

2008 WNC Regional Business Resource Guide

This resource guide is presented to provide an overview of the support that is being provided for business creation, growth and retention in the Western North Carolina Region.

Western North Carolina has a growing number of new and current business resources which provide technical assistance, training and development with the goal of increasing sustainability and profitability of its entrepreneurs. This in turn provides a healthy climate for business growth and a stable community. With the recent economic downturn and cost of business steadily increasing, the WNC region is still experiencing growth across many sectors.

Each of the business service providers in this guide provide support in various areas to the growing business community as well as collaborating with each other to support our communities which we call Western North Carolina.

This guide was created for Meet the Geeks, November 2008. Meet the Geeks would like to send a special thank you to Brenda Mills, Minority Business Program Coordinator Office of Economic Development for allowing us to build off of her original resource report.

ABTECH Center for Business and Technology Incubation

1465 Sand Hill Road, Candler, NC 28715
(828) 254-1921 x 5850 www.abtech.edu/sbc

The Center for Business and Technology Incubation provides support services for local entrepreneurs through its Small Business, BioBusiness and Technology Commercialization Centers. Services provided include free one-to-one counseling for business owners or prospective owners to assist them in getting started or with a specific area of concern.

Counseling covers a variety of topics ranging from licensing and marketing to patents and trademarks. Additionally, the center offers a variety of resources and services to help businesses start and grow including business incubation which is designed to provide companies maximum flexibility while working closely with them to identify areas of improvement and to assist them in locating needed resources. The incubation program is generally for a period of two years for most companies to grow and then relocate into the surrounding community.

AdvantageWest Economic Development Group

Blue Ridge Entrepreneurial Council – plewis@awnc.org
Certified Entrepreneurial Community Program – plewis@awnc.org
Blue Ridge Food Ventures – mlsurgi@awnc.org
134 Wright Brothers Way, Fletcher NC 28732
(828) 687-7234 www.advantagewest.com

AdvantageWest Economic Development Group serves 23 western counties in North Carolina through a diverse program of work which includes entrepreneurship and small business through the following programs; Blue Ridge Entrepreneurial Council (BREC), Blue Ridge Food Ventures, and The Certified Entrepreneurial Community ProgramSM (CEC).

BREC supports entrepreneurs through education, mentoring, networking forums and access to capital through the **Advantage Opportunity Loan Fund**. **Blue Ridge Food Ventures** operates as a kitchen incubator on the campus of AB-Tech-Enka and provides assistance for users producing value-added products. The **Certified Entrepreneurial Community ProgramSM** is a community development program designed to take community leaders through a rigorous five-step process to ensure the necessary infrastructure is in place for entrepreneurial development thereby improving the overall business climate for existing industry as well.

Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce

Small Business & Entrepreneurship
36 Montford Ave., Asheville, NC 28801
(828) 258-6116 chensley@ashevillechamber.org

The Small Business & Entrepreneurship Department of the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce provides marketing information and business orientation services to walk-in and call-in inquiries. This department also provides information and referrals to start-up or expanding businesses that are seeking support in all areas of business development. Additionally, Small Business & Entrepreneurship conducts business recognition programs such as the **Sky High Growth** and the **"We're for Business"** Awards, and plans and facilitates educational programs and leadership development training classes for businesses.

Small Business is also responsible for the Chamber's Business Healthcare Roundtable, which meets routinely to study ways to facilitate more affordable group health care insurance for area businesses.

The Asheville Hub
www.ashevillehub.com

The Asheville Hub is a catalyst for collaboration that promotes renewal and prosperity within Asheville/Buncombe County. The community leaders who make up the Asheville Hub Alliance advocate a collaborative economic, community, cultural and social renewal agenda. They strive to capitalize on opportunities for leveraging Asheville/Buncombe County's assets and marshalling our resources so we can improve Asheville/Buncombe County's competitiveness and desirability as a place to live and work.

