



NORTH CAROLINA'S SOUTHEAST™

Our Region. Your Future.



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Vision Statement

North Carolina's Southeast fosters regional prosperity and enhances economic development to unlock opportunities, attract investment, and cultivate growth for the region.



Mission Statement

North Carolina's Southeast facilitates economic development in our region through innovative marketing, capacity building, advocacy, and collaborative regional initiatives that result in job creation, capital investment, and regional prosperity.

Strategic Plan Goals

- Market NC's Southeast Region to Attract Investment and Jobs
- Support Local Economic Development Efforts to Increase the Industrial Sites and Building Inventory
- Promote Regional Collaboration and Advocate for Economic Growth
- Strengthen the NCSE Organization by Investing in Leadership and Staff

Top Strategies

- Support local economic development organizations in business recruitment
- Refresh and deploy a vibrant regional brand
- Expand funding, resources, and technical assistance to develop sites and buildings
- Connect leaders across the region
- Advocate for investments, funding, and resources that will advance regional economic development initiatives

Metrics

- ✓ Client visits
- ✓ Building and site recommendations
- ✓ Leads/projects generated by industry sector, source, port, and rail requirements
- ✓ Company location announcements impacted by marketing strategies
- ✓ Industrial site and building inventory
- ✓ Technical assistance provided to counties
- ✓ Marketing events implemented
- ✓ Regional engagement, participation
- ✓ Fiscal stability
- ✓ Investor retention, new investors
- ✓ Partner engagement
- ✓ Investor, board, and employee satisfaction

Private Investors

4.5 ★★★★★

Public Investors

3.9 ★★★★★

94% of private investors and 100% of public

investors are "likely" and "very likely" to **Continue to Invest in NCSE**

North Carolina's Southeast 2024-2027 Strategic Plan

In today's dynamic economic landscape, fostering regional collaboration is imperative for sustainable growth and prosperity. North Carolina's Southeast recognizes that the challenges and opportunities facing the region require a unified approach. By working together, sharing ideas, and leveraging collective strengths, the region can amplify impact and create a more resilient and competitive economy. The strategic plan is not merely a roadmap; it is a commitment to collective action, aimed at advancing the shared goals, and, ultimately, launching into tangible implementation to realize a vision for a thriving regional economy.

While there is steady pressure to expand scope, the strategic plan keeps NCSE squarely within its mission with goals in marketing, product development, advocacy, and regional initiatives. It calls for the organization to employ creative and innovative strategies, build capacity, and strengthen collaboration that will result in investment, job creation, and regional prosperity. Building upon NCSE's decades of success, the strategic plan charts a course for sustained growth and regional prosperity.

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Strategic Plan Goals

- ⦿ **Market NC's Southeast Region to Attract Investment and Jobs**
- ⦿ **Support Local Economic Development Efforts to Increase the Industrial Sites and Building Inventory**
- ⦿ **Promote Regional Collaboration and Advocate for Economic Growth**
- ⦿ **Strengthen the NCSE Organization by Investing in Leadership and Staff**

Target Sectors



Goal: Market NC's Southeast Region to Attract Investment and Jobs

NCSE is the lead marketing and business attraction organization for the southeast region in North Carolina. It promotes a regional brand, generates economic development leads, and supports counties in product development and recruitment. The organization maintains relationships with public and private allies and partners who work together at the local, regional, and state levels to attract new business to the region.

Strategy: Use innovative technologies and approaches to generate qualified leads for business attraction.

Action Steps:

- Continue to participate in marketing missions, trade shows, industry events, and conferences focused on target sectors, including participating with EDPNC's marketing outreach.
- Conduct strategic marketing campaigns and host special events with site selectors, brokers, and target companies when there is a unique marketing opportunity.
- Host familiarization tours with brokers, site selectors, investment firms, and companies.
- Explore new technologies for lead generation such as using LinkedIn connections, web traffic analytics (including SEO), geofencing at trade shows, etc.
- Use AI to support marketing content development and research.
- Maintain lead generation data (clusters, building size, talent) from Salesforce and use it to help counties improve their competitiveness.
- Increase international lead generation and marketing for foreign direct investment by leveraging EDPNC's international marketing program, including foreign mission trips and trade shows.
 - Increase promotion of Foreign Trade Zone 214 as a strategic advantage to locating in the region.

Strategy: Refresh and deploy a vibrant regional brand that positions the southeast region for new investment and job creation.

Action Steps:

- Refresh the NC Southeast brand, including graphics and vibrant messaging that will resonate with businesses and encourage investment in the region.
- Deploy the brand through updated collaterals including website, brochures, social media themes, presentations, etc.
 - Execute a digital marketing plan to promote the brand including e-newsletters to prospects and digital ads to raise awareness of the brand.
 - Continue to develop and promote site and building, target cluster, and specialized marketing flyers.
 - Provide a toolkit to local economic development organizations and investors so they can co-market the region in their communications where appropriate.
- Host events to unveil and launch the brand within the region and with marketing partners such as EDPNC and utilities.
 - Use the refreshed brand as a hook to engage print, digital, and broadcast media and educate them on the region's economic development assets and strategies.
- Develop more videos for the website, social media, and other marketing platforms. Videos that will live on the website should be done professionally; however, quick videos for social media can be done by staff.
 - Include business testimonial videos from target clusters.
 - Increase drone capacity to add more videos to NCSE's marketing content.

- Update the regional digital photo library, and through a use agreement allow local economic development organizations access for internal and external marketing.

Strategy: Support local economic development organizations in business recruitment and engage LDAG (Local Developer Advisory Group) in marketing strategy development.

Action Steps:

