

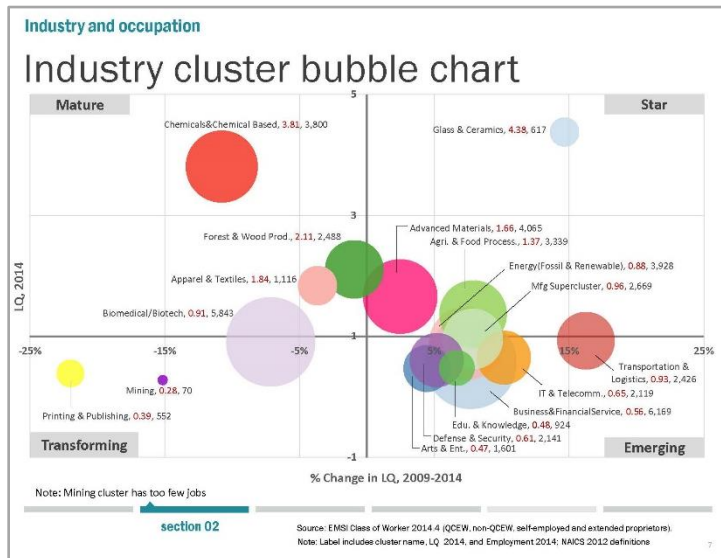
# Cultivate NC



North Carolina is only as strong as its individual communities. In order for the state to prosper, it is important to make our communities, both urban and rural, stronger and healthier. This requires systems work, and NC Cooperative Extension is uniquely positioned to catalyze the stakeholders needed to do this work through the following services.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

Cultivate NC emerged as a Community and Rural Development program of NC State Extension in 2013 in response to USDA's Stronger Economies Together (SET) and LEAD regional and



county level economic development planning initiatives. SET and LEAD have resulted in the adoption and implementation by 20 counties of strategies focused on strengthening agriculture, tourism, and manufacturing, as well as improving quality of life and workforce development efforts. While the SET and LEAD initiatives have not continued under the current USDA administration, the SET/LEAD data analysis and facilitated planning processes continue as the foundation for Cultivate NC's work in community economic development in non-SET/LEAD communities across the state.

## DIRECT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Relationships developed during the SET/LEAD strategic planning have led to Cultivate NC's continued direct support of adopted

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## PROGRAM IMPACTS

2013 – 2018

Completed 5 SET Economic Development Plans and 1 LEAD Action Plan

Leveraged over \$14 million in grant funding for affected counties

20 counties impacted; 300 partner connections made

Strengthened Extension's connection with USDA Rural Development, the Southern Rural Development Center, 2 Regional and 7 Local Economic Development Offices

