

New Rural Grant Program Launched to Support Downtown Economic Development

North Carolina Commerce Secretary Machel Baker Sanders announced a new grant program to support the revitalization of downtown districts in the state's rural communities. The Department's Rural Economic Development Division is now accepting applications from local governments for the Rural Downtown Economic Development Grant program. Grants will be awarded by the North Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority beginning with its April 2024 board meeting and the initial application period for these grants closes at 5:00pm on Monday, April 1, 2024.

"The Commerce Department, through our Main Street and Rural Planning Center, has for many years been a hub of knowledge and support for downtown business districts," said Secretary Sanders. "I'm so pleased we're now able to combine our technical expertise with this new source of financial support for rural downtowns across the state."

The new Rural Downtown Economic Development Grants will support public improvements that help retain business and attract customers to rural business districts. The program can support publicly owned downtown economic development initiatives that leverage main streets and downtown districts as economic engines, as well as help facilitate publicly owned building improvements that are used for community-wide uses or mixed-use development in or on properties that are publicly owned and controlled.

Eligible activities might include improvements to public infrastructure such as lots, alleys, streetscapes, waterfront developments, and parks. Renovations or additions to public buildings in a downtown district, such as a community or recreation center, a theater, or a library could qualify for grants, as could projects involving publicly owned property zoned and developed for a mix of uses, such as retail, restaurant, or nonprofit uses.

Complete guidelines for the Rural Downtown Economic Development Grants are posted on the Commerce website. The maximum grant amount per awardee is \$850,000 and may not exceed \$12,500 per projected job created or retained. Grant administration costs are limited to 5% of the awarded grant total, and applicants must provide a cash match equivalent to at least 5% of the grant amount, with the source of these local matches not derived from other State or Federal grant funds.

"The North Carolina Main Street program is one of the leading downtown development programs in the United States, and our entire rural planning team stands second to none," said Kenny Flowers, Commerce's Assistant Secretary for Rural Development. "Downtown districts are one of the most important economic engines for any rural community, and Commerce looks forward to superpowering these vital hubs of economic growth."

More information about the Rural Downtown Economic Development Grant program can be found at commerce.nc.gov/downtown.

Investment/Cryptocurrency Scams Riskiest in 2023, According to New BBB Report

Investment scams, including those involving cryptocurrency, are now the riskiest scam type, according to a new report from the Better Business Bureau. More than 80 percent of people who were targeted by this scam type reported losing money to BBB Scam Tracker. It also had the second highest median dollar loss at \$3,800.

Investment scams take many forms, including pressure to purchase, trade, or store digital assets (cryptocurrency) with fraudulent exchanges. Investment and cryptocurrency scams both appeared on the list of ten riskiest scams in 2023. This year, we combined them because most cryptocurrency scams involved some sort of investment opportunity.

Employment scam reports remained the second riskiest scam type in 2023. Reports increased 54.2% from the year before. Employment scams had a median dollar loss of \$1,995, significantly higher than the overall median dollar loss of \$100 reported for all scam types.

Online purchase (shopping) scams dropped from the riskiest scam type for the first time since 2019, landing at number three on the list. This year, 41.9% of scams submitted to BBB Scam Tracker were online purchase scams, and 82.6% reported losing money.

"Investment and cryptocurrency scams had a significant impact in 2023, particularly for people 45 and older," said Melissa Lanning Trumppower, executive director of the BBB Institute for Marketplace Trust, which produced the 2023 BBB Scam Tracker Risk Report. "People should always beware of opportunities that sound too good to be true. No investment opportunity will come with zero risk."

Key findings of the report include:

- Scams perpetrated online continued to grow, making up 68.4% of all reports. More concerning, online scams were more likely to result in a reported monetary loss than scams perpetrated in person or via phone.
- Overall reported susceptibility (the percentage of reports with a monetary loss) rose 27.8% from 2022 to 2023. Overall reported median dollar loss fell 41.5%.
- For the second year in a row, people ages 18-24 reported the highest median dollar loss of all age groups (\$155).
- The percentage of people who reported engaging with a scammer via social media rose 63.8% from 2022 to 2023.
- Credit cards remained the most reported payment method with a monetary loss, followed by bank account debit and online payment system. Reports of bank account debit with a monetary loss increased 66.4%.
- Employment scams were No. 1 riskiest for ages 18-44. Investment/cryptocurrency scams were No. 1 riskiest for ages 45+.
- According to our survey research, people between the ages of 18 and 44 named anxiety/stress as the number one emotion they felt after being targeted by a scam, while people 45+ cited anger as the number one emotion.