- Add value to the EDPNC-NCSE RFI process:
 - Develop an RFI “quick facts” of a few key factors to help communities quickly see if they should respond – industry clusters, site/building requirements, utilities, transportation, etc.
 - Develop internal protocols, including multiple staff, which will reduce the “turn time” to get RFI’s out to the local offices (e.g., shared group email addresses and a centrally stored email distribution list).
 - Indicate which RFI data points the region will complete and which the local organizations will complete.
 - Include supporting information/resources that will help local organizations complete their parts, such as international conversion tables, third-party data, or useful sources.
 - Continue to maintain a “tracker” to help LDAG follow project activity.
- Host and support prospect visits to encourage new investment and support local partners as projects narrow focus within the region.
 - Annually conduct a “best practices in prospect meetings” training session for new local developers.
- Validate target sectors every few years through research and analysis of trends and regional data. (Current target sectors are advanced textiles, agri-business and food processing, aerospace and defense, distribution and logistics, and metalworking.)
- Maintain a sites and buildings database, track the inventory trends, and share with LDAG.
 - Produce a report that shows “missed opportunities” due to lack of product and share with LDAG so they can raise awareness of the need for product with local leadership. EDPNC can provide state-wide information on site and building requests as well.
- Increase engagement with LDAG:
 - Hold an annual LDAG marketing workshop to develop the marketing calendar, update it based on changes and opportunities, and get feedback on trade shows, marketing trips, EDPNC events, etc.
 - Similarly, host an annual research workshop to provide updates on NCSE’s research capabilities, review subscriptions and services, and get feedback from LDAG on the top research needs.
 - At regular LDAG meetings, have a standing agenda item for members of the group to share new technology tools, hacks, apps, etc.
- Annually survey companies in the region in target sectors to inform the regional strategy and share with LDAG to inform local economic development policy.
- Leverage LDAG to identify suppliers of the Southeast’s largest companies for business attraction.
- Include LDAG in business retention visits to corporate headquarters facilities as part of marketing trips.
 - Support the business retention efforts of counties within the region as requested.
- Provide training to LDAG on research and technology tools that support RFIs, client visits, and overall organizational development and management.

Goal: Support Local Economic Development Efforts to Increase the Industrial Sites and Building Inventory

A critical factor influencing business attraction is the availability of quality industrial sites and buildings. NCSE supports the development of a regional inventory of sites and buildings by advocating for funding and strategically deploying resources to support counties across the region.

Strategy: Expand funding, resources, and technical assistance to help counties develop industrial sites and buildings.

Action Steps:

- Create a loan and investment fund to support industrial building development across the region.
 - Seek funding to seed the loan and investment fund.
 - Develop program details including goals, measures of success, eligibility, building specifications, repayment, etc.
 - Track and report program metrics.
- Conduct an industrial building feasibility study for sub-regional groups (small, rural counties; mid-size, suburban counties; and larger, urban counties) that identifies ideal size and specifications.
- Develop a set of construction plans for a couple of standard/basic industrial buildings (e.g., 50,000 SF, 100,000 SF) for counties to use.
- Update NCEA's Product Development Resources Guide for the Southeast Region and share with LDAG. This guide includes all resources for site identification, qualification, preparation, and building development.
- Continue to seek state funding and grants for the "Advancing Product Development Grant Program" and strategically deploy resources across the region.
- Provide support to counties with grant applications for product development funding as requested (e.g., Golden LEAF SITE Program, NC Railroad Build Ready Sites).
- Publish a case study annually on a successful product development initiative such as a spec building to encourage other counties to invest in product development.
- Sponsor regional studies that will advance product development such as:
 - Water and wastewater access to priority sites.
 - Update regional infrastructure study.
 - Continue the effort to identify potential new sites in each county and multi-jurisdictional development opportunities.

Goal: Promote Regional Collaboration and Advocate for Economic Growth

Strategy: Connect leaders across the region to strengthen collaboration and share the regional vision.

Action Steps:

- Host regional forums, networking events, and summits. Examples:
 - Annual Economic Forecast
 - Annual Meeting
 - Brand Launch event
 - Target Cluster networking
 - Sub-Regional networking
- Host meetings across the region simultaneously – in one location present “live” with staff while at two other locations “stream” the meeting. Rotate the location of the live event.
- Develop and distribute information that positions NCSE as the regional thought leader in economic development:
 - Include a regional economic dashboard in e-communications.
 - Build a ShareFile or similar accessible cloud folder with articles and research that is important to LDAG members.
 - Continue to produce the *Regional Profile*.
 - Sponsor technical studies such as the state of regional infrastructure and how local governments can support corporate sustainability goals.
 - Host webinars to highlight best practices, target clusters, and present NCSE updates.
- Promote the regional strategy through in-region media coverage.
- Continue orientation for new managers and elected officials appointed to NCSE Board.
- Make presentations to boards of county commissioners in partnership with local economic development organizations as requested.

Strategy: Advocate for investments, funding, and resources that will advance regional economic development initiatives.

Action Steps:

- Lead the southeastern region’s advocacy on key issues, initiatives, and public policies that advance the regional vision.
- Develop and promote a state and federal legislative agenda that aligns with the NCSE vision, mission, and strategic plan goals.
- Contract with a lobbying firm to support regional initiatives and funding opportunities.
- Educate, inform, and build relationships with the region’s state and national legislative delegations through regular communications and invitations to regional economic development events.
- Identify and apply for grants to support regional capacity building (e.g., infrastructure, transportation, etc.).
- Produce a briefing on the new Southeastern Crescent Regional Commission that will promote the program and encourage funding similar to the Appalachian Regional Commission.
- Highlight the work of related organizations such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s poverty initiatives.
- Continue to advocate for support of North Carolina’s military and defense assets to draw more attention to the importance of military installations in the southeast and North Carolina economies.

Goal: Strengthen the NCSE Organization by Investing in Leadership and Staff

NCSE is a stalwart leader thanks in part to long-term, stable staff and leadership who have been able to navigate challenges with resilience and resolve. Public and private investors rate the organization highly, say their investment is worthwhile, and indicate they will continue to invest.

Strategy: Implement a proactive investor relations program.

Action Steps:

- Review investment levels and board participation during the next private sector fundraising feasibility study process.
- Complete a private sector fundraising campaign to secure long-term investment in the organization.
- Continue to publish an annual report that is distributed to all board members, investors, supporters, allies, and county elected officials.
- Publish regular e-communications, including social media posts, on accomplishments, events, and economic development related news.
- Host an annual “investor only” networking event. This could be an economic forecast that is streamed to a few locations in the region.
- Complete an annual investor satisfaction survey.

Strategy: Invest in staff capacity and organizational development.

Action Steps:

- Implement efficiency tools and technologies that support the NCSE hybrid work model – shared calendars, project management, meeting scheduling, communications tools, etc.
- Expand staff capacity with contractors to support technical studies, marketing, and special projects and events. Consider adding staff as expertise is needed.
 - Conduct a review of compensation every three years and evaluate benefits for market competitiveness.
- Maintain up-to-date job descriptions and clearly define roles and success factors.
- Cross train staff to ensure continuity and expand capacity.
- Investigate best practices in other similar sized EDOs, perhaps visiting others to explore operations, technology, software, communications, etc.
- Ensure a strong governance model - develop and use a governance calendar as one management tool.
- Maintain staff and leadership succession plans.
- Complete board and employee satisfaction surveys annually.

Metrics

Economic development organizations typically track three kinds of metrics. Program metrics measure the outcomes of programs such as marketing. Organizational metrics measure the stability and strength of the organization. Economic indicators track the health and wellbeing of the economy.

