



Blueprint for Bertie

A Community Economic Development Plan



UNC
FRANK HAWKINS KENAN
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“Our best resource
is our people.”

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Introduction & Executive Summary

Economic development is intended to make a place better for the people and businesses that are there and more attractive to those that might come. It can represent a wide variety of activities ranging from targeted industrial recruitment to K-12 education reform. However, many of the old approaches to economic development leave the community without any real sense of control, agency, or power. This plan is different. The plan's long term vision, findings, goals, and recommendations are all designed by and created for community members and leaders.

The immediate needs and future desires of the people of Bertie County serve as the vision of this plan. The people of Bertie County envision a bright future and tremendous opportunity for economic growth. This vision includes convenient retail options, wealth-generating job opportunities, better education outcomes, local entertainment and recreation, and a more close-knit sense of community. The people's vision is broad and inspiring. For a summary of all of the community meetings held over the past sixteen months, please see Appendix B.

Residents' observations, reflections of those who serve the county, and extensive research all helped to determine the findings and specific goals of this plan. The Kenan Institute hosted a series of open community meetings, engaged in dozens of interviews with community leaders and workforce development providers, and performed an in-depth demographic and economic analysis of the county. Key findings include:



Stephanie Smith and E-TAP Manager Elizabeth Basnight address the Windsor-Bertie County Chamber of Commerce

- There is a willing workforce of currently under-employed and unemployed residents in Bertie County; however, available jobs are too few, do not pay a living wage, and/or require high qualifications.
- A wide variety of adult education and training opportunities exist, but they are far from where people live.
- There is tremendous opportunity for new and existing small businesses (retail, healthcare, entertainment, etc.) in Bertie because people often drive great distances and leave the county for shopping.
- Businesses want to locate in Bertie County, but available land options are limited.
- Abundant county resources are underutilized and poorly marketed, in part because of limited coordination.
- People and businesses lack access to banks and financial services.
- Existing community organizations are doing amazing work, but they need more support and coordination.

This community feedback and research revealed three goals to support economic growth in Bertie County:

- Empower the people who want better job opportunities with targeted workforce training. This will also help support industrial recruitment and business growth.
- Accelerate the good work of community leaders and organizations through improved coordination with public and private institutions.
- Jump-start the strategic use and marketing of underutilized resources.

The foundation and goals motivated a series of recommendations including:

- Create a community economic development task force. Members

of the leadership team should represent a diverse cross section of Bertie County's residents.

- Make training and education opportunities more accessible.
- Provide Career Readiness Certificate testing for all high school students.
- Align the goals of employers, workforce development, and K-12 education (WorkReady Community model).
- Improve county marketing and branding.

Many existing initiatives are already moving Bertie County closer to a collective vision for the future. Some of these initiatives are identified throughout this plan as examples of what is possible with limited resources.

The study team would like to thank the people of Bertie county and the professionals who serve the county for their tremendous support throughout this planning process. We would also like to thank the Bertie County Commissioners and the Economic Development Board for inviting us to their community.

About the Authors

This plan was drafted by the Center for NC Strategic Economic Growth at the Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The Center for NC Strategic Economic Growth identifies and leverages resources that promote sustainable economic growth and revitalize economically distressed communities in North Carolina. It realizes its commitment through research and consulting projects by:

- Leveraging relationships with community partners and university resources to support strategic economic development planning in

North Carolina communities and regions

- Identifying needs and mobilizing resources to support business growth
- Conducting research and analysis on economic trends
- Supporting entrepreneurs through the Entrepreneur Technical Assistance Program (E-TAP)

Mark Little, the Director of the Center for NC Strategic Economic Growth, oversaw the development of the plan. He has a broad background in science and policy, including renewable energy development, environmental sustainability, international and rural development, and public policy.



A Powellsville resident talking with Eric Breit after a Mayor-County Commissioner meeting

Eric Breit and Stephanie Smith are former interns at the Center for NC Strategic Economic Growth. They were the principle authors of the plan. Eric recently earned his Master's degree in Planning from the Department of City and Regional Planning at UNC Chapel Hill. Prior to graduate school, Eric worked for twelve years in community development and nonprofit management. Stephanie recently earned her MBA from North Carolina Central University. She obtained her Bachelor of Science in Political Science at East Carolina University, and has experience in sustainable development.

Faculty and staff at UNC's School of Government, Department of City and Regional Planning, and Kenan-Flagler Business School provided guidance, technical assistance, and expert feedback throughout the development of this plan. Kenan Institute staff members and interns including Ashley Brown and Jessie Maxwell helped facilitate the research, compilation, and editing process.

Process

The authors designed this plan to reflect and support the community's economic development goals. The Center for NC Strategic Economic Growth hosted four open community meetings over the summer of 2013 to solicit input. One meeting targeted young residents ages 14 to 25. At all meetings (held in Aulander, Colerain, and Windsor), attendees identified opportunities, challenges, and their vision for economic development in their community. The authors of this plan also conducted targeted interviews, speaking with more than 100 individuals and organizations serving Bertie County in workforce development, economic development, and other related fields. See Appendix A for a list of organizations that participated in the meetings and interviews. Appendix B outlines interviewee comments and suggestions.

The authors also hosted stakeholder meetings with the faith community, two community colleges serving the county, workforce development groups, and local and regional nonprofit organizations. Appendix C lists select regional public and private agencies serving Bertie County. Appendix D includes a list of select community partners. Finally, the authors gathered information from the Bertie-Windsor Chamber of Commerce, county commissioners and officials, town council members, mayors, and the board of directors of the Bertie-Hertford Community Foundation. Extensive socio-demographic analysis and research on rural economic and workforce development strategies complemented these perspectives. Select regional reports can be found in Appendix E.



Stephanie Smith guiding community members through a planning exercise in Windsor



Residents at the Aulander community meeting

Community meeting and interview participants identified several common goals for economic development in the county. First, they hoped to attract more industry, retail stores, and entertainment options. Second, they wanted better education, training, and enrichment programs. Finally, they wanted more coordination among county leadership and initiatives. The authors used this feedback to inform the economic development recommendations.

Background on Bertie County¹



Photo retrieved from windsorbertiechamber.com

Located in northeastern North Carolina and extending over 700 square miles, Bertie County has a rich history in manufacturing and agriculture. The flat terrain, fertile grounds, and lush forests are what many consider to be the community's pride and joy. Citizens boast about the quiet, rural lifestyle as well as the county's history, wandering rivers, and rich natural resources. Bertie County is home to more than

20,000 individuals. The county's population density is 30 persons per square mile. By contrast, North Carolina's population density is 196 persons per square mile. Bertie County is divided into eight incorporated towns: Askewville, Aulander, Colerain, Kelford, Lewiston-Woodville, Powellsville, Roxobel, and Windsor (the county seat).

Three industries supply 61 percent of jobs in Bertie County. Manufacturing, which includes chicken processing, biotechnical extraction, and animal by-product recovery services, supplies nearly 33 percent of all jobs in the county. In the last quarter of 2013, 2,057 people worked in manufacturing. The Healthcare and Social Assistance sector supplied just over 15 percent of jobs in the county, and about 13 percent

of people employed in Bertie County worked in Public Administration. The largest firms in the county are Perdue Products Incorporated, the Bertie County Board of Education, and the Department of Public Safety. See Appendix F for a list of Bertie County’s largest employers.

According to 2011 Census estimates, approximately 77 percent of occupied housing units in Bertie County are owner occupied. The remaining 23 percent are renter occupied. As of 2010, about 17 percent of housing units in the county are vacant. This percentage is higher than the state average, but lower than the regional average, and may reflect housing for seasonal residents and tourists in neighboring counties.



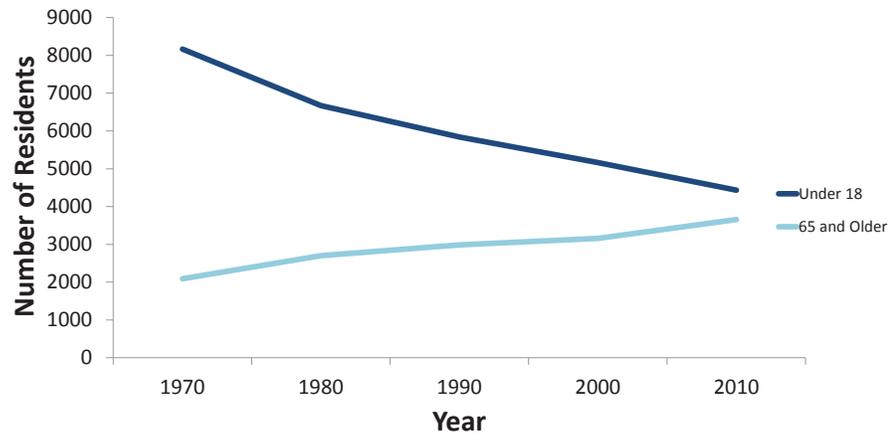
Tobacco field near Aulander

An average of 2.39 people live in each household. This is lower than both the regional and state average, but comparable to that of neighboring Hertford County. Thirty three percent of households in Bertie County have only one resident. This is a higher than average figure for the region. The percent of one-person households with a resident over 64 years old in the county—42 percent—is higher than the state average but lower than the figures for the region.

Bertie County has an aging population, and as a result, an aging workforce. Between 1970 and 2010, the number of residents under 18 years old has steadily declined. The number of residents over the age of 64 has increased (See Figure 1). Nearly half of the residents are 45 or older. Gender distribution across age brackets is fairly balanced (See Figure 2). A majority of Bertie County residents identify as Black. Thirty six percent identify as White (See Figure 3).

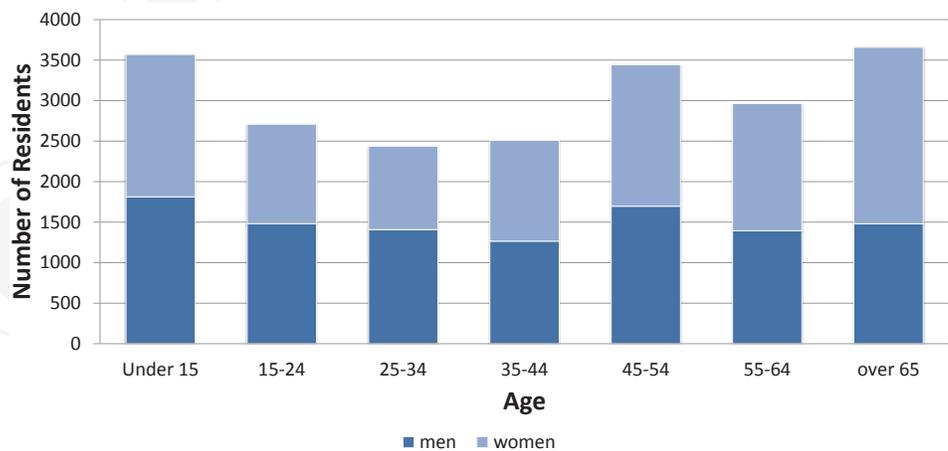
BLUEPRINT FOR BERTIE

Figure 1: Number of Bertie County Residents under 18 Years Old or 65+ Years Old (1970-2010)



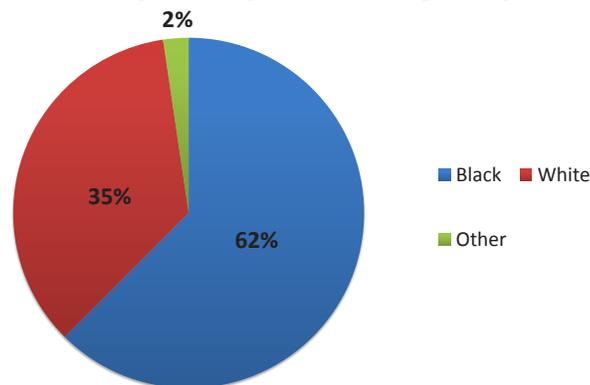
Source: 2010 US Census

Figure 2: Bertie County Population by Age and Gender



Source: 2010 US Census

Figure 3: Bertie County Population by Race



Source: 2010 US Census

Current Economic Environment

Bertie County lags behind state and regional averages in unemployment, educational attainment, and household income. According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's 2013 County Health Rankings and Roadmaps², Bertie County ranks 88th out of 100 in a cumulative ranking of social and economic factors.