The five most impersonated organizations reported to BBB Scam Tracker in 2023:

- U.S. Postal Service
- Amazon
- Publishers Clearing House
- Geek Squad
- Norton

A list of the top 20 is provided in the report.

For more highlights from the 2023 BBB Scam Tracker Risk Report, visit: BBBMarketplaceTrust.org/RiskReport. Go to BBB.org/ScamTracker to report a scam, learn more about other risky scams on BBB.org/ScamTips and visit our news feed.

I Wonder What the N.C. Department of Labor's Consultative Services Interaction is Really Like

The N.C. Department of Labor (NCDOL) has a resource that has been in place for a while that is designed specifically to assist employers with safety and health issues. The NCDOL offers on-site Consultative Services where a safety and health professional can meet with you virtually or on-site and review your areas of concern. They can review written programs and walk through your establishment to identify worksite hazards that may result in injury. This service is free and does not result in an Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA) citation or monetary penalty.

"One feature of our service that is great for employers is that they remain in control of the interaction and can guide our visit to meet their needs," OSHA Consultative Services Bureau Chief Kevin O'Barr said. He continued, "The program has been around for many years and many people have an awareness that it exists, but the majority of companies have never actually hosted us on site."

The consultants employed in NCDOL's Consultative Services Bureau have years of experience and work across North Carolina. They will identify safety and health hazards in a business and assist with recommendations to reduce and eliminate those hazards. The confidential service has a fantastic bonus – employers who have an open case with the Consultative Services Bureau are not eligible to be considered for a random OSHA inspection. Inspections prompted by an accident, complaint or other unprogrammed event could still proceed.

"Taking advantage of this free proactive Consultative Services program will assist North Carolina employers with improving their safety and health programs," Labor Commissioner Josh Dobson said. "We want to partner with the business community to make North Carolina the safest place to work."

"We can help employers get in compliance with the standards, but more importantly we are hoping to eliminate hazards from the jobsite and help prevent illness and injury to employees," O'Barr said. Does this free expertise come with a catch? No, the only employer obligation is to repair the serious hazards identified during the visit and that is the purpose of inviting the consultant in the first place. If the employer is concerned about the number of hazards being identified, they can stop the visit and work on the issues identified up to that point and then continue through the rest of the facility later.

In order to answer questions for those people considering submitting a request but who remain shy, NCDOL put together a client testimonial video where other employers share their experience with the program.

To watch the testimonial video, visit YouTube and use the search term "Testimonials Vs 3".

Funny, Random & Weird Holidays

- March 14 Thursday - Pi Day
- March 15 Friday - Everything You Think is Wrong Day
- March 16 Saturday - Every Thing You Do is Right Day
- March 17 Sunday - Submarine Day
- March 18 Monday - Awkward Moments Day
- March 19 Tuesday - Let's Laugh Day
- March 20 Wednesday - World Storytelling Day
- March 20 Wednesday - Proposal Day

Church

MARCH 15

BBQ Fundraiser

For Galilee AME Zion Church Anniversary. Held at City Reach Community Center, located at Harvest Ministries in Wadesboro (behind Pizza Hut), 11am until. Tim's chicken or pork plates \$15, 1 pound of pork BBQ \$10. Dine in or take out. Delivery for 6 plates or more, call 704-690-3932.

MARCH 16

Denim, Diamonds and Pearls by the Women's Ministry of First Baptist Church, Sikes Ave in Wadesboro, 11am-2pm with Apostle Beverly Medley & Pastor Lucretia Toney. Invited you, all our sisters.

MARCH 17

Guest Speaker Jonathan Mann of Chosen People Ministries at North Wadesboro Baptist Church, for morning service. Program is "A Jewish Look At Jesus' Resurrection."

7th Anniversary Celebration for Pastor, Overseer Sylvia McLendon at Divine Unity H.O.R.M., 6090 Hwy 109 S, Wadesboro. Pastor Iris Tillman of Church of God of Prophecy in Morven at 11am, and Pastor Larry Williams of Tabernacle of God Ministries in Dillon, SC at 2:30pm.

40th Bishop

Appreciation for Bishop James Glenn at Victory Temple Miracle Center, 1685 Morgan Sellers Rd, Wadesboro, 4pm with Pastor Charles P. Wright of Kings World Outreach Ministries, Timmonsville, SC. All are invited.

