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Weekly highlights from the
North Carolina Department of Commerce

N.C. Rural Infrastructure Authority Board Approves Second Round of Grants

N.C. Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker and Assistant Secretary for Rural Development Dr. Pat Mitchell announced March 27 that the N.C. Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA) approved 18 grants totaling more than \$8.1 million.

The RIA was established as part of the Rural Economic Development Division at the N.C. Department of Commerce to assist with the review and approval of grants for rural areas in the state. The grants-making programs of the new division include assistance for building reuse and restoration as well as infrastructure including water and sewer.

Grants were announced in four program areas: Community Development Block Grants (CDGB), the Industrial Development Fund Utility Account, the Building Reuse Program, and the Economic Infrastructure Program.

To review the list of grants, [click here](#).

The CDBG is a U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program that provides an annual allocation of funds to the State for rural economic development and residential infrastructure projects. The Department of Environmental and Natural Resources administers the rural residential infrastructure program and the N.C. Department of Commerce administers the economic development program. CDBG economic development provides grants to local governments for creating and retaining jobs. Funding for projects is based on the number of jobs to be created and the level of distress in the community applying for the funds.

The Utility Account of the Industrial Development Fund provides grants to units of local government of the 80 most distressed counties in the state to assist in job creation. The funds may be used for publicly-owned infrastructure and should be used for projects that are reasonably expected to result in the creation of jobs.

The Building Reuse Program will provide grants/loans to local governments to support the reuse of vacant buildings and/or expand rural healthcare facilities that will lead to the creation of new, full-time jobs.

The Economic Infrastructure Program will provide grants for a variety of public infrastructure, such as water and sewer, broadband infrastructure, natural gas, access road, and rail

Plastics Manufacturer to Expand in Henderson County

Governor Pat McCrory and N.C. Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker announced March 31 that Elkamet Inc. is expanding its North Carolina manufacturing operations in Henderson County. The company plans to create 20 new jobs and invest more than \$2.5 million over the next three years in East Flat Rock. [Bill Payne](#) served as the developer on the project for the N.C. Department of Commerce.

"We are continuing to make North Carolina a destination to grow a business through job-friendly economic policies," said Governor McCrory. "I applaud Elkamet for choosing Henderson County for their expansion, and we look forward to working with them as a strategic partner."

Elkamet Inc. produces extruded profiles from industrial polymer materials for the automotive industry as well as PA/PE/XPE tanks for fuel and hydraulic systems which are used in utility vehicles and motorcycles. Elkamet currently employs 54 full-time workers in western North Carolina.

"When Governor McCrory took office in 2013, he pledged to revitalize our state and make North Carolina more attractive for business once again," said Secretary Decker. "Companies like Elkamet know firsthand that our state means business, and we welcome this expansion in Henderson County."

At its four sites across the world, Elkamet employs more than 700 staff, including 77 trainees and participants on the dual study program "StudiumPlus." The commitment, the competence and the high level of identification of the employees with the Elkamet philosophy form the basis for high-quality, technologically outstanding products that set standards.

"The consideration of our East Flat Rock location for this project is based on a very committed and fast-learning workforce out of Henderson County," said Artur Bitner, plant manager, Elkamet Inc.

Other partners that helped with this project include: N.C. Community Colleges, Blue Ridge Community College, Henderson County

spur improvements.

[Read more.](#)



Cozza Named Executive Director for North Carolina Ports

Paul J. Cozza has been named the new Executive Director of the North Carolina State Ports Authority. The Authority's Board of Directors confirmed the choice at its regularly scheduled meeting on March 27.

Cozza brings to the role extensive, high-level executive experience in the international transportation and logistics industry. He previously served in several roles for Maersk Line, Limited including Chief Financial Officer, Senior Vice-President for Finance and Administration, and Vice President for Network Planning. In addition to his experience with Maersk, Cozza has more than a decade of experience with CSX Corporation/Sea-Land Service Inc. He was the Vice President for Terminal Operations and General Manager, Europe, as well as the Tradelane Director, Asia Container Services.

A U.S. Army veteran and graduate of West Point, Cozza also holds a Masters in Business Administration from Fairleigh Dickinson University. "Strong leadership is essential to expanding Port business in North Carolina," said N.C. Department of Transportation Secretary Tony Tata. "The Ports play a key role in our efforts to better leverage all the state's transportation assets to help create jobs and strengthen the economy. Mr. Cozza brings years of business and leadership experience to the CEO position."

and the Henderson County Partnership for Economic Development.

Year-to-date Metrics

Below are year-to-date metrics tracked by the N.C. Department of Commerce's Division of Business and Industry Development that illustrate some of the recent activities of the Division. The metrics include the number of new economic development projects assigned to B&I development staff; the number of economic development project announcements; the number of announced jobs created and capital invested; the number of interactions existing industry staff had with businesses throughout the state; and the number of contacts received by the Business Link North Carolina/Business ServiCenter.

Jan. 1 - March 31, 2014

New projects assigned:	99
Projects announced:	26
Jobs announced:	1,246
Capital investment announced:	\$110M
Industry visits by existing industry staff:	197
Calls to Business Link N.C.:	5,122

N.C. in the News

This Week's Highlights

- [North Carolina ranks No. 3 for growth in women entrepreneurship](#) (*Charlotte Business Journal* - March 31)
- [Charlotte among nation's most cost-friendly cities for business](#) (*Charlotte Business Journal*- March 31)
- [Exclusive: 20 minutes with Yuangqing Yang, CEO of Lenovo](#) (*Triangle Business Journal*- March 28)
- [Red Hat: We're hiring 800 this fiscal year](#) (*Triangle Business Journal*- March 28)
- [While local brand remains in works, state developing its own](#) (*Port City Daily*- March 28)

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