



# Incentives



## **State and Federal Incentive Programs**

**Article 3J Credits:** Article 3J provides two types of tax credits to eligible taxpayers that undertake qualifying activities in North Carolina.

1. **Credit for Creating Jobs:** Eligible taxpayers that meet a minimum threshold of new full-time jobs created during the taxable year may claim a credit for each new job created. The credit is taken in equal installments over four years following the year the jobs are created. The job threshold and the credit amount per job are determined by the tier designation of the county in which the jobs are created. Currently for Catawba County, 10 jobs must be created paying at or above the wage standard of \$563/week to qualify for tax credits equaling \$5,000 per new job created.
2. **Credit for Investing in Business Property:** Eligible taxpayers may claim a credit based on a percentage of the cost of capitalized tangible personal property that is placed in service during the taxable year, in excess of an applicable threshold. This credit is taken in equal installments over four years, beginning the year after the property is first placed in service. The current threshold for Catawba County is \$1million and the credit percentage is 5%.

**Job Development Investment Grant:** Provides a percentage up to 75% (designated by the Economic Incentive Committee) of employee state income tax receipts per full-time job created, for approximately 10 years. The employee salary must meet the average wage standard of \$625 per week and the company must provide health insurance. There are a limited number of grants given each year and each request must be approved first by the NC Department of Commerce and second by the Economic Investment Committee for businesses.

**One NC Fund:** Provides funds for the purchase of equipment, structural repairs, improvements or renovations of existing buildings, for expansion and construction of or improvements to new or existing water, sewer, gas or electric utility distribution lines, or equipment for existing buildings. Moneys may also be used for construction of or improvements to new or existing water, sewer, gas or electric utility distribution lines, or equipment to serve new or proposed industrial buildings used for manufacturing and industrial operations. Funding is provided at the discretion of the Governor, usually provided on an amount for each full-time job created, which is determined by the NC Department of Commerce and the Governor. Factors considered include economic impact, strategic importance to the state, region or locality, quality of jobs, quality of industry and project, and environmental impact.

**Community Development Block Grant:** Provides funding for infrastructure such as water, sewer and roads for businesses committed to a site.\* In Catawba County CDBG provides \$12,000 per each full-time job created by businesses that qualify for the Article 3J Credits and \$7,500 per job for businesses that do not qualify for the Article 3J Credits. The cap is \$1,000,000 and it requires a 25% local match. In addition, the business must agree to hire 60% of employees from previously low to moderate-income levels, which is \$29,000, or less.

\*site must be outside of the city limits of Hickory. (Hickory is an entitlement city and runs their own CDBG program)



## **State and Federal Incentive Programs** (continued)

**Economic Development Administration:** Provides up to 50% funding for water, sewer and road infrastructure for businesses plus 10% presumed benefit.

**Golden Leaf Foundation Fund:** Provides funding for initiatives that result in job creation and retention in tobacco-dependent or economically distressed counties; improve new and existing business performance in tobacco-dependent or economically distressed areas through responsible and effective technology and business training; and supports programs that assist with small business and entrepreneurial interests related to cultural, heritage, and eco-tourism. A non-profit 501(c)3 organization must make application and funding is decided by the Foundation's staff and Board of Directors.

**Local Government Incentives:** These incentives at the municipality and county levels are negotiated on a case by case basis. These incentives typically are based upon job creation, including wage rate, investment in real property and machinery and equipment and the type and general description (NAICS) of the business. Incentives typically involve granting an amount equal to a percentage of the property tax to the business and/or property and in-kind infrastructure improvements. Each municipality may, on a case-by-case basis, consider annexation, alter or waive fees or implement special measures to attract or retain businesses in their municipality city limits. In addition, Catawba County has a policy that provides for the extension of water and sewer lines outside of municipalities. The county fronts 100% of the costs with the participating city repaying 75% of the loan with no interest. Each municipality has its own policies in providing city services.

**Industrial Revenue Bonds:** Industrial revenue bonds are issued by a governmental entity which borrows money and uses the loan proceeds to finance a manufacturing plant or other facility for a specific private company. The governmental entity uses the company's loan repayments to retire the bonds. The principal amount may not exceed \$20 million on federal bonds, state bonds do not have a principal cap. Typically, the interest rates on IRB loans are lower than the current market rate.

**Community College Industrial Training Programs:** The program trains workers for any new or expanding business that has created at least twelve new jobs. The program pays the instructors wages and travel costs, for classroom materials and for the use of the training facility.

**Department of Transportation Rail Industrial Access Program:** Provides funding for a portion of the cost of constructing or refurbishing spur tracks to new or expanded industrial facilities. The funded portion is between 35 and 50 percent of eligible project costs, with the percentage funded determined by the project's score in an economic benefit point system that credits jobs created, amount of capital investment, number of rail carloads to be generated, and whether the project is in a distressed county or will preserve a short line railroad. The program will fund site preparation, track construction, switches, and grade crossings and signals. It will not fund engineering, utility relocation, right-of-way relocation or rail docks.



