



PIEDMONT TRIAD REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The Piedmont Triad Regional Development Corporation (PTRDC) serves as the Economic Development District (EDD) recognized by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) for the 12-county Piedmont Triad region. As the designated EDD, the PTRDC publishes a comprehensive five-year update to the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The most recent update was released in January 2023.

To prepare this update, PTRDC collaborated with a wide range of stakeholders and partners across the region to assess current economic conditions and local trends, ensuring that the shared aspirations of the community were reflected in the CEDS framework. This engagement process included a regional survey for quantitative data collection, along with targeted surveys addressing specific challenges such as Workforce Development, Housing, Infrastructure Planning, and Community Resilience.

Additionally, PTRDC hosted multiple community listening sessions, providing residents an opportunity to voice their needs and contribute qualitative insights. These perspectives have been integrated into the 2023-2028 CEDS update to create a comprehensive, community-driven strategy.

The PTRDC ensured that the CEDS promotes regional cohesion and implements practical strategies to equitably harness the unique assets of each Piedmont Triad county. This vision gave rise to four regional goals that form the foundation of the region's priorities. These goals and the overarching framework include:

- Goal 1: Boost the Region's Competitive Advantages and Leverage the Marketplace
- Goal 2: Establish and Modernize a Robust Regional Infrastructure
- Goal 3: Create and Connect Vibrant, Healthy, and Resilient Communities
- Goal 4: Develop and Retain Talented and Innovative Human Capital

We encourage all residents of the Piedmont Triad region to explore PTRDC's CEDS at <https://ptrc.digitalceds.com/en/>

Throughout the year, the PTRDC has been tirelessly working toward advancing the latest CEDS update throughout 2023 and 2024. Including a total of 28 related activities, 13 ongoing initiatives, 9 key accomplishments, and 12 priorities anticipated to be initiated, advancing the defined goals and objectives.

EDD Related Activities

The following events and initiatives demonstrate PTRDC's involvement and efforts in advancing the CEDS Goals.

GOAL 1 – Boosting Regional Competitiveness

- Managing the Business Investment Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program, a key initiative to provide small businesses in the region with flexible financing options for growth and expansion. The current portfolio includes 50 active loans, totaling over \$4 million invested in local businesses across the Piedmont Triad. With diligent oversight, the program maintains an 85% on-time repayment rate, reflecting strong borrower engagement and successful loan performance. Key staff actions include:
 - Monitoring and Supporting Borrowers through staff regularly reviewing and updating the RLF Administrative Plan, monitor repayment schedules, and address potential challenges early to provide guidance and ensure the continued viability and success of participating businesses.
 - Connecting Borrowers to Additional Resources by staff actively linking current and potential borrowers to supplementary funding opportunities, including grants from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC), and local sources like the Piedmont Triad Regional Workforce Development Board (PTRWDB). These resources support work-based learning opportunities, including On-the-Job training, Incumbent Worker training, and Small Business training grants.
- Actively partnering with the Piedmont Triad Regional Workforce Development Board (PTRWDB) to implement workforce solutions that address skill gaps and create opportunities for businesses to access necessary training programs. PTRWDB staff work directly with local employers, offering proactive recruitment assistance through NCWorks Career Centers, as well as access to additional training and educational resources. Through this partnership, PTRDC helps businesses navigate workforce development needs while connecting them to financial resources like the RLF program and available grant funding. This combined approach enables businesses to expand their operations, reduce hiring barriers, and support job creation, contributing to the overall economic vitality of the region.

- Enhancing Regional Branding of Outdoor Attractions in the Piedmont Triad by promoting the region's outdoor attractions, activities, and natural beauty through leveraging the NC Triad Outdoors website - www.nctriadoutdoors.com as a central hub to showcase the region's diverse outdoor offerings and recreational areas. Promotional activities include:
 - Collaborating with local tourism and visitor bureaus to create coordinated marketing campaigns that highlight key attractions in each of the 12 counties.
 - Setting up informational tables at local events and outdoor festivals to attract visitors and engage residents, bringing attention to hiking trails, nature reserves, and water activities.
 - Developing multimedia content, such as staff being interviewed on local news outlets, social media campaigns, and blog posts to showcase the natural beauty and recreational opportunities across the Piedmont Triad.
 - Supporting Piedmont Legacy Trails, a regional initiative to develop robust trail networks and help promote the Piedmont Triad as a trails destination.

