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NC and Ireland Share Surprisingly Strong Economic Ties

Nearly 50 Irish companies employ more than 7,000 people across the state

Many North Carolinians may not realize just how extensive the state’s economic relationship with Ireland has become. Nearly 50 Irish companies now operate in North Carolina, employing more than 7,000 people, while Ireland has grown into one of the state’s largest international trading partners.

Gov. Josh Stein recently traveled to Ireland to promote North Carolina as a destination for business investment and tourism and to meet with Irish government officials and business executives.

The numbers behind the relationship are substantial. Forty-eight Irish companies employ more than 7,000 people at nearly 200 locations in North Carolina. Since 2021, the state’s exports to Ireland have increased 75 percent. Ireland is now North Carolina’s 10th-largest export market and third-largest source of imports. North Carolina exported more than \$888 million in goods to Ireland last year.

“The relationship between North Carolina and Ireland runs in both directions,” said Christopher Chung, CEO of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina.

Chung said Irish companies are investing and creating jobs in the state while North Carolina businesses are finding a substantial market for their products in Ireland. He also pointed to expanded air service between the two locations.

American Airlines offers seasonal direct flights between Charlotte and Dublin, while Aer Lingus recently began year-round nonstop service between Raleigh-Durham and Dublin. State tourism officials say the flights are creating additional opportunities for tourism, business and investment.

Ireland is already the seventh-largest European market for visitors to North Carolina. Irish visitors generated \$8.5 million in spending in the state during 2024.

The connection is particularly strong in life sciences. Pharmaceutical products account for 84 percent of North Carolina’s exports to Ireland. North Carolina’s life sciences industry employs more than 225,000 people and generates \$88.3 billion in annual economic activity.

During his visit, Stein met with Irish Ambassador to the United States Geraldine Byrne Mason and Peter Burke, Ireland’s Minister of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment. He also participated in an investment and trade seminar and met with executives of Irish companies already operating in North Carolina or considering expansion in the United States.

“North Carolina’s relationship with Ireland is strong through our deep political, economic, and cultural ties,” Stein said. He added that he expects the partnership to continue growing as the state pursues additional business investment, jobs and tourism from Ireland.

Workforce Pell Grants to Help Pay for Short-Term Job Training

Pell Grants are federal grants that help eligible students pay for education and, unlike loans, generally do not have to be repaid. Traditionally associated with college degree programs, Pell Grants are being expanded through the new Workforce Pell program to cover certain short-term training programs that prepare students for in-demand jobs.

The NCWorks Commission has approved North Carolina’s first 43 training programs for participation in Workforce Pell. The programs, offered through 16 community colleges, must now receive final approval from the U.S. Department of Education before students can use the grants.

Programs receiving state approval cover a variety of fields, particularly health care and public safety. Examples include nurse aide, emergency medical technician, firefighter and truck driver training.

“As North Carolina starts a new school year, we are creating new opportunities for the students and jobseekers with Workforce Pell Grants,” said Governor Josh Stein. “Our hard work to implement federal Workforce Pell demonstrates once again that North Carolina is leading the nation in workforce development.”

To qualify, training programs must meet federal requirements, including generally lasting at least eight weeks but fewer than 15 weeks and preparing students for high-skill, high-wage or in-demand occupations. Programs must also count toward academic credit for a certificate or degree program.

Once individual programs receive federal approval, eligible students will be able to seek Workforce Pell Grants to help pay for the training. The first step for students is completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, commonly known as FAFSA.

The NCWorks Commission plans to consider additional programs quarterly during the 2026-27 year. North Carolina’s 58 community colleges are preparing to participate in the initiative.

Information about Workforce Pell and the approval process is available at commerce.nc.gov/workforce-pell.

Volunteers Needed at Crisis Ministries

Anson Crisis Ministries is in need of volunteers to help hand out food, sort through items, and more. They are open from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The dress code is comfortable clothes, such as jeans and a nice t-shirt.

The Crisis Ministries feeds Anson County residents all week. If you have some time to give please call 704-694-2445 to sign up. They are located at 117 North Rutherford Street in uptown Wadesboro.

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