NCSE has long measured the outcomes of its programs. It also tracks regional economic data and uses it to inform the regional strategy. We recommend adding organizational metrics to track the stability of the organization.

We recommend selecting a few program metrics for a “dashboard” that is regularly communicated to stakeholders and investors. NCSE’s dashboard could include leads, announcements, and marketing events.

Program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Unique, first-time client visits •Building and site recommendations •Leads/projects generated by industry sector, source, port, and rail requirements •Company location announcements impacted by marketing strategies •Industrial site/building inventory •Technical assistance provided to counties •Marketing events conducted •Regional engagement, participation

Organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Fiscal stability: Fund balance, collection rates, net revenues •Investor retention, new investors •Employee retention and turnover •Partner engagement •Investor, board, and employee satisfaction •Governance Calendar milestones

Marketing and Growth Goals

NCSE has long set goals for the marketing program and goals for regional economic growth. Regional marketing goals are directly related to the organization’s program of work and are within the organization’s control. Regional economic growth goals are a result of the organization’s program of work but are outside of the direct control of NCSE. An example is if the organization generated a company lead, supported site visits and research, and supported the county in recruitment, but the company eliminated the county because a flaw was discovered in the site, or state/local incentives were not approved. NCSE can execute its program of work flawlessly and still not achieve the economic growth goals.

Marketing Goals	2024-2027	Regional Economic Growth Goals	2024-2027
Leads	465	New Jobs	2,000
Projects	410	Investment	\$415M
Visits	225	Company Locations	23
Recommendations	1,490		

Strategic Plan Implementation

NCSE will continue proactive external marketing initiatives that attract new investment to the region, support product development, and advocate for state and federal investment in the region. The action steps below are new to the program of work for NCSE. Some are one-time projects, like the brand refresh, while others are recommended to continue annually. The ongoing tasks are denoted by italics. Expanding the program of work will only be possible with additional resources, both staff and funding. Year 1 of the timeline calls for using contractors to expand capacity, and in Year 2 evaluating the need for additional staff. The NCSE annual budget will need to grow by approximately **\$100,000** to fully implement the strategic plan.

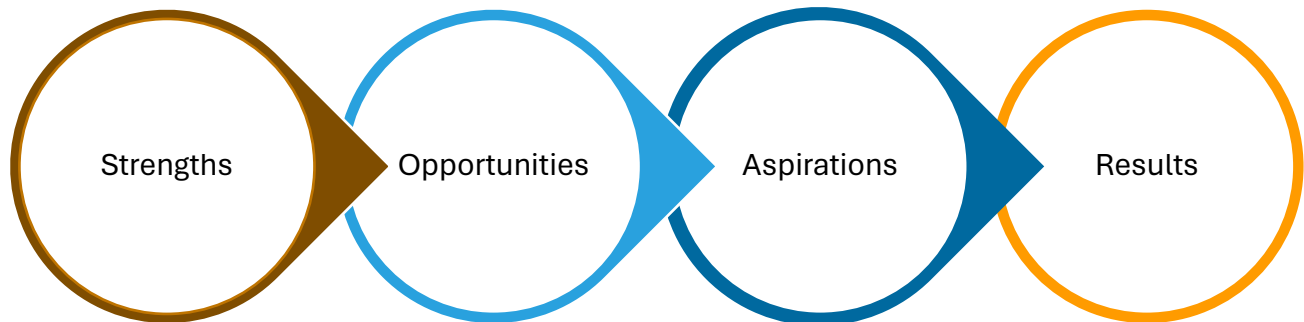
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Expand Videos</i> • Update RFI process • <i>Prospect meeting training</i> • Product Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Missed opportunities report</i> • Spec building feasibility • Spec building construction plans • Regional Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Annual Economic Forecast</i> • <i>Simultaneously stream meetings</i> • <i>Legislative agenda</i> • NCSE Organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Increase internal communications</i> • Fundraising campaign • Expand capacity with contractors • Internal operations enhancements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand refresh • Brand toolkit • Brand launch events • <i>Digital campaign</i> • Brand events • <i>New technologies for lead generation</i> • <i>Increase international lead generation</i> • Validate target clusters • <i>LDAG Research Workshop</i> • <i>LDAG training</i> • <i>Company survey</i> • Update photo library • Product Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revolving loan fund • Update resources matrix • Regional Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sub-regional networking</i> • Southeastern Crescent briefing • Advocate for State Senate Military Affairs Committee • Evaluate expanding staff • NCSE Organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Investor-only networking</i> • <i>Satisfaction surveys</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LDAG supplier identification • Product Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Best practices case studies</i> • Update regional infrastructure study • Regional Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Target cluster networking</i> • <i>Webinars on best practices</i> • NCSE Organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Succession planning

Below are actions NCSE can take to ensure the strategic plan remains a dynamic and relevant document:

- Pull action items from the strategic plan to include in the annual program of work.
- Ensure new requests for resources (staff, funding) align with strategic plan goals to avoid mission creep.
- Report progress on the strategic plan at board meetings.
- Establish a strategic planning committee that meets a couple of times a year to review the plan and progress on implementation. One of these meetings should be a workshop to -
 - Review status of action steps.
 - Determine if any action steps are no longer valid.
 - Update the plan based on market changes and new information. (e.g., one page addendum).
- Every three years, complete a strategic planning process to fully update the plan.

Appendix A: Stakeholder Input

SOAR Analysis



Strengths

- NCSE Team and Leadership – Staff is experienced, knowledgeable, and responsive, and mentors local economic developers. Board leadership has been consistent, stable, and mission-focused.
- Support for counties and private sector – NCSE is focused on adding value to local economic development programs and supporting private sector business development. Examples are research, supporting prospect and client visits, and state-level advocacy that has resulted in funding for product development.
- State relationships – NCSE has developed strong relationships with legislators, EDPNC, Department of Commerce, and other state agencies and officials that has raised awareness of regional assets and opportunities.
- Clear mission – NCSE has avoided mission creep, which allows the organization to focus on its core competencies.
- Success – NCSE has been a steady force in economic development for decades, providing a steady stream of leads, project support, and leading regional initiatives.
- Product Development – NCSE created a new product development program that supports the evaluation and preparation of sites.
- Target Marketing – NCSE leads marketing to target clusters and also provides support to sub-regional targets such as the golf cluster in Moore County.