All these collaborative efforts position the NC Triad Outdoors website as a key driver for tourism, economic development, and community pride within the Piedmont Triad region.

- Staff attended the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) and Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA) Washington Conference, participating in training workshops on emerging data and metrics, strategic goal alignment, and strategies for competing for federal funding. Engaged in networking with other EDDs to discuss challenges, barriers, and solutions related to CEDS planning.
- Staff participated the New Growth Innovation Network's Cityscapes Summit to explore inclusive economic development strategies, focusing on inclusive capital to create new opportunities for entrepreneurs and community wealth building. Discussions also centered on addressing reparations in small and mid-sized cities, while reimagining systems to find intersections between environmental justice, climate investment, and equity.
- Staff joined the NADO Wealth Creation Summit to learn about the *WealthWorks* framework, which focuses on building various types of capital or assets within a community or region. This approach, recognized as a best practice in the EDA's CEDS Content Guidelines, emphasizes supporting local ownership and control of businesses and assets to anchor wealth in the region. It also promotes inclusivity

by actively involving diverse voices as planners and owners, rather than just beneficiaries or consumers.

- Staff joined the Surry County Economic Development Partnership's (EDP) Project VISTA announcement, marking the county's largest private investment to date with the expansion of a polyurethane foam manufacturing facility.
- Provided a letter of support for a local sustainable construction and building technology company applying for funding opportunities to establish a manufacturing facility and green building industry training programs within the Piedmont Triad will directly contribute to strengthening our regional entrepreneurial ecosystem.

GOAL 2 – Regional Infrastructure Modernization

- Addressing the digital divide by developing a Broadband Mapping Fabric Application tool as a crucial resource for local and regional Geographic Information System (GIS) staff. This tool is designed to accurately pinpoint underserved and unserved areas, enabling us to ensure that high-speed broadband services are accessible to all residents, thereby promoting a more equitable digital landscape. As part of these efforts, we hosted two public webinar training sessions designed to empower communities and municipalities to actively participate in shaping broadband accessibility.

The first virtual public webinar focused on educating internet consumers and residents across the region about the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) National Broadband Map. This session highlighted:

- How participants can identify and report challenges regarding the accuracy of location and broadband availability information.
- The crucial role consumers have in influencing data that drives funding decisions for unserved and underserved communities.
- Engaged an audience of 24 individuals across the region, them with tools and understanding to contribute to data accuracy.

The second virtual public webinar was targeted at council-affiliated counties and municipalities for GIS staff to participate in a guided tour of the application and explore features in real time. This session highlighted:

- How GIS staff will use the Broadband Mapping Fabric Application to create and submit bulk challenges on behalf of their jurisdiction.
- Engaged an audience of 27 local government staff members across the region.

Both webinars were part of an ongoing effort to engage local communities, ensuring all regions are represented in broadband data to guide future infrastructure investments.

