

2025-2026

YEAR IN REVIEW



CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF COMMUNITY, GROWTH, & IMPACT

2025-26 Year in Review

- 3 About NCEDA**
Who We Are
- 4 Guiding NCEDA Forward**
Board of Directors
- 5 Building Connections**
Membership
- 6 Your Voice for North Carolina**
Legislative & Advocacy
- 7 Learning & Growing Together**
Professional Development & Events
- 10 Keeping Members Connected**
Marketing & Communications
- 11 Members Making a Difference**
Committees
- 12 Investing in the Future**
NCEDA Foundation
- 14 Partnerships that Make an Impact**
Our Partners & Sponsors
- 15 Looking Ahead**





Our Mission

NCEDA serves as the voice for North Carolina's economic development community – providing professional development, networking opportunities and advocacy to secure the state's economic future.

About NCEDA

For 60 years, the North Carolina Economic Development Association (NCEDA) and its members have worked to position North Carolina as a strong and competitive place for business investment. Today, more than 900 economic development professionals and partners are part of NCEDA, all committed to supporting new investment, growing existing businesses, and strengthening entrepreneurship across the state.

NCEDA supports this work by providing professional development, opportunities to connect and share ideas, and a unified voice for the industry. Through collaboration with the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, the North Carolina Department of Commerce, and state legislators, the association helps advocate for policies and priorities that matter to the economic development community.

Our members represent a wide range of roles, from local, regional, and state economic developers to professionals in related fields like architecture, commercial real estate, utilities, and academia. Together, they are working toward a shared goal: building long-term economic prosperity across North Carolina.

Guiding NCEDA Forward

NCEDA is fortunate to have a dedicated Board of Directors who provide leadership, guidance, and support throughout the year. Through their time, expertise, and commitment to the profession, our Board helps shape the direction of the Association and ensures we continue to meet the evolving needs of our members.

We are grateful to our 2025–26 Board of Directors for their service, thoughtful leadership, and willingness to give their time to strengthen NCEDA and the economic development community across North Carolina. Their dedication helps make the Association stronger today and prepares us for continued success in the future.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Brittany Brady

President

Henderson County Partnership
for Economic Development

André Lennon

Vice President

ESP Associates

Clark Duncan

Secretary/Treasurer

Economic Development Coalition for
Asheville–Buncombe County

Dr. Gary Lanier

Immediate Past President

McAdams and Associates

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Julie Pruett

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Christopher Chung

Economic Development Partnership of North
Carolina

Anna Walker

Emerging Executives Chair

North Carolina's Electric Cooperatives

Randall Johnson

NCEDA Foundation Chair
NC Biotechnology Center

Katherine Thomas

Past Presidents Liaison

Alfred Williams & Company

Liz Dobbins-Smith

NCEDA

Building Connections

NCEDA is more than a professional association. It's a community of economic development professionals and partners working together to strengthen North Carolina. Throughout the year, we focused on creating opportunities for members to connect, build relationships, and get the most out of their membership.



Building relationships that make an impact across North Carolina.

Welcoming New Members

Every new member brings a unique perspective to our network. Throughout the year, we welcomed new members through virtual orientation sessions, introductions in NCEDA communications, recognition at events, and resources designed to help them get involved from day one.

Investing in the Next Generation

Supporting future economic development leaders remains an important part of NCEDA's mission. Student members had opportunities to expand their networks, connect with experienced professionals, participate in educational programs, and explore career pathways through mentorship and professional development.

Listening to Our Members

Our members help shape the future of NCEDA. This year, we conducted a membership survey to better understand what's most valuable and where we can continue to grow. The feedback we received is helping guide future programs, member benefits, and communications so we can continue delivering an experience that reflects the needs of our membership.



Your Voice for North Carolina

NCEDA serves as the voice of North Carolina's economic development community, advocating for policies that support economic growth and keeping members informed on the issues shaping our profession.

Through legislative advocacy, strategic partnerships, and member engagement, we work to ensure economic developers have a seat at the table and a voice in the conversations that matter most.

Advocacy in Action!

- Legislative Day
- Legislative updates
- Advocacy resources
- Strategic partnerships
- Member-informed legislative priorities

Legislative Advocacy

Throughout the year, NCEDA worked alongside legislative advocates, strategic partners, and members to advance priorities that support economic development across North Carolina, with continued attention to product development and long-term competitiveness.

Keeping Members Informed

Members received legislative updates throughout the year at conferences, regional networking luncheons, and through advocacy communications. NCEDA also provided resources and talking points to help members confidently engage with state legislators and communicate the value of economic development.

