



JACKSONVILLE ONSLOW

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Strategic Plan



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Economic Development Strategic Plan

Economic development strategic plans provide a clear roadmap for sustainable growth and prosperity, making them vital to healthy communities. It helps identify local strengths, address economic challenges, and attract investment by aligning resources and initiatives toward common goals. Jacksonville Onslow Economic Development's (JOED) vision statement is meant to inspire public and private leaders to work collaboratively toward an aspirational future – one of economic resilience. The mission statement clearly defines how JOED will reach that vision. This strategic plan lays out goals and strategies that support the vision and fall under the framework of the mission statement – business development, capacity building, and strengthening collaborations and partnerships.

JOED helps the community solve complex economic challenges by connecting organizations, people, places, and resources. In business development, JOED connects companies to real estate, training resources, and funding. Through marketing and communications, JOED connects people to places and businesses to businesses. It convenes local governments to collaborate on infrastructure, education, and placemaking. Woven throughout the goals and strategies of this strategic plan are action steps that support all of these priorities and further connect people, places, organizations, and resources.

Vision Statement

A diverse and resilient economy for Onslow County where businesses and communities prosper and thrive

Mission Statement

JOED supports the community's economic development vision through recruitment, product development, business retention, and entrepreneurship; strengthening assets; and fostering strategic collaborations between the public and private sectors.

Strategic Plan Goals

- Attract, Retain, and Support the Start Up of Businesses that Diversify the Economy and Provide Well-Paying Jobs
- Leverage the Talent Pipeline
- Develop and Deploy a Brand Identity that Attracts Business, Investment, and People
- Connect Onslow County, Municipalities, and the Private Sector to Advance Community and Economic Development Initiatives
- Invest in JOED and Implementation of the Strategic Plan to Ensure the Community's Economic Development Goals are Realized



Goal: Attract, Retain, and Support the Start Up of Businesses that Diversify the Economy and Provide Well-Paying Jobs

Product development, business attraction, and business retention and expansion are the top priorities of JOED. The county and municipalities look to the organization to take the lead role in developing the sites, parks, and buildings that will attract and retain businesses that will create quality jobs and increase the tax base.

Strategy: Implement a proactive Business Retention and Expansion Program.

Action Steps:

- Implement a formal business visitation program to include large employers and fast-growing companies. Target cluster companies, legacy companies, large agriculture businesses, etc., to form relationships, assess expansion/contraction potential, and provide services that will reduce barriers to start up and growth.
- Engage local government elected leaders in business appreciation, networking, and other BRE events.
- Deploy an annual existing business survey that gathers information for the BRE program such as in-demand skills, expansion potential, topics for lunch-and-learn programs, regulatory barriers, and future space needs.
- Use a customer relationship management program to track information gathered during business visits to ensure efficient follow up and track trends over time.
- Update the “Existing Industry” menu on the website to include a “resources” page that lists the support JOED provides to existing businesses. Also, add a “call to action” button on the webpage. The call to action could be a button to schedule a meeting or ask for help.
- Continue to partner with ally organizations to host regular business networking events. Lunch-and-learns are one example.
- Facilitate cluster development by hosting networking events for industry clusters such as marine and logistics.
- With partner agencies, such as the Small Business Center, hold a workshop on succession planning. Invite business owners that, through the BRE Program, are anticipated to be within a few years of retirement.
- Organize events to celebrate business contributions to Onslow County around designated weeks such as Manufacturing Week, Small Business Week, Veterans Small Business Week, etc. Include facility tours, social media campaigns, networking lunches with keynote speakers on a current topic, profiles of business owners on social media, awards events, etc. Invite elected officials to visit with companies during tours and weeks like Manufacturing Week.

Strategy: Leveraging regional and state partners, promote Onslow County to target sectors for new business locations.

Action Steps:

- Focus on the following target clusters: IT and Analytical Instruments; Distribution and E-Commerce; Water Transportation; Marketing, Design and Publishing; and Transportation and Logistics.
- Continue to respond to RFIs and maintain up-to-date property listings in EDPNC’s database, which is pulled to populate JOED’s online database.
- Invite EDPNC and NC’s Southeast recruiters to an Onslow County product and community tour each year, targeting new hires at the organization.
- Hold a marketing event for regional commercial brokers to present development opportunities in Onslow County.
- Add a target cluster section to the website and include competitive position information. North Carolina’s Southeast has a good [model](#) on their website.
- Participate in regional and state business attraction activities aligned with JOED’s target clusters.