Asheville SCORE
Federal Bldg, 151 Patton Ave - RM 259, Asheville NC 28801-5007
(828) 271 4786 www.ashevillescore.org

Asheville SCORE provides free and confidential face-to-face business mentoring and email counseling in addition to a variety of low cost seminars on a various business subjects. SCORE has approximately 30 volunteer members who provide professional guidance and information that will maximize the probability of success for existing and emerging small businesses. Men and women members have many years of diverse real world business experience.

The organization offers information and advice to help solve new and/or ongoing business problems for as long as entrepreneurs request it. Asheville SCORE also offers "Tiger Team" counseling when a select group of counselors focuses on one or more business problems of a larger company.

BalsamWest FiberNet
20 Colonial Square, Sylva, NC, 28779
(888) balsam6 www.balsamwest.org

The mission of BalsamWest FiberNET is to provide open and direct access to advanced telecommunications infrastructure in Western North Carolina, Northern Georgia and Eastern Tennessee at prices and quality levels enjoyed in major metropolitan areas of the U.S.

Headquartered in Sylva, North Carolina, BalsamWest FiberNET operates a first-class fiber optic network in the rapidly expanding region between Atlanta, Knoxville, Asheville, Charlotte and Greenville. Our founding members, Drake Enterprises and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, invested the necessary resources to provide open access to Next Generation Carrier Grade infrastructure to allow for light speed access to and from our region.

Rural Reach

- Andrews, NC
- Blairsville, NC
- Blue Ridge, GA
- Bryson City, NC
- Cherokee, NC
- Copper Hill, TN
- Cullowhee, NC
- Ducktown, TN
- Franklin, NC
- Hayesville, NC
- Hiawassee, GA
- McCayesville, GA
- Murphy, NC
- Sylva, NC
- Webster, NC
- Cashiers, NC (coming soon)

Buncombe County Government
Finance / Purchasing Division
35 Woodfin Street, Asheville, NC 28801
(828) 250-4800 / www.buncombecounty.org

Buncombe County's Minority Outreach Plan works to provide minorities equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of County contracting and purchasing programs, including but not limited to, participation in procurement contracts for equipment, professional and other services contracts, and construction contracts. Buncombe County has a current verifiable goal of twelve percent (12%) for minority participation on building construction or repair projects, ten percent (10%) each for procurement, and services. The County posts bidding opportunities on its website and has instituted an electronic registration and bidding process to allow vendors to receive notification of opportunities to bid.

Center for Rapid Product Realization, Western Carolina University
164 Belk Building, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC 28723
(828) 227-2435 <http://www.wcu.edu/3632.asp>

The Rapid Center's mission is to match the Kimmel School's expertise and resources to Western North Carolina's needs by forming effective partnerships to grow the region's economy, by assisting in generating value-creating jobs and by improving the quality of life for its people.

The vision for the Rapid Center is to be known and respected throughout the region as an innovative, can-do partner and as the primary resource for technical assistance and technology transfer for government, business and industry officials with local economic growth and job creation responsibilities. We hope you will visit us soon and partner with us in this effort! I look forward to working with you to reach our goals of economic transformation and engaged learning.

Cherokee Business Development & The Sequoyah Fund
PO Box 1200, Cherokee, NC 28719
(828) 497-1666 / www.sequoyahfund.com

The mission of Cherokee Business Development and the Sequoyah Fund is to provide training, technical assistance and resources to support entrepreneurship, business start-up and expansion and community development on the Qualla Boundary. Sequoyah Fund is an independent, non-profit Native American community development financial institution (CDFI).

In 2007 Cherokee Business Development and Sequoyah Fund began Indianpreneurship classes. These classes will be held 3 times a year for aspiring business owners.

Economic Development Coalition for Asheville-Buncombe County
36 Montford Avenue, Asheville, NC 28801
(828) 210-2729 www.EconomicDevelopmentAsheville.org

The EDC is a unique public-private partnership charged with creating high-paying career opportunities for citizens in our community. Located at the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce and funded by Buncombe County, the City of Asheville, the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce as well as private sector contributions through Advantage Asheville, the EDC serves as the one-stop-shop for business leaders who are evaluating the creation, expansion, or relocation of businesses within Asheville-Buncombe County. Four core service areas are Economic Research, Business & Industry Services, Marketing & Recruitment, and Small Business & Entrepreneurship.