In January 2014, the county's unemployment rate was 9.8 percent, down from 12.8 percent in January 2013. The drop in Bertie County's unemployment rate is due to a decline in the labor force rather than people finding work. In the same time period, North Carolina's average unemployment rate dropped from 8.8 percent to 6.7 percent.

Educational attainment can be highly correlated with unemployment. North Carolina residents who have not attended any college experience higher rates of unemployment than residents who have participated in higher education (See Figure 4).

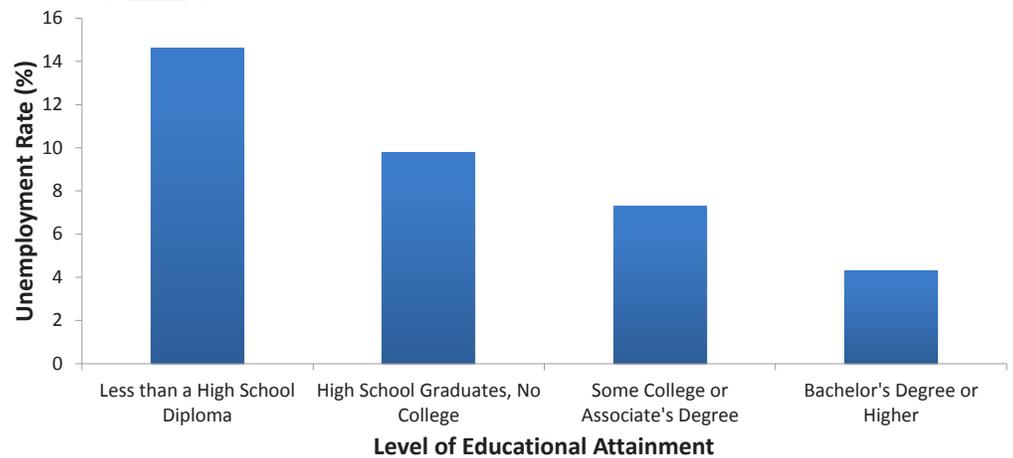
Just under 11 percent of Bertie County residents 25 years and older have earned a bachelor's degree or higher. This is much lower than the statewide average, and is the lowest of all the counties in Region Q (Beaufort, Bertie, Hertford, Martin, and Pitt Counties).³ About 37 percent of county residents 25 years and older have attended at least some college. Statewide, an average of about 57 percent of residents 25 years and older have attended at least some college (See Figure 5).

Bertie County's median household income is \$29,000. The state average is \$44,000. Only 41 percent of Bertie residents are currently in the workforce, compared to the state average of 48 percent. This average is lower than that of surrounding counties. The average annual wage per employee in Bertie County in 2011 was \$27,861. This is \$2,350 less

than the regional average, and \$18,911 less than the statewide average. Between 2008 and 2012, an average of about 24 percent of Bertie County residents lived below the poverty level. The North Carolina State average during the same timeframe was about 17 percent.⁴

Given the county’s current economic conditions, Bertie residents could benefit greatly from the economic development recommendations outlined in this plan. The recommendations are informed by recent economic activities and reflect community members’ and leaders’ growth goals.

Figure 4: Unemployment Rate and Educational Attainment in North Carolina



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey. No county-level data available at this time.

Figure 5: Educational Attainment for Population Ages 25 Years and Older

	Bertie County	Region Q	North Carolina
Less than High School	26.1%	17.9%	15.5%
High School Graduate (including equivalency)	37.3%	29.2%	27.2%
Some College	25.5%	31.1%	30.4%
Bachelor’s Degree	8.8%	14.1%	17.8%
Advanced Degree (including Master’s, Professional School, and Doctorate)	2.3%	7.7%	9.1%

Areas of Focus

Based on both quantitative and qualitative county assessments, the authors identified four areas of focus to support economic development in Bertie County: workforce development, business attraction, county marketing, and community capacity building. These focus areas capitalize on current opportunities for growth in Bertie County. They also reflect the goals expressed by stakeholders in community meetings and interviews, and complement the industrial recruitment strategy identified by county officials.



Colerain Mayor Burney Baker speaking with Mark Little

Workforce Development

Key Findings

Job Training Opportunities

Currently, Bertie County residents have limited access to job training. A workforce development expert in the region said, “The first question industry asks is, ‘What kind of workforce do you have?’” A former employee of a manufacturer in the county said, “The biggest thing is to be able to get good, trainable workers.” Better and more accessible job training can prepare residents for area jobs.

Overall, Bertie County residents earn relatively low scores on education and skills assessments. According to 2012-2013 End of Grade Test administered to third graders across North Carolina, a significantly lower percent of third graders in Bertie County Schools demonstrated grade appropriate proficiency in both reading and math than third

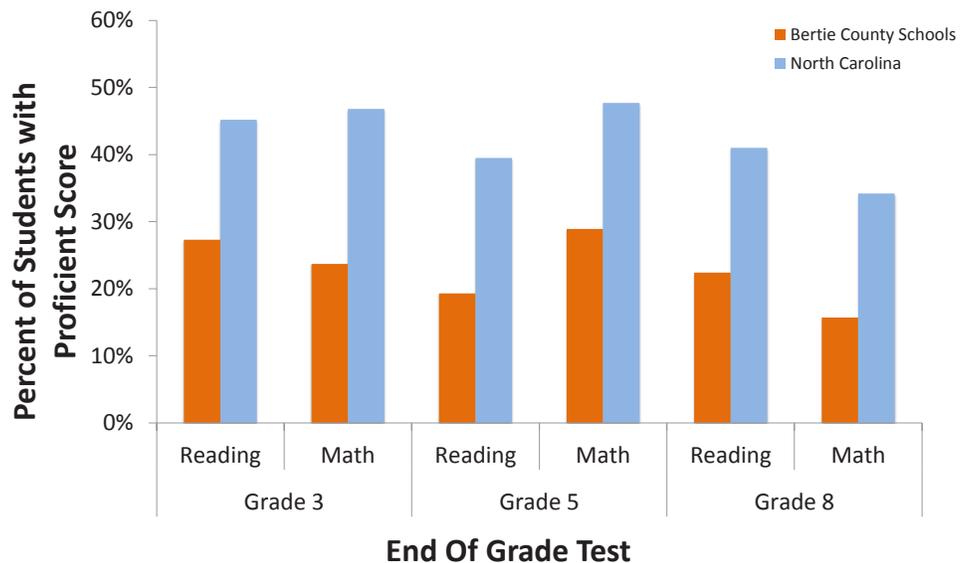
graders across the state. Similar trends appear in fifth grade and eight grade EOG scores (See Figure 6).

Bertie County Schools' 2012-2013 high school graduation rate was about 78 percent. North Carolina's average high school graduation rate was nearly 83 percent. Twenty six percent of Bertie County's population 25 years and older has not earned a high school diploma. This is nearly 11 percent higher than the North Carolina average (See Figure 5).

About 71 percent of high school graduates in Bertie County took the SAT in 2013, earning a combined average score of 1,178 out of 2,400. Each of the other four Region Q counties reported higher average SAT scores ranging from 1,222 to 1,433. North Carolina has an average combined SAT score of 1,479.

Improved job training could effectively supplement residents' current skillset to match the needs of area businesses.

Figure 6: Percent of NC End of Grade Test Scores at or above Grade Level (2012-2013)



Access to Job Training and Employment Opportunities

Many Bertie County residents live far away from job training and employment opportunities. This, coupled with expensive and inconvenient transportation options, makes it difficult for residents to access employment and job training opportunities. More than 52 percent of employed Bertie County residents commute more than 20 minutes to work. Nearly 10 percent commute for more than an hour (See Figure 7). Closer, and more convenient jobs and training opportunities could reduce transportation challenges and make it easier for residents to find and keep jobs.

Seventy-five percent of employed Bertie County residents work outside of the county. Of that, thirty four percent work in Hertford County. For more information about the county commuting patterns, see Appendix G. Just as difficult as commuting to a job is accessing higher education institutions in the area. University and regional community college locations can range from as close as 11 and as far as 67 miles away from the four main towns in Bertie County (see figure 8).

For those with automobiles, high fuel cost is a challenge. Employed residents use informal car pools to get to and from work, but this mode of transportation can be unreliable. Those without cars face greater challenges. A Bertie resident commented, “I work in the middle of Windsor, and I have no idea how to get around using public transportation.”

The regional transportation system, Choanoke Public Transportation Authority (CPTA)⁵, was described by many interviewed as an unreliable primary means of transportation. The CPTA has no fixed routes, but offers on-demand services. In 2010, the CPTA had 203,701 passenger trips with an average of 3.62 passenger trips per service hour. Each passenger trip cost an average of \$8.28. In spring 2010, CPTA reported

437 total average daily passengers. Outside of medical facilities, Bertie County offices and the Food Lion in Windsor ranked among the most popular CPTA passenger destinations.

Figure 7: 2011 Bertie Residents' Average Commute

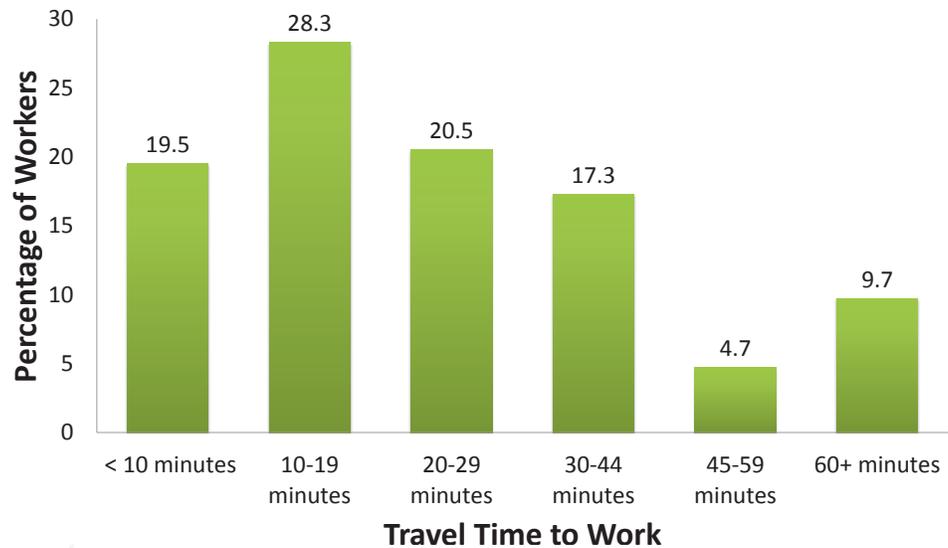


Figure 8: Commute to Regional Community Colleges and Universities

	Ahoskie (Roanoke CC)	Williamston (Martin CC)	Windsor (Martin CC – Bertie)	Greenville (ECU)	Elizabeth City (ECSU)
Aulander	11 miles	33 miles	19 miles	50 miles	67 miles
Colerain	15 miles	37 miles	23 miles	65 miles	50 miles
Lewiston- Woodville	18 miles	27 miles	22 miles	42 miles	63 miles
Windsor	22 miles	13 miles	0 miles	42 miles	49 miles

Community Level Job Training

Human Resource Development⁶ classes offered through the community colleges are a good resource for job training. They are also free for the unemployed and underemployed. But distance and lack of affordable transportation prevent too many people from attending.

