



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Grants Available from Tobacco Trust Fund Commission

RALEIGH – Current economic and job conditions have accelerated the implementation of a new grant cycle from the North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission (NCTTF). Upcoming grant funding will place a high priority on projects that address ways to stimulate the agricultural economy in local communities, decrease unemployment and implement workforce development programs.

Projects that support the agricultural economy in North Carolina, especially in areas affected by changes in the tobacco industry, will be strongly considered. Projects must meet one or more of these criteria: diversification initiatives, development of natural resources, increasing farm profitability, skill and resource development, and community economic development. Priority will be given to projects based on the size of the area and number of people affected.

"The rural economy in North Carolina has continued to face challenges in a post-tobacco buyout era," said Billy Carter, the Commission's chairman. "With this new grant cycle, the Tobacco Trust Fund Commission will place a high priority on projects that could provide relief to the state's challenging employment conditions, and we'll look to fund innovative projects designed to strengthen local communities and agriculturally-related organizations, individuals and farming operations."

Since 2002, the NCTTF has awarded grants to public and nonprofit agencies that meet the goals of strengthening the rural and tobacco-dependent economies of North Carolina. Past projects have included workforce development and training programs, farmers markets, energy efficiency programs and pasture/pond renovations to address drought-related issues. Grant applications are available online at www.tobaccotrustfund.org and should be postmarked by February 16, 2009. Grant recipients will be announced by May 29, 2009.

The General Assembly created the Tobacco Trust Fund Commission in 2000 to help soften the financial impact to farmers and tobacco-related businesses caused by the sharp decline of tobacco in the agricultural economy. The commission's funding comes from monies paid by cigarette manufacturers under the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement.

For more information about the 2009 application, contact the TTFC at (919) 733-2160 or via email at tobaccotrustfund@ncagr.gov.