- Administering and closing out the City of Greensboro's Land-Use Feasibility Study funded through EDA, to evaluate critical water infrastructure and land-use considerations for the Greensboro-Randolph Megasite. This study involved coordinating with local government entities, engineers, and urban planners to assess the site's capacity for development, ensuring it meets both current and future industrial needs. Key activities included conducting comprehensive infrastructure assessments, analyzing the water utility systems, and evaluating zoning and land-use policies to determine their suitability for large-scale economic development. The findings from this study will serve as a foundational tool for future investment and development in the region, promoting sustainable growth and enhancing the Megasite's appeal to prospective industrial partners.
- Administering and supporting the City of Lexington's EDA Construction grant to fund critical upgrades to the natural gas infrastructure at a key industrial site, facilitating the expansion of a major steel manufacturing facility. This project is crucial for boosting the site's energy capacity, allowing the facility to meet growing operational demands and increasing production efficiency. The expanded natural gas capacity will not only support the steel manufacturer's immediate needs but also position the site for future industrial growth, making it more attractive for additional businesses.
- Administering and supporting Davidson County Parks and Recreation's EDA construction grant to fund an interpretive environmental center and visitors center in Davidson County. This project is a major step toward enhancing local tourism, environmental education, and community engagement in the region. The environmental center will provide educational programs and exhibits, highlighting the unique natural resources, wildlife, and ecosystems of Davidson County. The visitors center will serve as a gateway for tourists, offering amenities and information about recreational opportunities, trails, and other attractions within the county.
- Administering and supporting Zirrus's EDA construction grant to fund broadband infrastructure expansion in underserved areas of Davie and Yadkin counties, addressing the digital divide and improving connectivity for businesses and residents. The grant is focused on infrastructure development, laying fiber optic lines, and expanding coverage areas. Ongoing efforts include working with the company's engineering teams, overseeing progress, and ensuring the project aligns with broader regional connectivity goals.

- Administering and supporting Forsyth County’s EDA construction grant to fund critical infrastructure repair and resilience efforts at Smith Reynolds Airport in Winston-Salem, which was significantly impacted by Hurricane Michael. The grant provides essential funding to repair structural damages to airport facilities, as well as to offset the economic hardships compounded by the coronavirus pandemic. This project not only ensures the airport’s operations can continue smoothly but also positions the facility for future growth by enhancing its infrastructure to attract private investment.
- Administering and supporting Davie County’s EDA construction grant to fund a new water treatment facility within the Town of Cooleemee. This facility is designed to serve not only Cooleemee but also the surrounding communities of Davie County, Mocksville, and Bermuda Run. The existing water treatment infrastructure across the county was becoming outdated, leading to increasing maintenance costs and concerns about the long-term viability of providing clean, safe drinking water. This new facility will address those challenges and support future growth in the county.
- Assisted with the City of Reidsville’s SCRC State Economic and Infrastructure Development (SEID) grant application requesting funding for infrastructure improvements to the city’s water treatment facility. This application was centered on upgrading and modernizing the water treatment infrastructure to ensure it meets the growing demands of the city and surrounding areas, as well as to maintain compliance with evolving environmental regulations.
- Provided a letter of support for municipalities applying for the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Discretionary Grant program to fund the installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations all throughout the Piedmont Triad. This support aligned with broader infrastructure goals to promote sustainable transportation, reduce carbon emissions, and enhance regional accessibility to EV charging stations.

GOAL 3 – Community Resiliency and Vibrance

- Continued support and cultivating the Piedmont Triad Regional Food Council by actively engaging a diverse group of regional stakeholders, including farmers, local governments, food businesses, non-profits, and community members. This collaborative approach ensures the promotion of a sustainable and equitable food system across the Piedmont Triad region. Key activities include:
 - Organizing regular meetings and workshops to address food security, local food production, distribution challenges, and equitable access.
 - Foster open dialogue among stakeholders, identify barriers, and co-develop solutions for both urban and rural communities.