Community members agree that more employment training and skill

development opportunities should be offered at various locations throughout Bertie County. To increase participation, community organizations (faith-based and secular) could co-host training opportunities with community colleges. A community college representative said, “We are successful when we tag onto existing programs. We do not always get the audience when we go alone to different communities.”

Community colleges indicate that while some courses such as nursing can only be offered on their campuses, other courses can be taught anywhere as long as there are at least eight students enrolled. The colleges also have great flexibility in how classes are structured. For example, some courses can either be offered as a single class or as a series of classes that would count towards a certificate of completion

Bertie County Faith-Workforce Summit

Bertie County faith-based leaders and workforce development professionals came together on May 3, 2014. Participants sought to better understand resources and to develop partnerships that will increase access to job skills, employment opportunities, and financial empowerment. The Center for NC Strategic Economic Growth, Reverend Vonner Horton of New Oxley Hill Baptist Church; and Melvin Powers, Choanoke Area Development Association’s Director of Agency Development⁷ organized the summit. Representatives from community colleges, local churches, and career centers discussed how workforce development offerings could be integrated into church programming. The discussion addressed marketing challenges, benefits to building on existing programs, and the role of pastoral care in job training and career advancement. Summit attendees also discussed the role of advocacy in workforce development and the importance of engaging both industry and public officials in economic development strategies.



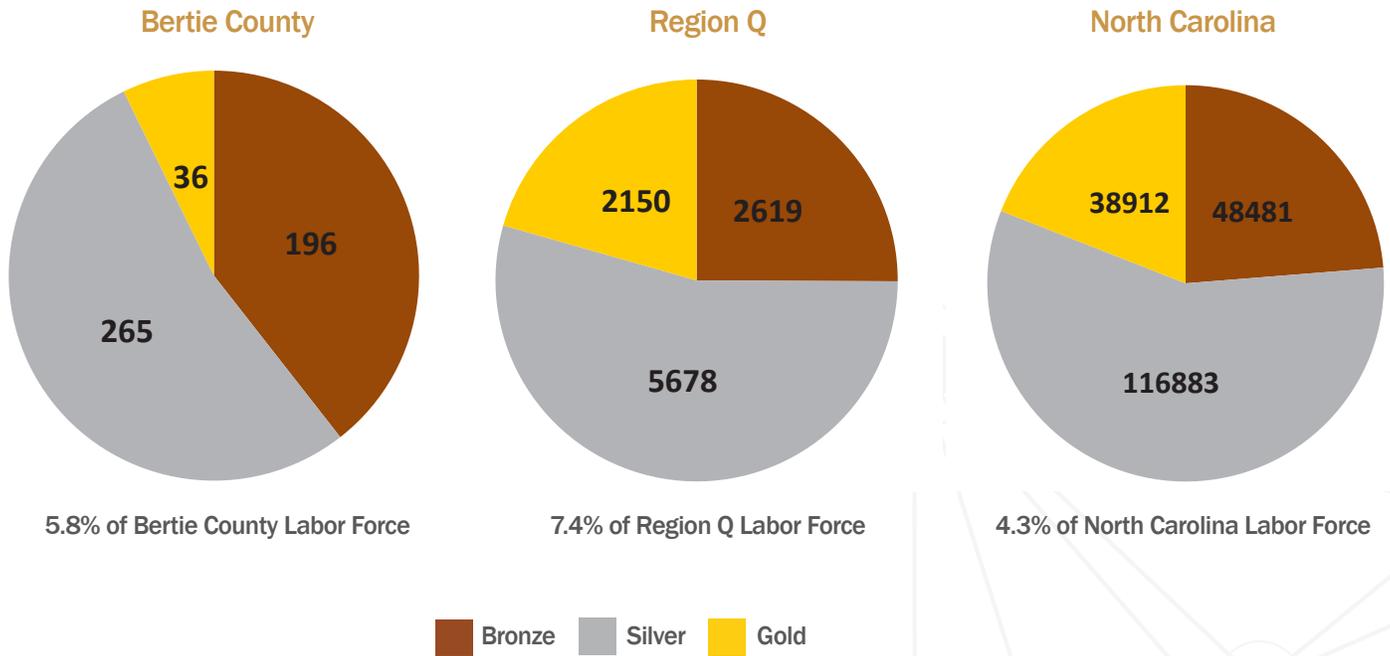
or other recognized credential. Bertie County's 2014 Faith-Workforce Summit aimed to establish community college partnerships and bring training opportunities to the county. See the *Bertie County Faith-Workforce Summit* sidebar for more information.

Benefits of Career Readiness Certificate Testing

Many of the stakeholders interviewed cited the benefits of Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) testing.⁸ A regional economic development professional said of CRC testing, "I love the model. [...] We know employers want potential employees that have 'soft skills,' whether that is answering the phone or speaking directly to a customer. That also encompasses your dress and attitude. If we could certify an individual in high school that was entering the working world, this is what we would want them to have. [...] If I were a business owner and there was a high school student with this [career readiness] certificate in hand, I would certainly put them at the top of my list."

Currently, only 5.8 percent of the Bertie County labor force has earned a CRC. One hundred ninety six individuals earned bronze-level certificates and 265 earned silver-level certificates (See Figure 9). A bronze-level CRC indicates that a recipient has demonstrated the skills necessary to perform approximately 30 percent of the jobs profiled by WorkKeys.⁹ A silver-level CRC indicates that a recipient has the skills necessary to perform 65 percent of the jobs profiled by WorkKeys. Of the certificates earned, only 36 individuals earned a gold certificate, the highest-level certificate. A gold-level CRC indicates that the recipient has demonstrated skills necessary to perform 85 percent of jobs profiled by WorkKeys. Businesses seek to relocate to areas with a highly skilled workforce. If Bertie County can increase the number of gold-level CRCs earned, it may be easier to recruit businesses. Further, residents with high-level CRCs may be able to find work more easily.

Figure 9: Career Readiness Certificates Earned *as of 12/31/2013



Other Workforce Development Challenges

A community service provider articulated that, while resources existed for people in need, many lacked the knowledge and ability to access them. She said, “A gap existed in helping people navigate through the system.” A community college representative reiterated this issue. “The challenge that people have is that they have to negotiate many systems. [...] People needing help do not always know how to ask the right questions.” However, developing streamlined systems may present different challenges. A regional foundation staffer explained, “In our region, we have a long tradition of taking care of our own. To transition to more organized services that have to be shared loses some people.”

The Hive House is an example of a local community service provider that offers resources and guidance to help Bertie County residents. See the *Working with the Hive House* sidebar for more information.

Working with the Hive House

The Hive House is a community center that offers a wide array of affordable services and resources including after school programs, summer camps, a technology center, a parent education center, a food pantry, and a domestic violence shelter.



The Kenan Institute has worked with Hive House founder Vivian Saunders to enhance the brand of the Hive House and provide technical assistance for long-term financial sustainability. Students in UNC Kenan-Flagler's MBA Sustainability Capstone Class worked with the Hive to create marketing materials and develop financial best practices for the resource center. After analyzing the Hive's challenges, the class suggested ways that the Hive House could enhance existing relationships, establish a long-term vision, and generate a reliable revenue stream.

Goals for improving Workforce Development

- Improve opportunities for job training
- Enhance access to job training and employment opportunities
- Increase the number of county residents with Career Readiness Certificates

Business Attraction and Industry Participation

Key Findings

Retail and Service Gap

According to a 2013 retail market report, the demand for retail goods by Bertie residents far exceeds the supply within the county (See Figure 10). This means that county residents are spending most of their retail dollars outside county borders. Their money goes to support other counties' economies.

Residents also cited a lack of available doctors, dentists, and other personal services as an obstacle to economic growth. The number of residents for each doctor or other health care provider is much higher than the state average (See Figure 11). A county childcare provider said, "We have no pediatricians. This is a big obstacle for both current residents and to attract new residents." This shortage of health care professionals could negatively impact health outcomes. However, it also reveals a potential opportunity for health care providers to locate within the county. See Appendix I for a map of regional health care providers.

Increasing the number of retail and service providers within Bertie County may improve residents' quality of life, prevent people from moving away, and support the local economy by encouraging spending within county borders.



The three founders of Windsor's newest retail business, Rise and Grind Coffee House, and Kenan Institute E-TAP intern Chris Long

Figure 10: 2013 Bertie County Retail Market Potential

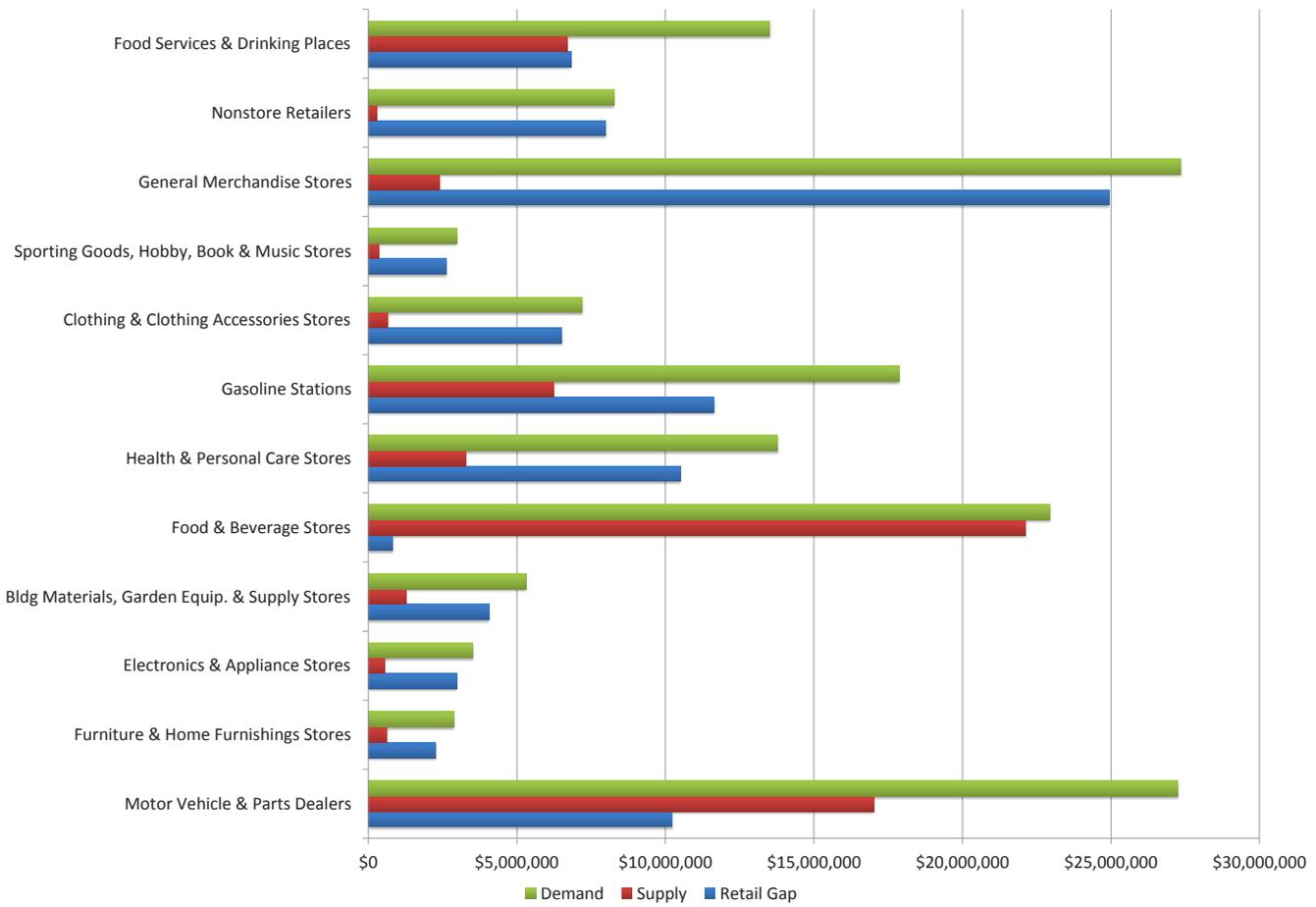


Figure 11: Bertie County Medical Providers in 2012

Medical Providers	Bertie		State	
	Total	Number of Residents Per Practitioner	Total	Number of Residents Per Practitioner
Office of Physicians	18	1,147	32,946	296
Office of Dentists	3	6,884	7,482	1,303
Medical Specialist	14	1,475	18,616	524
Outpatient Care Centers	2	10,327	1,598	6,100

Land Availability and Building Stock

A number of individuals interviewed agreed with a local business owner who said, “Land availability is an obstacle to development opportunities. People are not interested in selling.” For example, the Food Lion in

Windsor opened only after a group of individuals pooled their resources to purchase land in hopes of attracting businesses to the county. A local public official went on to suggest, “We need a county-wide land use strategy.”

