

WAKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS · 2026

# LAUNCH

WAKE COUNTY

*Empowering Entrepreneurs · Building Communities · Driving Economic Growth*

2026

1,130+

Graduates

9

Municipalities

80%

Women-Owned

\$50K

Awarded

OUR MISSION

# Entrepreneurship Changes Communities

We believe that when people have access to knowledge, mentorship, and opportunity, they create businesses that strengthen Wake County.

**Our role is simple:**

*Help Wake County entrepreneurs turn ideas into sustainable businesses — because when small businesses succeed, Wake County succeeds.*



Create Local Jobs



Drive Economic Growth



Build Stronger Communities



Expand Opportunity for Everyone

# SUCCESS STORY

## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

# Michael Prelaske

*Thirteen Forty Seven Games · Apex*

“Besides for the professional contacts which have been invaluable, Launch made me feel like this was a possibility and that made everything else possible.”

- Grew from 3 employees to 55 employees during time in Launch
- Expanded out with 2 sub businesses
- Professional connections through program and mentorship helped secure funding for expansion



# Educational Economic Development

1,437

Individuals Supported at 112 Events

Focus: Historically Under-Resourced & Traditional Businesses

Training the Ecosystem

## PERFORMANCE AREAS



**Training**

Practical skills for business owners



**Financial Readiness**

Building a strong financial foundation



**Mentoring**

1-on-1 guidance from experienced professionals



**Pitch Competition**

Blueprint to Skyline — \$50K awarded annually

# Launch Wake County Impact

132

2025 Enrollment

1,130+

Total Graduates

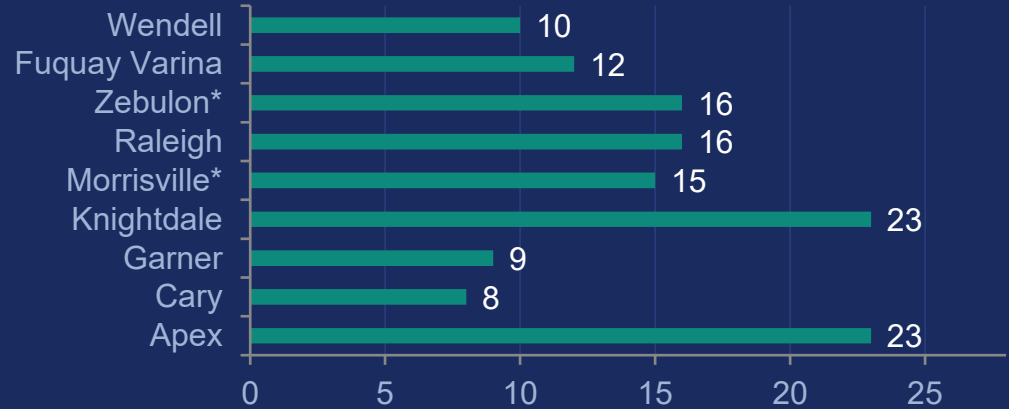
80%

Women

78%

Minority-Owned

Municipality	2025	Proj.
Apex	23	20
Cary	8	20
Garner	9	20
Knightdale	23	20
Morrisville*	15	20
Raleigh	16	20
Zebulon*	16	20
Fuquay Varina	12	20
Wendell	10	20
<b>TOTAL (10 towns)</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>200</b>



\* Added in 2025 · Program Total Through SPR26: 1,130

# Program Managers & Working Partners



**10+**

**Leadership Team**

Program Managers and Working Partners



**80+**

**Board**

Town Boards — 6 to 11 people per town



**150+**

**Mentors**

Experienced entrepreneurs and business professionals  
in local communities



**1,000+**

**Launch Alumni**

Graduates of the Launch curriculum and growing

PITCH COMPETITION

# Blueprint to Skyline

**\$50K**

Total Awarded

**9**

Entrepreneurs Funded

**3**

Award Categories

**167**

Applications Received

HIGHLIGHTS

- 7 of 9 winners were active Launch program participants
- 15 finalists presented from a pool of 167 applicants
- 3-week pitch prep focused on competence and confidence
- Funds generously sponsored by Wells Fargo



# Community Impact

60%+

Alumni Business  
Growth in 2025



Focused on programming with the biggest impact on small business growth

Contractor's Academy hosted 8 attendees in 2025

3,000+ hours of training provided to Launch participants

Business Expo at Wake Tech Southern Campus for Launch Alumni

15 students in Entrepreneurship for Skilled Trades & Professionals

Launch curriculum updating for Fall 2026 with deeper new-owner training

# Alumni Happenings

## UPCOMING & RECENT EVENTS

### Business Expo

June 2025

[Launch Alumni set up as vendors on South Campus while staff, students, and the public came to check them out.

### Alumni Speed Networking

Monthly Virtual Networking

Alumni come together in a virtual networking event. Get moved into breakout rooms with 4 other alumni to meet and network with.

### Pitch Competition

March 2026

Launch Alumni pitched their businesses for a chance to win up to \$7500.

### Launch Graduation

TBD

Wake Tech to hold one large Launch graduation with all municipalities on one evening

### Duke Energy Pitch Competition

TBD

Applying for the Duke Energy Grant to support one more pitch competition for our Alumni.

### Launch 2.0

TBD

Looking into building out a Launch 2.0 program where alumni can receive additional curriculum and support as their businesses grow.

# THANK YOU

Wake County Board of Commissioners

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*Together, we are building a community where every entrepreneur has the tools, support, and confidence to succeed.*

**1,130+**

Graduates

**9**

Municipalities

**\$50K**

Awarded