- Connect regional producers with local markets, support farm-to-table initiatives, and advocate for sustainable agricultural policies.
 - Address systemic inequities by supporting community gardens, urban farming projects, and mobile food markets in underserved areas.
- Staff delivered a presentation on the Childcare Crisis to PTRC's Executive Committee, raising awareness of the pressing challenges facing the region's childcare infrastructure. The presentation emphasized the potential impacts of the impending expiration of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, which has provided support to the childcare sector during the pandemic. Staff outlined key concerns, such as the anticipated reduction in childcare availability, potential workforce shortages, and increased costs for families. Staff also proposed potential solutions of advocating for sustained funding, expanding subsidies, and investing in economic and workforce initiatives to stabilize and grow the childcare sector. The goal was to inform decision-makers of the urgency and collaborate on strategies to support long-term improvements in childcare access and affordability.
- Staff attended the Annual Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health Symposium to gain insights to the latest research and best practices within mental health and addition treatments for building resilient and recovery-focused communities.
- Staff participated in the NC Rural Center's statewide listening tour to share and learn firsthand about ongoing challenges facing rural communities within the region. This tour is to directly inform and shape the Rural Center's 2025 advocacy agenda.
- Collaborating as a Community Partner with the Winston-Salem Neighborhood Initiative to support the revitalization, restoration, and reimagining of neighborhoods and properties within targeted, highly distressed areas of Winston-Salem. Activities include deploying the PTRWDB mobile unit to these communities, providing on-site resources such as resume assistance, job application support, and access to the internet to empower residents and connect them to workforce opportunities.
- Provided a letter of support for a Forsyth County nonprofit focused on digital equity, inclusion, and literacy, assisting them in their application for the North Carolina Department of Information Technology (NCDIT) Digital Champion Grant. As a result of this support, the application was successful, and the organization was awarded funding, enabling the implement of new initiatives and continued work in fostering digital inclusion across Forsyth County.

GOAL 4 – Human Capital Development and Retention

- Administering and supporting Guilford Technical Community College’s EDA Construction grant to expand their truck driver workforce training program. This expansion is crucial in addressing the increasing demand for qualified CDL truck drivers in the region, essential to the local economy and the thriving logistics and distribution industry. Due to the Piedmont Triad serving as a hub for logistics, warehousing, and distribution companies, ensuring a steady pipeline of skilled truck drivers is vital for sustaining economic growth and meeting industry needs.

- Continued management and support of the NC Triad regional talent portal website – www.nctriad.com to effectively highlight workforce opportunities, career development resources, and promote the unique culture and attractions of the Piedmont Triad region. Upkeep activities include:
 - Regularly updating job listings to ensure the portal stays current by consistently refreshing job opportunities, providing a variety of career advancement pathways to attract both local and out-of-state talent.
 - Showcasing success stories to highlight regional businesses and professionals’ achievements, demonstrating the area's potential for career growth and business development.
 - Social media integration by utilizing platforms to promote job opportunities, success stories, and community events, further expanding the portal's reach and engagement.
 - Ensuring cohesion between the NC Triad and NC Triad Outdoors platforms to work in synergy to highlight the Piedmont Triad region's unique blend of career opportunities, lifestyle benefits, and natural attractions. While NC Triad focuses on showcasing workforce openings, career advancement, and regional business success, NC Triad Outdoors complements this by promoting the area's outdoor activities, natural beauty, and recreational opportunities. Together, these platforms provide a comprehensive economic view of what the Piedmont Triad offers, both professionally and personally, attracting talent to the region by highlighting not only career prospects but also the exceptional quality of life available. This cohesive strategy enhances the region's appeal as a desirable place to live, work, and play.

- Continued engagement with the Piedmont Alliance for Triad Healthcare (PATH), an advocacy group of healthcare professionals, workforce partners, and educational institutions focused on addressing workforce gaps and barriers within the healthcare industry. Staff enhances PATH's efforts and capacity by providing access to the PTRWDB’s mobile unit fleet for events and outreach, offering training programs and career advancement opportunities through

NCWorks Career Centers, and facilitating connections with regional healthcare employers.

- Staff attended the Triad Minority and Women’s Business Expo to share workforce resources available, including job placement assistance, on-the-job training programs, and workforce readiness support. Additionally, staff provided business development solutions such as small business training grants, access to financial capital, and connections with small business centers across the region, all intended at helping the Triad Minority Business community achieve greater success and growth.
- Provided a letter of support for a local biotechnology company applying for the Piedmont Triad Regenerative Medicine Engine Ecosystem Building Grant. If awarded, this project will foster innovation by connecting academic institutions, healthcare providers, and biotechnology industry leaders, to drive regional economic and workforce development and positioning the Piedmont Triad as a leader in regenerative medicine.