Opportunities

- Product development – The investment in site preparedness will attract more private investment. Developing a program (e.g., a revolving loan fund) for spec buildings will open another level of opportunities.
- Funding – Continuing to secure new funding streams for economic development in the southeast.
- Infrastructure – There is an infrastructure gap in many southeast counties, and this gap is a hurdle for business development.
- Regional brand - Refresh and deploy a regional brand that positions the southeast for business attraction.
- Lead Generation – NCSE is a primary lead generation source for the 20 member counties.
- Advocacy – Recent advocacy efforts resulted in special state funding for product development. The 20 member counties look to NCSE to continue this leadership role.
- Internal Communications – Public investors want more updates and presentations from NCSE and more opportunities for regional engagement.

Aspirations

- Utilize more innovative approaches to economic development
- Make NCSE **the** economic development organization in North Carolina
- Recruit more companies and jobs
- Reduce underemployment
- Grow and expand economic development tools for communities
- Improve ROI for investors
- Establish a revolving loan fund for product development
- Maintain and expand technology skills of NCSE staff and county economic development offices
- Deploy new ways of marketing the region to reach targeted audiences

Results

- Investment and job creation
- Marketing missions
- Establishment and use of a revolving loan fund
- Increase in payroll, wages, and economic impact
- Investor satisfaction (public and private)
- Fiscal health of the organization

Local Economic Developer Input

The local economic developers work closely with NCSE staff. In fact, several consider NCSE to be an extension of their staff. They look to the organization for marketing, lead generation, project support, product development funding, advocacy, and regional leadership. There is appreciation for the organization's efforts to secure funding for product development and special regional studies.

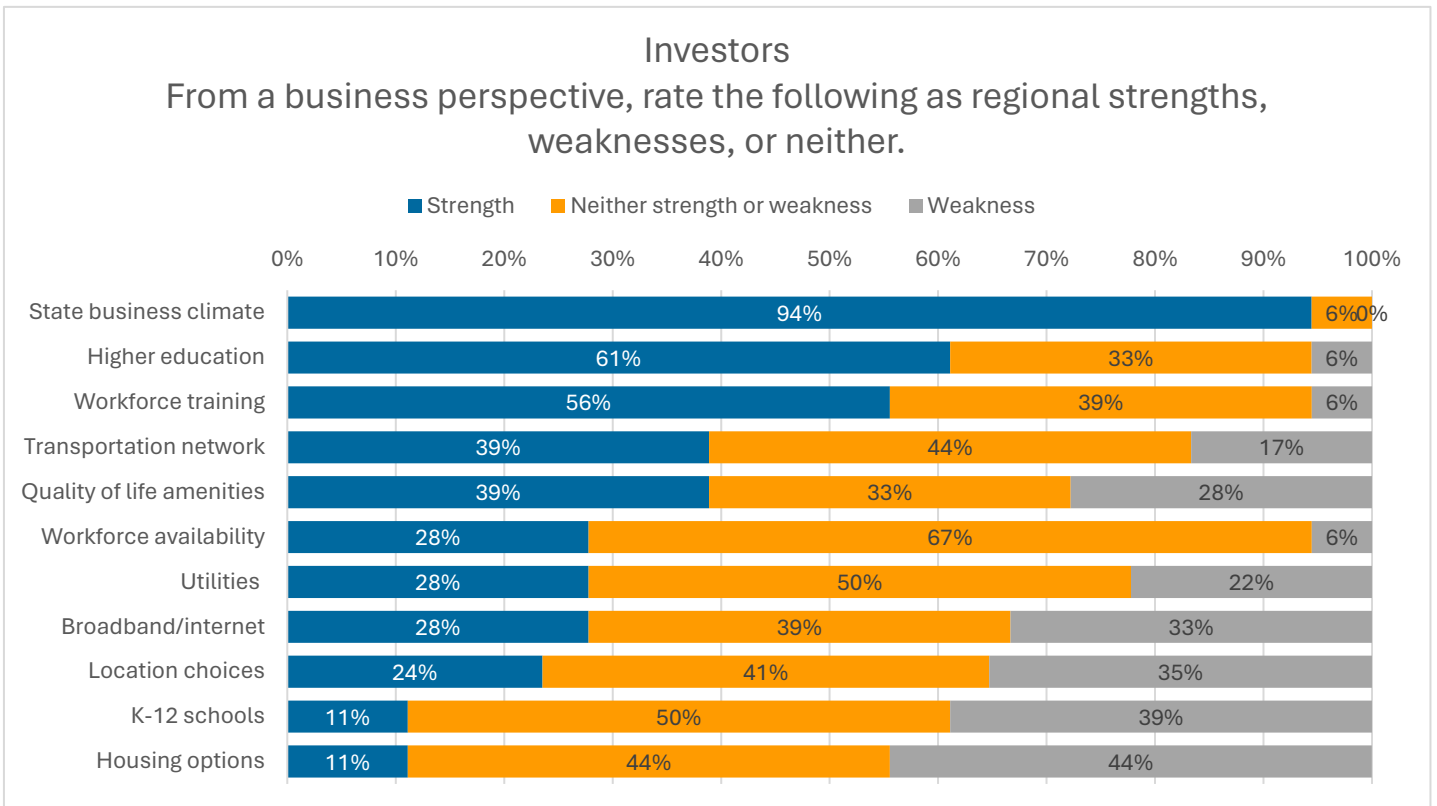
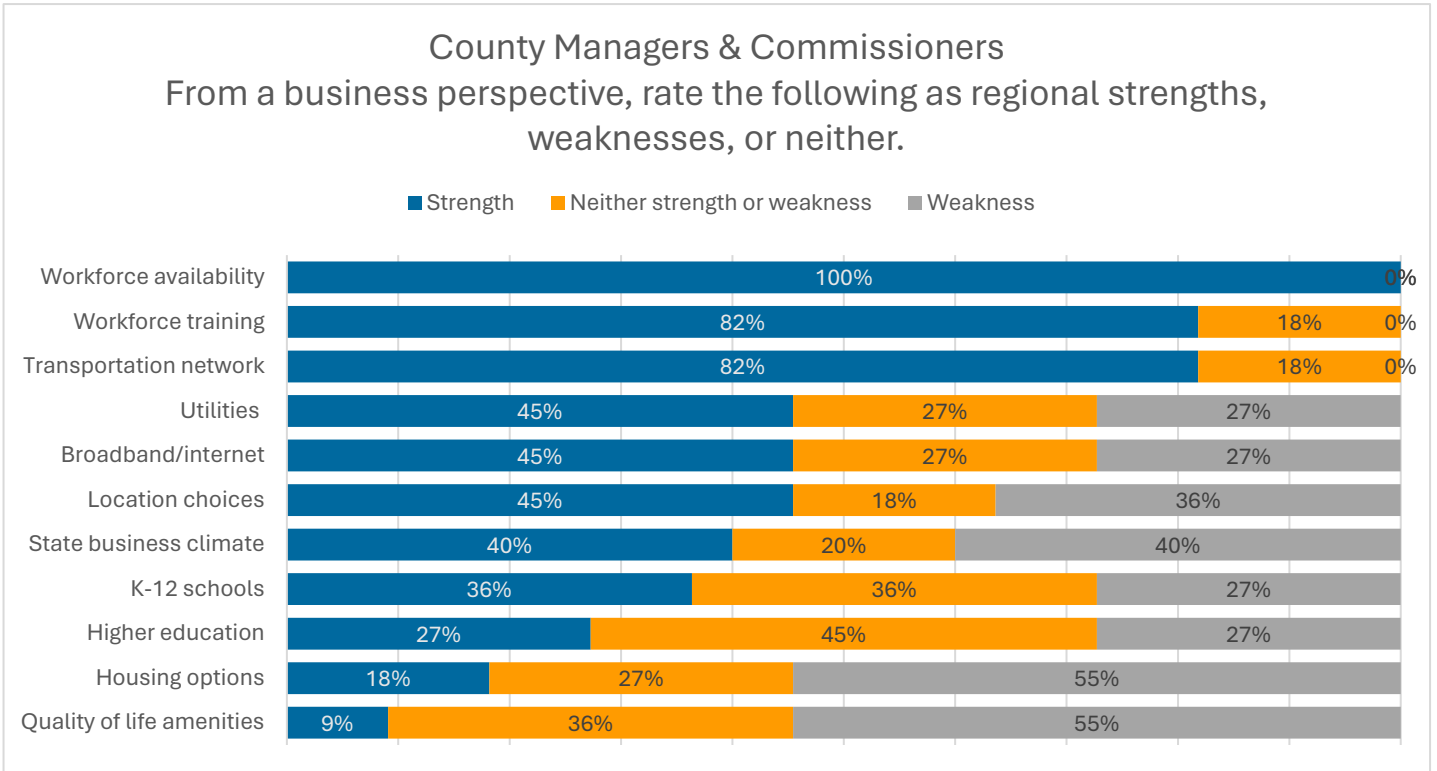
The Local Developers Advisory Group (LDAG) offered many suggestions on how to improve the RFI process, expand the product development program, refresh the regional brand, and enhance their local economic development efforts. They also see product development as an area where the region can support their efforts. Their suggestions were integrated into the plan as strategies and action steps.