A lack of available land and building stock may also be inhibiting economic development in Bertie County. An economic development expert explained that “Eighty percent of all companies that relocate to an area from outside of the state look at existing buildings. If you have no existing or shell buildings, then your chances of getting new industry are very slim.”

Bertie County has a sufficient supply of vacant land and building space. The county could collaborate with current land and building owners to encourage development and industry recruitment.

Employment Training and Industry Participation Challenges

Some businesses are aware of employee training opportunities, yet many do not participate. An area manufacturer’s former employee said that his past employer was well aware of training opportunities and other resources provided by the community colleges. But the company rarely took advantage of them. “Maybe there is not enough effort to make it happen from both sides: industry and workforce developers. It is easy for it [the connection between workforce development agencies and industry] to fall apart. [...] People just get busy.” Bertie County may have an opportunity to more aggressively engage area businesses in workforce development efforts.

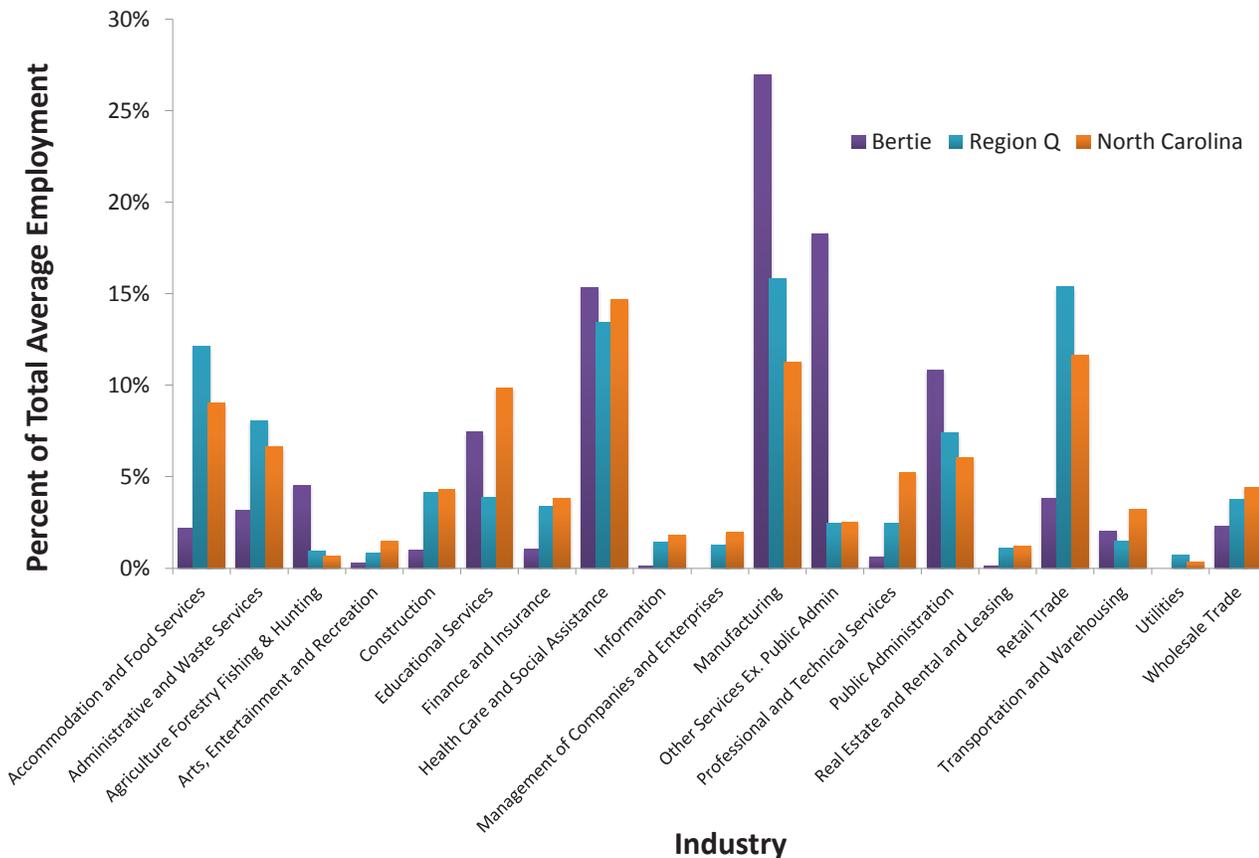
Small businesses cite the cost of Career Readiness Certificate testing as a hindrance. An economic development expert suggested that Bertie County and Bertie Public Schools could work with smaller industries in the area to help pay for CRC testing.

Collaboration Opportunities with Local Industry

Manufacturing is Bertie County’s largest industry (See Figure 12). Several large and small manufacturing firms operate in the county. Employment training collaborations typically occur most frequently with large businesses in the service industry. However, Bertie County has had a consistent manufacturing presence for several years. The county could take advantage of this experience and forge new job training collaborations with employers.

Smaller businesses often claim that CRC testing costs deter them from supporting the certificates. If Bertie County chooses to roll out CRC testing for the county’s workforce, it has the opportunity to immediately engage these small businesses and encourage participation in CRC testing.

Figure 12: 2012 Average Employment by Industry



Finally, industries that have high demand for low-skilled workers participate less in employment training opportunities than firms that demand high-skilled workers.¹⁰ As a result, Bertie County may need to further incentivize local industries to participate in job training collaboration. See Appendix F for more information about Bertie County's current business environment.

Goals for improving Business Attraction and Industry Participation

- Improve retail and personal service options
- Enhance the quality and availability of land, building stock, and other assets
- Remove obstacles for collaboration between industry and workforce development
- Promote business diversity

Coordination and Marketing

Key Findings

Regional identity

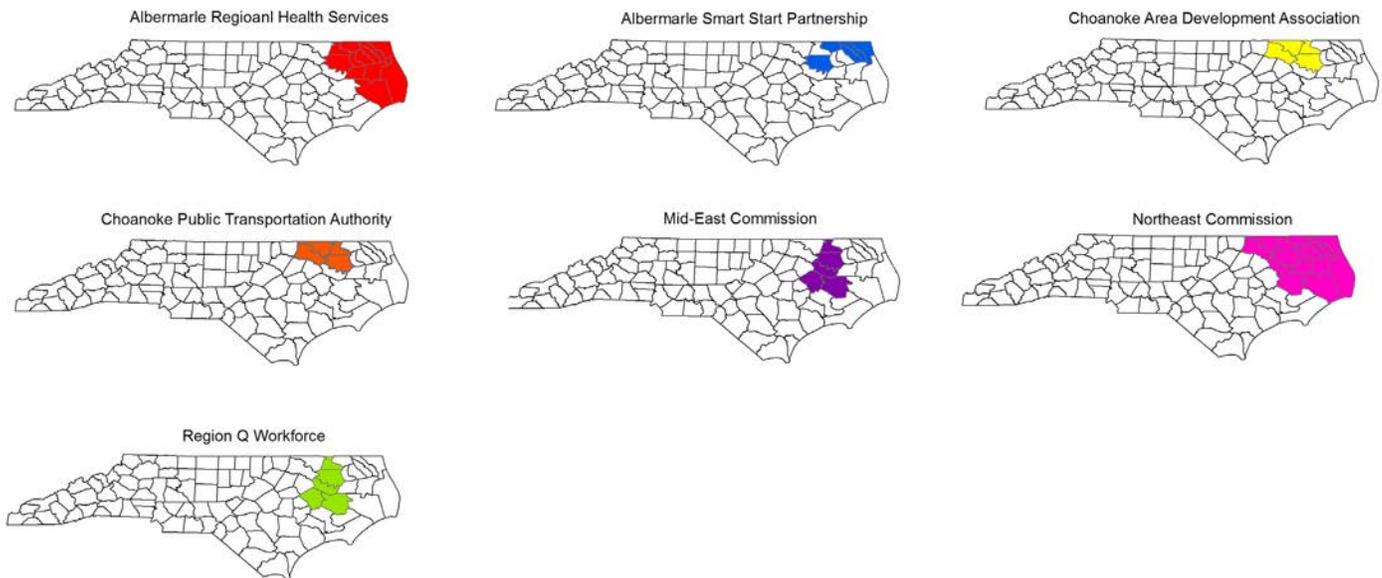
Bertie County covers a large geographic area, and supports a dispersed population spread among numerous small towns. As a result, county residents affiliate with several different identities. A staff member at a community service provider said, "There is a feeling that Bertie has a split identity. Its north associates with Ahoskie. Its south associates with Williamston. Its east associates with Edenton." While these differences may challenge efforts to establish a centralized county identity, they also speak to the numerous environments and assets that Bertie has to offer.

Agency coordination

Many people interviewed for this plan cited efforts to coordinate industry and the multiple levels of public and private agencies and initiatives to be one of the biggest challenges to economic development in the county. In fact, numerous regional organizations have overlapping service areas (See Figure 13). Currently, there is little collaboration. A community provider said, “We need each other, but agencies seem to hold on to their own information.” Therefore, there may be substantial opportunity for partnerships and information sharing.

At the college level, Martin Community College and Roanoke-Chowan Community College could collaborate to increase employment training opportunities and post-secondary educational opportunities for Bertie County residents.

Figure 13: Public and Private Agencies Service Areas



Benefits of Community-Wide Coordination

Residents suggested that more efforts to coordinate among organizations could improve funding for initiatives. A number of representatives from private philanthropies explained that community

projects with clear, coordinated efforts among community stakeholders are viewed more favorably and are more likely to receive funding than projects that reinforce an agency’s isolated efforts. Better coordination would also help to address the competition for limited resources among community and faith-based groups.

Improve county marketing and branding

An analysis of the web presence of Bertie County and six neighboring counties revealed that Bertie is one of three areas in the region with no county-level social media presence (See Figures 14 and 15). A local public official said, “To get private investors [...] we will have to sell our goods.” Bertie County could improve its marketing image and attract business and investment by maintaining informational websites dedicated to tourism and economic development at both the county and town levels.

Figure 14: Web Presence of Bertie and Surrounding Counties

County	Government	Tourism	Chamber of Commerce	Economic Development	Social Media
Bertie	•		•		
Chowan	•	•	•		
Halifax	•	•	•	•	
Hertford	•			•	
Martin	•	•	•	•	
Northampton	•		•		
Washington	•	•	•		

Figure 15: Web Presence of Towns in Bertie County

County	Government Website	Tourism	Chamber of Commerce	Economic Development	Social Media
Ahoskie	•		•		
Edenton	•	•	•		
Plymouth	•	•			
Williamston	•				
Windsor	•		•		

The Perception of Economic Development

Bertie County officials could encourage resident support for economic development by consciously articulating the county's economic development goals. The term "economic development" can mean different things to different people. For some, "economic development" means an increase in retail options and jobs. For others, it indicates an increase in jobs as well as wages high enough to alleviate poverty. Still others view "economic development" as an increase in development projects that will negatively impact quality of life. When planning economic development opportunities for the county as a whole, officials may want to consider the needs and desires of its various constituents.