Legislative Day

Each spring, members from across North Carolina come together for Legislative Day to meet with lawmakers and advocate for policies that strengthen our communities. This signature event gives members the opportunity to share their expertise, build relationships with elected officials, and ensure the economic development profession is represented in policy discussions.

Learning & Growing Together

NCEDA is committed to helping members grow throughout every stage of their careers by creating opportunities to learn, connect, and share ideas. From conferences to networking and leadership development, our professional development offerings are designed to strengthen members and support the continued advancement of economic development across North Carolina.

Conferences

NCEDA's Fall, Spring, and Annual Conferences remain the cornerstone of the Association's professional development efforts. Each event brings members together to learn from industry experts, exchange ideas, celebrate achievements, and build relationships that continue long after the conference ends.



Supporting Lifelong Learning in Economic Development



Regional Networking Luncheons

Throughout the year, regional networking luncheons provided members with opportunities to connect with peers, discuss timely topics, and learn from leaders across the state.

Economic Development Practitioners Workshop

The annual Practitioners Workshop offers practical strategies and real-world insights tailored to the day-to-day work of economic development practitioners.

Emerging Executives Forum

Designed for rising leaders, the Emerging Executives Forum helps participants develop leadership skills, exchange ideas, and build lasting professional relationships.

Webinars

Virtual learning opportunities throughout the year help members stay informed on emerging trends and issues affecting the profession.

Professional growth extends beyond traditional learning. NCEDA continues to invest in members through mentorship, leadership development, and opportunities to recognize excellence across the profession.

Mentorship Program

The NCEDA Mentorship Program connects students and emerging professionals with experienced leaders, fostering meaningful relationships that encourage knowledge sharing, career development, and long-term success.

North Carolina Certified Economic Developer Program

Through its partnership with East Carolina University, NCEDA continues to support the North Carolina Certified Economic Developer (NCCED) Program. In 2026, the Association celebrated the graduation of the program's sixth class, marking another milestone in developing the next generation of economic development leaders.



Bryan Eatmon

Person County Economic Development

Nick Farmerie

Ashe County

Julie Graham

North Carolina Global TransPark
Economic Development Region

Tiffany Henry

Jackson County Economic Development

Nancy Johnston

North Carolina Biotechnology Center

Ray Jordan

Sampson County
Economic Development Commission

Julie Kruse-John

Wake Forest Area Chamber of Commerce

Mary Jane Lyonnais

Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments

Michael Matthews

Edgecombe County

Derrick McArthur

City of Fayetteville Economic Development

Johnnie Taylor

City of Lexington

Emily Yeager

East Carolina University

Learning Beyond the Classroom

Learning doesn't stop at our events or in the classrooms. Through the NCEDA Book Club and other member engagement opportunities, professionals continue to exchange ideas, learn from one another, and strengthen the relationships that make our profession stronger.

Celebrating Excellence

Recognizing the accomplishments and service of our members is an important part of NCEDA's mission. Throughout the year, the Association honored outstanding achievements through its annual awards program, recognized exceptional dedication with the Lifetime Service Award, and welcomed a new Emeritus Member in celebration of a career of lasting impact on economic development in North Carolina.

Economic Developer of the Year

Martie Butler

Richmond County Economic Development

Small Market Deal of the Year

Josh Carpenter

Mountain West Partnership
(Eco King Solutions)

Career Achievement Award

Brent Christensen

Greensboro Chamber of Commerce

Emerging Leader of the Year

Baylee Fox

Hickey Global Economic Development Consulting

Lifetime Service Awards

Donny Hicks, Gaston County Economic Development Commission

John Nelms, NCEDA Past President

Mid-Size Market Deal of the Year

Julie Graham

NC Global TransPark Economic Development Region
(Prolec GE Waukesha)

Large Market Deal of the Year

Joanna Helms

Apex Economic Development
(NC Children's Hospital)

NCEDA Innovator of the Year

Tiffany Henry

Jackson County Economic Development

President's Award

Andrew Tate

Duke Energy Corporation

Newest Emeritus Member

Katherine Thomas

NCEDA Past President



When our members grow, North Carolina grows with them.

Keeping Members Connected

Staying connected is at the heart of NCEDA. Throughout the year, the Association continued to create opportunities for members to stay informed, engage with one another, and celebrate the people and programs that make North Carolina's economic development community so strong.



Every story we share helps strengthen the connections that bring our members together.

A New Look for NCEDA

As NCEDA celebrated its 60th anniversary, the Association entered an exciting new chapter with the launch of a refreshed brand identity. From a new logo to updated marketing materials and communications, the new look reflects the collaboration, connection, and forward-thinking spirit of our members and partners across North Carolina.