EDD Ongoing Initiatives

The following initiatives illustrate actions that are in the early to mid-stages of advancing the CEDS Goals.

GOAL 1 – Boosting Regional Competitiveness

- Staff represented the region’s Workforce and Economic Development efforts on the review panel for the inaugural U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) Engines Program award, which was successfully granted to the Wake Forest Institute for Regenerative Medicine, led by the Wake Forest University School of Medicine. In this role, staff provided insight into how the proposed project aligned with regional workforce development goals and economic growth strategies, and ensured that workforce readiness, talent pipeline development, and economic resilience were prioritized, supporting the long-term goals of enhancing job opportunities and strengthening the Piedmont Triad’s position in the growing field of regenerative medicine.
- Staff is conducting comprehensive research and developing a feasibility study to assess the need for and viability of constructing a vegetable and fruit processing facility within the Piedmont Triad region. This study is a key part of the effort to determine the economic, logistical, and operational benefits of establishing such a facility, which would support local farmers, food producers, and businesses by providing a centralized location for processing, packaging, and distributing fruits and vegetables. The economic impact from this study will provide valuable insights to guide decision-making for an interested entity in establishing a regional produce processing center.

GOAL 2 – Regional Infrastructure Modernization

- Administering the Brownfields Revolving Loan Program and developing potential land assets in the Piedmont Triad through issuing low-interest loans and grants centered at supporting the cleanup and redevelopment of contaminated or underutilized properties to transform neglected areas into thriving, productive parts of the community and unlocking economic potential. Key management activities include:
 - Portfolio maintenance and future projects, to date, the program has 1 active loan of \$750,000 supporting a significant cleanup project in the region. The program is actively seeking applications and attention to sites for cleanup and redevelopment to further the region’s growth and enhance environmental sustainability.
 - Aligning the Brownfields RLF program with the established practices of the Business Investment RLF program to enhance resource sharing and connect additional supportive services. Both current and potential borrowers from either program are referred between both RLF programs, workforce training initiatives, and grant opportunities, providing a comprehensive support system for businesses looking to start or expand within the region. This holistic approach ensures that businesses receive the necessary resources for environmental remediation, infrastructure improvement, and workforce development, fostering long-term growth and success in the Piedmont Triad region.
- Supporting and offering technical assistance to the Town of Stoneville in managing their SCRC State Economic and Infrastructure Development (SEID) grant award, which funds critical water system infrastructure improvements. The project will fund upgrades to the town's aging water infrastructure, ensuring safe and reliable access to clean water for residents and businesses.
- Providing support to the jurisdictions of Liberty, Pleasant Garden, and Jonesville by drafting comprehensive Land Development Plans that identify growth opportunities and address critical land use needs. These plans act as strategic roadmaps for sustainable development, shaping local policies to guide zoning and future projects. In collaboration with local officials and stakeholders, staff is ensuring that these plans align with community priorities while promoting economic development, enhancing public services, and encouraging smart growth practices that balance residential, commercial, and industrial needs.

GOAL 3 – Community Resiliency and Vibrance

- Administering S.G. Atkins Community Development Corporation’s ARC grant to support the expansion of their Shared-Use Kitchen facility. This project will enhance the capacity of the facility to serve local entrepreneurs, small

businesses, and food-based startups by providing them with affordable, professional-grade kitchen space. The expansion aims to foster economic growth by enabling more food entrepreneurs to scale their businesses, create jobs, and contribute to the local economy. Additionally, the facility will offer training and resources to help entrepreneurs navigate food safety regulations, business development, and marketing strategies, ensuring long-term success and sustainability for the region's food economy.