Education & Research Services

**Haynes Center, Suite 701, 1459 Sand Hill Road, Candler, NC 28715
(828) 670-7873 www.education-research-services.org**

Education & Research Services is focused on building partnerships with government, industry, and academia to enhance economic development, technology, and innovation. ERS is working with regional, state and national partners to tell the Asheville story as it relates to the emerging climate-related business sector.

By building public-private partnerships, ERS develops regional capability to compete for large projects and programs that are vital to the national interest while enhancing economic development, technology and innovation.

ERC-Broadband

**151 Patton Avenue, Asheville, NC 28801
(828) 350-2415 www.ercbroadband.org**

ERC Broadband is a part of the Education and Research Consortium of the Western Carolinas, Inc. (ERC), a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. The focus of the ERC is to further economic development in the Western Carolinas through education, infrastructure, and capital development. ERC Broadband is committed to improving the technological infrastructure of the Western Carolinas. With a focus on economic development through education, research, and government projects, ERC Broadband is not only bringing the Internet to the rural Western Carolinas, but also bringing next generation Internet and advanced technology to the region. ERC offers a wide range of communications services in support of the region.

Handmade In America

**125 South Lexington, Asheville, NC 28801
(828) 252-0121 www.handmadeinamerica.org**

The mission of HandMade in America is to celebrate the hand and the handmade, to nurture the creation of traditional and contemporary craft, to revere and protect our resources, and to preserve and enrich the spiritual, cultural, and community life of our region. Our programs impact children, craft artists, farmers, travelers, rural women entrepreneurs, the environment, and communities at large.

Manufacturers Executives Association

**One Town Square Blvd, Suite 100, Asheville NC 28803
(828) 667-3311 www.meawnc.org**

Mission: to maintain a unified advocacy voice to represent manufacturing. Please see listing for *Western Carolina Industries* for more information.

The Media Arts Project

**PO Box 646, Asheville, NC 28802
www.themap.org**

The Media Arts Project cultivates innovative arts & technology in western North Carolina. The MAP provides exhibition programming, professional development, outreach, and education. We are driven by the belief that the media arts are integral to the vibrant cultural and economic life of the region.

Meet the Geeks Learn more at www.meetthegeeks.net
P.O. Box 1622, Asheville 28802

Meet the Geeks (MTG) is a volunteer-driven organization that seeks to build and support the IT community throughout Western North Carolina. Since its founding in March 2005, it has established a successful series of networking events, created an online portal for local IT professionals, participated in recruiting and developing new IT business in the area, developed a series of classes on IT and business topics, and initiated efforts to build the regional IT community.

Meet the Geeks serves more than 400 members. The bi-monthly networking events regularly bring 40 - 50 IT professionals, business owners, educators and students together to socialize and make connections that result in new opportunities. Membership and the majority of our events are free and open to the public.

Mountain BizWorks

153 Lexington Avenue, Asheville, NC 28801
(828) 253-2834 www.mountainbizworks.org

The mission of Mountain BizWorks is to provide entrepreneurs with access to business instruction, professional support, and loans; which in turn, help create and sustain successful businesses that help the economy of Western North Carolina grow. Mountain BizWorks is a national leader in the field of small business development.

In 2007, Mountain BizWorks started the Black Business Alliance which brings members of Western North Carolina's African American business community together monthly for networking and business training.

NCCCS BioNetwork

Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College, Enka Campus
1459-C Sand Hill Road, Suite 208, Candler, NC 28715
(828) 254-1921 ex. 5842 www.ncbionetwork.org

NCCCS BioNetwork is a statewide initiative that connects community colleges across North Carolina, providing specialized training, curricula and equipment to develop a world-class workforce for the biotechnology, pharmaceutical and life sciences industries. All community colleges serving the pharmaceutical and biotechnology sector are part of the BioNetwork.