Work also continued on a redesigned website that will make it easier for members to access resources, stay informed, and engage with the Association in the years ahead. Expected to launch this Fall.

Keeping Members Informed

Providing timely and relevant information remained a priority throughout the year. Through NCEDA's bi-weekly e-news, targeted email communications, social media channels, and Forj community, members stayed connected to important updates, upcoming events, advocacy efforts, professional development opportunities, committee activities, and member news.

These communication channels help ensure members have the information they need to stay involved and make the most of their NCEDA membership.

Sharing Our Story

Throughout the year, NCEDA continued to highlight the people, programs, and partnerships that make economic development possible across North Carolina. Through member stories, leadership announcements, Foundation initiatives, and program highlights, NCEDA shared the impact of our profession and celebrated the work happening in communities across the state.

Members Making a Difference

Members Making a Difference

NCEDA is strengthened by the members who give their time, share their expertise, and step forward to help shape the future of the Association. Through committee service and volunteer leadership, members play an important role in creating programs, resources, and opportunities that benefit the entire economic development community.

Members Turning Ideas Into Action

Our committees are where much of the work of NCEDA takes shape. Throughout the year, Board members and volunteers worked together to support the priorities that matter most to our members, from professional development and advocacy to membership engagement and leadership development.

Each committee brings together members with different experiences, perspectives, and areas of expertise to help guide the Association forward.



*Committees
powered by
member
volunteers*

- Advancement & Engagement Committee
- Annual Conference Committee
- Emerging Executives Committee
- Fall Conference Committee
- Legislative Committee
- Membership & Marketing Committee
- Professional Development Committee
- Research Committee
- Spring Conference Committee

We are grateful to every member who serves, collaborates, and shares new ideas to help ensure NCEDA remains a strong, responsive association for our members today and in the years ahead. Your commitment makes a meaningful difference in the work we do and the value we provide to the economic development community across North Carolina.

Investing in the Future

Established in 2020, the NCEDA Foundation continues to invest in the future of economic development by creating opportunities for professionals at every stage of their careers. Through scholarships, fellowships, and educational programs, the Foundation helps expand access to learning, support career growth, and strengthen the talent pipeline for communities across North Carolina.

Supporting Professional Growth

During the 2025–26 program year, the Foundation awarded 34 scholarships totaling \$60,000, providing professionals across North Carolina with opportunities to continue their education and strengthen their skills. These investments supported recipients across 23 cities, counties, and state organizations, helping ensure economic development professionals throughout the state have access to valuable professional development opportunities.



Investing in people today builds stronger communities tomorrow.



Building the Next Generation

The Foundation continued to invest in future economic development leaders through the North Carolina Economic Development Fellowship Program and Career Trek. Three graduate students gained hands-on experience through fellowship placements with economic development organizations, while more than 60 undergraduate and graduate students explored careers in the profession through the third annual Career Trek.

The NCEDA Foundation's work extends beyond supporting individual professionals. Through awareness initiatives, research, and partnerships, the Foundation continues to strengthen the economic development profession and increase understanding of its impact across North Carolina.

