

## Marion receives grant to help small businesses

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The city of Marion is one of eight North Carolina small towns that will participate in a new project to support small businesses and entrepreneurs in rural communities.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has awarded a \$250,000 grant to the N.C. Rural Center as part of the federal Rural Community Development Initiative. The initiative supports rural housing, community facilities and economic development projects, according to a news release.

With this funding, the N.C. Rural Center will boost small-business capacity in eight North Carolina communities. Marion is one of those eight. The others are Elizabethtown, Elkin, Lansing, Plymouth, Scotland Neck, Siler City and Star. Each of these communities participated in the Rural Center's N.C. Small Towns Economic Prosperity program (N.C. STEP). This new initiative will build upon the work of N.C. STEP by providing a program that includes community coaching, technical assistance and leadership training for entrepreneurs and small businesses, according to the news release.

“The goal of this project will be to build the capacity of these eight communities to support and nurture small businesses and entrepreneurs,” reads the news release. “The entrepreneurs and small businesses will in turn invest in their communities by starting or expanding businesses, creating new jobs and contributing to the overall quality of life in their small towns.”

City Manager Bob Boyette said his office had previously been informed that the program would provide a \$100,000 loan pool to each community to be used to support small business creation and expansion. The loan pool will be administered by the Rural Center and/or the USDA.

“The city is awaiting confirmation on the specifics, including verification of the amount of the loan pool,” said Boyette.

To accomplish the goal of boosting the economies in these towns, the Rural Center will partner with the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship. A national nonprofit, CRE will assist with the training and serve as an advisor to the Rural Center community coaches.

The program is on track to launch this summer.

## Center for Rural Entrepreneurship

“Regardless of the amount of the loan pool, this is a great opportunity for the city of Marion and Marion Business Association to work on a program to develop opportunities for small business creation and enhancement,” said Boyette. “The city is honored to have been one of a handful of rural communities handpicked by the Rural Center for this new program, based on our past success with the N.C. STEP Program. The N.C. Rural Center has always been supportive of our community and all of rural North Carolina and we look forward to working with them on this new endeavor.”

**The Center for Rural Entrepreneurship’s** mission is to help community leaders build a prosperous future by supporting and empowering business, social and civic entrepreneurs. With our roots and hearts in rural America, we help communities of all sizes and interests by bringing *empowering research* together with *effective community engagement* to advance *community-driven strategies* for prosperity.

Our **Solution Area Teams** empower community leaders to find their own answers to the economic development challenges and opportunities they face:

- **Community Development Philanthropy** provides effective strategies to build local philanthropic capacity and generate development resources.
- **New Generation Partnerships** provides a framework for engaging young people now and attracting them in the future.
- **Entrepreneurial Communities** provides a roadmap for designing and delivering entrepreneurship strategies that work.

For tools and resources, visit the departments in e2 University at <http://www.energizingentrepreneurs.org/library/e2university.html>.

To learn more about the Center, go to [www.energizingentrepreneurs.org](http://www.energizingentrepreneurs.org).

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