PittCounty
Economic Development

111 S Washington Street
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Greenville, NC 27835-0837

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NCEDA Summer Fellowship Proposal
Submitted: October 29, 2025

Overview:

Pitt County is home to nearly 180,000 residents, and we are the 17th largest county in North Carolina. Anchored by Greenville—our largest city and county seat with about 90,000 residents—Pitt County is a regional leader in education, healthcare, recreation, culture, and innovation. Pitt County is also the home of one of the State's largest universities with approximately 27,000 students, East Carolina University (ECU). Our industrial sector represents over 100 manufacturers and distributors in various industries from traditional hammock-making to biopharmaceutical production. Pitt County is also the home of key companies that are among the State's targeted and emerging industries. For example, Beast Industries (Mr. Beast), a world leader in online content creation, is located in Greenville and Boviet Solar, a leader in renewable energy, has not only opened this year but is actively planning for expansion in Greenville.

Based on the Pitt County Economic Development Strategic Plan as well as recently developed protocols adopted by Pitt County and our public-private economic development partnership, Greenville ENC Alliance, one of two primary focus areas for our department will be **Business Retention and Expansion (BRE)**. As local industries are the largest creators of new jobs, provide average salaries higher than the overall Pitt County average salary, and are some of our highest taxpayers, attention to their needs is a top priority for us. We will begin to develop a formalized BRE program over the coming months, including strategies, goals, and metrics that will ensure that we stay on track and evolve with our industries' changing needs.

A timely initiative at ECU is also taking shape. The ECU Division of Research, Economic Development, and Engagement (REDE) is developing a strategy for Industry Engagement focused on the collaborative needs of industry in the areas of Life Sciences, Advanced Manufacturing, and Health Care for the 29-county region of eastern NC. The goal is to create an engagement strategy with measurable outcomes serving the core areas of innovation, workforce development, process improvements, and discovery. This effort will initially be focused in Pitt County and the surrounding area. The engagement strategy will be expanded and eventually touch all 29 counties in the region. The Industry Engagement Strategy will extend ECU's faculty, research, and collaboration assets into the region and improve access to world class faculty innovation, enhance technologies and workforce leading to economic growth of the region.

As we have discussed our plans with ECU, and their strategy aligns with ours, we are moving forward together toward the development and implementation of a robust industry outreach and engagement program.

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Project Description:

Pitt County Economic Development (PCED), a department of Pitt County Government, proposes to host an NCEDA Foundation Summer Fellow to support the revitalization of our Business Retention and Expansion Program as well as support the development of ECU's Industrial Engagement Strategy. Many of our industries have expressed expansion plans as well as growing challenges, and we need to be in a position to be proactive and respond to an array of needs. We envision a program, led by Pitt County Economic Development, that will provide robust, flexible, customized, and sustainable programming and outreach in collaboration with ECU and other partners.

We are currently in the process of hiring a consultant to develop our BRE program. This will be completed prior to the Fellow's appointment in the summer of 2026. While the program is yet to be developed, there are several components that we know will be key to our success and for which we will include in the BRE program and propose funding in our 2026-27 budget. We plan to identify and aggregate key assets, contacts, and resources to be used in collateral materials and strategic initiatives. In addition, we will coordinate and convene outreach visits with industries to assess their needs and gather intelligence on what programming will best serve their needs as well as how to most effectively implement that programming. With this information and feedback, we aim to develop a web portal to ensure active and ongoing engagement opportunities between industries and our partners, particularly PCED and ECU. This tool will be designed for easy navigation and regular updates and will provide relevant, accessible data, contacts, and opportunities for engagement.

The Fellow's work will include researching best practices and existing models, convening local economic development partners and industries to determine their needs, working with stakeholders to aggregate identified needs, and translating findings into an outline of accessible contacts, programs, data, and information for the web portal. These findings, along with recommendations, will be presented to stakeholders. Finally, the outline will be developed into an implementation plan for sustainable, interactive programming and a web portal to serve as the cornerstone of our BRE program.

We will work collaboratively with ECU to support the development of their strategy for industry engagement, as they are interconnected and have similar deliverables. For both programs, we will work to identify core resources and support mechanisms as well as engage with our industries. We will enhance each other's respective initiatives with support from the NCEDA Fellow. Together, we will create an outreach and engagement program for the mutual benefit of all.

The NCEDA Fellow will gain valuable experience from the required research, engagement with partners and industries, and strategic planning with PCED and ECU. This work with be critical for the development of **PCED's Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program and ECU's Industry Engagement Strategy.** Both initiatives will be designed to spark interaction, address challenges, facilitate change, and spur more outcome-driven engagement between our economic development office, industries, academia, and other partners.

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Project Deliverables:

For the 2026 Summer Fellowship, the NCEDA would be responsible for:

1. Meeting with stakeholders to understand the outlined BRE program, SWOC (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges) of existing engagement as well as the goals and expected outcomes of the project.

2. Conducting research and aggregating information on resources, support mechanisms, contacts, and programs relevant to existing industries.

3. Developing a plan of engagement with existing industries, including relevant questions that will lead to the identification of support and engagement needs.

4. Coordinating and convening meetings with existing industries, to include relevant stakeholders, and providing follow-up.

5. Presenting a report aggregating responses and summarizing the findings of industry meetings to stakeholders.

6. Connecting identified industry needs with available resources and support mechanisms to be included in collateral materials and the web portal.

7. Developing recommendations for an implementation plan to roll out components of the BRE Program (i.e.: web portal) or other suggested programming.

8. Presentation of findings and final recommendations to stakeholders for review, feedback, and approval.