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Workforce Champion Dr. Lisa Smelser Graduates from Leadership Development Program

RALEIGH, NC— Dr. Lisa Smelser, Executive Director of Workforce Strategic Initiatives at Central Carolina Community College, recently graduated from the NC Rural Center's Homegrown Leaders program, a three-day regional leadership and community economic development program that develops and supports highly motivated leaders committed to regional collaboration.

Dr. Smelser reflects, "It was a joy to meet new people and learn across sectors to deepen my knowledge of economic development. I'm inspired by opportunities to build the future with people rather than for people."

The training, held in Gaston from June 10 to 12, drew existing and emerging leaders from across Eastern North Carolina.

Graduation certificates were presented to the program's 25 participants upon completion of the training.

"Through Homegrown Leaders, we equip and empower rural leaders to have a greater impact on regional economic development," said Olaunda Green, director of leadership training for the Rural Center. "Their vision, determination, and deep-rooted connection to their communities inspire them to help shape the future of their regions and the next generation of rural leaders."

Class participants included leaders from small businesses, health professionals, education, faith, and nonprofit organizations.

"Leadership development is at the core of the Rural Center's work, and now more than ever it is important that our leaders are equipped with the skills and tools to foster growth and innovation," said Rural Center President and CEO Patrick Woodie. "We're excited to see the impact our Homegrown Leaders graduates will have in their communities and regions to create a thriving future for generations of residents."

For more information about Homegrown Leaders, visit <https://www.ncruralcenter.org/homegrown-leaders/>.

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About the NC Rural Center

The NC Rural Center has worked since 1987 to develop, promote, and implement sound economic strategies to improve the quality of life of rural North Carolinians. The Rural Center serves the state's 78 rural counties with a special focus on people with low-to-moderate incomes and communities with limited resources. To learn more about how the NC Rural Center is developing and supporting rural leaders across the state, visit [ncruralcenter.org](https://www.ncruralcenter.org).