Goals for improving Coordination and Marketing

- Encourage greater coordination between economic development and workforce development
- Diversify economic development leadership by socio-economic status, geographic location, race, gender, age, etc.
- Align economic development goals with the county's assets
- Improve marketing of the county and its assets

Community Capacity Building

Key Findings

Access to financial services

Access to financial services is important to individuals and small businesses. Residents have a negative feeling about the recent reduction in bank locations within the county. In January 2014, Southern Bank closed three branches in Bertie County.¹¹ Currently, the county only has six banks and credit unions within five miles of its town centers.

Appendix J contains additional information about banks in the region. Despite the lack of local banking options, there are alternative strategies to increase access to financial services and education in Bertie County. One strategy is to combine existing financial education courses offered by community agencies with online and remote banking options.

Workforce Development Resources

A number of resources are available to assist non-profits and other organizations whose mission is to support workforce development. The Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of North Carolina created the “Healthy Organizations, Healthy Communities through Leadership,” a workshop series that focuses on board recruitment, community engagement, and succession planning to more effectively develop strong nonprofit leadership in North Carolina. Vidant Health, in partnership with Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust¹² and the Duke University Nonprofit Management Program, created a learning cluster to help nonprofit leaders build infrastructure and organizational capacity in eastern North Carolina. The Place of Possibilities¹³ is participating in this program. See the *Vidant Health Care Nonprofit Capacity Building* sidebar for more information.

Vidant Health Care Nonprofit Capacity Building

The Vidant Health Care Nonprofit Capacity Building initiative offers training and professional development to improve nonprofit organizations’ long-term viability and capacity. Classes and workshops provide opportunities for coordinated training, technical assistance, and grant support. They are tailored to meet the specific needs of the nonprofit sector in eastern North Carolina. The program is sponsored in collaboration with Duke University and the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust. Vidant Health Care and participating nonprofits hope to enhance the quality of life for the people and communities they collectively serve. For more information, please contact Capacity Building Program Coordinator, Daniel Mallison III, at 252-847-2036 office, 252-402-6169 cell or daniel.mallison@vidanthealth.com.

Goals for Community Capacity Building

- Increase availability of credit and financial services for small business creation and personal financial needs
- Increase the capacity of community-based organizations to support public and privately-led efforts to improve economic conditions for the county and its residents

Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended to complement the Bertie County commissioners' existing industrial recruitment priorities as well as the school board's K-12 education efforts. As a result, recommendations do not include suggestions for targeted industrial recruitment or education reform.

Recommendations are based on community feedback, residents' economic development goals, and findings outlined in the previous section. They are organized based on priority, suggested sequence of steps, and level of near-term achievability. It is important to emphasize that to successfully implement these recommendations both county officials and the community at large must extend support.

Priority Recommendations

1. Create community economic development task force

The authors developed the recommendations assuming that Bertie County leaders would create an economic development task force. Such a task force would continue the planning effort started by the county and its residents in partnership with the Kenan Institute and pursue opportunities beyond this plan's scope and timeframe.

Task force members could include county officials, economic development staff, and other community leaders from the school board, local community colleges, the NCWorks office, the Chamber of Commerce, faith communities, and regional industry. This diverse membership would represent the geographic and cultural diversity of the county.



Community leaders and others at a stakeholder meeting in Windsor

The task force could also take steps to avoid potential challenges such as internal conflict and industry indifference. First, the task force could immediately engage local industries. Second, the task force could utilize industry-respected third party conveners such as the Mid-East Commission or the North Carolina State Industrial Extension. Finally, the task force could balance existing EDC goals for workforce and industry development with this plan's recommendations.

See Appendix E for an example of task force recommendations in Beaufort County.

Activities and Estimated Time to Complete:



Estimated
TIME TO COMPLETE

Resources Needed:

- Employer willingness to allow employees to participate
- Funds to cover materials (copies, print outs) and hospitality (food and refreshments for meetings)
- Meeting space

2. Make education opportunities more accessible

Bertie County could partner with community organizations to offer education classes and workforce development trainings at convenient locations throughout the county. This could lead to higher class attendance and improve residents' job skills. Businesses would be attracted to the area because of the skilled workforce. Strong community and faith-based organizations are viable partners for the community colleges and other workforce development organizations. Community leaders could coordinate scheduling and training opportunities. They may also help allocate resources effectively and de-stigmatize opportunities for self-improvement. Reverend Vonner Horton's nonprofit, *A Pathway to Independence*, is an example of a resource already at work in the community. See the *A Pathway to Independence* sidebar for more information.

Bertie County residents have explained how transportation time and costs limit their ability to participate in job and educational opportunities. Hosting education courses in convenient locations within the county could eliminate these obstacles. Additionally, hosting courses with a local partner allows instructors to have easy access to community leaders who can share insights. Examples already exist in the county. Roanoke-Chowan Community College offers GED classes and CRC testing at Place of Possibilities in Aulander. Currently, Bertie County Schools, the Department of Social Services, and the Department of Corrections refer individuals to Places of Possibilities and Christian

A Pathway to Independence

A Pathway to Independence (API) serves as an example of a partnership between a faith-based organization and workforce development efforts. Led by Reverend Vonner Horton of New Oxley Hill Baptist Church, API works to empower women by helping program participants become more self-sufficient. In addition to connecting participants with workforce development programs in the area, API works to provide women with the practical and emotional guidance they need to become more independent and productive members of society. For more information on API, please visit www.apathwaytoindependence.com.



Women's Job Corp.¹⁴ The development of a tracking system to account for collaborative activity will be crucial to leverage existing public-private partnerships for future opportunities.

While cross-institutional partnerships to support workforce training could be helpful, the solution is not without its challenges. There are institutional differences between community colleges, public schools, and community organizations such as local churches or NC Works.¹⁵ A regional foundation executive explained, "The challenge will be how to find common ground between the time horizons, expectations, and organizational beliefs of the different actors in the network. Can churches and government come together? This is the critical question, and it is a critical one for our rural communities."

Activities and Estimated Time to Complete:



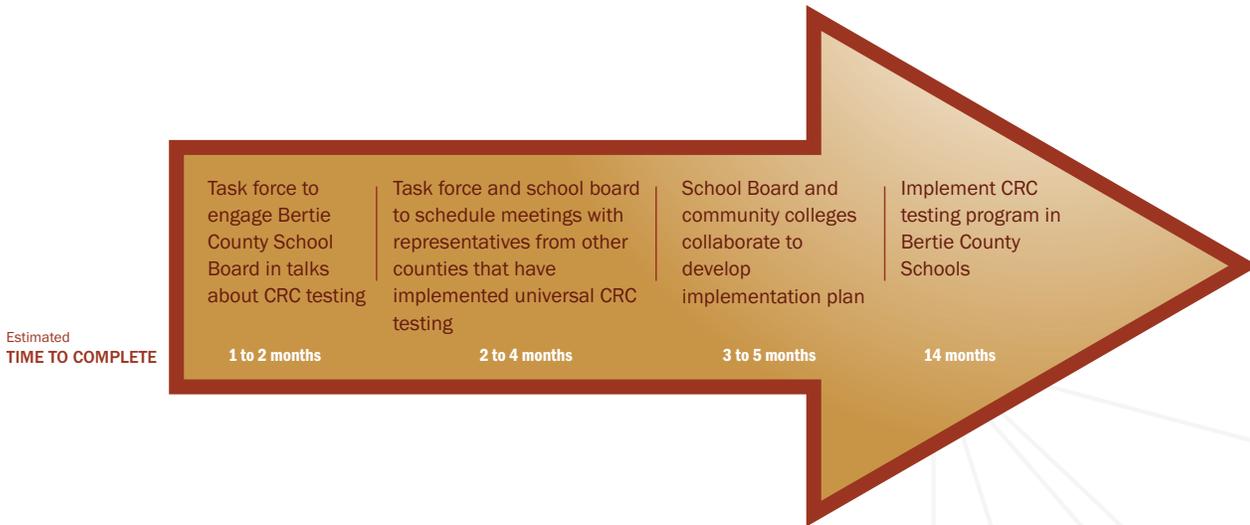
Resources Needed:

- Space and support staff provided by local host churches and organizations
- Community college instructors and teaching materials
- Church, organization, and community college sponsored marketing efforts
- Quarter-time staff person at the community college to coordinate and troubleshoot location decisions and program implementation

3. Career Readiness Certificate testing for all high school students

Bertie County could establish Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) testing for all high school students to help improve county residents' workforce potential. CRCs may help improve Bertie residents' chances of finding a job. Additionally, industries considering relocating to Bertie could easily see the county's workforce potential. The task force could recommend and allocate resources for testing locations in both school and community facilities.

Activities and Estimated Time to Complete:



Resources Needed:

- Dedicated staff time from school board and community colleges
- Money to cover cost of testing materials
- Time for testing implementation and follow up

4. Align the goals of employers, workforce development, and K-12 education (WorkReady Community model)

Use a model such as the WorkReady Community to facilitate countywide coordination. This model would combine many of the above-mentioned recommendations into a single initiative. A county can become certified as WorkReady by meeting four criteria.

- A county must provide a signed letter of commitment to workforce excellence
- Its school board must demonstrate an annual increase in the high school graduation rate
- Its community colleges must have an annual increase in the number

of CRCs issued to the total labor force

- A county's local employers must demonstrate a commitment to workforce excellence by using CRCs as a qualification for hiring.



Walter Dorsey speaking at the 2014 Bertie County Faith-Workforce Summit

The WorkReady model provides an opportunity to address Bertie County's specific workforce development challenges at minimal cost. The model could improve coordination among community organizations. It could also help increase the number of job-certified residents and attract businesses to the area. See the *WorkReady Community* sidebar for more information.

Kathy Howard, from North Carolina's Eastern Region was interviewed for this plan, and can provide guidance for Bertie County's efforts. See www.ncworkready.org for more information.

WorkReady Community: An Example of Workforce and Economic Development Working Together

The WorkReady Community model combines economic and workforce development strategy. North Carolina's Eastern Region¹⁶ facilitates WorkReady initiative in eastern North Carolina. The Eastern Region began WorkReady by committing \$750,000 of seed funding over three years in competitive grants to community colleges that serve the region. Grants were awarded to improve capacity to deliver Career Readiness Certificate testing and to market the program to individuals, employers, and other potential community partners. The WorkReady Community's keys to success are the partnerships created between the Eastern Region, the Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board,¹⁷ the North Carolina Community College System, county school boards, chambers of commerce, and businesses located in the region. The WorkReady Community model involves evaluating the standards of proposed certifications, motivating rural county participation, introducing the WorkReady model to employers, and awarding communities that achieve WorkReady goals. See ncworkready.org.

Activities and Estimated Time to Complete:



Resources Needed:

- Task force participation
- Dedicated quarter-time staff person to oversee implementation
- Financial support for technical assistance from North Carolina's Eastern Region (ncworkready.org)
- Marketing materials

5. Improve County Branding and Marketing

Attract more businesses to the county by improving Bertie County's branding and marketing. Improved marketing could enhance business recruitment, address residents' retail and service needs, and facilitate job growth. This can be done by upgrading county websites, economic development web page, and economic development marketing materials to provide information about Bertie County's assets to businesses and industries interested in relocation.

Resources needed:

- IT support
- Marketing materials
- Staff to provide ongoing support

Additional Recommendations with Resource Links

Improve Financial Access and Literacy

Bertie County stakeholders have discussed how improved access to financial resources and education could positively affect individual credit scores, homeownership rates, and small business growth. Bertie County could help its residents access financial services by increasing the availability of mainstream banking and financial resources. The county could also promote financial literacy by incorporating lessons in budgeting, personal credit, and use of financial services into events for youth, adults, and small business entrepreneurs. The county could partner with community colleges to teach financial literacy courses for free to the unemployed or underemployed.