4 New Businesses created through direct technical assistance

5 Technical Trainings Created

Agritourism support in 15 counties and 7 beach communities

Local Food System Research

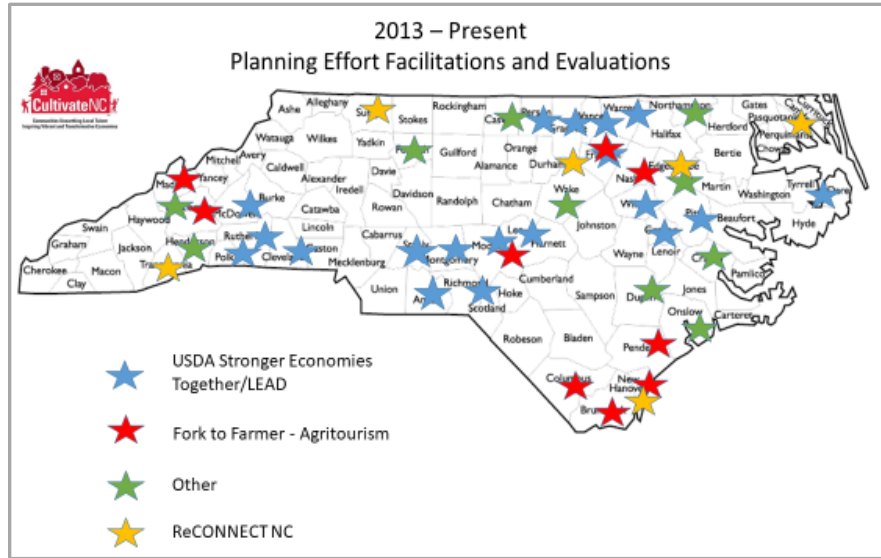
Partner Program Evaluation

strategies in these communities, including nonprofit and small business development, grant writing, and other resource connections. These services are also available to non-SET/LEAD communities across the state.

**TECHNICAL TRAININGS**

In addition to grant or contract-supported strategic planning services and the direct technical assistance that follows, Cultivate NC

also develops and delivers technical trainings directly to Extension agents and at community workshops organized by agents. New educational materials created include the Cultivate NC curriculum (which contains a research segment conducted by youth to engender community pride and innovation), as well as trainings on nonprofit compliance and development, cooperative formation, collaborative farming, grant writing, and downtown development through local food programming. As a member of Extension’s Local Food Program Team, Cultivate NC staff has also generated the NCACES award-winning Agritourism Curriculum, which has been incorporated into the USDA-funded Fork to Farmer Initiative described below.



**INTERDEPARTMENTAL and MULTISTATE COLLABORATIONS**



Cultivate NC transforms communities and promotes economic prosperity by leveraging and connecting the capacity of the many colleges and departments of NC State University, NC State Extension, CEFS, and their partners to build engaged leadership, inclusive partnerships, and innovative solutions. Specifically, Cultivate NC staff routinely supports the work of Extension's Local Food Program by conducting community assessments, engaging with other states in food system research, and chairing the Economic Impacts Work Group of the Local Food Program Team. In addition,

Cultivate NC staff also partners on the Fork to Farmer Initiative (f2F), a current collaboration with Tourism Extension. The f2F initiative is focused on strengthening agiturism through increased consumer awareness, and Cultivate NC staff is leading the implementation of f2F activities in nine counties and developing this process in six more, including the expansion of the Grange award-winning Vacationer-Supported Agriculture program.

**EVALUATIONS**

Cultivate NC staff is currently conducting an evaluation in Craven and Onslow Counties of USDA’s AgVets program, a pilot program of the federal administration designed to benefit military veterans through

agricultural educational programming. Other evaluation requests of grant-funded programming are considered by Cultivate NC staff on a continuing basis.

## HOW TO USE CULTIVATE NC

How can counties partner with Cultivate NC? As an integral arm of Community and Rural Development (CRD) at NC State Extension, Cultivate NC leverages university resources to support communities in building their local economies. Our proactive planning and development work brings diverse voices to the table to solve pressing issues and address wicked problems, thus constructing a platform to design and implement “win-win” strategies to create positive change.

When local agents are confronted by community issues or asked to develop new programming to address those issues and aren’t sure where to begin, that is the time to call the staff of Cultivate NC. Cultivate NC asks probing questions to uncover the most suitable sequence of actions and other steps a community should take to arrive at its desired outcomes.



## Sample Community Questions

What is the condition in your community that you believe needs to be changed?

What is the change you seek to create?

What data or other evidence supports your belief that this condition should could change?

What is the history of any current or prior efforts to change this condition?

What is the outcome you seek?

How will your community be different?

Today’s complex issues require a new level of leadership. This leadership needs to broaden the conversation, be inclusive, challenge the status quo, be responsive and innovative, follow-through with implementation and evaluation, and develop leadership succession. By building capacity through organizational governance, policy development, and leadership development, Cultivate NC will help you tackle your community’s big challenges.

*Looking for more information? Contact Becky Bowen, Cultivate NC Project Manager, 919-628-4317, [blbowen@ncsu.edu](mailto:blbowen@ncsu.edu).*