlight real-world examples of how communities have successfully used incentives to attract investment and jobs. Attendees will leave with an understanding of legal limitations, as well as practical ideas they can evaluate and adapt in their own communities.

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1:30 – 1:45 pm

C-PACE Spotlight: A New Financing Tool for Economic Development

KRISTIN BUNN

C-PACE Program Administrator – EDPNC

Learn how NC's Commercial Property Assessed Capital Expenditure (C-PACE) Program helps finance energy efficiency, renewable energy, water conservation, and resilience improvements in commercial and industrial projects. This session will provide a brief overview of how the program works, eligible project types, and the benefits of C-PACE financing.

1:45 – 2 pm

Connection Session

2 – 2:15 pm

Networking Break

2:15 – 3 pm

Small Communities, Big Connections: Regional Collaboration in Action

LOREN HILL, *moderator*

Carolina Core Regional Economic Development Director – Piedmont Triad Partnership

GARRETT DINKINS

Director – Yadkin County Economic Development

BLAKE MOYER

President – Surry County Economic Development Partnership

NCEDA Board of Directors

How can rural and smaller communities position themselves to benefit from major economic development projects happening in neighboring communities? This panel will explore how communities can leverage regional assets, work together through regional collaborations, and strengthen partnerships to proactively prepare for and capture new opportunities created by larger project announcements and economic activity across the region.

3 pm

Adjourn