



## 2024 CEDS Annual Update

In its second year of implementation, the Centralina Economic Development District (EDD) continues to make significant strides in advancing the goals of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), guided by the overarching vision of **Prosperity of All**. This vision focuses on creating a globally connected, inclusive, and prosperous future for the Greater Charlotte region by fostering collaboration among businesses, stakeholders and individuals.

In 2024, progress has been made on 44 out of 58 CEDS action items, with marked improvements in Urgent, Critical and Moderate priority areas. The region has also seen advancements in digital inclusion, workforce development and transportation infrastructure which contribute to continued economic growth and resilience.

### 2024 Highlights and Accomplishments

#### Goal 1: Expand Economic Opportunity

The Centralina Workforce Development Board collaborated on numerous statewide initiatives, including the NC Business Service Summit and several in-person and virtual hiring events.

Recognizing childcare as a critical and trending topic, the Centralina EDD team, with support from the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC) funds, facilitated an interactive discussion with economic developers, childcare providers, and local government officials to develop actionable solutions and share best practices. We amplified the childcare message by presenting to North Carolina Community College leadership at their annual conference and hosting a webinar that brought together industry leaders, economic developers, and workforce partners to share the latest updates and initiatives.

#### Goal 2: Build Community Supportive Infrastructure

Centralina continues to advance Connect Beyond, expanding the LYNX Silver Line and securing funding for passenger rail corridor projects. The region received grants to improve roads safety and develop Resilience Improvement Plans, ensuring the continued safety and connectivity of the region's transportation network.

A Regional Digital Inclusion Framework was developed to address the digital divide, providing strategic solutions for increasing access to broadband and digital literacy across the nine-county region.

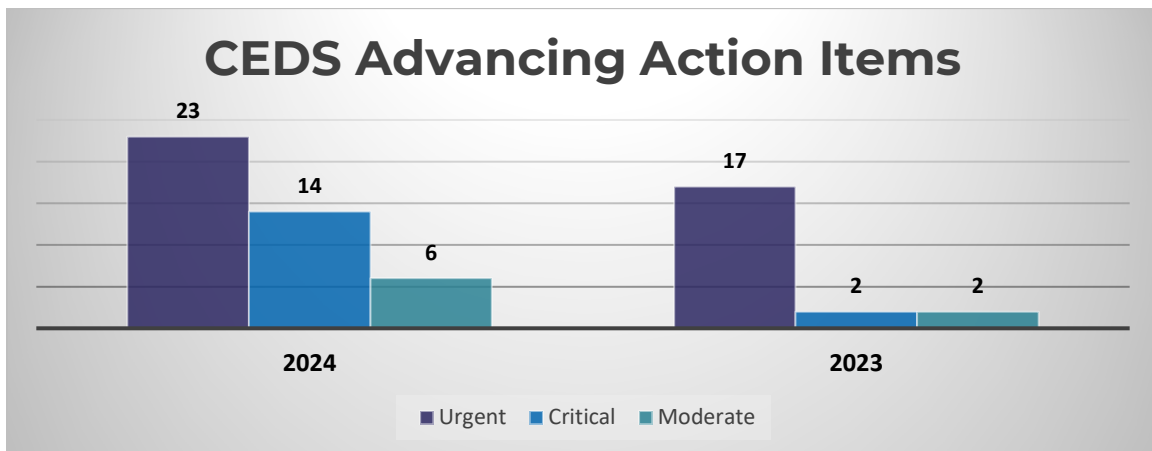
### Goal 3 Strengthening Regional Resilience and Global Competitiveness

Centralina has partnered with UNC Charlotte and the Charlotte Regional Business Alliance on the Carolinas Innovation Center for Optics and Metrology (CICOM) Tech Hub Strategy Development Grant. This collaboration has made progress in highlighting challenges and opportunities to formulate a workforce approach that will prepare workers for jobs in optics and metrology. Other key activities in the CICOM project included launching a workforce survey, conducting focus group meetings and presenting information at the Consortium Summit meeting on October 2, 2024.

The Centralina Regional Resilience Collaborative (RRC) identified critical gaps in regional recovery planning, and this prompted the development of Anson County's Pre-Disaster Recovery Plan. This achievement marks the completion of the RRC and Anson County's plan, enhancing the region's preparedness and resilience. Furthermore, Centralina strengthened regional capacity for economic recovery by administering the NCARCOG FEMA Public Assistance Financial Administration Training program, providing essential guidance for financial management in post-disaster recovery.

### Progress on CEDS Action Items

In 2024, there was substantial progress in the advancement of CEDS action items, particularly in *critical* and *urgent* categories. The number of advancing items increased significantly across the board.