## **State and Federal Incentive Programs** (continued)

**Department of Transportation Site Access Fund:** Provides funding for the construction of roads to new industrial facilities that also qualify for the Lee Act. Departmental policies provide that the number of employees at the facility and the amount of truck traffic to and from the facility will be primary justifications for assistance.

**On-The-Job-Training (OJT):** OJT is a federally funded activity through the Workforce Investment Act that can reimburse employers up to 50% of an employee's wages during his/her training. It is designed to give unemployed or under-employed workers the opportunity to learn valuable new skills beneficial to the workforce. OJT encourages employers to provide the training and allows for monetary incentives to help compensate for training time and cost.

**Incumbent Workforce Development Grant:** Program provides funding to established North Carolina businesses to provide educational and skills training for current workers. It is designed to benefit business by enhancing the skills of employees, thereby increasing employee productivity and the potential for company growth. Maximum funding for any project is \$37,500. The business must state that it is not eligible for or has exhausted efforts to secure funding through existing incumbent worker training programs in the North Carolina Community College System, or the university system, such as the New and Expanding Industries Program and the Focused Industrial Training Program.

**Sales Tax Exemption for Large Scale Data Centers:** Qualified large data center projects investing in real and personal property will be exempt from sales and use taxes on machinery and equipment. However, a one percent privilege tax will be imposed on eligible datacenter purchases (maximum of \$80 per article). Qualified data center projects must be designated as a Tier 4 classification as designated by the Uptime Institute and make minimum real and personal property investment levels based on NC Development Tier structure as follows:

- Tier 1 county: a minimum of \$150 million investment in real and/or personal property within 5 years after commencement of construction.
- Tier 2 and 3 counties: a minimum of \$300 million investment in real and/or personal property within 5 years after commencement of construction.



## **Local Incentives**

Local Incentives may be granted by each municipality and then by Catawba County on a case-by-case basis. The only local municipality with a written incentive policy is the City of Hickory.

### **City of Hickory Economic Development Assistance Guidelines**

The Hickory Metropolitan Area is undergoing a period of economic transition. The following guidelines are adopted to promote diversified economic development, encourage growth in the property tax base, improve recruitment of business and industry, enhance job creation, and to continue Hickory's ability to function as the hub of the metropolitan area. All economic development assistance is offered at the discretion of the City of Hickory. These guidelines are intended for application to economic development agreements made while the unemployment rate in the Hickory Metropolitan Area is above 5 percent.

#### **1) General**

- a) The companies that seek economic development assistance must first submit a letter requesting such assistance and a completed economic development grant application. The letter must demonstrate that without City assistance, the company would not make the investment in Hickory.
- b) Projects must not have started construction prior to consideration of the application.
- c) Economic development projects must comply with the North Carolina General Statutes 158-7.1 and other appropriate general statutes.
- d) Companies entering into economic development agreements with the City must implement training and educational support programs for their employees comparable to the City of Hickory's tuition reimbursement program. The purpose of this requirement is to limit economic development assistance to businesses that are willing to improve the overall education and skill level of their workforce, which will also have long-term benefits the community at large.
- e) The company must enter into a binding joint economic development agreement with the City.
- f) The recipient must demonstrate compliance with all program criteria prior to receiving assistance. Grants will be disbursed after payment of the annual property tax levy.
- g) Leased properties will qualify if the companies have a lease that exceeds the length of the incentive period.
- h) Economic development assistance is limited to new businesses and businesses undertaking expansions. This assistance is not intended to create an incentive for existing businesses to shift locations within the community. An exception may be provided to this provision for business retention activities as described in paragraph 8.
- i) There is no right or entitlement to economic development assistance. All such assistance is made at the discretion of the Hickory City Council.



**City of Hickory Economic Development Assistance Guidelines (continued)**

- 2) Industrial projects. The City may provide economic development grants for industrial projects that meet the following criteria:
  - a) Net minimum increase capital investment of \$1,000,000 or more measured by an increase in the property tax assessment;
  - b) The project must create employment that pays wages at or above the median industrial wage for Catawba County as listed annually by the North Carolina Department of Commerce Finance Center;
  - c) Economic development grants for industries may be made annually for up to ten (10) consecutive years to projects that meet these criteria. The size of the annual grant may be up to 100% percent of the net increased property tax revenue generated by the project.
  - d) Industrial projects include corporate headquarters and research and development facilities that qualify under the requirements of the William S. Lee Act.
- 3) Non-industrial Projects. The City may provide economic development grants to non-industrial projects that meet the following criteria:
  - a) The projects must create new employment.
  - b) The projects must increase the assessed value of real property by no less than \$1,000,000.
  - c) Non-industrial economic development grants may be up to 100% of the net gain in property tax revenue generated by the project for a period not to exceed ten (10) consecutive years for projects creating new employment that pays wages at or above the median industrial wage for Catawba County as listed annually by the North Carolina Department of Commerce Finance Center.
  - d) Non-industrial economic development grants may be 100% of the net gain in property tax revenue generated by the project for a period not to exceed three (3) consecutive years for projects creating new employment that does not pay wages at or above the median industrial wage for Catawba County as listed annually by the North Carolina Department of Commerce Finance Center.
  - e) Non-industrial projects include professional offices, health care services, back office operations, but exclude residential projects. The following uses are not eligible for non-industrial economic development grants: cemeteries, golf courses, public utility uses, resource recovery facilities, adult uses, private clubs, agricultural uses, abattoirs, mining, landfills, retail uses, personal services and telecommunications towers. Mixed-use projects are eligible, but any residential element must have its portion of the investment subtracted from the calculations of tax value. The residential portion of the project may be eligible for other grants for the creation of opportunities for home ownership.



