

# sync<sup>®</sup> NEWS & OPPORTUNITIES FROM N.C. COMMERCE



## Forklift Manufacturer to Expand in Kinston Adding 130 New Jobs

Crown Equipment Corporation, a global lift truck manufacturer, expects to create more than 130 new jobs in Lenoir County, **Governor Roy Cooper** announced February 18. The company is planning to invest up to \$13 million to expand its manufacturing operations in Kinston.

"Crown Equipment Corporation's decision to expand in Lenoir County helps with our efforts to grow the economy in eastern North Carolina," said **Governor Cooper**. "Crown is an example of the growing companies that choose to continue operating in our state because of our resilient economy, capable workforce, and supportive communities."

Crown Equipment Corporation was originally founded in Ohio in 1945 and has grown to become one of the world's leading material handling companies. The company has earned more than 100 prominent international design awards while developing and manufacturing a broad range of electric and internal combustion (gas) forklifts, as well as automation and fleet management technologies. Crown operates 19 global production facilities and a service and distribution network that exceeds 500 retail locations in over 80 countries. The company's expansion in Kinston will provide additional manufacturing and assembly space to meet growing customer demand.

"This expansion is part of our long-term vision to enhance our manufacturing flexibility and capacity," said **Todd Frideger, plant manager of Crown's Kinston manufacturing facility**. "We are pleased to strengthen our commitment to Kinston and



*North Carolina Commerce Secretary Machel Sanders*

## Secretary Machel Sanders Joins Commerce

**Governor Roy Cooper** announced on February 12 that **Machel Sanders** will serve as the state's Secretary of Commerce. Sanders replaces **Tony Copeland** who stepped down at the end of January.

"Machel has been an outstanding leader in this administration, and I am grateful that she is willing to take on this new role and continue to serve our great state," said **Governor Cooper**. "Her strong background as a business leader and her extensive knowledge of what it takes to build a globally competitive workforce will serve North Carolina well as we attract better paying jobs, help small businesses and stimulate our innovation and entrepreneurial economy."

"I am humbled and excited about leading the North Carolina Department of Commerce at this critical time in our state's history," said **Secretary Sanders**. "In this role, I plan to execute on a bold vision for economic restoration and progress for our state and its people in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. My top priority is to marry innovation and strong leadership to create promising conditions for economic recovery and opportunity."

**Secretary Sanders** continued, "Expanding

the state of North Carolina through this investment and excited to create more career opportunities in region."

"With the largest manufacturing workforce in the Southeast, North Carolina is poised to support Crown's next phase of growth as they expand their manufacturing operations," said **N.C. Commerce Secretary Machel Sanders**. "Crown has been one of the larger employers in Lenoir County for more than 30 years. We welcome their continued investment and confidence in our business community and our people, especially during such unprecedented times."

The new positions include assemblers, engineers, machine operators, and support staff. The potential payroll impact for the new positions is more than \$6.1 million per year. Lenoir County's overall average annual wage is \$38,241.

A performance-based grant of \$400,000 from the One North Carolina Fund will help facilitate Crown Equipment's expansion.

Joining the [North Carolina Department of Commerce](#) and the [Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina](#) were key partners in the project that included the North Carolina Global TransPark Economic Development Region, the [North Carolina Community College System](#), [Lenoir Community College](#), [Lenoir County](#), [North Carolina's Southeast](#), and the [City of Kinston](#).



## Cardinal Foods Doubles Workforce in Pender County

Cardinal Foods, a Burgaw agribusiness company, will create 48 new jobs as it launches a \$15.5 million expansion at its Pender County operations, **Governor Roy Cooper** announced February 17. The project doubles the company's current 48-person workforce.

"The significant expansion of Cardinal Foods is good for farmers and workers in Pender and other eastern North Carolina counties. Companies that expand here in this way highlight our state's ability to compete in the global economy," said **Governor Cooper**.

Founded in Burgaw in 2017, Cardinal Foods processes blueberries, sweet potatoes and butternut squash harvested primarily by North Carolina farmers. The company also provides product development, marketing and distribution services. Its foods are sold to both national consumer brands and leading grocery retailers.

"We are excited about the opportunity the future holds for Cardinal Foods and the region's agriculture community," said **Corey Barnhill, Cardinal Foods president and CEO**. "This expansion will close the gap in offering North Carolina growers a viable solution for processing their crops and open up global markets that were limited previously."

Cardinal Foods' current expansion involves the production of

workforce development initiatives is essential to helping North Carolina attract and keep jobs that not only help people fulfill basic needs, but also provide them with the ability to start and sustain businesses of their own. Collaboration with economic development partners, community stakeholders, higher education networks, and affinity groups will help to transform the enormous economic possibilities for rural areas and groups marginalized from enjoying in the promise of economic growth and prosperity. Building a strong team of dedicated public servants and experts, and creating a culture of equity, inclusion, and excellence will ensure that the agency remains committed to these goals. I look forward to leading with purpose to achieve results consistent with Governor Cooper's promise to make this a state that works for everyone."

Most recently, Sanders served as Secretary of the Department of Administration. Governor Cooper appointed her to that position in 2017.

A graduate of North Carolina State University, Sanders holds a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry and a Master of Health Administration from Pfeiffer University.