MARCH 24

16th Pastoral Anniversary

of Pastor Bernice Johnson at Pee Dee Church of Deliverance, 302 NC Hwy 145, 11am with Pastor Sirander Allen of Vision Baptist Worship Ministry in Raeford, NC.

28th Pastoral Anniversary

of Pastor Rev. Dr. Roy Lisenby at Garris Grove Missionary Baptist Church. 11am service with Rev. James Parker, followed by dinner. 3pm service with Bishop Walter Ellerbe. Come and help us celebrate.

MARCH 28 & 29

Two Nights Revival

At Evangelistic Outreach Center, 7852 Hwy 74 W, Polkton. Thu-Elderess Mary Lloyd & Fri-Evangelist Brenda Pratt, 7pm both evenings. Come be blessed!

MARCH 30 & 31

Easter Celebration

At Sandy Plains Christian Fellowship, 1154 Cason Oldfield Rd, Morven. Sat-Friends & neighbors invited for fun & fellowship with an egg hunt for the kids at 4pm. Sun-Easter Celebration Service 11am with special music, youth presentation, communion & Pastor's message. All are invited!

MARCH 31

Easter Sunday

Morning Service at Evangelistic Outreach Center, 7852 Hwy 74 W, Polkton, 10:30am with Prophet JaShawn Washington.

ONGOING

Saturday Worship

Services 11am at Lighthouse Ministries, 311 Birchwood Dr, Wadesboro. All are welcome.

Bible Study

At Thomas Chapel AME Zion every Wednesday, 7pm

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Events

MARCH 19

Board of Commissioners Meet 6pm in Board Room, Suite 209, in Government Center, 101 S Greene St in uptown Wadesboro. Meetings are available online at [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com), search for Anson Commissioners. To appear, sign up prior to meeting. Info 704-994-3201.

ONGOING EVENTS

Popcorn & a Movie

4th Thursday each month, 1-3pm at Grace Senior Center, 199 Highway 742 South, Wadesboro, just past IGA. Info 704-694-6616.

Compassionate Friends Meet

on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7pm, at the Training Room at First Baptist Church, Lee Avenue in Wadesboro. Bereaved parents, family and friends who have lost a child of any age are invited. Info 704-694-2425

Direct and Counter Cyclical Program Sign-ups

Call the Farm Service Agency Office at 704-694-3516 ext. 2 to complete eligibility forms

Senior Box Program at Feed My Lambs starts the third Tuesday each month for seniors only. Located at 2290 Hwy 74 West, Wadesboro. 704-695-1820

Food Pantry Free food every Wed, 9-11am at Burnsville Recreation & Learning Ctr. 704-826-8182

Book Club

1st Thursday each month, 10am-12 noon at Grace Senior Center, 199 Highway 742 South, Wadesboro, just past IGA. Info 704-694-6616.

Craft & Workshops

3rd Thursday each month, 12-2pm at Grace Senior Center, 199 Highway 742 South, Wadesboro, just past IGA. Info 704-694-6616.

Chair (seated) Exercise

Every Tuesday & Thursday, 10-11am at Grace Senior Center, 199 Highway 742 South, Wadesboro, just past IGA. Info 704-694-6616.

Alcoholics Anonymous Regular meetings on Mondays at 7:30pm and Wednesdays at 12 noon. AA welcomes all who are seeking help, as well those wanting to help another person. The AA building is located at 2177 Country Club Rd. in Wadesboro, across from the Anson EMS building.

Learning Center Hours

Burnsville Recreation & Learning Center, Mon-Fri, 10:30-5:30pm. Computer lab (children & adults), copy service, fax service & resource library. All available to the public for a small fee.

After School Program

Kid Cafe Mon-Fri from 2:30-5:30p.m. at the Burnsville Recreation & Learning Center, 704-826-8737

Free Food Distributed by Anson Crisis Ministries

Every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday, 8am-1pm. It is located at 117 North Rutherford Street in uptown Wadesboro. Telephone is 704-694-2445.

Community Worship Service Outreach

The Lamb of God Church will hold a Community Worship Service Outreach, giving out household items and paper products on a first come, first serve basis, on Sunday, March 24. The worship service begins at 6:00 p.m. and the give-away begins at 6:45 p.m.

This is a free event, but you must register.

Email: lambofgodchurch8390@gmail.com or call 843-623-3777.

The event will take place at the Lamb of God Church, located at 1111 Concord Avenue in Monroe. Pastor Antonio Patterson and Co-Pastor Cindie Patterson invite you to this event. The website is: logomchurch.com.