This progress reflects the strong and growing momentum in implementing the CEDS action plan, with fewer items remaining in the early or uninitiated phases. In this second year of execution, the pace of activities continues to accelerate, demonstrating Centralina's commitment to advancing regional goals.

Implementation Activities are categorized by priority: **U** for Urgent, **C** for Critical, and **M** for Moderate. Notably, two Urgent action items have not been started due to funding challenges.

## Implementation Activities

### Regional Engagement

- Four targeted virtual job fairs were organized for local government, education, manufacturing, flexible schedule/remote employment. **M Goal 1 – 2.2**
- Centralina team presented childcare research to statewide EDD coordinators in preparation for February event. **C Goal 1 – 3.1**
- Centralina EDD team hosted a forum to discuss the Role of Childcare in the NC Economy. There were 26 attendees from local government and economic development partners. **C Goal 1 – 3.1**
- Centralina Workforce Development is participating in a Childcare working group as part of the Good Jobs Great Cities grant received by City of Monroe. **C Goal 1 – 3.3**
- Rowan County Manufacturers Network collaborated with local manufacturers, Centralina and Commute with Enterprise program to explore solutions for workforce mobility to employment centers. **U Goal 2 – 1.1**
- CONNECT Beyond is forming a task force of stakeholders to examine connected and autonomous vehicles and their technology. **C Goal 2 – 1.3**
- Centralina Planning hosted a Joint Roundtable Meeting between the Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln MPO and the Charlotte Regional TPO. There were 80 attendees from across the region. **C Goal 2 - 2.1**
- Centralina formed the Integrated Mobility Center (IMC) to provide technical assistance and coordination for transportation planning. The IMC also facilitated a regional discussion on future passenger rail corridors, fostering collaboration among transportation organizations. **U Goal 2 – 1.2**
- In partnership with CRTPO, Centralina launched an initiative to provide a training and develop a playbook to help communities implement tailored mobility-supportive development strategies. **U Goal 2 – 1.2**
- The Centralina team collaborated with Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS), City of Belmont, and Gaston County to finalize funding to complete 15% of the design for the LYNX Silver Line extension from I-485 west of CLT Airport to Belmont. **U Goal 2 – 1.2**
- Centralina collaborated with NCDOT Rail to secure funding for Service Development Plans for multiple passenger rail corridors in the Centralina region. **U Goal 2 – 1.2**
- Centralina Area Agency on Aging surveyed adults 60+ in the Charlotte region on ridesharing barriers and provides a Transportation Guide to help older adults and caregivers access reliable mobility options. **C Goal 2 – 1.3**
- Centralina supported CRTPO in securing a \$5 million RAISE grant to fund safety audits in underserved and transportation-disadvantaged communities across Iredell, Mecklenburg, and western Union counties, boosting regional road safety. **U Goal 2 – 2.2**

- Centralina is collaborating with CRTPO and Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization to seek federal project funding to develop Resilience Improvement Plans. **U Goal 2 – 2.2**
- Centralina received a Regional Infrastructure Accelerator grant from the US DOT for CONNECT Beyond implementation, including building an Integrated Mobility Center and building out project service lines for finance innovation, pipeline project facilitation and transit-orientated development. **U Goal 2 – 3.2**
- The Centralina Regional Resilience Collaborative (RRC) identified gaps in recovery plans, leading to the development of Anson County's Pre-Disaster Recovery Plan, which was officially adopted in May after eight planning meetings. **M Goal 2 – 3.3**
- In February Centralina hosted two FEMA Regional Disaster Recovery Financial Administration trainings supported by NCAROG to help municipalities improve pre-disaster resiliency, mitigation and post-disaster recovery efforts to assist local governments in managing funding assistance. **M Goal 2 – 3.3**
- In April, the EPA approved the PCAP (Pollution Control Action Plan), marking a significant milestone in advancing regional environmental efforts. **M Goal 2 – 3.4**
- Centralina CED developed a resource addressing stormwater management specifically for local government pre-development meetings. **M Goal 2 – 3.4**
- Centralina was referenced for Affordable Housing best practice initiatives by National Association of Development Organizations. **U Goal 2 – 4.1**
- The Town of Matthews and CED completed a sidewalk extension near the downtown district, enhancing pedestrian safety and promoting mobility-friendly spaces. **C Goal 2 – 4.4**
- The 2024 update of the Prosperity Profiles was released, featuring a comprehensive overview report on regional economic trends and growth opportunities. **C Goal 2 – 4.4**
- Exploring supply chain council with Charlotte Regional Business Alliance through NC Manufacturing Extension Partnership. **U Goal 3 – 2.1**
- CEDD website published a blog on the NC Manufacturing Extension Partnership to raise awareness and help manufacturers enhance their global competitiveness, driving economic growth and job creation. **U Goal 3 – 2.1**
- Centralina recently featured the progress of the EDA Tech Hub Strategy Development grant in the February issue of the Centralina Lines newsletter. **U Goal 3 – 4.1**
- Centralina is partnering with UNC Charlotte and Charlotte Regional Business Alliance on the Carolinas Innovation Center for Optics and Metrology (CICOM) Tech Hub Strategy Development grant by formulating a workforce training approach that will prepare future workers for jobs in the industry. Key activities include launching a survey, focus group meetings and presenting at the Consortium Summit. **U Goal 3 – 4.2**
- Centralina continues to strengthen the partnership and collaboration with NCInnovation, focusing on commercialization efforts and connecting industry and entrepreneurs with universities to foster innovation and growth. **M Goal 3 – 4.3**

