

Wake County Business Development Grant Policy

Updated December 4, 2023

Policy Objective

Support the development of an economic environment that attracts or encourages new investment, creates new jobs, results in a diverse tax base, promotes economic mobility, and supports sustainable business practices.

Eligible Projects

An existing or new company (“economic development projects”) may be eligible for a Business Development Grant if they meet a new investment threshold, a new jobs threshold, and wage requirements detailed in this policy. Special consideration may be provided for Fortune 500 companies and large international companies.

Living Wage Standard

No company shall receive a Business Development Grant for a project that includes jobs with wage rates below the Wake County Living Wage Rate or equivalent. The Wake County Living Wage Rate will be calculated annually by the County and based on the four-year average housing cost of a One Bedroom according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Fair Market Rents in the Raleigh MSA. The rate will be set on July 1st each year.

New Investment Threshold

New or existing companies may be eligible for a Business Development Grant for new investments, which exceed the minimum thresholds as outlined below. New investment is defined as “improvements to real estate, machinery, equipment, and other business personal property.” The value of land is not included in the calculation of new investment. New investment must exceed the minimum threshold in assessed valuation, as determined by the Wake County Tax Administrator.

New Jobs Threshold

New or existing companies may be eligible for a Business Development Grant when the investment threshold is met, and new jobs are created as outlined below. New jobs are defined as a new increase in the company's number of full-time Wake County employees. A full-time employee is defined as a person who is employed by the company working at least 35 hours per week, and whose wages are subject to withholding under Article 4A of Chapter 105 of the North Carolina General Statutes. Salary and employment documentation provided to the NC Department of Commerce, North Carolina Employer's Tax and Wage Reports, or other information as determined by the Wake County Finance Department will serve as Wake County documentation of job creation.

Thresholds

	Investment Minimum	Jobs Minimum	Avg. Salary Minimum	Incentive Percentage	Max Years
Tier 1 (Super Jobs)	\$50 million	250	200%	50% new tax growth	8 years
Tier 2	\$100 million	50	110%	50% new tax growth	8 years
Tier 3	\$75 million	50	110%	42.5% new tax growth	5 years
Tier 4	\$50 million	50	110%	35% new tax growth	5 years
Tier 5	\$25 million	50	110%	30% new tax growth	5 years

State Participation

New or existing companies may be eligible for a Business Development Grant when the state incentive requires local government participation and when the investment and jobs thresholds meet or exceed the minimum as outlined below.

	Investment Minimum	Jobs Minimum	Avg. Salary Minimum	Incentive Percentage	Max Years
State Participation	\$5 million	25	100%	35% new tax growth	5 years

Targeted Growth Areas

New or existing companies may be eligible for a Business Development Grant when locating or expanding in a designated Targeted Growth Area when investment and job creation thresholds meet or exceed the minimum outlined below.

	Investment Minimum	Jobs Minimum	Avg. Salary Minimum	Incentive Percentage	Max Years
Targeted Growth Area	\$2 million	20	Wake County Living Wage	35% new tax growth	5 years

Headquarters

New or existing headquarters may be eligible for a Business Development Grant when the investment, jobs, and salary thresholds meet or exceed the minimums below. For the purposes of this policy, a headquarters is defined as a corporate or national headquarters. Regional headquarters serving as a company's headquarters for a multi-national region are also eligible. Wake County Economic Development will assess the headquarters status and qualifications.

	Investment Minimum	Jobs Minimum	Avg. Salary Minimum	Incentive Percentage	Max Years
Headquarters	\$5 million	35	120% County Average Wage	35% new tax growth	5 years

Upward Mobility Bonus

5% additional of new tax growth

After qualifying for a Business Development Grant under Wake County policy, new or existing companies may be eligible for a Business Development Grant Bonus of 5% of additional new tax revenue growth attributable to the project when meeting conditions outlined below. The bonus is intended to encourage business practices that reduce barriers to employment and economic mobility, not inconsistent with NCGS 143-162.6.

The company meets all following conditions:

- Prohibits discrimination against applicants and employees in hiring, promotion, discharge, pay, fringe benefits, job training, classification, referral, and other aspects of employment on the basis of race, natural hair or hairstyles, ethnicity, creed, color, sex, pregnancy, marital or familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin or ancestry, National Guard or veteran status, religious belief or non-belief, age, or disability.
- Offers health insurance to employees and dependents at a level generally considered affordable.
- Leave policies accommodate vacation, sick, bereavement, and parental leave.

The company provides other programs that reduce barriers to employment and economic mobility, including at least two of the following:

- Program(s) that offset costs to employees associated with childcare.
- Program(s) that offset costs to employees associated with transportation.
- Program(s) that offset costs to employees associated with tuition or related educational expenses that increase employee skills and opportunities for advancement.
- Second chance hiring practices, including removal of prior conviction checkoffs.

Policy Guidelines

1. Business Development Grants will be considered for companies meeting the new investment and new job thresholds. The Board of Commissioners is not obligated to make any grants.
2. All projects will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The County will consider several factors (in addition to level of new investment and number of new jobs) when determining approval of a Business Development Grant, including:
 - a. Type of business, relative to current tax base
 - b. Types of new jobs
 - c. Reputation of company
 - d. The presence of competition for the projects
 - e. Business practices, such as employee benefits offered, wellness and health benefits, leave policies, community involvement practices, or other innovative programs to support economic mobility and employee health and wellbeing.
 - f. Business practices, such as LEED certification, WELL Building Standard, or other sustainability initiatives.
3. The amount of the grant payment to be paid by the County shall be consistent with the investment and jobs minimum as established in the grant agreement. In no event shall the grant amount exceed the amount of ad valorem taxes paid by the company on the new investment in that calendar year.
4. The County will require that the assessed value of new investment is confirmed by the Wake County Tax Administrator and that all property taxes are paid prior to providing a grant payment.

5. For projects/companies considering locating (or expanding) in one of the municipalities within Wake County, the County's participation in a Business Development Grant is contingent on participation by the municipality.
6. All grant agreements are subject to performance criteria that will be outlined in detail in a Business Development Grant contract between the company and the County approved in an open meeting of the Wake County Commissioners. The contract will outline that grant payments are contingent on achievement of performance criteria during each year of the grant.