NC Department of Commerce, Business & Industry Development Division

134 Wright Brothers Way
Fletcher NC 28732
(828) 654-9852 cmesser@nccommerce.com

The North Carolina Department of Commerce is the state's leading economic development agency, working with local, regional, national, and international companies. The department's mission is to improve the economic well being and quality of life for all North Carolinians. The mission is carried out by recruiting new jobs and domestic and foreign investment; serving existing business and industry, including providing international trade assistance; encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation; marketing North Carolina and its brand; supporting workforce development; strengthening communities; and promoting tourism, film, and sports development. The department also provides data, statistics, information, and reports for state government and agencies which regulate commerce in the state. There are seven economic development regions throughout the state. The western regional office is located in Fletcher and serves 23 counties.

National Environmental Modeling & Analysis Center

201 Rhoades Hall CPO #2345; UNCA Asheville, One University Heights; Asheville, NC 28804, (828) 250-3890 www.nemac.org

UNC Asheville's National Environmental Modeling and Analysis Center (NEMAC) is an applied research group that thrives due to its collaborations. NEMAC collaborates with other academic institutions; local, state and federal government; and private enterprise. Our research begins with addressing environmental issues and data sets tied to weather, climate, forest health, water resources and a variety of related issues. We then examine the interaction of humanity's infrastructure with the environment to address key issues that affect our society including hazard mitigation, climate change, competitive land use, and the wise use of our energy and water resources.

North Carolina Lawyers for Entrepreneurs Assistance Program (NCLEAP)

**8000 Weston Parkway
Cary, North Carolina 27513
(800) 662-7407 ext. 342 www.ncbar.org/ncleap**

NC LEAP provides pro bono, business legal assistance to income-eligible, low-wealth clients seeking to start or expand their businesses in North Carolina. NC LEAP services include creation of business entity (i.e. partnership, LLC, corporation etc), intellectual property assistance, contract drafting and negotiation including commercial leases, employment law issues, succession planning etc. NC LEAP provides its services through a network of business attorneys across the state and is sponsored by the Business Law Section and Corporate Counsel Sections of the North Carolina Bar Association. NC LEAP is partially funded by the Lenovo Hope Fund of the Triangle Community Foundation.

NC LEAP started providing services June 4, 2007 in a limited nine county region and has since expanded to cover over 52 counties. NC LEAP's launch to western NC took place in conjunction with our community partner, ABTECH Center for Business and Technology Incubation.

Office for Historically Underutilized Businesses

**N.C. Department of Administration
1336 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1336
(919) 807-2330 www.doa.state.nc.us/hub**

The Office for Historically Underutilized Businesses' mission is to advocate increasing opportunities and promotes diversity and inclusion in state government procurement and contracting to increase the amount of goods and services, including construction, acquired by the State of North Carolina from historically underutilized businesses. This is accomplished by the certification program for firms; the outreach program which includes statewide workshops, seminars, trade shows, networking events and information sessions on "How to Do Business with the State;" the HUBSCO training and compliance program a web-based system to report minority to report minority business utilization and construction data to the HUB Office and in addition conducts training sessions for public entities; construction outreach to monitor capital bond programs and identifies major construction projects that provide opportunities for increased HUB participation.

In August 2007, Governor Michael Easley signed into law, Senate Bill 320 (Ch. SL 2007-392) authorizing the Secretary of Administration to develop and administer a statewide uniform certification program for historically underutilized businesses with state departments, agencies and institutions and political subdivisions of the state.

For assistance with certification locally, contact Brenda Mills, Minority Business Program Coordinator at the Office of Economic Development for the City of Asheville at (828) 232-4566 or bmills@ashevillenc.gov.

Office of Economic Development

**City of Asheville, 29 Haywood Street, Asheville, NC 28801
(828) 232-4500 www.ashevillenc.gov**

The mission of the City of Asheville Office of Economic Development is to promote the City's economic Development policies through linked and collaborative initiatives that leverage resources to create a vibrant and robust Asheville economy.

The organizational model is based on the following: recruitment, marketing, technical assistance and education, entrepreneurship, financial assistance and access to capital, workforce development, and product development.

PANGAEA Network

**301 N. Trade St.Suite 200Tryon, NC 28782
(828) 817-0863 www.pangaea.us**

PANGAEA's mission is to build an open and cost effective fiber optic network and infrastructure to deliver affordable high-speed Internet connectivity to enhance economic development, improve the quality of life, and create a broad platform of innovation for rural western North Carolina and upstate South Carolina.