Strategy: Create and implement a long-range product development strategy with public and private partners.

Action Steps:

- Complete a more refined “Phase 3” development plan for the Camp Davis Industrial Park in Holly Ridge.
- Continue to support the development of Project Coffee.
- Develop an inventory, analysis, and long-range product development plan for site and building development.
 - Continue to partner with the public and private sectors for industrial park and building development.
 - Conduct the recommended due diligence and prioritize sites for development to make sure JOED has an inventory of future development opportunities.
 - Develop a multi-year budget to implement the plan and make specific requests for public support.
 - Refresh the spec building feasibility study analysis.
- Explore multi-jurisdictional development opportunities between municipalities, the county and municipalities, and Onslow County and other counties as one strategy to develop priority sites. The [Brunswick-Columbus International Logistics Park](#) is one example.
- Complete an evaluation to identify vacant, underutilized, and brownfield redevelopment opportunities. Include publicly owned properties.
- Help each municipality identify its priority industrial, commercial, or development site. Develop a set of development steps for the site. If needed, act as a “project manager” to facilitate the development.
- In addition to maintaining available industrial property information in EDPNC’s database (that populates JOED’s website), keep a database of available significant commercial and downtown properties to promote to developers.
- Advocate for public investment in infrastructure to support business development:
 - Water and sewer
 - State investment in transportation improvements such as Hwy 24 to I-40
 - Continued investment in the Albert J. Ellis Airport.
- Work with North Carolina’s Southeast to develop marketing videos of Onslow County’s most marketable properties.

Strategy: Support the start up and scaling of new businesses with a focus on veteran and military related businesses.

Action Steps:

- Continue to support the “veterans business collaborative” that brings together the organizations that are supporting veteran startups and business development.
- Co-sponsor entrepreneurship awareness events with partners such as the Small Business Center, Genesis Block, and Small Business and Technology Development Center.
- Update the 2019 feasibility study for an incubator/entrepreneurship center in Jacksonville. Refresh the data, location analysis, and business plan to capture today’s opportunities in entrepreneurship. The update could be in partnership with Genesis Block, which supports entrepreneurship in Jacksonville. The entrepreneurship center could have special programs/rates for veterans and military dependents.

Goal: Leverage the Talent Pipeline

Attracting, retaining, and developing skilled talent is the number one concern of all businesses. In order for JOED to be successful in the first goal of the strategic plan, it will need to leverage the talent pipeline and work with education and workforce development partners to expand and strengthen the talent pipeline. Economic development organizations can be a liaison between business and education, identify best practices and promote them to partner organizations, and promote job opportunities.

Strategy: Align education and workforce training with target clusters.

Action Steps:

- Develop stronger relationships with higher educational institutions in the region and state. One example is connecting to UNC Wilmington's research and work in marine biology.
- Develop stronger relationships with industry associations and organizations that support Onslow County's target clusters (i.e., NC Biotechnology Center).
- Conduct a feasibility study for a "center of innovation and excellence" aligned with one of Onslow County's target clusters. The center could provide space for workforce training, prototype equipment, and visiting researcher space. Examples are the Textile Technology Center at Gaston College and the Polymers Center in Charlotte.
- Update the "Workforce Development" menu on the website and promote the opportunities to existing businesses.

Strategy: Convene stakeholders of the workforce development system to meet goals.

Action Steps:

- Initiate and facilitate a quarterly roundtable of workforce development partners to exchange ideas, share business intelligence, and explore opportunities for efficiencies and outreach.
- Continue to be a source of workforce development information for local employers.
- Periodically survey employers to identify needs and share with workforce development providers.



Goal: Develop and Deploy a Brand Identity that Attracts Business, Investment, and People

Onslow County's story is currently several stories. The county is home to large military installations that influence the local economy. It is a coastal community with lifestyle businesses and tourism. It is a place where high tech services, e-commerce, and advanced manufacturing companies have located. Onslow County is also home to a wide range of municipalities and communities. Developing a brand identity that encompasses the many facets of Onslow County is important for marketing. JOED can help curate and tell Onslow County's story.

Strategy: Develop Onslow County's brand identity and deploy through internal and external marketing and communications.

