



# Franklin County

*A Natural Setting for Opportunity*

## PRESS RELEASE

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### COUNTY ANNOUNCES NEW FRANKLIN CENTER GRANT AWARD FROM THE TOBACCO INDEMNIFICATION AND COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION COMMISSION

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For Additional Information:

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The County of Franklin, today announced it will receive a grant award of \$451,476 from the Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission to assist with the completion of the lower level of The Franklin Center, the County's Higher Education, Workforce, and Career Center. The *Franklin Center for Advanced Learning and Enterprise* represents an unprecedented collaboration of partnerships for promoting economic development opportunities by developing a skilled and adaptable workforce to support activities in business retention, attraction and entrepreneurial development. Richard E. Huff, II, County Administrator notes, "Funding provided by the Tobacco Commission will assist the County with the completion of the lower level of the existing Franklin Center." The modern, state-of-the-art facility is located adjacent to the County Library in downtown Rocky Mount. The finished lower level of an additional 4,700 sq. ft. will consist of approximately seven additional classrooms for instruction and career counseling space. The finished lower level will house classrooms, computer labs, and much needed training space to accommodate the rising demands for education and workforce development. The Center is experiencing record growth in student enrollments and customers seeking higher education in a challenging economy.

The Franklin County Workforce Development Consortium was created in 1999 and represents twenty entities including local governments, the public school system, area colleges, the Virginia Employment Commission, the Western Virginia Workforce Investment Board, and other community based agencies tasked with the mission of promoting education, workforce and economic development. As demonstrated since 1999 and since opening of the new facility in 2007, Franklin County and its partners have managed and operated *The Franklin Center for Advanced Learning and Enterprise*, thereby offering opportunities to employers and citizens relative to employment, training and education. Kathy Hodges, Executive Director of *The Franklin Center for Advanced Learning and Enterprise* adds, "The success of The Franklin Center is evident in that the existing facility has surpassed its maximum capacity due to the increased utilization of services. The training providers have experienced challenging accessibility and flexibility for training, classroom and program space. The additional space in the lower level of the Center will thereby allow the partners to offer new programs, certificates and degrees in a competitive economy, which will include an LPN (Licensed Practical Nursing) Program, to begin in the fall of 2010."

As stated in the *Long Range Planning Task Force of the Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission*, “to remain vital and productive, Virginia’s tobacco region must successfully migrate from sole dependence on the failing, agricultural and industrial economies of yesterday to the growing knowledge-based economies of today and the future... Long held-values of hard work, self-reliance and attention to productive families could prove to be a powerful force if brought to bear in an information economy”. The Franklin County Board of Supervisors vision for economic development is further reflected in the County’s *Strategic Plan* in which the Board describes securing a highly trained and competitive workforce as the County’s highest economic development priority. “As Franklin County finds itself in the midst of an ever-growing information-based society and global economy, it is firmly believed the expanded Franklin Center will provide life-long learning opportunities for all citizens and therefore create an even better climate for Franklin County businesses,” adds Charles Wagner, Chairman of the Franklin County Board of Supervisors.

Opening of the lower level of The Franklin Center is projected in the summer of 2010. “The financial support and confidence in this exciting project is evident through various economic and community development agencies across the Commonwealth,” adds Christopher Whitlow, Assistant County Administrator. “The recent \$451,476 grant is the County’s fourth award from the Tobacco Commission for this project. A seed grant of \$150,000 for initial planning and a second construction grant of \$1,311,426, along with another construction grant of \$421,378 were all previously awarded by the Tobacco Commission. In addition, a Community Development Block Grant of \$700,000 by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, a grant for \$1,000,000 from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, a \$176,000 USDA Rural Development grant, and a \$100,000 grant from the Carilion Foundation have also been secured by the County totaling in excess of \$4.3 million in grant funding towards the construction and equipping of The Franklin Center” adds Whitlow.

Construction documents for the lower level are currently under development, whereby construction is scheduled to begin this spring. Project completion is expected in late summer just in time for fall semester classes and programs.

The Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission is a 31-member body created by the 1999 General Assembly. Its mission is the promotion of economic growth and development in tobacco-dependent communities, using proceeds of the national tobacco settlement. To date, the Commission has awarded 1,221 grants totaling more than \$652.8 million across the tobacco region of the Commonwealth, and has provided \$234 million in indemnification payments to tobacco growers and quota holders.

For more information and project details, please visit: <http://www.thefranklincenter.org>