

# Preliminary Findings

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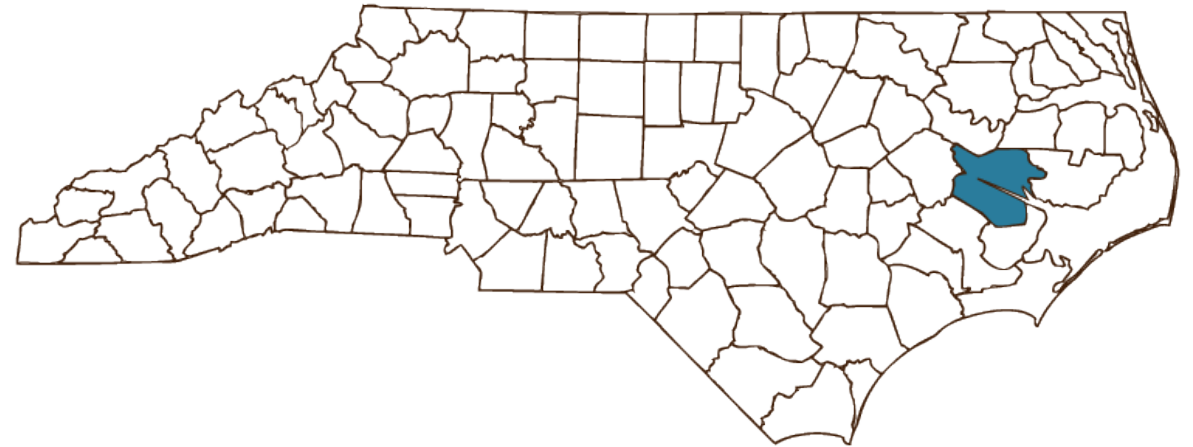
BEAUFORT COUNTY ENTREPRENEURSHIP

UNC KENAN-FLAGLER START PROJECT

# Agenda

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Needs
- 3 Potential Solutions
- 4 Discussion

**BEAUFORT  
COUNTY, NC**



# How can Beaufort County support a stronger entrepreneurial culture?



# We gathered insights from Beaufort County Stakeholders,

## Subject matter experts

- Will Lambe – UNC School of Government
- Barry Ryan – NC Rural Economic Development Center
- Amanda Sorrells – NC Rural Economic Development Center
- Davis Greene – NC Rural Economic Development Center
- Leslie Scott – Entrepreneurial Places

## Beaufort County stakeholders

- Lentz Stowe – Small Business Center
- Catherine Glover – Chamber of Commerce
- Bob Schultz – SCORE
- Daniel Mallison – Vidant Health
- John Rodman – Beaufort County
- Randell Woodruff – Beaufort County

### Small Business Owners

- Steve Brodie – Pacific Seacraft
- Teresa Goerss – Spoon River Artworks and Market
- Adam Feldhousen – Deep Fried Creative, Inc.
- James Mckelvey – Wine & Words
- Richard Andrews – TarPam
- James Gaynor – OT Plus Inc.
- Skip Smith – Rough Brothers Greenhouses
- Jane Boahn, Raised in a Barn Farm
- Jim Chesnutt – National Spinning Corporation

## Other rural communities

- Jeff Tobias – Rocky Mount Springboard
- Jeff Wells – Rockingham County Business and Technology Center
- Diane Reid – Chatham County Economic Development Corporation
- The Minnesota Rural Partners Academy
- University of Kentucky-CES Entrepreneurship Initiative program

# Needs of Beaufort County Stakeholders



# Resources are not fully understood or utilized by small business owners

## Some are not aware of resources

“The resources at the SBC are great but most people do not know about them.”

“The problem is not lack of resources, but **lack of knowledge** about those resources.”

## Some are aware but do not believe they need them

“Business plans are **just pieces of paper**, and I don’t believe in them.”