Action Steps:

- Facilitate a professional process to develop a brand identity that defines the future vision of Onslow County.
 - Utilize the SWOT Analysis and other assessments from this strategic planning process in the branding process so the consultant will not have to duplicate those steps.
 - Ask the consulting team to assess the brands of related organizations for consistency.
 - Implement the brand using all of JOED's marketing tools: website, social media, materials, promotions, etc.
 - Seek support, endorsement, and agreements with allies to use versions of the brand. An example is Amherst County, VA, where county agencies and related organizations all use versions of one brand.
 - Develop user guidelines to ensure brand integrity is maintained.
- Overhaul JOED's website with the new brand and add features such as:
 - Reduced narrative and more infographics, images, and videos
 - Interactive data (sourced and updated)
 - Video testimonials
 - Calls to action
- Create downloadable e-brochures on the website. Examples: community profiles, talent profile, housing profile, target cluster briefs, etc.

Strategy: Tell Onslow County's story to internal audiences.

Action Steps:

- Add a full-time marketing, communications, and events position in Year 2 of strategic plan implementation.
- Develop and deploy social media campaigns throughout the year. Some could coincide with the International Economic Development Council's Economic Development Week, Small Business Week, National Veterans Small Business Week, etc.
- Create a social media series spotlighting Onslow County people that are doing great things, such as "Faces & Stories of Onslow County." The series could include short blog articles and/or video interviews.
- Maintain segmentation of the JOED database to send tailored content to existing businesses, public partners, investors, and other key audiences.
- Create "content brands" for e-communications so it is easier for readers to focus on key messages. Examples are brands for sites and buildings news, business/leader spotlights, organizational announcements, etc.
- Make a yearly presentation of JOED's annual report to each municipality and the county. Also make quarterly or semi-annual presentations to the county.
- Maintain the e-newsletter and expand to include "special editions" to targeted audiences.

Goal: Connect Onslow County, Municipalities, and the Private Sector to Advance Community and Economic Development Initiatives

One of JOED's primary roles is convener. It is the only organization that brings together local governments and the private sector to work on complex issues that support the overall community vision. Community collaboration is essential for economic development because it brings together diverse perspectives, resources, and talents to support sustainable growth. When local businesses and governments work in partnership, they can identify shared priorities, attract investment, and build resilient, inclusive economies that benefit everyone.

Strategy: Facilitate a higher level of collaboration between local governments and the private sector.

- Host an annual economic development summit or micro-conference to facilitate an ongoing community conversation about the future of Onslow County. Use this opportunity to provide a JOED annual report. Local governments can present an update on local projects and initiatives. Existing businesses can highlight major expansions. JOED can spotlight its strategic plan and accomplishments.
- Participate in the regular local government managers meeting to discuss points of collaboration.
- Attend the quarterly meeting of the mayors and county commission chair to discuss points of cooperation.
- Organize an annual showcase tour for public and private leaders to see progress on projects in each locality. This could kick off with a JOED update, include a bus tour, and conclude with a reception.

Strategy: Provide technical assistance that will support decision-making and investment in amenities and placemaking.

Action Steps:

- When aligned with JOED's mission, provide project management support services to municipalities and the county on development projects.
- With additional special funding, conduct specialized market studies for municipal and county projects such as feasibility studies for a hotel, event venue, etc.
- Provide market data to organizations and companies with investment plans in Onslow County. Examples include market profiles for housing developers and community profiles for nonprofits seeking grants.
- Publish a community profile for each municipality and the county that includes retail, housing, workforce, and other market information.



Goal: Invest in JOED and Implementation of the Strategic Plan to Ensure the Community's Economic Development Goals are Realized

A well-funded, expertly staffed local economic development organization led by strong, visionary leadership is essential to the successful implementation of a strategic plan. Skilled staff bring the expertise needed to analyze data, build partnerships, and adapt strategies and effective leadership ensures alignment with community priorities and fosters trust among stakeholders. JOED serves as the driving force behind turning broad goals into measurable actions, ensuring accountability, coordination, and sustained momentum.

Strategy: Appropriately resource JOED to implement the strategic plan.