Expanding Awareness and Resources

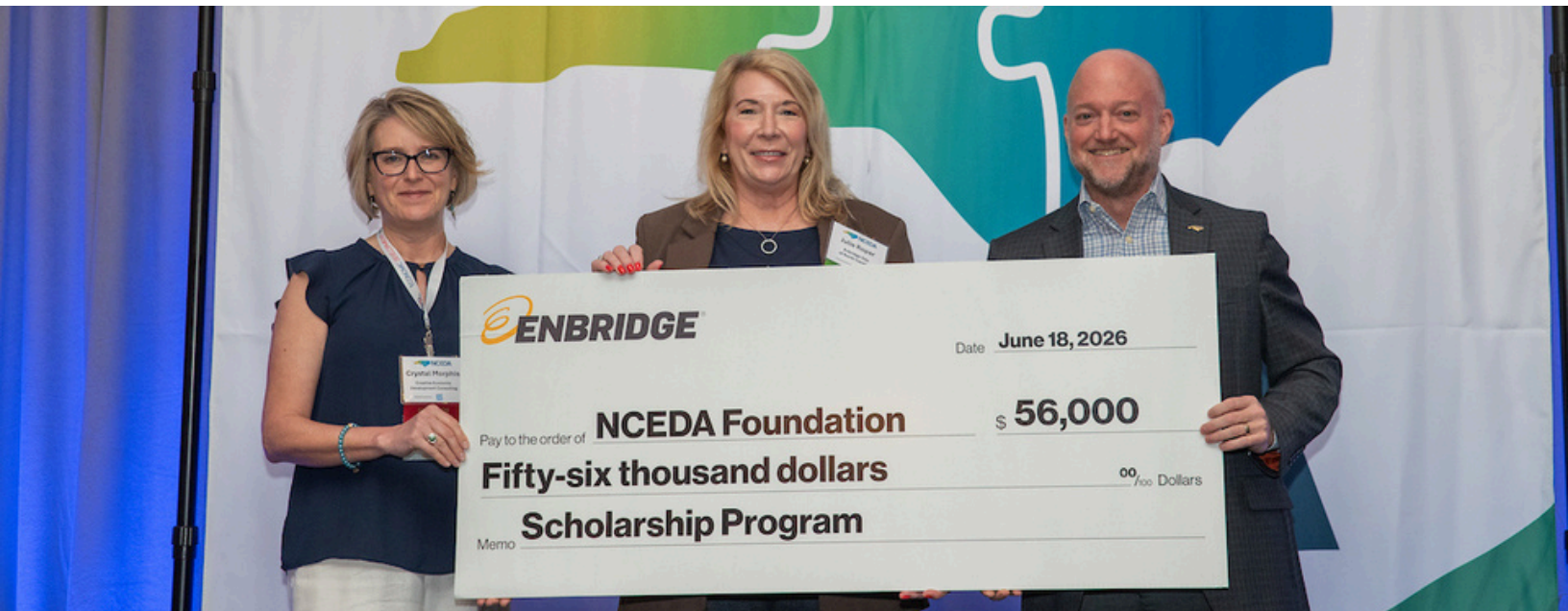
This year, the Foundation launched the North Carolina Economic Development Awareness Program, introducing two workshops designed to educate community and elected leaders about the role economic development plays in strengthening communities.

The Foundation also launched its newsletter during the 2025-26 program year, creating a new way to share updates, highlight Foundation initiatives, and keep supporters informed. In addition, the Foundation continued exploring opportunities to support research and began developing new "How-To Guides" to provide additional resources and practical tools for NCEDA members.

Growing Support Through Partnerships

The Foundation experienced significant growth in fundraising and partnerships during the year. We received numerous grants to support scholarships, professional development, research, and educational initiatives, thanks to the generosity of donors and partners including Dogwood Health Trust, Enbridge, and the Camber Foundation.

The Foundation's fourth annual silent auction held in conjunction with the Fall Conference raised more than \$12,000, providing additional support for programs that invest in the future of the profession.



Together, we are building the next generation of economic development leaders.

Thank You

We are grateful to the donors, sponsors, volunteers, and members who continue to support the NCEDA Foundation. Together, we are creating opportunities, strengthening the profession, and investing in the future of economic development across North Carolina.

Partnerships that Make an Impact

NCEDA's Annual Partners and Sponsors play an important role in the success of the Association. Their generous support helps make it possible to provide the educational programs, networking opportunities, advocacy efforts, and resources that connect and support members throughout the year.

We are grateful for the organizations that invest in NCEDA and share our commitment to advancing economic development across North Carolina. Their partnership allows us to expand opportunities for members, strengthen our programs, and continue supporting the professionals who are building stronger communities across the state.

Simply put, we couldn't do it without them.

CARDINAL SPONSORS

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North Carolina Railroad Company

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Enbridge Gas of North Carolina
North Carolina's Electric Cooperatives
North Carolina Ports
Smith Anderson

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North Carolina Biotechnology Center
North Carolina Community College System
North Carolina's Southeast
Norfolk Southern
Parker Poe
Thomas & Hutton
WithersRavenel

MEDIA PARTNER

Business North Carolina

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EnergyUnited
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myFutureNC
Pennoni
Rockingham County Economic Development
Samet Corporation
Timmons Group
Virginia Port Authority
Wooten Company

ANNUAL PARTNERS

EDPNC
NC Department of Commerce



Thank you for investing in the future of economic development in North Carolina.

Looking Ahead

As NCEDA looks ahead, we remain focused on strengthening the connections, opportunities, and resources that make our Association valuable to members across North Carolina.

The year ahead brings continued momentum as we build on the progress of our 60th anniversary, expand engagement opportunities, enhance member resources, and continue investing in the future of the economic development profession. Through advocacy, education, collaboration, and innovation, NCEDA will continue working alongside our members to support communities and advance economic development across the state.

Thank you to our members, volunteers, partners, and supporters for being part of NCEDA's continued success.

Together, we are building a stronger future for economic development in North Carolina.





NCEDA

WWW.NCEDA.ORG