“There are great programs at the SBC, but I didn’t use any of them, it was **easier to do by myself.**”

# There is a disconnect between business owners and regulatory agencies

Unless you have an in, it is hard to get the information you need in a timely manner

“I **could not identify a point person** to contact for regulatory issues.”

“The town inspector became my friend, so I never had any trouble getting my questions answered”

“I repeatedly called and left messages but I **could not get in touch**, so I will most likely end up **doing the work myself.**”

“I had **to redo expensive work**, because I **could not get feedback** from the county fast enough”

The county has an ombudsman, but not a single entrepreneur we spoke with knew this

# Business owners are willing to mentor, but have little time for meetings

Business owners see the value in helping more people join the community

“I **would love to be a mentor to anyone**, because it would have helped me when I started.”

“Although I am very busy running my business, I **would be happy to be on a call list** for someone to come shadow me.”

“It is important to me to have more small businesses open”

But they don't have time to participate in structured programs

“I think it is more helpful to the community for me **to invest time in the success of my business** than to attend a lot of meetings.”

“I had to quit the Council of 100 because **I could not attend all of the meetings**”



# Potential Solutions

# Beaufort should convene an Entrepreneurial Council to build a sense of shared purpose

## Diverse set of stakeholders

- Should include a diverse set of stakeholders representing different communities in the county
- For example: regional librarian, arts council, clergy, town managers, chambers of commerce

## “No wrong door” policy

- Actively mediate connections with resources
- Diversity of council creates “doors” accessible and visible to diverse audiences

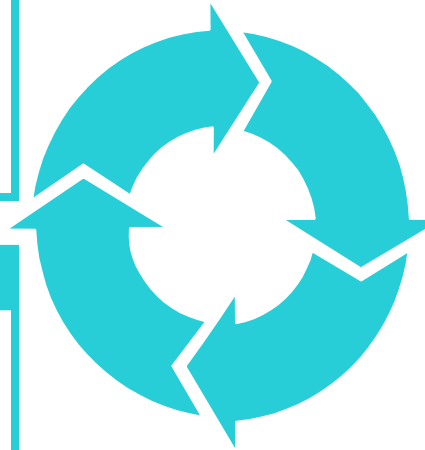
## High visibility

- Council raises public awareness of what it takes to be a *strong* entrepreneur
- When entrepreneurs are ready to start, they know where to go

## Tasked with specific and tangible goals

*“Working towards a specific event helps a group come together, builds trust, and working relationships that can kick start the group.”*

–Barry Ryan, NC Rural Economic Development Center



# The Council should start by hosting an annual Entrepreneurial Resource Fair...



**Example of Success**

Pickens, SC: Pickens Revitalization Association



... and link it to a Shark Tank event to identify new entrepreneurs



### Why a Shark Tank?

- **Demonstrates value of a business plan** in a fun and engaging way
- Immediate opportunity to **apply new skills** from the resource fair

### Rocky Mount Springboard

- *“We **did not know about 90% of the entrepreneurs** that applied to be part of the event.”* –Jeff Tobias, Rocky Mount Springboard
- 36 entrants in the first year
- Funding comes from admission fee and sponsorship from local businesses