Secretary Sanders is a native of Belhaven, North Carolina and brings strong business experience in both management and leadership to the Commerce Department. She is a seasoned pharmaceutical and biotechnology executive and previously held the role of vice president of manufacturing and general manager of Biogen's largest manufacturing facility in Research Triangle Park (RTP). She also held leadership positions overseeing manufacturing, global quality assurance and quality control functions at Biogen and Diosynth-Akzo Nobel. While at Biogen, Secretary Sanders created a Women's Innovation Network.

Secretary Sanders is a strong supporter of diversity and inclusion, including service as the Chair of the North Carolina Commission on Inclusion, the North Carolina Complete Count Commission and the Andrea Harris Social, Economic, Environmental, and Health Equity Task Force.

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## Latest Round of Rural Grants to Attract 375 New Jobs and \$60 Million in Private Investment

The North Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA) approved 12 grant requests to local governments totaling \$4,566,930, **Governor Roy Cooper** announced February 18. The requests include commitments to create a total of 439 jobs, 64 of which were previously announced. The public investment in these projects will attract more than \$60 million in private investment.

sweet potato French fries to fill growing market demand in the U.S. and abroad. The company will rely on raw materials supplied by farmers in North Carolina, which has led the nation in sweet potato production since 1971. In 2019, the state produced two billion pounds of sweet potatoes -- about 61 percent of total U.S. production, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"Cardinal Foods is a home-grown company connecting North Carolina farmers to quality-minded consumers around the world," said **North Carolina Commerce Secretary Machele Sanders**. "The company's success demonstrates how our state's productive soils and productive people create a global competitive edge for value-added agribusiness operations."

Among the positions Cardinal Foods will create in Burgaw are operators, supervisors and production managers. The new positions come with annual salaries that will average \$38,458, creating a payroll impact of more than \$1.8 million per year for the local economy. The current average annual wage in Pender County is \$33,987.

A performance-based grant of \$50,000 from the One North Carolina Fund will help facilitate Cardinal Foods' expansion.

The [North Carolina Department of Commerce](#) worked closely with the [Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina](#) to lead a collaborative effort to support this expansion. Other key partners in the project include the [North Carolina General Assembly](#), the [North Carolina Community College System](#), [Pender County](#), the [Town of Burgaw](#), and [Wilmington Business Development](#).

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## Coronavirus Grants Awarded to 34 Communities

Nearly \$27 million in grants has been awarded to 34 municipal and county governments in North Carolina in response to the adverse economic and public health impacts of COVID-19, **Governor Roy Cooper** announced February 18.

The federal funds are being distributed through the Community Development Block Grant Coronavirus (CDBG-CV) program to assist local governments with subsistence payments to prevent evictions and utility disconnections in their communities.

In addition to public utilities and rent assistance, the funds will also provide public facilities support with broadband, communications, and the rehabilitation of buildings as well as financial assistance to small businesses with fewer than 100 employees and micro-enterprises with no more than five employees.

"Our communities need help in recovering from the pandemic and these funds will help with some of their immediate needs," said **Governor Cooper**.

"Supporting North Carolina's smaller communities and businesses is critical for our state's economic recovery," said **N.C. Commerce Secretary Machele Sanders**. "These grantees will be able to provide emergency payment assistance for families who desperately need relief due to the pandemic, as well as receive financial support to expand the economic revitalization efforts in their communities."

The funds will be administered by Commerce's Rural Economic Development Division. A [complete listing of the local grant recipients is available online](#).

"A broad-based economic recovery requires investments in rural North Carolina communities, and that is what these grants will do," **Governor Cooper** said. "These grants will help counties and towns with water, sewer and buildings to help their existing small businesses and residents as well as attracting more good paying jobs."

The North Carolina Department of Commerce's team of rural economic development professionals supports the RIA's work. RIA members review and approve funding requests from local communities. Funding comes from a variety of specialized grant and loan programs offered and managed by N.C. Commerce's Rural Economic Development Division. Grants can support a variety of activities, including infrastructure development, building renovation, expansion and demolition, and site improvements.

The RIA approved eight grant requests under the state's Building Reuse program and one request from the federally-funded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Three requests to the Industrial Development Fund - Utility Account were also approved.

A complete [list of the projects awarded funding is available online](#).

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## On Our Radar

- [Biden administration's PPP loan fixes mean more money for these small businesses](#) (*Triangle Business Journal* - February 23)
- [Sam Taylor, leading advocate for NC's biosciences industry, dies at 64](#) (*North Carolina Biosciences Organization* - February 21)
- [Editorial: Machele Sanders fits bill to lead N.C. Commerce, grow state's economy](#) (*Capitol Broadcasting Company* - February 17)
- [2020 State of the Center City](#) (*Charlotte Center City Partners* - February 5)
- [Job Creator, Community Builder \(Tom White Profile\)](#) (*N.C. State University News* - December 16)

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## N.C. in the News

- [Guilford groups launch small business recovery initiative study](#) (*North Carolina Biosciences Organization* - February 21)
- [UNC's vice chancellor for innovation, entrepreneurship is retiring](#) (*WRAL TechWire* - February 22)
- [These two Bay Area cities fall in 'best performing' report](#) (*San Jose Mercury News* - February 17)
- [Three Triad companies win 2020](#)

### About Us

SYNC is North Carolina Commerce's electronic newsletter for local government officials, private-sector allies, state policy makers, and other economic development leaders. We offer unfiltered details about new economic development projects and events, useful news about your peers, and opportunities to synchronize with statewide programs and tools in order to advance economic development in your community. [Send your story ideas to the editor.](#)

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