Regional Investments

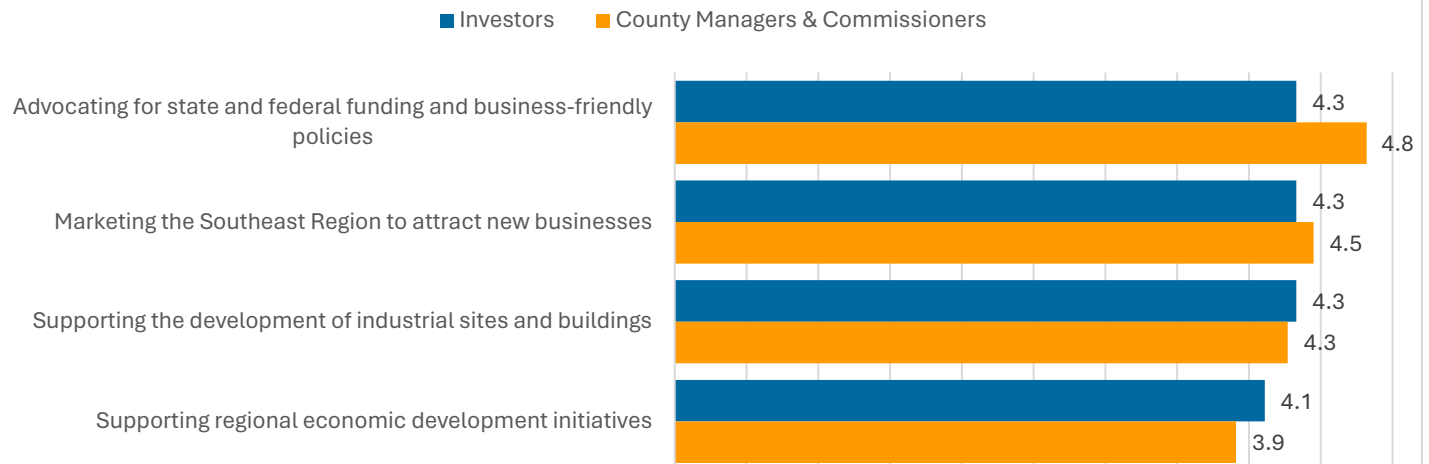
There are investments that are needed for the southeast region to be successful in economic development. NCSE's role is raising awareness of these investments and facilitating regional collaboration to find solutions. Examples are infrastructure, especially sewer, workforce readiness, and product development. In the survey, both the public and private sectors stated that more investment is needed in state and federal advocacy to bring more funding and resources to the region.

Appendix B: Survey Results

NCSE distributed an online survey to county managers and elected officials representatives to NCSE and another survey to investors. The county managers and elected officials survey had 11 responses and the investor survey had 18 responses.



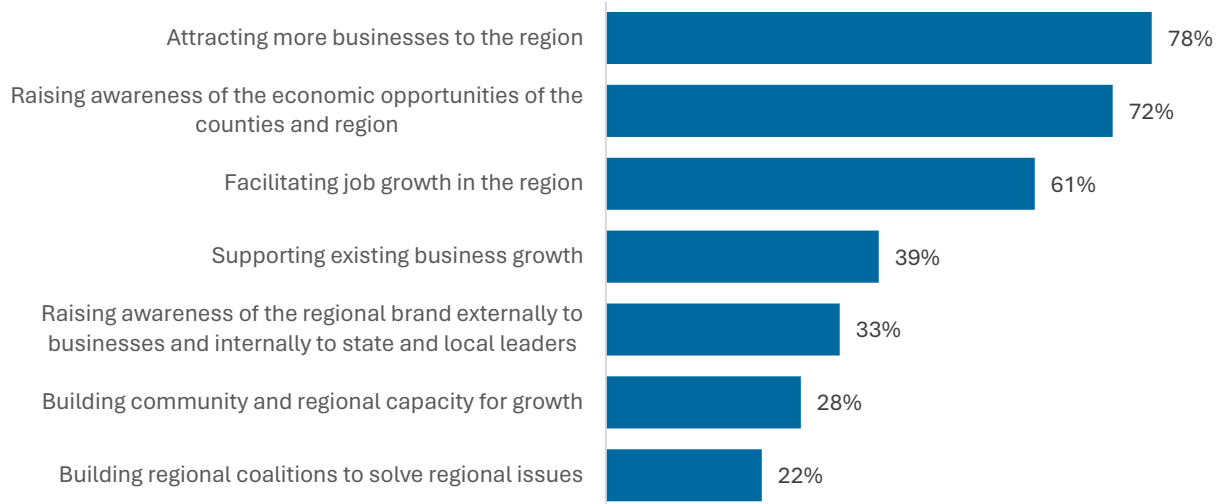
I would like to see NCSE invest more/less resources in these economic development strategies carried out by the organization