## Grant Support

- UNC Charlotte CICOM was awarded Tech Hub Strategy Development Grant. **U Goal 3 – 4.1**
- Provided a letter of support for SPCC to create a career center focused on advanced manufacturing training and employment. **U Goal 3 – 2.4**
- Provided a CEDS Consistency Letter for Western Piedmont Community College and partners Catawba Valley Community College, Gaston College, North Carolina State University and The Industrial Commons in their federal application to request funding to expand workforce opportunities through registered apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships. **U Goal 3 – 2.4**

## Individual Service Delivery

- Supported project engagement meetings with NC EDA representative
  - City of Concord
  - Latin American Chamber
  - City of Monroe
  - UNC Charlotte E4 Clean Energy

## Strategy Framework

- Presented quarterly CEDS Dashboard tracker to EDD Board of Directors in January, April and October 2024 meetings and promoted progress through Centralina monthly newsletter.
- On February 15, 2024, Centralina facilitated a panel discussion along with constructive dialogue on "The Role of Childcare in the NC Economy" which focused on the topic for local governments and economic development professionals, with attendance from 26 partners.
- Produced newsletter Success Story around the childcare event the provided solutions and best practices.
- Created a dedicated webpage on CentralinaEDD.org to showcase relevant childcare data and provide a comprehensive list of available resources.
- Updated the CentralinaEDD.org data dashboard, integrating demographic and regional data from Lightcast (formerly eIMPACT) to enhance support for community and economic development initiatives.

## Grants and Funding

Centralina successfully secured multiple grants to support critical regional products.

- USDOT Regional Infrastructure Accelerator grant for Connect Beyond implementation initiatives
- RAISE grants for Improving road safety in underserved communities

- EPA Climate Pollution Reduction grant to advance regional environmental and sustainability goals
- Launched a strategic planning process for WeBuild Concord, to help bring affordable housing to the City of Concord.
- IEI Digital Inclusion Funding for BAND-NC to help bridge the digital divide
- Southeast Crescent Regional Commission Local Development District to increase economic equity, resilience and inclusivity across the region
- EDA Tech Hub Strategy Development Grant for the Carolinas Innovation Center for Optics and Metrology (CICOM)
- A Brownfields Assessment Coalition Grant was received from the EPA, enabling Centralina to conduct environmental assessments and revitalize former textile mill sites in Spencer, Mount Holly, and Albemarle, advancing sustainable redevelopment and economic growth in the region.

## 2025 Anticipated Activities

Looking ahead to 2025, the Centralina EDD will focus on expanding initiatives in several critical areas that include:

- Prioritizing efforts to develop career pathways and talent pipelines in regional clusters with a focus on advanced manufacturing and clean tech and energy industries.
- Continuing to focus on expanding mobility options through the Connect Beyond Regional Mobility Plan, with special emphasis on Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and sustainable transit solutions.
- Proceeding with full implementation of the Digital Inclusion Plan across the Centralina region, ensuring all residents have access to broadband and digital literacy resources.
- Continue to build on the success of recent environmental grants by developing further strategies for climate resilience and expanding infrastructure projects that align with the region's sustainability goals.
- Seek additional resources to continue the Centralina Regional Resilience Collaborative and the update the Regional Resilience Equity and GIS mapping tool data tool data layers and user interface.
- Continue to advance efforts to collaborate with consortium members in pursuing the CICOM Tech Hub Strategy Development Grant.
- Collaborate with workforce and economic development teams to deliver timely, relevant topics that address talent solutions and business needs.

In conclusion, the Centralina EDD is committed to fostering economic growth and regional prosperity through the implementation of its CEDS. This approach to improving the economic mobility, inclusivity and resilience of our nine-county region through the lens of collaboration, innovation, equity and ***“Prosperity for All.”***