This mission will ameliorate the Digital Divide by reducing barriers to entry for Internet Service Providers and other broadband providers – resulting in a proliferation of service providers and business models, lower prices, and spurred economic growth and job creation.

Renaissance Computing Institute

**AB Tech, 1459 Sand Hill Rd., Candler, NC 28715
(828) 301-2075 www.renci.org**

RENCI at UNC Asheville opened in 2007, expanding RENCI's virtual organization into the western reaches of North Carolina. RENCI at UNC Asheville works closely with teams at the anchor site to promote economic development in Asheville and Buncombe County. The center focuses on disaster research, mitigation and preparedness, taking advantage of western North Carolina's expertise in weather and climate modeling, visualization and public outreach.

During the 2004 hurricane season, heavy rains caused severe flooding, which overwhelmed local watersheds. Since then, community groups, UNC-Asheville, NOAA's National Climate Data Center in Asheville, and local businesses have organized to develop high-resolution, near real-time weather models that can be used to plan for, and respond to, natural disasters. RENCI at UNC Asheville will leverage and accelerate these ongoing efforts and help to foster economic development, especially in the environmental technology sector.

Self Help Credit Union

**34 Wall St., Suite 704 Asheville, NC 28801
(828) 253-5251 joyce@self-help.org**

Self-Help's mission is to create and protect ownership and economic opportunity for people of color, women, rural residents, and low-wealth families and communities.

We make loans, develop real estate, and fight predatory lending -- so more people can achieve the financial security and sense of possibility that are at the heart of the American dream.

We continue to believe that the best way to strengthen families and communities is through ownership -- sustainable ownership. With the help of depositors, supporters, and visionary partners, we work every day, one loan at a time, to invest in the futures of families and enterprises that are often overlooked by mainstream lenders.

Small Business & Technology Development Center (SBTDC)

**68 Patton Avenue, Lower Lobby, Asheville, NC 28801-3312
Asheville – (828) 251-6025 / Cullowhee (828) 227-3459 www.sbtdc.org**

In Western North Carolina, the Small Business and Technology Development Center (SBTDC) has six business professionals who provide comprehensive services for small to medium-sized enterprises. These counselors serve the 14 western counties of North Carolina through two convenient locations at Western Carolina University and downtown Asheville.

Most business owners or their managers come to us initially for confidential counseling to assess their business and develop a plan. Together, the counselor and company select tools to implement that plan -- financial analysis, market studies, focus groups, strategic needs assessments, government procurement assistance, and/or strategic planning retreats to name a few. Should funding be needed, the SBTDC is an approved technical assistance provider for the North Carolina Rural Fund, SBA Community Express Loan programs. For companies involved in scientific R&D, they can apply for SBIR and STTR grants.

As a program of the University System, the SBTDC strives to leverage the assets of area Universities to benefit businesses in WNC. Last year, over 50 students from WCU, UNCA, and Montreat were placed into applied learning projects designed to assist companies with large projects and provide a hands-on learning experience for students. In addition, the Western Center of the SBTDC continues to be engaged in statewide initiatives such as the Center of Innovation for Natural Biotechnology and Integrative Medicine and NC's Small Business Disaster Recovery Loans.

Southwestern Community College Small Business Center

**447 College Drive
Sylva, NC 28779
(828) 488-6413 www.southwesterncc.edu/swain/small-bus-ctr**

The Small Business Center (SBC) supports the development of new businesses and the growth of existing businesses by being a community-based provider of training, counseling, and resource information. The SBC can provide free, confidential counseling services on an as-needed basis, serving as a sounding board for ideas and concerns you might have about your business. Our professional staff will help you find solutions to your challenging business questions, no matter how simple or complicated. For more information on services provided by the SBC at Southwestern Community College, as well as offices across the state, visit the Small Business Center Network website at www.sbcn.nc.gov.