The authors interviewed FDIC¹⁸ staff for this plan. The staff members have made themselves available to support the development of the Bank On model and financial literacy training. The FDIC also has information about virtual bank branch concepts that have proven to be effective in other rural communities. John Meeks, Regional Director for Community Affairs, FDIC, has made himself available as a resource for Bertie County. He can be contacted at jmeeks@fdic.gov. For more information about Bank On, see the *Bank On* sidebar.

Strengthen Connection between Economic Development and K-12 Education

Bertie County could partner with the school board, community colleges,

Bank On

The Bank On program is a voluntary, public-private partnership between local government, financial institutions, and community-based organizations. The initiative works with local banks and credit unions to provide individuals access to financial education and affordable bank accounts. Eastern North Carolina's Wayne County has implemented a Bank On program with the help of the local government, banks, and the United Way of Wayne County. More information about this model can be found at www.bankonwayne.org and at joinbankon.org.

In spring 2014, Self Help Credit Union¹⁹ implemented a new mobile banking product to support rural customers. One can download the free app or access a streamlined, mobile-friendly version off of Self-Help's online banking site. For more information, visit www.self-help.org/personal/services/mobile-banking.html.

and community-based organizations to support workforce development opportunities for K-12 students. For example, Roanoke-Chowan Community College hosted a weeklong entrepreneurship program for high school students. Bertie County could also lend its unused building space to high school students working to develop their own businesses. Utilize North Carolina Early Learning Challenge Grant resources to address economic development through early childcare systems. See the *North Carolina Early Learning Challenge Grant* sidebar for more information.

Recruit Small Businesses and Service Providers

Assess and prioritize service gaps in Bertie County. Consider medical and dental services, elder care services, hotels and accommodations, and retail. Draft a plan that will create and attract businesses to provide needed goods and services to Bertie County residents. Rise & Grind Coffee House is an example of a new business in Bertie County. The owners opened the coffee house after recognizing the county's limited

North Carolina Early Learning Challenge Grant

The North Carolina Early Learning Challenge Grant is a Race to the Top initiative that works to improve early childhood care systems through policy, practice, and infrastructure. More specifically, grant funds support local efforts to ensure that children are socially and academically prepared for kindergarten.

The grant has been awarded to several Transformation Zones in eastern North Carolina, including Bertie County. Programming and activities center around enhancing quality childcare, improving parent literacy, strengthening families, promoting coordination among agencies and organizations, and supporting existing systems and resources for health, mental health, and nutrition. For more information about the North Carolina Early Learning Challenge Grant, please visit <http://earlylearningchallenge.nc.gov>.

coffee options and lack of public meeting space. See the *Story of Rise and Grind* sidebar for more information. To help recruit small businesses and service providers, leverage resources such as the North Carolina Medical Society Foundation's Community Practitioner Program and the UNC School of Government's Community and Economic Development Program.

The North Carolina Medical Society Foundation's Community Practitioner Program is a resource for funding for attracting physicians to rural areas. More information can be found at www.ncmedsoc.org/about-ncms/partner-organizations/ncms-foundation/community-practitioner-program/.

The UNC School of Government's Community and Economic Development Program provides public officials with training to support efforts to create jobs and wealth, expand the tax base, and maintain vibrant communities. The program deploys university resources to support the development goals of communities in North Carolina.

Story of Rise and Grind

Rise & Grind Coffee House is a café and event space set to open in fall 2014 in downtown Windsor, NC. The new business participated in the Kenan Institute's Entrepreneur Technical Assistance Program (E-TAP), a program supporting startups and high growth businesses in economically distressed rural North Carolina communities. Through E-TAP, an experienced MBA student helped the owners of Rise & Grind calculate realistic financial projections and develop a business strategy to support the café's future growth. Rise & Grind's participation in E-TAP is an excellent example of how business-support programs can help Bertie County entrepreneurs plan for growth and development. Learn more at www.NCGrowth.unc.edu.



Interested public officials may participate in training seminars and webinars on topics such as business development and job creation or financing options for community economic development. The program website also provides access to valuable economic development publications that cover a variety of topics. For more information, visit ced.sog.unc.edu.

Determine Impact of Land Availability on Development Opportunities

Consider a public-private partnership to establish a land bank. The land bank will hold land available for services, attractions, and retail opportunities. Support industry recruitment by creating countywide building inventory and existing conditions analysis to determine what buildings might be appropriate for redevelopment. The Development Finance Initiative provides resources to help public agencies redevelop and reuse buildings. See the *Development Finance Initiative at the UNC School of Government* sidebar for more information.

Development Finance Initiative at the UNC School of Government

The Development Finance Initiative (DFI) at the School of Government partners with local governments in North Carolina to attract private investment for transformative projects by providing specialized finance and development expertise. DFI partners with communities on projects including building reuse, business development, downtown revitalization, economic development, neighborhood redevelopment, and small business finance. DFI also provides services to help local governments develop and implement finance tools that can be used to attract new business. For more information, visit ced.sog.unc.edu.

Address Regional Transportation Challenges

Coordinate with Choanoke Public Transportation to ensure that transportation services align with common commuting patterns and job schedules. This will help Bertie County residents more easily access job opportunities and career training.

Work with industries to consider employee-sponsored vanpools or other types of point-to-point systems. See *A Rural Workforce Development Transportation Model* sidebar for information about Northampton County's van transportation services. Other rural transportation examples can be found at http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/Profiles_of_Innovative_Rural_Vanpool_Programs.pdf.

Create Business Incentive Policy that Promotes Local Hiring, Job Quality, and Community Wellbeing

Identify target industries that would thrive in Bertie County's current physical and economic environment. Tailor business incentives to include provisions for local hiring. Consider job quality in addition to job quantity. Target high-wage businesses that pay employees more than the average annual wage of the county. Prioritize businesses that

A Rural Workforce Development Transportation Model

Northampton County extended van transportation services through a contract with the Choanoke Public Transit Authority. Under the contract, the county funded two vans to transport Work First participants to job readiness classes, job search activities, and appointments with social workers. The van service was considered crucial because Northampton County, like Bertie County, lacks major retailers and many services, and residents typically have to travel considerable distance for jobs, health care, and other needs.

will inject money into the local economy as a result of conducting business. Look at other counties with similar goals and initiatives for ideas. For example, Warren County and Bertie County have comparable socioeconomic compositions. Warren County recently approved a countywide business incentive policy that incorporates a dual mission to balance job quality with quality of life. See the *Warren County's Incentive Policy* sidebar for more information.

Warren County's Incentive Policy

Warren County's Economic Development Commission (EDC) engaged the Center for NC Strategic Economic Growth to assist with the development and approval of a county business incentive policy. A 2012 report authored by master's students in UNC's Department of City and Regional Planning recommended that the county adopt an incentive policy that would target areas in need of improvement and strengthen its economic assets. While the EDC aimed to boost the local economy, it felt strongly that incentives should not be used to attract projects that would threaten county residents' wellbeing. For example, the EDC determined that it did not want to promote projects that would bring in a significant number of new residents or involve environmental hazards. The Center for NC Strategic Economic Growth organized a series of meetings with economic development officials and scholars throughout the spring of 2013. The center worked closely with the Warren County economic development director and EDC board to develop the EDC's incentive policy by researching best practices, reviewing government and industry standards, and analyzing incentive documents from other local governments. Contact the Center for NC Strategic Economic Growth at NCGrowth@unc.edu.

Appendix

A– Interviewees and Community Meeting Participants

- Residents of Bertie County
- Avoca, Inc.
- Bertie County Economic Development Commission
- Bertie County Peanuts
- Bertie County Smart Start
- Bertie NCWorks Center, CADA
- Bertie Public Schools
- Bertie-Hertford Community Foundation
- Choanoke Area Development Authority (CADA)
- Conservation Fund, Resourceful Communities Program
- Current and former Bertie County Commissioners
- Current and former Mayors and town Councilmembers, Bertie County
- Duke Endowment
- Faculty, Department of City and Regional Planning, UNC
- Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)
- Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute
- Fundraising consultant
- Golden LEAF Foundation
- Heritage Collegiate Leadership Academy
- Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust
- Manpower Development Corporation (MDC)
- Martin Community College
- NC Back to Work Program
- NC Department of Commerce
- NC Cooperative Extension Office Bertie Center
- NC Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development
- NC Industrial Extension
- North Carolina Community Foundation

- North Carolina Institute for Public Health
- North Carolina Medical Society Foundation
- North Carolina Partnership for Children
- North Carolina's Eastern Region
- Office of Congressman Butterfield
- Office of Senator Kay Hagan
- Office of Senator Richard Burr
- Oxley Hill Baptist Church
- Place of Possibilities
- Reach Out and Read
- Region Q Workforce Development Board
- Roanoke-Chowan Community College
- School of Government, UNC
- Self Help Credit Union
- Small Business Entrepreneurs
- South by North Strategies
- The Hive House
- UNC Institute for the Environment
- United Way of Wayne County
- Windsor-Bertie Chamber of Commerce

B - Summary of Input from Community Meetings

Community Meetings, Summer 2013

Aulander, Colerain, Windsor, NC

The authors of this plan held four community meetings throughout the summer of 2013 to brainstorm strategies for improving Bertie County's economy. The meetings took place in Aulander, Colerain, and Windsor. The final meeting was designed to solicit input from youth living in Bertie.



More than 60 Bertie County residents and stakeholders participated in the meetings. Each meeting's racial and gender composition reflected that of the county's population as a whole. While participants generated a wide range of ideas for improving Bertie County's economy, most suggestions fell into one of five categories: food and retail stores, youth enrichment, new and small business support, tourism, and entertainment.

Many Bertie County residents wish to attract food and retail stores to the area. Meeting attendees want to bring in chains such as Wal-Mart, Goodwill, Lens Crafters, Olive Garden, and McDonalds in hopes that these stores will make shopping more convenient and provide jobs for Bertie County residents.

Community meeting attendees also cited a need for youth enrichment programs in the county to underpin economic development efforts. They recommended bringing in a Boys & Girls Club, starting a community partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters, and offering improved daycare and easily accessible Pre-K.

Another commonly agreed-upon idea was for the county to provide incentives and support for new and small businesses. Meeting attendees cited a need for more businesses in the county such as an ice cream shop, hair salon, commercial bakery, and manufacturing plant.

Meeting attendees identified tourism as another potential avenue for economic development. Many suggested using the river to generate tourism by building boat platforms, a boating club, and boat repair shop. Others recommended strategic marketing for the county zoo and historic sites such as Hope Plantation and the Lost Colony archeological site.

Finally, Bertie County residents articulated a need for entertainment venues. Attendees recommended building a movie theater, constructing a concert venue, holding annual festivals, and expanding the community recreation center.

Bertie County Community Economic Development Stakeholder Meeting, February 8, 2014 Windsor, NC

Twenty-five stakeholders attended this meeting, including representatives from two community colleges serving Bertie County, the regional workforce investment consortium, local and regional nonprofit organizations, and faith communities. Several public school teachers and small business entrepreneurs also attended the meeting. Meeting attendees discussed the need for more local-level education programs, Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) testing, community-wide coordination, financial education, and business attraction.

They also discussed the roles of the county commissioners and school board members. Community members want to review the WorkReady Community model and CRC testing with the commissioners and school board. However, meeting attendees expressed concerns that these groups may not be receptive to community-generated ideas. Participants also cited a need for more communication and collaboration between the Economic Development Commission (EDC) and the county commissioners. Meeting attendees suggested that an advisory group representing a diverse cross section of Bertie residents could help the EDC broaden and align its agenda to reflect community needs.

Education Programs

Meeting attendees agreed that more education programs should be offered at the community level. Faith-based groups and community-based nonprofits should work together to deliver these programs.

Alternatively, larger entities such as community colleges could collaborate with local organizations for more effective program delivery. Some common assumptions and points of discussion are listed below.