Action Steps:

- Develop new Memorandums of Understanding with the county and all municipalities that is an umbrella agreement about the relationship between JOED and local governments. Also develop an annual service agreement with each local government based on JOED's annual program of work that outlines expectations for public sector support.
- Increase JOED's funding over the next five years to match standard ranges in North Carolina (\$5-\$10 per capita). We recommend an annual operating budget increase to support implementation of this strategic plan. The organization will need funding for branding and marketing, feasibility studies, additional staff, and other action items.
 - The public sector has committed to be a lead investor in Year 1.
 - Leverage public sector support to raise private sector fund in Year 2.
 - Request funding in the form of a forgivable loan from the public sector to fund a professional fundraising campaign.
 - Conduct a fundraising feasibility study.
 - If the feasibility study is positive, continue with a private sector fundraising campaign.
- Benchmark JOED's funding with other economic development organizations every five years to ensure it remains competitive.
- Continue to seek grants to support implementation of the strategic plan. Examples are site development grants for product development, a U.S. Economic Development Administration grant for incubator feasibility study, and workforce development grants for the digital skills program.
- Hold quarterly update sessions with all city and county managers.



Strategy: Implement an investor relations program.

Action Steps:

- Host semi-annual events to engage investors and provide networking opportunities. These could be coordinated with other business networking events for efficiency, such as a “pre-reception” for investors.
- Publish quarterly communications and an annual report to update investors.
- Make the annual financial audit available to investors.
- Complete an annual investor satisfaction survey.

Strategy: Invest in staff and leadership development.

Action Steps:

- Budget for staff development, certifications, and course work to maintain professional credentials.
- Conduct a compensation study every three years to make sure JOED is positioned to attract and retain top talent.
- Conduct an orientation for new JOED board members and newly elected officials.
- Periodically provide an economic development training workshop for local government and JOED board leadership.
- Conduct annual employee and board satisfaction surveys.



Metrics

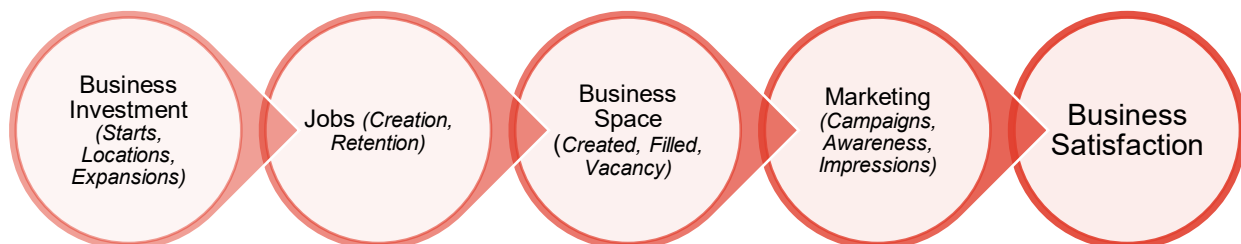
We advocate that economic development organizations track three sets of metrics. Program metrics are outcomes of the activities of the economic development program and measure the effectiveness of strategies. These metrics inform strategic planning and resource allocation. Organizational metrics track the overall stability of the organization. These metrics offer an understanding of how effective and efficient the organization is. Community well-being is a measure of the overall health and well-being of a community. Over time, these metrics influence a wide range of public policies.

In addition to tracking metrics, perform an annual economic impact analysis of the projects that JOED “assisted” to show the return on investment in the economic development program.

Example Metrics

Program	Organization	Community Well-Being
•Business Starts, Locations, Expansions •Job Creation, Retention •Program, Event Participation •Business Sites, Parks and Buildings Created, Filled, Vacancy •Marketing Awareness, Impressions •Existing Business Satisfaction	•Funding Stability •Governance and Compliance •Employee Satisfaction •Leadership Engagement •Investor Satisfaction	•Educational Attainment •Housing Affordability •Transportation Investments •Income, Wage Gains, Poverty •Labor Force •Food Security •Health Outcomes

Recommended Dashboard of Program Metrics



Implementation Plan

Implementing a strategic plan for economic development is crucial for fostering long-term economic stability and prosperity within a community or region. It is a roadmap for economic resilience and allows local governments, businesses, and stakeholders to align efforts, reduce inefficiencies, and capitalize on opportunities. Moreover, following a strategic plan enhances competitiveness, supports job creation, and ensures that development initiatives are inclusive and sustainable, ultimately improving the quality of life for residents.

This plan was crafted with input from a wide range of Onslow County citizens, business and government leaders, and allies in economic development. It represents a shared vision for the future – a vision of prosperity for all of Onslow County citizens.

Below is a recommended timeline to implement major initiatives in the strategic plan. The list is not comprehensive, nor does it include the many ongoing activities of JOED. It includes action items that require the most significant resources, both of finances and people, and many will require expanded partnerships and support of allies.