Technology Commercialization Center

1465 Sand Hill Rd, Candler, NC 28715

(Located in the A-B Tech Center for Business and Technology Incubation on the Enka campus)

(828) 254-1921 ext. 5856 / spoland@abtech.edu or www.abtech.edu/sbc/tcc

The Technology Commercialization Center (TCC) implements a business development program for technology based companies that guides the management team in the deployment of a fundable and sustainable business. Coaching, training, and mentoring are provided with the purpose of client development in proven business practices and preparation for investor funding, should that be needed.

There is no charge for the TCC base program for A-B Tech incubator residents, those pursuing resident or affiliated status, or those companies located in Buncombe county. A comprehensive entrepreneurial management development training program complements the stage-based coaching and mentoring services.

We have worked with more than 60 companies in the past 2 years. We work with the management teams of these companies on day-to-day operational issues as well as strategic plans, business plans, partnerships, and mergers and acquisitions. We conduct monthly management training sessions that discuss general management issues common to all companies. We also bring local senior executives together monthly to review and provide guidance to client companies from mentors that have been successful running their own businesses.

Four of our clients have received loans for the Advantage West Advantage Opportunity Fund, four have presented to the Inception Micro Angel Fund, an early stage angel investment network in western North Carolina. Our client companies have earned over \$3,500,000 in revenue, have created or sustained more than 89 jobs in the local communities, and have raised over \$800,000 in investments.

US Department of Labor

Women's Bureau

151 Patton Ave Room 168, Asheville, NC 28801, (828) 505-1547 www.dol.gov/wb

The U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, established by Congress in 1920, is the only federal agency mandated to represent the needs of wage-earning women in the public policy process. The Mission of the Women's Bureau is: To improve the status of wage-earning women, improve their working conditions, increase their efficiency, and advance their opportunities for profitable employment.

For 87 years, it has been meeting that mandate -- identifying the issues working women care about most and vigorously pioneering research and remedies to address them. Today's Department of Labor represents the workforce of the 21st Century. The Women's Bureau, through its Strengthening the Family Initiatives -- Better Jobs! Better Earnings! Better Living! and Value-Added Supporters!, will continue to prepare women for tomorrow's jobs. The Bureau promotes an environment that is responsive to the demands and challenges of the 21st Century workforce. More than ever, it is vital to ensure opportunities for American women to achieve their potential in the workplace.

U.S. Small Business Administration
29 Haywood Street, Asheville NC 28801
(828) 225-1844 michael.arriola@sba.gov

The U.S. Small Business Administration was formed over 50 years ago to help Americans start, develop and grow their small businesses. An independent federal agency, the SBA accomplishes this mission through:

- Small business loan programs
- Federal contracting programs to enable small firms to gain access to federal procurement opportunities
- Counseling and training programs through sponsored or funded resources such as SCORE, the Small Business & Technology Development Center network, the Women's Business Center at Mountain BizWorks, and an array of online tools; and
- Advocacy on Capitol Hill, in which the SBA serves as the voice for small business in our nation's capitol.

The SBA's Alternate Work Site, or satellite office, has been situated in Asheville since February 2004, joining the other SBA satellite offices in Raleigh and Wilmington and the SBA's district office, or state headquarters, in Charlotte. Mike Arriola is Senior Area Manager in Asheville and staffs the one-person office which serves the 22 counties of western NC. As an SBA officer, Mike's objective is to further the SBA's mission of helping small businesses start, develop and grow by:

- Increasing SBA loans to startups and existing small businesses in the region by working with lenders and loan applicants on SBA loan options and applications;
- Outreach throughout western North Carolina to inform the public about available SBA programs and services for their business use; and
- Assistance with other SBA programs, including federal government contracting, surety bonding, and others.

Western Carolina Industries, Inc.
One Town Square Boulevard, Suite 100, Asheville, NC 28803-5013
(828) 667-3311 www.wciinc.org

WCI works to recognize the needs of its member companies and offers cutting-edge informational and educational workshops, seminars and in-house training. Through WCI, members have the opportunity to make dramatic strides toward improving organizational performance.

WCI is committed to offering high quality education and development and providing the latest information regarding laws and regulations and how they will affect your company.

WCI will develop new curriculum to meet the needs of member companies and sharpen the skills of all employees.