

North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State

NEWS

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Elaine F. Marshall
Secretary of State

For Immediate Release

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New Wilkes County Businesses Added to RuralRISE NC Project *Pilot Project Connects New Businesses with Crucial Resources for Success*

RALEIGH – North Carolina Secretary of State Elaine F. Marshall has launched a unique pilot project to connect new Wilkes County businesses with mentors, business counselors, and funding opportunities located in Wilkes County and elsewhere. The agency project known as **RuralRISE NC** (Resources for Innovators, Start-ups, and Entrepreneurs) links new businesses to significant free and low cost resources such as:

- A much requested checklist of crucial steps new business should follow to be successful, such as important tax and reporting deadlines
- Lenders that focus on small and start-up businesses
- Business counselors for permitting and other questions
- Connections to local service providers who can help identify target markets and develop business plans

In launching **RuralRISE NC**, the agency focused on analyzing historic business data and surveying North Carolina’s new entrepreneurs around their needs.

“Our data shows that the first three years are the most challenging for new businesses. The sooner we put these entrepreneurs in touch with valuable business resources and funding opportunities, the more likely they will be making good money, creating jobs and supporting their communities,” said Sec. Marshall. “With the explosive growth of new business creations over the last 18 months, we took this initiative to help our new rural businesses thrive.”

The Secretary of State’s office saw a record number 178,300 new business creations in 2021, smashing the previous year’s total of 127,000. That’s more than 700 new businesses created each day. More than 360 of those new businesses call Wilkes County home.

“The Secretary of State’s office was the front door to more than 178,000 new businesses in 2021 entering North Carolina’s entrepreneurial ecosystem,” said Marshall. “Our mission and our challenge is give each of these businesses and the ones created before them every opportunity at being successful.”

Wilkes is one of 12 counties that will be included in the first group of new businesses in the pilot project. The Secretary of State’s office is working with local partners to deliver their business support content by e-mail to these new business owners upon creation. While this initiative will

be statewide, the Secretary of State's office intends **RuralRISE NC** to focus mostly on the 79 counties in North Carolina considered rural.

Secretary Marshall is a nationally recognized leader for designing and offering innovative and efficient e-government services to businesses and other customers. More than 1.7 million North Carolina businesses have been created during her tenure as Secretary of State.

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