- Developing the Regional Digital Inclusion Plan for the Piedmont Triad region to address gaps in broadband access, digital literacy, and technology adoption across communities. This plan is designed to ensure that all residents, have access to the digital tools necessary for education, employment, healthcare, and civic participation. In collaboration with the NC State Institute for Emerging Issues, staff is working to identify barriers to digital inclusion, such as affordability, device availability, and digital skills training. The plan will outline strategies for expanding broadband infrastructure, increasing digital literacy programs, and supporting community-based initiatives that promote equitable access to technology.
- Supporting partner engagement across the region for the Piedmont Triad Regional Food Council by connecting partners to key resources and leveraging the findings of the 2021 Regional Food System Assessment. This assessment emphasizes regional challenges and opportunities in food production, distribution, access, and equity. Notably, two feasibility study projects have emerged as a direct result of referrals from Food Council members to staff, demonstrating the impact of this collaborative approach.

GOAL 4 – Human Capital Development and Retention

- Implementation of the ARPA Small Business Training Opportunity connects small, underserved businesses with 25 or fewer employees to PTRWDB Incumbent Worker Training grants, providing upskilling opportunities for both employees and business owners. This initiative is designed to help small businesses grow and remain competitive in the regional marketplace by offering targeted training resources. Additionally, the program serves as a valuable referral resource within both PTRDC RLF programs, ensuring a holistic support system for small businesses. When businesses seek financial assistance through either RLF program, they are referred to the ARPA grant for workforce training, and vice versa. This interconnected approach strengthens the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem, fostering resilience and long-term sustainability for small businesses.
- PTRWDB Business Services staff is actively collaborating with local industries, educational institutions, and private employers to enhance training models and create effective upskilling opportunities for the local area to combat skill gaps

and meet industry needs. These partnerships support long-term economic growth by nurturing a skilled labor pool, driving productivity and innovation to solve the gap between workforce supply and demand, ultimately benefiting both employers and job seekers.

- Conducting Spatial Equity Outreach events focuses on delivering workforce development resources and services directly to underserved zip codes and historically marginalized areas within the local workforce area. The goal is to address barriers to workforce participation and to promote equity by ensuring that residents who have traditionally been underserved, have access to the tools needed to pursue meaningful employment and improve their economic well-being. By organizing events in targeted communities, PTRWDB staff work to engage residents, educate them on available programs, and provide hands-on assistance with job placement, skills development, and career advancement. This outreach includes:
 - Organized a community resource fair and workshop in the Town of Cooleemee, Davie County, to engage the reentry population and provide support in overcoming barriers such as transportation, digital literacy, and on-site resume building. The event connected participants with resources and services within to ease their transition back into the workforce and enhancing their career prospects.
 - Hosted a community resource fair and workshop in the Cleveland Avenue Choice Neighborhood Community in Forsyth County to engage the low-income population, offering opportunities to overcome barriers such as transportation, digital literacy, and resume building. The event connected residents with NCWorks resources and PTRWDB initiatives to enhance job readiness and improve access to employment opportunities.
 - Hosted a community resource fair and workshop in partnership with Samaritan Ministries in Forsyth County to engage the unsheltered population, providing opportunities to address barriers and encourage workforce participation. The event aimed to connect individuals with essential resources, support services, and pathways to employment.
 - Organized a back-to-school event in the Town of Jonesville, Yadkin County, to share workforce opportunities, NCWorks resources, and PTRWDB initiatives with both youth and adults. This event led to a follow-up hiring event, connecting employers with job seekers who had participated in the back-to-school event and received assistance.
 - Set up an informational booth at the Bright Leaf Hoedown Festival in Yanceyville, Caswell County, to engage residents and raise awareness for an upcoming resource fair. The fair will offer a range of services and opportunities, including transportation assistance, housing support, and career readiness resources.