**City of Hickory Economic Development Assistance Guidelines (continued)**

- 4) Economic development projects located within the commercial development revitalization area designated by City Council;
  - a) The City may provide economic development grants for industrial and non-industrial projects that meet the following criteria:
    - i. The projects must create new employment.
    - ii. The projects must increase the assessed value of real property by no less than \$500,000.
    - iii. The project must be located in a designated commercial development revitalization area. Designated areas shall be adopted by City Council and may be amended by City Council only. Exhibit "A" is the map that delineates the commercial revitalization area.
    - iv. Commercial economic development grants may be for up to 100% of the net gain in property tax revenue generated by the project for a period not to exceed five (5) consecutive years that is the result of the new investment. Projects must not have started construction prior to consideration of the application;
  - b) Grants will be disbursed after payment of the annual property tax levy
- 5) Off-site improvements to infrastructure. As an alternative to providing direct economic development grants, the City may participate in making off-site improvements such as roads, rights of way, sidewalks, water and sewer lines, fire hydrants, underground utilities, street landscaping, and the like when such improvements are required to bring about desirable economic development. Criteria for such participation are:
  - a) Off-site improvements to infrastructure will be subject to an economic development agreement. The agreement may consider increased property taxes toward payment of the cost of the extension or improvement in the same ratio as for economic development grants. That portion of the property tax may be directed to the appropriate general or enterprise fund.
  - b) If the improvements benefit only one property, the combination of the increased property tax and company participation shall account for the cost of the extension or improvement.
  - c) If the improvement benefits multiple properties a pro-rata share of the cost of the improvement shall be assigned to requesting property.
- 6) City Property as an economic development incentive. The City may accept increases in prospective property taxes for up to ten (10) years as consideration for the sale of its business park properties. Such property sales will be subject to an economic development agreement that includes a guarantee of payment by the applicant if there is a shortfall between the projected property taxes and the actual property taxes paid during the agreement period. The use of City Property as an economic development incentive is an alternative to and not an addition to other economic development incentives.



**City of Hickory Economic Development Assistance Guidelines (continued)**

- 7) Assistance to entrepreneurs. The City may provide incentives to entrepreneurs by making grants of up to \$1000 for documented costs of tuition and materials for participation in small business development training or consultation offered by the Catawba Valley, Western Piedmont or Caldwell County Small Business Centers, the Small Business and Technology Development Center, Lenoir Rhyne University or the Hickory Metro Higher Education Center. All grants are reimbursable following successful completion and certification of the training and opening of the new business. Adult businesses and private clubs are not eligible for this assistance. The new or expanded business must create new employment in the City of Hickory. Only costs for successfully completed training or business consulting assistance incurred within the calendar year prior to the opening or expansion of the business and directly related to the new or expanded business are eligible.
- 8) Assistance with required infrastructure. The City may budget to provide matching grants of up to \$5000 for the documented costs of additions or enlargements to public utilities within public rights of way associated with the opening of a new business or expansion of an existing business. Such assistance is limited to the addition of fire hydrants. To be eligible the new or expanded business must make application to City prior to construction, must create new employment and must increase the City's tax base by \$200,000 or more. The grant shall be made after the improvements have been completed and paid for by the applicant.
- 9) Business Retention Incentives. The City may provide incentives to retain business and industry under certain conditions. The intent of these incentives is to provide a tool for the City to retain significant tax base and employment in the event of a critical and potentially catastrophic business or industrial closing. Grants cannot be used to subsidize or artificially sustain businesses and industries when job losses or closings appear inevitable. Grants or loan funds under this program are intended to benefit the City, employee and citizen by increasing worker education, worker and company productivity and long-term industry competitiveness on a global basis. These incentives may not be used to protect companies from local business competition.
  - a) Retention incentives may be used for the following purposes:
    - i) Employee training
    - ii) Improving public infrastructure
    - iii) Modernization of plant or equipment
  - b) Funding may be provided in the form of a loan or annual grants
  - c) Conditions of approval include commitment to maintain or increase levels of employment and tax base throughout the incentive period
  - d) Failure to comply with incentive conditions will result in the return of all incentive funds to the City of Hickory
  - e) The recipient must agree to participate in public information programs about all modernization and employee training efforts in order to share information concerning successes in making local industries more competitive in the global economy.