

Jackson County Economic Development Incentive Program
DRAFT 12.1.2014

Purpose. Jackson County encourages the expansion of economic development options that promote the well-being and growth of the business community; diversify the tax base; and offer improved opportunities for its citizens.

Objectives. This Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP) provides a cash incentive grant to new and existing businesses based on the following criteria for economic impact. Under this incentive policy, companies may qualify for, *but are not guaranteed*, a financial incentive grant. Each applicant must provide demonstrable proof that without County support there is little to no likelihood of the job creation requirement being met.

The County reserves complete discretion in determining which eligible projects warrant a financial incentive grant. The County will use criteria outlined in this document and other policy documents to accept, reject or modify the grant amount.

Program Criteria.

This program allows a cash grant based on the actual value, schedule, and payment of county property taxes for a period of up to five (5) years.

The County requires the business to pay all assessed property taxes in full annually. If program criteria are met, a portion of the property tax will be returned to the business each year, according to the written agreement between the County and the company.

The job creation criteria outlined below determine eligibility. All job creation requirements are for full-time employees (FTEs), which must work a minimum of 35 hours per week. Part-time employee hours can be combined to create FTEs which meet the weekly minimum of hours.

Number of Jobs	Incentive Amount	Time Frame
3-10	60%	Up to 5 years
11-24	70%	Up to 5 years
25 or more	80%	Up to 5 years

Minimum Investment Bonus. Applicants investing a minimum of \$1 million and meeting the minimum job creation criteria of at least three (3) FTEs will be eligible for a 90% property tax incentive that can be made over eight (8) years.

Existing Business Expansion and Support: The County wishes to encourage existing businesses and industries to sustain and expand the local and regional economy. Consequently, the terms and application of this policy are to result in existing businesses and industries receiving consideration for incentives that

are on terms equal to or better than those available to a company considering its first location in the County.

Eligible Applicants. Eligible applicants are new or existing businesses located or locating within Jackson County, including in the municipalities of Forest Hills, Dillsboro, Sylva, and Webster. In limited cases, the County may consider applications from a public-private partnership between a non-profit entity and a private client.

Application Process. The application process requires successful completion of these phases before review:

1. Completion of a preliminary Letter of Intent to Economic Development Office staff;
2. Completion of the application package, including all required supporting documents; and
3. Timely response to requests for information from the Economic Development Office.

Evaluation. Each application is considered complete when all requested materials are received by the Economic Development Office. The application will be reviewed at the regular board meeting of the Business and Industry Advisory Committee. Special exceptions may be made for time-sensitive projects. After review, the BIAC will submit the application to the Board of Commissioners for review.

Award Determination. *Eligibility to apply does not guarantee that an award will be made.* Awards are determined using the criteria above. Award amounts are based on these criteria and the decision of the Board of Commissioners. This policy only addresses financial grant awards determined by property tax amounts; the County may, at its discretion, offer other kinds of incentives in addition to, or instead of, this type of financial incentive.

Written Agreement. All incentive packages will be formalized in a written contract between Jackson County and the recipient company, which will include the agreed-upon performance criteria. Each agreement shall also include language allowing the County to pursue the repayment of all incentive funds and equivalents should the company fail to meet the obligations defined in the agreement.

Compliance. The applicant remains responsible for all required federal, state, and local permits. To be eligible for payment of the incentive, the company must have completed and occupied the building; be current on all taxes payable to Jackson County; and be current on the performance criteria specified in the incentive agreement. The company must also apply for and maintain all local, state, and federal permits in good standing for the duration of the award.

Disclaimer: The County retains the right to deny incentive assistance to any applicant; there is no “vested right” to economic incentives. Decisions are made at the discretion of the Board of Commissioners. All incentive awards must be made in accordance with the North Carolina Public Records Law and N.C. GS 158-7. County participation cannot violate the laws of the State of North Carolina and all projects must be deemed not harmful to the environment according to federal, state, and local regulations. Jackson County may evaluate projects through oversight or through a requested audit, and may modify, amend, or discontinue the incentive should the company not meet its obligations under the agreement. Economic incentives may not be transferred or otherwise conveyed to another party unless agreed to by the Jackson County Board of Commissioners.