# Council should facilitate regulatory process by coordinating pre-application meetings

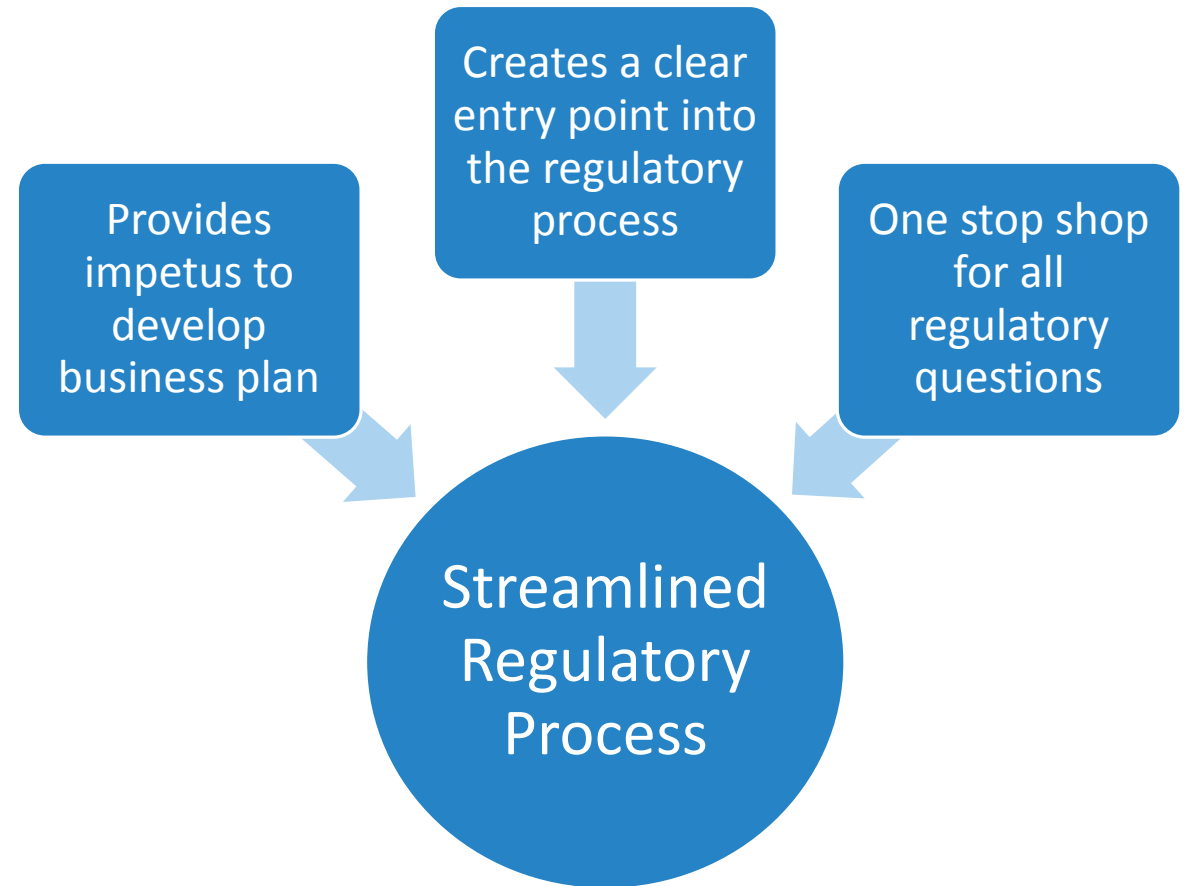
**Pre-Application Meetings**

A specified time and place for regulatory officials to meet with entrepreneurs who are ready to implement a business plan

**Example: Chatham County, NC**

*“This process has worked very well for Chatham County.”*

– Diane Reid, President of Chatham County Economic Development Corporation



# Having a storefront location will enhance accessibility for entrepreneurs

## Physical Location

- Face to face contact
- Extends **“no wrong door”** idea – a place to drop in

## “Estuarium”-like role

- Highly visible from river and often **fields general questions** about river



## NOT an incubator/coworking

- Requires critical mass of new businesses starting regularly
- Doesn't meet the needs of Beaufort County entrepreneurs – e.g. retail and restaurant
- Kinston example



# The Entrepreneurial Council and potential projects we recommend can meet the needs we identified

	<i>Raise Awareness of Value of Resources</i>	<i>Streamline Regulation</i>	<i>Easy Opportunitiy for Mentorship</i>	<i>Engage Marginalized Communities</i>
<b>Entrepreneurial Council:</b>				
• County-wide Resource Fair	✓		✓	✓
• Shark Tank event	✓			✓
• Pre-application regulatory meetings	✓	✓		
• Storefront location			✓	✓

# Questions for you

- What resonates with you?
- Which ideas should we continue to pursue over the next month?
- What information do you need to help you implement the ideas you like?