Is there another regional economic development initiative that NCSE should lead?	
Investor Responses	County Manager & Commissioner Responses
Strategic planning for local EDO to educate their stakeholders and align priorities	
Tourism might be helpful	
Alternative, clean energy	
Affordable housing in coastal counties.	

Investors

What are the best measures of success for a regional economic development organization? Check your top three choices.



County Manager & Commissioners

What are the best measures of success for a regional economic development organization? Check your top three choices.



Investors

Rate North Carolina's Southeast Region on accomplishing its mission to support the creation of new jobs, generate capital investment, and secure new business locations.

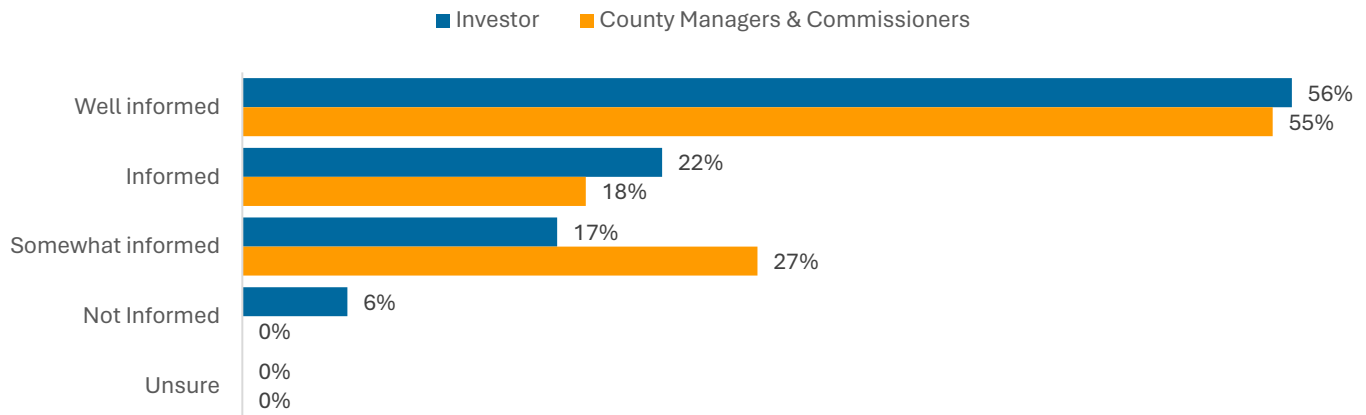


County Managers & Commissioners

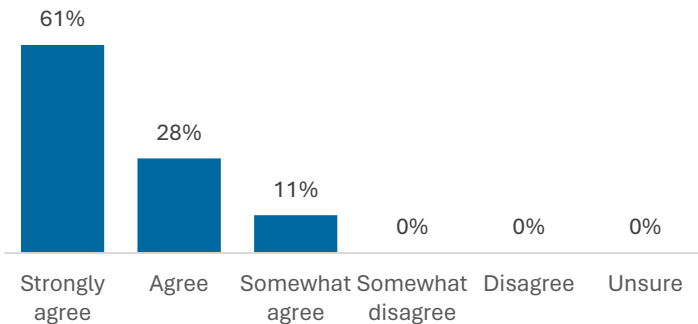
Rate North Carolina's Southeast Region on accomplishing its mission to support the creation of new jobs, generate capital investment, and secure new business locations.



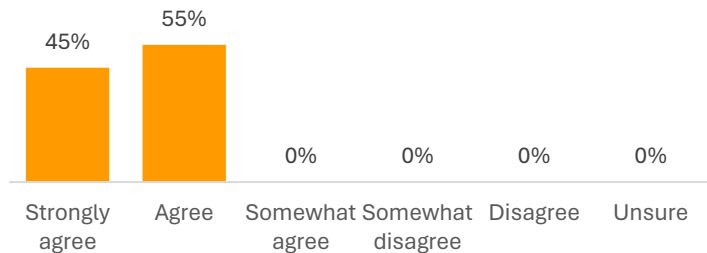
How informed are you about NCSE's accomplishments?



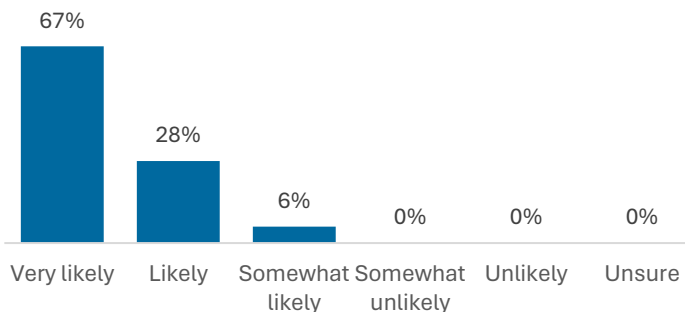
Investors: My financial commitment to NCSE is a worthwhile investment.



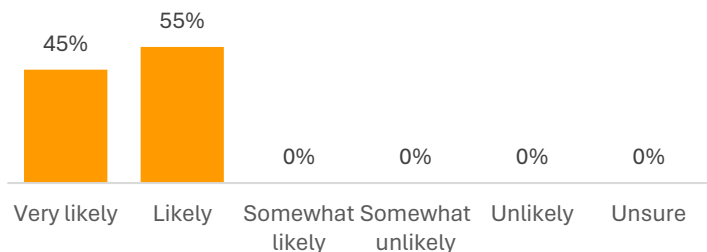
County Managers & Commissioners: My community's financial commitment to NCSE is a worthwhile investment.



Investors: How likely are you to continue your financial investment in NCSE?