- Bertie County has large faith-oriented communities inside its borders. As such, strategies to bring in additional education, testing, and development initiatives should involve these communities.
- Faith-based groups can host programs to help alleviate institutional barriers and challenges related to transportation.
- The people that the programs serve should be involved in the decision-making process.
- Bertie County needs more nonprofits. Or, existing funders need to coordinate more effectively to secure funding.

Career Readiness Certificate Testing

Meeting attendees also discussed CRC testing, and agreed that testing should be offered to all high school students to improve county residents' workforce potential. Points of discussion are listed below.

- Cost of CRC is \$30 per test (\$12 for the test itself, \$18 for overhead). Need to secure funding to pay for the tests. Look into grants from a foundation such as Golden Leaf.
- Software is available to help students to practice for test. It costs \$3,000 per site.
- Ninth and tenth graders should be added for pre-testing preparedness of CRC, in line with the Cradle to Career movement.
- Test should be offered to entire labor force and not just students.
- Need to ensure county has appropriate infrastructure to support testing such as staff, technology, and transportation. Currently, transportation options and Internet access are insufficient to support large-scale CRC test administration.
- Need incentives to get businesses to participate.

- Perdue is interested in CRC testing, but will not formally participate due to internal restrictions.
- Need for better communication between guidance counselors, teachers, parents, and community colleges.
- Roanoke-Chowan Community College in In Northampton County trained high school teachers to administer CRC testing to all students. However, Roanoke-Chowan Community College currently lacks the funding necessary to serve Bertie County.

Community-Wide Coordination

Residents also believe that economic development in the county would benefit from improved participation and coordination among local organizations and initiatives. Meeting attendees articulated that perhaps a more cohesive and coordinated approach to economic development would also support a unified county identity. See comments and points of discussion listed below.

- “It is not just Windsor. What will unite Bertie?”
- “There needs to be better coordination of limited resources.”
- Closer coordination needed between industry, community colleges, and Bertie County Schools.
- Less than a third of the stakeholders attending this meeting live in Bertie County.
- Beaufort County has a good example of a workforce development board that is more inclusive and representative of its community.
- Advisory board can play role in finding potential partners and funders for implementing WorkReady, CRC testing, and other initiatives.
- Organize nondenominational convening of all faith communities in the county to help coordinate local-level development efforts. Maybe ask Roanoke Baptist Association to serve as convening body?
- Moving forward, need to examine lessons-learned from forming the

advisory committee for Bertie's Race to the Top effort.

Financial Education

Community stakeholders highlighted the need for better access to financial education in Bertie County. See comments and points of discussion below.

- “How do we create assets for our families?”
- Credit worthiness and financial literacy are biggest barriers to homeownership in Bertie County.
- Is credit worthiness an obstacle to small business entrepreneurship?
- Does financial education make sense for a population living in extreme poverty and with no money to save in the first place?
- Community colleges offer financial literacy courses.
- The county could collaborate with local banks and offer financial education.
- Some meeting attendees are concerned that teaching people about their credit scores would not satisfy Bertie County residents' need for financial education.
- Financial literacy should be taught to young children.
- To what extent is financial literacy included in the K-12 curriculum and classroom activities?
- Department of Social Services has money for financial literacy through foster care programs.
- Bertie County residents should utilize The Benefit Bank of North Carolina more frequently.
- The now-defunct Money Smart (FDIC) training offered through the community colleges used to be a successful program.

Business Attraction and Marketing

The stakeholders agree that attracting new and small businesses to Bertie County would be a key driver of economic development in the

area. Comments and points of discussion are listed below.

- Incentivize existing businesses to hire one or two more employees
- Develop effective incentives using limited funds.
- Lack of services is an issue to attracting people to the area.
- Need countywide broadband access to recruit businesses. Some seed funding available for last mile of Windsor District.
- Update Bertie website and marketing materials
- Partner with Commerce and the Northeast Commission
- Windsor Township Development Corporation, Windsor 1 and 2, provides small loans for buildings, etc.
- There was mention of the availability of incubator space in Windsor provided by the Chamber of Commerce. At the same time, attendees talked about a lack of available space for small businesses.

Bertie County Mayor – Commissioner Meeting, April 10, 2014, Powellsville

At the Mayor-County Commissioner’s meeting in April 2014, attendees discussed the challenges surrounding workforce training and business attraction in Bertie County. Meeting participants included mayors, town councilmembers, and county commissioners.

Workforce Training and Accessibility

Meeting attendees acknowledged the link between economic development and education. They discussed the differences between the traditional K-12 curriculum and training needs for careers in trades such as construction and electrical. While community colleges are working to bridge the skill gap created by these differences, meeting participants considered ways in which the public school system could play a larger role in training Bertie County’s future workforce.

Attendees proposed offering trade, professional development, and CRC test prep classes for high school students. They also discussed the curriculum reform necessary to support this shift from typical high school course offerings. Finally, attendees articulated the need to improve library resources and funding to support education and workforce training.

Business Attraction

Participants talked about existing land vacancies and owners' unwillingness to sell or develop. Further, some meeting attendees mentioned that county residents as well as those driving through the area don't support new businesses. Instead, residents shop in larger cities such as Elizabeth City, Williamston, and Greenville.

Meeting attendees also discussed how economic growth can be difficult with an aging population, limited access to financial institutions, a struggling school system, and young people moving away to find jobs.

Attendees also said that, while the towns have social media pages, they need to establish a greater social media presence.

C – Select Regional Public and Private Agencies Serving Bertie County

Agency	Website	Counties Served
Albemarle Regional Health Services	http://www.arhs-nc.org	Bertie, Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Hertford, Hyde, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Tyrrell, Washington

Albemarle Smart Start Partnership	http://www.albemarlessp.org	Bertie, Camden, Currituck, Gates, Pasquotank
Choanoke Area Development Association	http://www.nc-cada.org	Bertie, Halifax, Hertford, Northampton
Choanoke Public Transportation Authority	http://www.choanokepta.org	Bertie, Halifax, Hertford, Northampton
Mid-East Commission	http://www.mideastcom.org	Beaufort, Bertie, Hertford, Martin, Pitt
North Carolina's Northeast Commission	http://www.ncnortheast.info	Beaufort, Bertie, Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Halifax, Hertford, Hyde, Martin, Northampton, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Tyrrell, Washington
Region Q Workforce Development Board	http://www.mideastcom.org/regionq_wdb.htm	Beaufort, Bertie, Hertford, Martin, Pitt

D – Select Community Partners Working in Bertie County

- **Healthy Communities**

Healthy Communities is a project funded by the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust. It is a place-based initiative that provides intensive support to Halifax and Beaufort Counties through connecting partners and actively supporting collaboration to improve health and economic outcomes. While not currently available in Bertie County, the Healthy Communities model uses best practices that Bertie County may be able to implement. For more information, visit <http://kbr.org/content/healthy-places-nc>.

- **North Carolina Early Learning Challenge Grant**

This initiative is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, and aims to improve early childhood outcomes in Bertie County and three other northeastern North Carolina counties. Programming

and activities center around enhancing quality childcare, improving parent literacy, strengthening families, promoting coordination among agencies and organizations, and supporting existing systems and resources for health, mental health, and nutrition. For more information about the North Carolina Early Learning Challenge Grant, please visit <http://earlylearningchallenge.nc.gov>.

- **Resourceful Communities**

Resourceful Communities is a Conservation Fund project. The project takes a “triple bottom line” approach that focuses on environmental stewardship, sustainable economic development and social justice, to improve conditions in rural communities such as Bertie County. For more information, visit <http://www.conservationfund.org/our-conservation-strategy/major-programs/resourceful-communities-program/>.

E – Select Regional Reports

Recent reports written about community economic development and related conditions in Bertie and other counties in the region.

- 2014 Beaufort County Economic Development Task Force Plan <http://www.ncgrowth.unc.edu/index.php/projects/beaufort-county/>
- 2014 Thrive NC Bertie County Community Profile <http://accessnc.commerce.state.nc.us/docs/countyProfile/NC/37015.pdf>
- 2013 Bertie County Community Health Assessment <https://www.vidanthealth.com/vidant/dynamic-detail.aspx?id=16475>
- 2013 Bertie County Community Health Assessment <https://www.vidanthealth.com/vidant/dynamic-detail.aspx?id=16475>
- 2011 Region Q Economic Development Plan [52](http://locateincarolina.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/2011-</div><div data-bbox=)

Comprehensive-Economic-Development-Strategy-8-11.pdf

- 2011 East Carolina Economic Development Analysis
<https://www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/plan/upload/Region-Q-Report-w-Cover.pdf>
- 2008 Bertie County Economic Development Plan
<http://www.co.bertie.nc.us/departments/ed/edplan.pdf>
- 2008 Bertie County Land Use Plan
<http://dcm2.enr.state.nc.us/planning/Bertie%20Co/Bertie%20LUP.pdf>

F – Bertie County Top Employers (2013)

Rank	Company	Industry	Employment Range
1	Perdue Products Incorporated	Manufacturing	1000+
2	Bertie County Board of Education	Education & Health Services	500-999
3	Dept of Public Safety	Public Administration	250-499
4	County of Bertie	Public Administration	100-249
5	QSI	Professional & Business Services	100-249
6	East Carolina Health Inc	Education & Health Services	100-249
7	Solid Foundation	Education & Health Services	100-249
8	Avoca Inc	Manufacturing	100-249
9	Home Life Care Inc	Education & Health Services	50-99
10	Liberty Healthcare Group LLC	Education & Health Services	50-99
11	Golden Peanut Company	Natural Resources & Mining	50-99
12	Land Contractors Inc	Trade, Transportation & Utilities	50-99
13	Brian Ctr Health & Retirement	Education & Health Services	50-99
14	Valley Protein Inc	Manufacturing	50-99

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15	Livermans Metal Recycling Inc	Professional & Business Services	50-99
16	Food Lion	Trade, Transportation & Utilities	50-99
17	Bertie Ambulance Service Inc	Education & Health Services	50-99
18	White Oak Medical Transport Service	Education & Health Services	Below 50
19	Town of Windsor	Public Administration	Below 50
20	Windsor House	Education & Health Services	Below 50
21	Lawrence Academy	Education & Health Services	Below 50
22	Positive Step Inc	Education & Health Services	Below 50
23	Costal Medical Transport Inc	Education & Health Services	Below 50
24	Bojangles Famous Chicken & Biscuits	Leisure & Hospitality	Below 50
25	US Department of Agriculture	Public Administration	Below 50

Source: NC Commerce, Labor and Economic Analysis Division (2013)

G – Bertie County Commuting Patterns

Top 5 Most Common Residence Counties

Bertie County Workers' County of Residence	Percentage of Total Out-Of-County Residence
1. Hertford County, NC	35.3%
2. Martin County, NC	19.8%
3. Northampton County, NC	9.7%
4. Pitt County, NC	6.5%
5. Chowan County, NC	6.4%

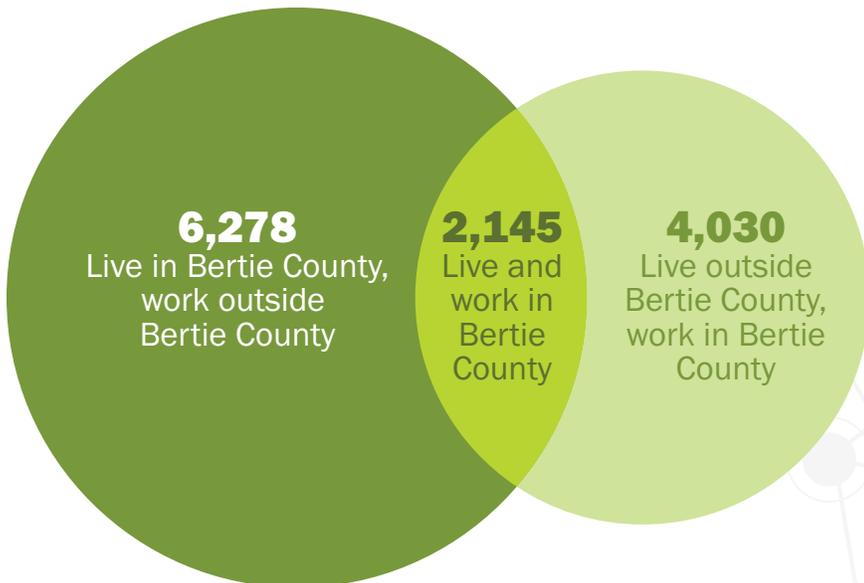
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Metropolitan and Micropolitan Data 2006-2010