- Hosted a community resource fair in collaboration with the Burlington Housing Authority's Back-to-School campaign to connect Alamance County residents, both youth and adults, to services and opportunities to overcome barriers such as housing solutions, digital literacy, and career readiness.
 - Organized a community resource fair at the Archdale Public Library in partnership with Randolph Community College, providing on-site resume assistance, connecting Randolph County residents of all ages with NCWorks registration, and offering information on educational and apprenticeship opportunities.
 - Hosted a job fair in partnership with Asheboro Housing Authority to connect unsheltered Randolph County residents with job opportunities with local employers, on-site resume assistance, NCWorks registration, and resources for career advancement or change, including information on skills training, certifications, and educational pathways to support long-term professional growth.
- Initiated a collaboration with Jobs for the Future (JFF) and PTRC's 2023 Regional Equity Assessment report to develop a comprehensive supplemental research report, outlining the experiences of Black workers and jobseekers in the Piedmont Triad. To further identify unique barriers and opportunities for improving workforce equity in the region. Through this initiative, staff gathered qualitative and quantitative data to better understand systemic challenges faced by Black individuals in the labor market, including access to education, career pathways, and equitable job opportunities. By leveraging the 2023 Regional Equity Assessment, this additional report will contribute to ongoing efforts to close equity gaps and support sustainable economic growth in the region.
 - Supporting the creation of a Local Reentry Council (LRC) for Alamance County to assist justice-impacted individuals in successfully transitioning to employment by navigating barriers. PTRC, which already serves as the LRC for Forsyth County, brings a wealth of experience and best practices to inform and guide the development of the Alamance County LRC. The goal is to establish a comprehensive support system that streamlines access to services and reduces recidivism. By leveraging strong relationships with local employers, community organizations, and support services, the LRC will empower individuals to overcome challenges and make meaningful contributions to the local workforce.

Key EDD Goal Accomplishments

The following accomplishments showcase the successes that PTRDC has either led or directly participated in, from planning through to implementation.

- Secured funding from the NCDIT office to promote device access, enhance digital literacy and education programming, and support economic engagement and entrepreneurship across the Piedmont Triad through the Digital Champions grant program.
- Received funding from the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) to provide food financing and technical assistance, including training, convenings, and capacity-building services for food retail and food enterprises throughout the Piedmont Triad region.
- Submitted and received additional funding from the EPA for PTRC's Brownfields Revolving Loan Program. This supplementary funding will support ongoing efforts to assist communities in addressing the environmental, legal, and fiscal challenges associated with cleaning up contaminated brownfield properties.
- Secured funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) through the Smart Reentry: Housing Demonstration Program to boost efforts to implement evidence-based activities that improve reentry outcomes and reduce recidivism by expanding access to housing for individuals currently or formerly involved in the criminal justice system. This initiative will help the region evaluate current reentry systems, identify strengths and gaps, and build capacity to offer sustainable housing solutions for adults reentering society.
- Completed the Revolving Loan Fund Community of Practice cohort, led by Grow America. This program provided valuable insights and best practices for managing revolving loan funds, enhancing PTRDC's strategies to support small business growth and regional economic development. Participation in the cohort strengthened PTRDC's capacity to offer accessible financing to local businesses, especially in underserved communities, aligning with the region's commitment to equitable economic growth and fostering entrepreneurship.
- Hosted a regional housing summit to gather insights on housing data and trends, foster collaboration with communities, developers, and resource providers, and explore innovative strategies to expand and diversify the housing supply.
- Staff conducted research and developed a feasibility study for a regional shared-use kitchen project intended to evaluate the potential for supporting local food entrepreneurs and fostering small business growth. The findings and recommendations from the feasibility study will serve as a guide and reference for the client's upcoming EDA application, ensuring alignment with broader economic development goals.

- Added an additional mobile unit to the existing fleet, enhancing outreach efforts by delivering resources and services directly to communities throughout the region. This expansion increases access to programs and services, further engaging residents, businesses, and stakeholders to expand its impact.
- 2024 NADO Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award recipient for outstanding work in advancing Digital Equity and Inclusion efforts and programming in the region.

2024-2025 Anticipated EDD Activities

The following are projects and collaborations that PTRDC is currently developing and organizing to drive progress in the region, transforming ongoing initiatives into tangible accomplishments.