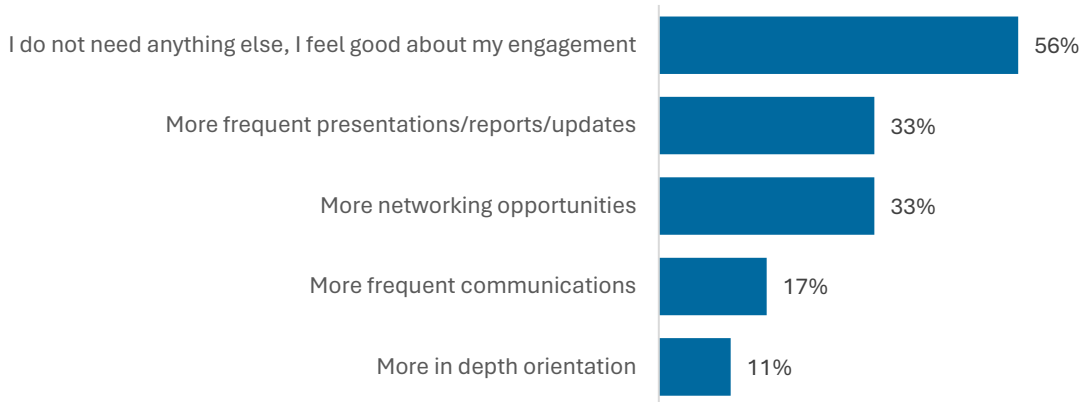


County Managers & Commissioners: How likely is your community to continue its financial investment in NCSE?



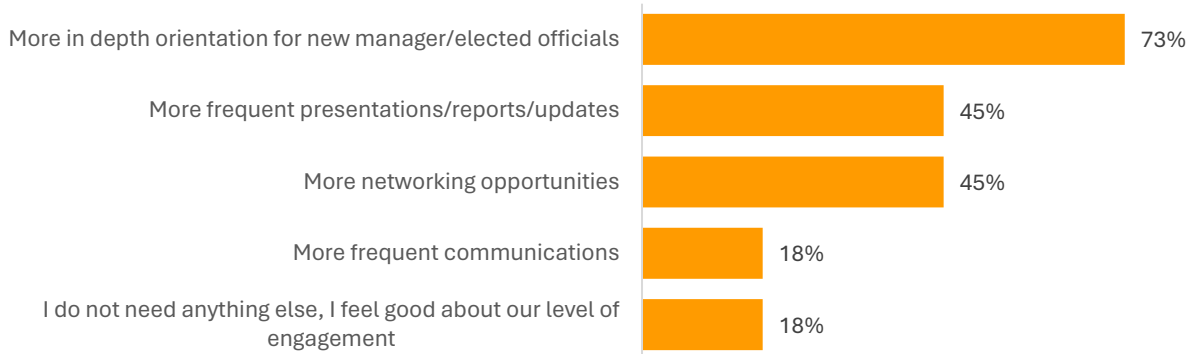
Investors

The following would help me be a more engaged investor of NCSE.

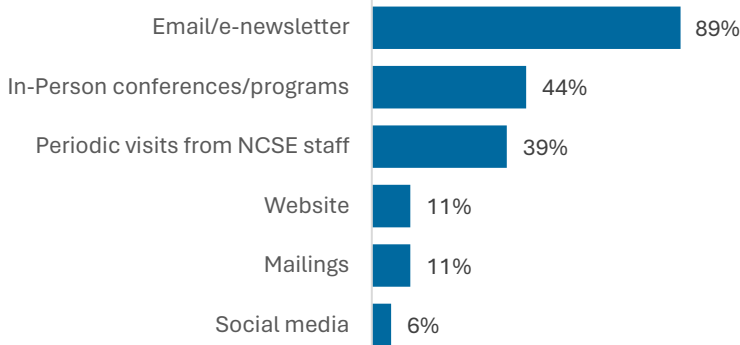


County Managers & Commissioners

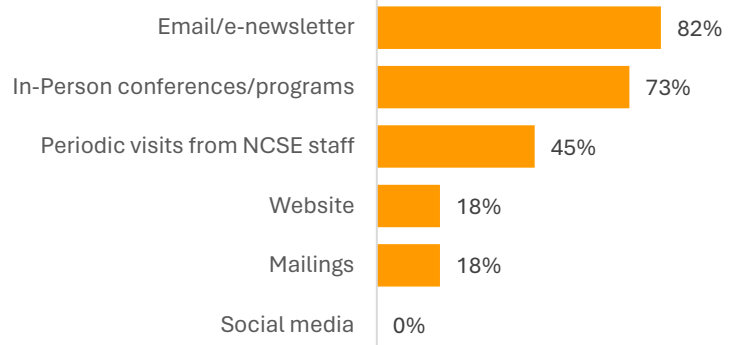
The following would help me be a more engaged investor and supporter of NCSE



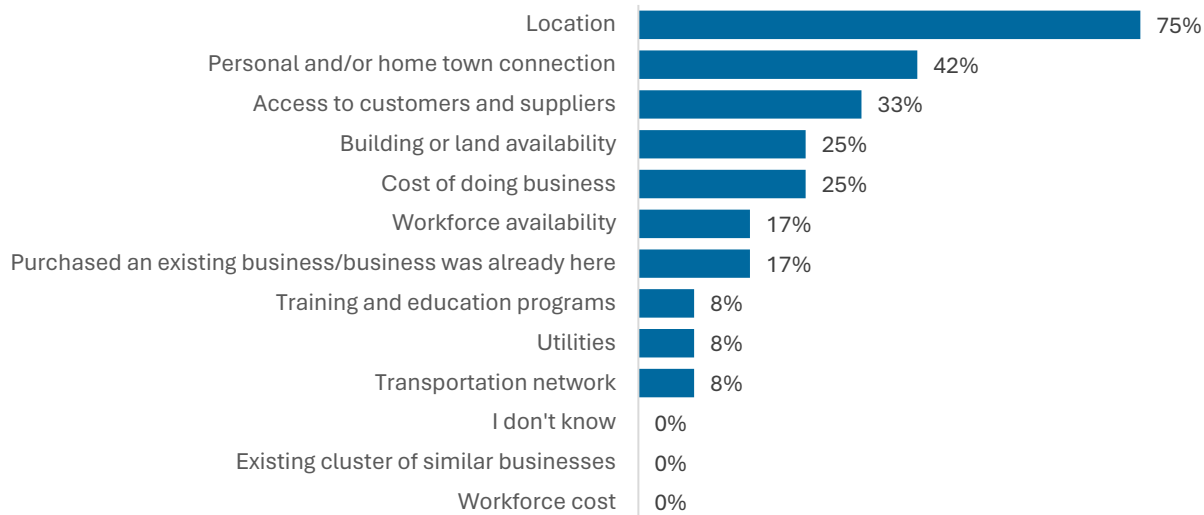
Investors: What is your preferred method to consume information from NCSE?