Top 5 Most Common Work Counties

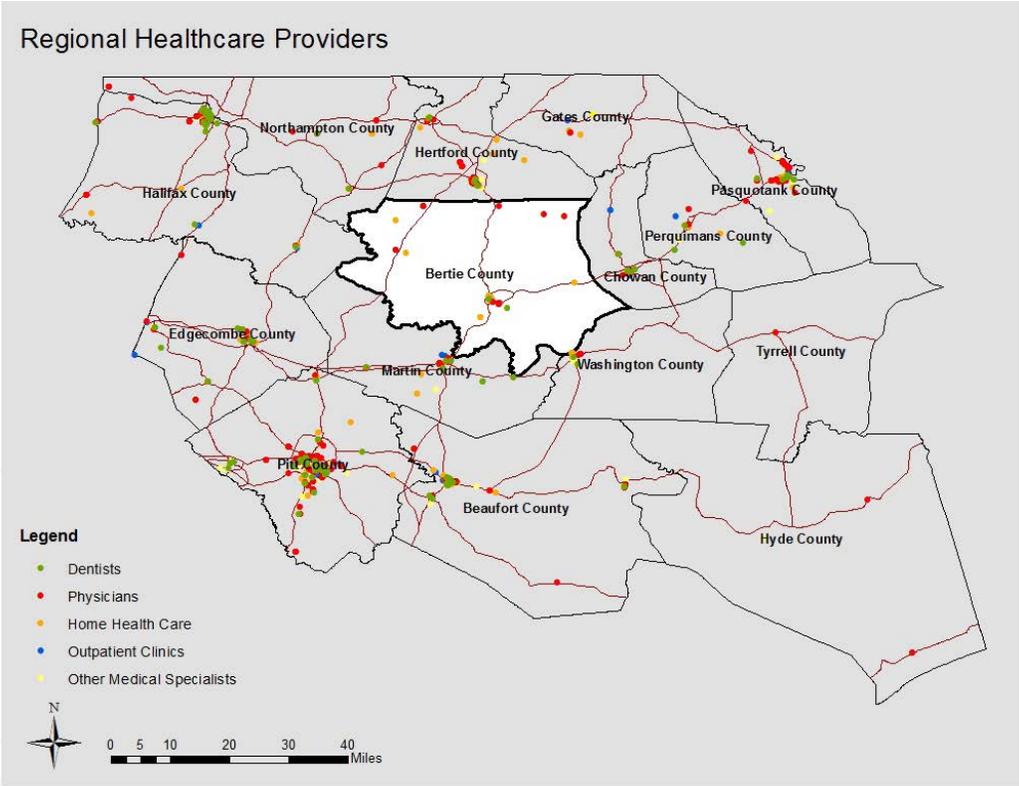
Bertie County Residents' County of Work	Percentage of Total Out-Of-County Work
1. Hertford County, NC	45.2%
2. Martin County, NC	11.0%
3. Isle of Wight County, VA	7.7%
4. Chowan County, NC	7.3%
5. Newport News, VA	6.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Metropolitan and Micropolitan Data 2006-2010

County of Residence vs. County of Employment

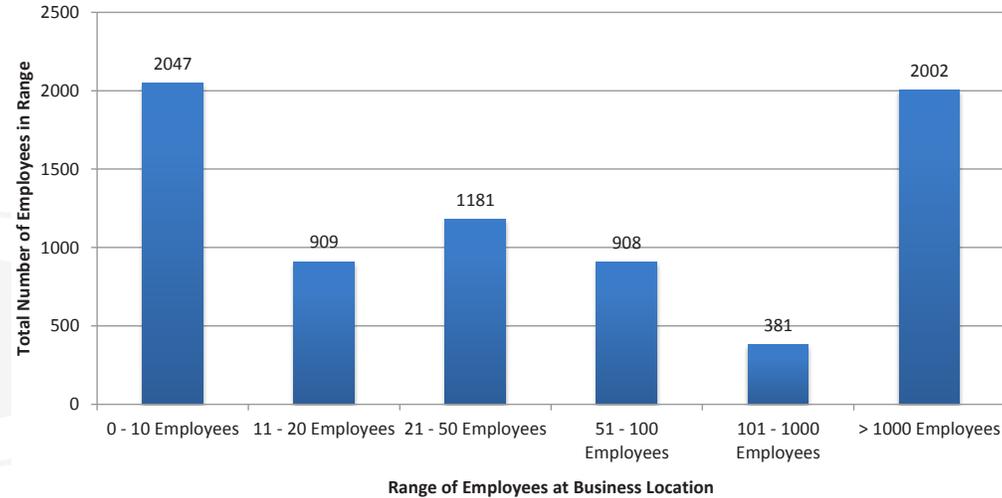


H – Map of Regional Health Care Providers



Source: RefUSA

I – Number of Bertie County Workers Based on Business Size

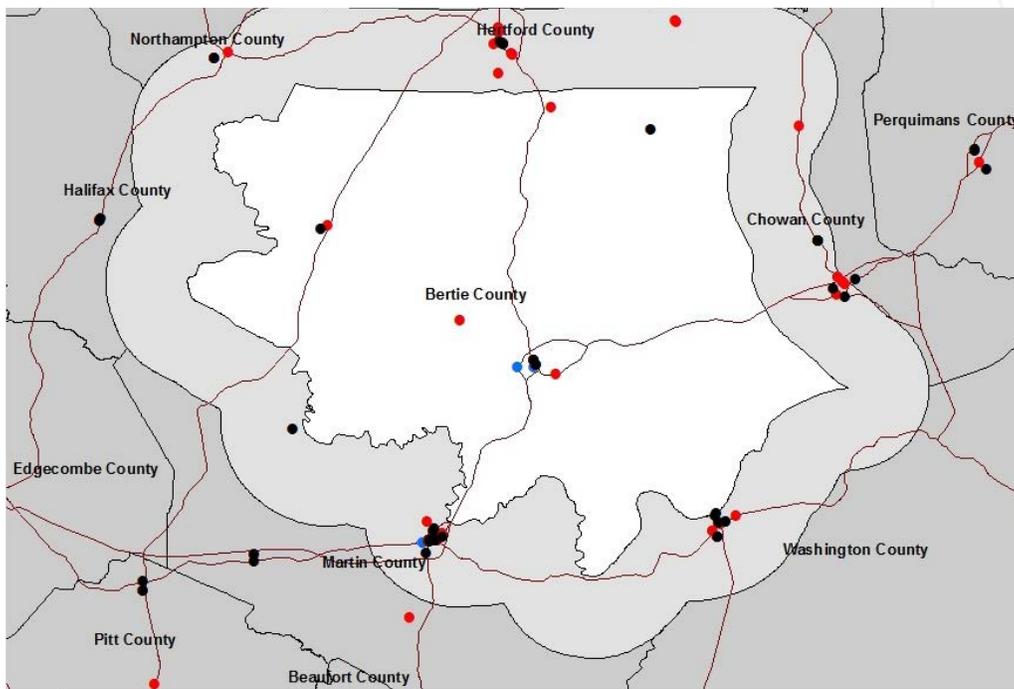


(2012)

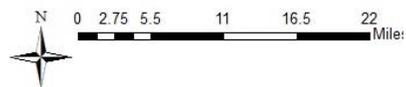
J – Regional Banking

Number of Banks and Credit Unions within Five Miles of Town Center

Town	Banks and Credit Unions (not including ATMS)
Aulander	0
Colerain	1
Lewiston-Woodville	1
Windsor	4



Legend
 ● Commercial Banks
 ● ATM Machines
 ● Credit Unions
 □ 5 Mile Radius



Source: RefUSA

Regional Banking (5 mile radius)

Glossary

¹ Information obtained from the 2013 Bertie County Community Health Assessment

² County Health Rankings & Roadmaps measures vital health factors such as high school graduation rates, obesity, income, access to healthy foods, etc, and provides relevant tools and strategies that communities can use to move towards action. Visit countyhealthrankings.org for more information.

³ Region Q includes Beaufort, Bertie, Hertford, Martin, Pitt Counties. The Region Q Workforce Investment Consortium is a public-private partnership that administers workforce development programs in the aforementioned Eastern North Carolina counties. For more information, visit www.regionqwdb.org.

⁴ Income and poverty data retrieved from the 2010 US Census.

⁵ Choanoke Public Transportation Authority is a community transportation program in Bertie, Halifax, Hertford, and Northampton Counties. Services are provided Monday – Friday and are funded by the NC Department of Transportation, Public Transportation Division.

⁶ Human Resource Development courses provide employability skills and assistance for adults who are trying to find employment, transition back into the workforce, or working to redefine their professional niche in the global market.

⁷ Choanoke Area Development Association (CADA) is a private, non-profit, public organization that was established by the federal government in 1964 to combat poverty in geographically designated areas.

⁸ The Career Readiness Certificate is an industry-recognized, portable, evidence-based credential that certifies essential skills needed for workplace success including problem solving, critical thinking, reading comprehension, and basic mathematical and locating skills.

⁹ ACT WorkKeys, or WorkKeys, is a job skills assessment system that helps employers hire a high performing workforce. It is part of the ACT Work Readiness System. For more information, visit www.act.org/products/workforce-act-workkeys/.

¹⁰ From “Workforce Development in Rural Areas,” by Gary Green, published in 2007.

¹¹ In January 2014, Southern Bank and Trust Company announced the closing of twelve branches in North Carolina, three in Bertie County: Askewville, Aulander, and Roxobel.

¹² The Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust’s mission is to improve the quality of life and the quality of health for the financially needy in NC.

¹³ The Place of Possibilities, located in Aulander, NC, is a community organization and nonprofit whose mission is to alleviate suffering and hardships, and to educate, empower, and enlighten the children and adults in Eastern NC.

¹⁴ Christian Women’s Job Corp, with regional offices in Ahoskie, Greenville, and Edenton, provide the requisite resources necessary to empower women to help them move from dependency to self-sufficiency.

¹⁵ NC Works is an online resource tool for job seekers and employers in the State: job seekers can search for jobs, create resumes, and find education and training. Likewise, employers can find candidates, post jobs, and search labor market information. More at www.ncworks.gov/.

¹⁶ The North Carolina Eastern Region is the lead economic development organization that serves eastern NC. Located in Kinston, NC, the alliance is a private, not for profit, economic development agency that serves more than 1 million residents within several small metropolitan and micropolitan areas.

¹⁷ The Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board is a non-profit organization located in New Bern, NC. It is the designated administrative/fiscal agent for the Federal and State workforce development funds appropriated by the NC Department of Commerce to operate employment and training services in a nine county local area (this area includes Bertie).

¹⁸ Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) preserves and promotes public confidence in the US financial system by ensuring deposits in banks and thrift institutions for at least \$250,000; by identifying, monitoring, and addressing risks to the deposit insurance funds; and by limiting the effect on the economy and the financial system when a bank or thrift institution fails. For more information visit: <http://www.fdic.gov/about/learn/symbol/>

¹⁹ Self Help Credit Union is a nonprofit center for the community that combines several organizations that together provide financing, technical support, consumer financial services and advocacy for those left out of the economic mainstream.





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