



**NCEDA 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
June 17-19 • Hotel Ballast • Wilmington

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**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COALITION FOR ASHEVILLE-BUNCOMBE COUNTY**

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**DEVELOPMENT CONSULTING**

**ENBRIDGE GAS OF NORTH CAROLINA**

**GASTON COUNTY**

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

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**WILMINGTON BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

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## Exhibitors

**365 DEGREE TOTAL MARKETING**  
**ALLIANCE CONSULTING ENGINEERS**  
**BEAM GENERAL CONTRACTORS**  
**BL COMPANIES**  
**BRANCH CIVIL**  
**CAPITOL B**  
**CAROLINA WATER SERVICE**  
**DAVIE CONSTRUCTION COMPANY**

**DESTINATION BY DESIGN**  
**DMJPS CPAS + ADVISORS**  
**INSIGHT CONSULTING GROUP**  
**JDS CONSULTING**  
**NORTH CAROLINA**  
**RAILROAD COMPANY**  
**RESEARCH FDI**

## Agenda

### Wednesday, June 17

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

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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**

Cruise Sponsor: **WILMINGTON DOWNTOWN INC.**

## **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**

7:30 am

**CONFERENCE REGISTRATION DESK OPENS**

Lower Lobby

7:30 – 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

Cape Fear Ballroom  
Port Side

### 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

Cape Fear Ballroom  
Starboard Side

### 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  
Grand Ballroom

## 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.*

**CLARK DUNCAN**, moderator

Executive Director – Economic Development Coalition for Asheville-Buncombe County  
NCEDA Secretary/Treasurer

**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

Carolina Room

### 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 – 12:05 pm

## **Construction Professional Network Institute Spotlight**

*Learn how CPNI helps rural North Carolina communities advance economic development through complimentary workshops, expert assessments, actionable data, and follow-up support—all provided at no cost!*

**CHRIS BUSCH**

Principal – Tremont Engineering

Member – Construction Professionals Network of North Carolina

12:05– 12:30 pm

## **2026 North Carolina Certified Economic Developer Recipients Recognition**

**KELLY ANDREWS**

Director – Pitt County Economic Development

*NC Certified Economic Developer Program Capstone Director*

**BRITTANY BRADY**

President – Henderson County Partnership for Economic Development

*NCEDA President*

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**

7:30 am  
Lower Lobby

**CONFERENCE REGISTRATION DESK OPENS**

7:30 – 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 support a growing economy. This session will provide updates on key transportation initiatives, including the updated rail and freight plan and the Ports Authority's new strategic plan, and explore their impact on 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

9:40 – 9:50 am

## Emerging Executives Report and Mentorship Program Spotlight

*This session will celebrate the Emerging Execs' accomplishments during 2025–26, introduce the 2026–27 Vice Chair, highlight the mentorship program through participant testimonials, and showcase the program's ongoing investment in developing North Carolina's next generation of economic development leaders.*

### *Emerging Executives Report*

**ANNA WALKER**

Economic Development Manager – North Carolina's Electric Cooperatives  
NCEDA Emerging Executives Chair

### *Mentorship Program Spotlight*

**BRYN COVINGTON**

Business Development Specialist  
Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina

**ANDRÉ LENNON**

Group Manager – ESP Associates  
NCEDA Vice President

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

**DR. ANGELO MILAZZO**

Chief Clinical Officer – North Carolina Children's Hospital

10:15 – 10:45 am

## Networking Break

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

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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

*A gap typically exists in one or more domains of our lives between where we are and where we know we are capable of being. This encouraging keynote uses pivotal lessons learned from Nate's journey to fulfillment after 5 years of professional football and 10+ years of corporate leadership to help us all gain a greater sense of clarity in regards to where these gaps exist, what will be required of us to bridge them, and the keys needed to unlock our personal AND professional 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

Award Presentation Sponsor: **DAVIE CONSTRUCTION COMPANY**

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

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