County Managers & Commissioners: What is your preferred method to consume information from NCSE?



Investors: Why did your company locate in North Carolina's Southeast Region?



Other (please specify)

Office not in the southeast region. Service provider.

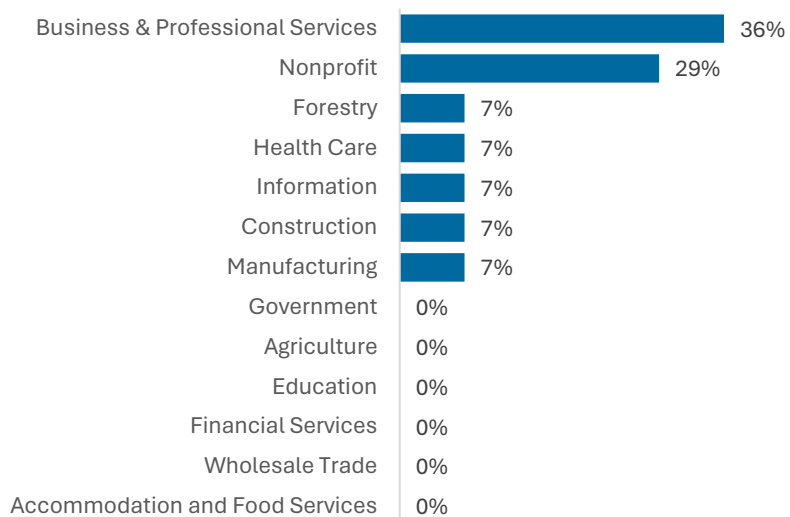
Locally owned; in business since 1939

Formed for a specific need

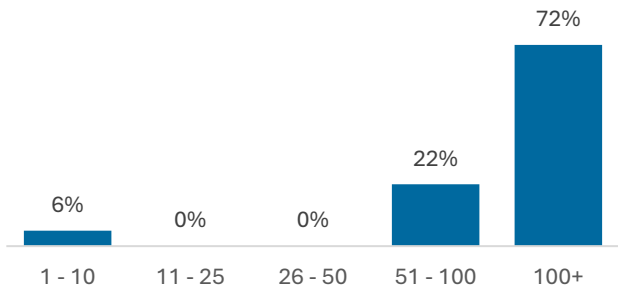
We were founded here.

We are an ally.

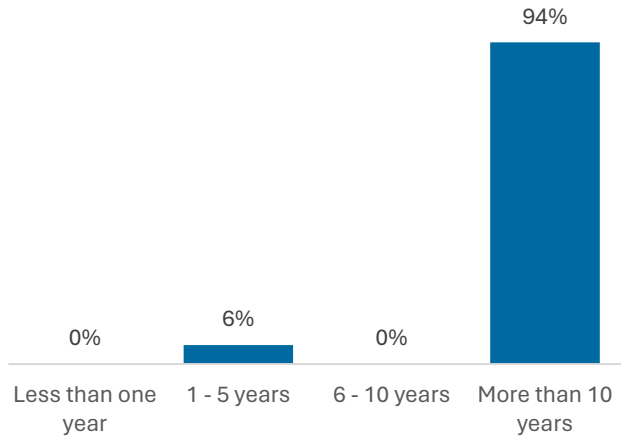
Investors: What business sector most closely matches your business?



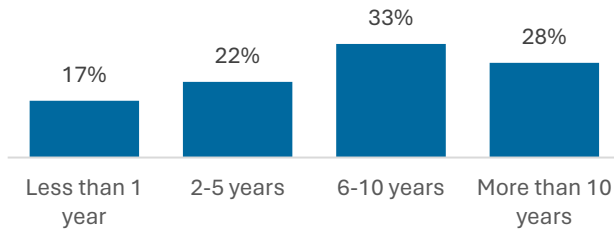
Investors: How many employees, full-time equivalents, are employed in your business?



Investors: How many years has your business been operating?



Investors: I have been an investor in NCSE for...

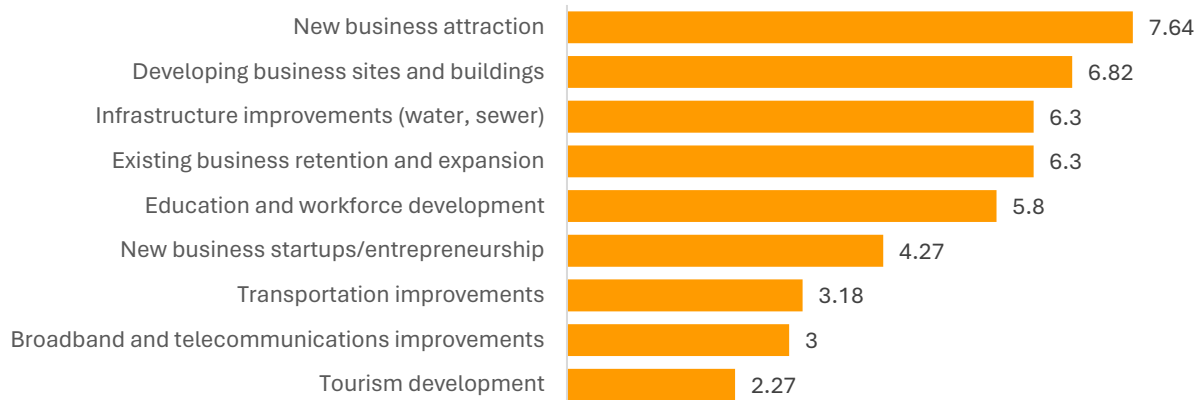


Please share anything else you believe is important for the strategic plan.

Responses

A good job is being done.

County Managers & Commissioners: Rank the importance of the following economic development strategies for your county.



Are there other economic development strategies important to your county?

Public education on the importance of all these factors

Please share anything else you believe is important for the strategic plan.

More engagement between the NCSE and our elected officials would further ingrain the benefit of our partnership with the governing boards.

Study Sponsor and Consultant



North Carolina's Southeast is a regional public-private partnership that markets the state's Southeast Region – nationally and globally – to encourage new economic growth. Business and government leadership work together in this partnership to promote the region and its assets through The Southeastern Partnership, a 501c6 organization. The region is

made up of 20 counties: Anson, Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, Craven, Cumberland, Duplin, Jones, Hoke, Lenoir, Montgomery, Moore, New Hanover, Onslow, Pender, Richmond, Robeson, Sampson, Scotland, and Wayne.

<https://www.ncse.org/>



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