- Organize a regional in-person training session for local GIS staff to learn and participate with the Broadband Mapping Application tool, enhancing their engagement with using broadband data analysis to help bridge the digital divide in the region.
- Implement the Regional Digital Inclusion Plan, following the recommendations and action steps outlined in the final report, across the 12-county region to guarantee equitable access to reliable broadband, technology, and digital skills for all residents.
- Deploy the NCDIT Digital Champions grant across the local workforce area to improve access to devices, expand digital literacy and education programs and initiatives, and encourage greater economic participation.
- Pursue National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program to assist in funding ongoing regional digital equity and inclusion efforts to ensure communities have the access and skills to fully participate in the digital world.
- Pursue EDA's Build to Scale (B2S) grant program to bolster the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem for technology-driven businesses. The Piedmont Triad region is well-positioned and energized around technology, fueled by the leadership of the Wake Forest Institute for Regenerative Medicine and a growing tech-focused community.
- Pursue Housing and Urban Development's (HUB) Preservation and Reinvestment Initiative for Community Enhancement (PRICE) funding opportunity to address infrastructure upgrades, safety improvements, and community enhancements of manufactured housing communities (MHCs) across the Piedmont Triad region.

- Continue promotion of the regional equity assessment report as a foundation for future research and evaluations. PTRC plans to request and review proposals for the development of an entrepreneur equity assessment, aimed at generating actionable recommendations to advance equity in the regional entrepreneurial landscape.
- Maintain engagement with local Economic Development Partnerships (EDPs) and MakeMyMove to market rural ARC counties as attractive destinations for remote workers. This initiative focuses on recruiting work-from-anywhere talent to these communities, helping to revitalize and stimulate growth in areas with stagnant or declining populations.
- Continue seeking funding opportunities to expand reentry services and address barriers for justice-impacted individuals, both pre and post-release, to support successful reintegration.
- Provide technical assistance, grant writing, and supportive research for applicants seeking federal, state, or local funding opportunities for projects that align with the goals and objectives of the CEDS. This support includes identifying potential funding sources, preparing grant applications, developing the resources if needed, and offering insights into how projects can contribute to the region's economic growth. By ensuring that applicants have the necessary resources and guidance, PTRDC helps secure investments that advance key priorities such as infrastructure improvements, workforce development, small business growth, and regional innovation. Strengthening the region's economic resilience and competitiveness.
- Initiate efforts to transition the NC Triad brand and platform from a job-seeker centric focus to an employer-centric approach. This transition is to reflect the evolving talent alignment strategy in the region, particularly in the post-pandemic landscape, where the needs of entrepreneurs and business owners have taken on greater urgency. With the changing dynamics of the workforce, small businesses and startups are seeking more accessible resources and operational support to grow and thrive. This reset seeks to address these needs by offering more tailored content and services for employers, providing them with the tools necessary to find, develop, and retain top talent. This shift includes resources for business growth, workforce development programs, access to capital, and connections to local and regional support networks.
- Pursue opportunities to extend capacity and provide planning assistance for disaster recovery and relief efforts for Western North Carolina counties and

municipalities devastated by Hurricane Helene. This involves assisting local governments, emergency management departments, and community organizations to assess needs and develop strategic plans that support recovery and resilience. The focus is on rebuilding infrastructure, revitalizing local economies, and creating sustainable solutions that strengthen the region's preparedness for future disasters. The PTRWDB mobile unit fleet has been actively delivering supplies and serving as command centers, supporting organizations working with affected residents and government agencies.

Overall, PTRDC's CEDS framework continues to be a guiding force and connector of resources for driving sustainable, inclusive, and resilient economic growth. Over the past year, we have made notable strides in workforce development, digital equity, infrastructure improvements, and supporting regional entrepreneurship. While challenges remain, our strategic focus on collaboration and innovation, positions the region for long-term success.

We look forward to continued progress in the coming year as we work together to build a brighter future for the twelve-county Piedmont Triad region.