

# Medicaid Expansion Workforce Report

DECEMBER 2024

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## Acknowledgments

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the North Carolina Department of Commerce (Commerce) are grateful for the engagement of education, workforce, healthcare, economic development, and business partners from across the state. The subcommittee leads and members generously shared their time and expertise in developing this comprehensive report. This work would not have been possible without the leadership of the “Core Team”: Karen Wade, Melanie Bush, Jay Ludlam, LaQuana Palmer, Dr. Andrea DeSantis, Amber Thiel, and Emily Roach. Commerce and DHHS also extend their thanks to nclMPACT for its coordination and leadership throughout this process. This report charts a path forward to ensure that North Carolinians have access to career pathways with family-sustaining wages and that the state has the well-trained healthcare workforce needed to support a thriving economy.

# Acronyms and Abbreviations

(All agencies listed are state agencies unless otherwise noted.)

<b>ACA</b>	Affordable Care Act (full title: Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act) (federal statute)
<b>CHW</b>	Community health worker
<b>CMS</b>	Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (federal agency)
<b>Commerce</b>	Department of Commerce
<b>DAC</b>	Department of Adult Correction
<b>DOL</b>	Department of Labor
<b>DHB</b>	Division of Health Benefits, located within the NC Medicaid section of DHHS
<b>DHHS</b>	Department of Health and Human Services
<b>DPI</b>	Department of Public Instruction
<b>DSS</b>	Division of Social Services
<b>DWS</b>	Division of Workforce Solutions, located within Commerce
<b>EDPNC</b>	Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC is the state nonprofit corporation with which Commerce contracts pursuant to Chapter 143B, Section 431.01(b) of the North Carolina General Statutes (G.S.)).
<b>FPL</b>	Federal poverty level
<b>LEAD</b>	Labor & Economic Analysis Division, located within Commerce
<b>NC AHECs</b>	North Carolina Area Health Education Centers
<b>NCCCS</b>	North Carolina Community College System
<b>NCICU</b>	North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities
<b>NCWorks Commission</b>	North Carolina's official state-level workforce development board, as designated by WIOA (see below)
<b>RESEA</b>	Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment
<b>SNAP</b>	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (administered at the federal level by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Services)
<b>SOG</b>	School of Government, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
<b>TANF</b>	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (federally funded program)
<b>UNC</b>	University of North Carolina
<b>WDB</b>	Workforce Development Board
<b>WIOA</b>	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (federal statute)

## Executive Summary

North Carolina Session Law 2023-7 required the state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS); the state Department of Commerce (Commerce); and key health, education, and workforce stakeholders to develop a multifaceted plan to support workforce development opportunities for Medicaid beneficiaries and the expansion of the healthcare workforce. Individuals who are newly eligible for Medicaid through the expansion are likely to be underemployed and without access to employer-sponsored healthcare. A collaboration between DHHS, Commerce, and other partners provides an opportunity for holistic support of individuals' health and employment needs.

DHHS, Commerce, and partner agencies developed a robust plan and proposal to provide greater access to workforce services for Medicaid beneficiaries and to address North Carolina's growing need for healthcare workers.

### Proposals

#### Helping Medicaid Beneficiaries Obtain Higher-Paying Jobs with Access to Employer-Sponsored Health Insurance

Commerce and DHHS are proposing a new Medicaid Beneficiaries Workforce Development Program to help Medicaid beneficiaries access job training and education programs that will lead to jobs with **family-sustaining wages and access to employer-sponsored healthcare**. The total cost of the program would require \$18 million in new state funding, recurring, to serve approximately 10 percent of individuals (60,000) receiving Medicaid through the expansion. By reaching an additional 60,000 individuals annually, the workforce system would increase its overall services to individuals by 60 percent. A [table outlining the budget for such services](#) is found in Chapter 4.

#### Key Points

- The new program would involve collaboration between DHHS and Commerce to identify Medicaid beneficiaries and connect them with workforce development services offered by the Commerce Department's Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) and local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs).
- DWS would conduct initial assessments and recommend services based on individual goals.
- A new "Medicaid Beneficiary Workforce Development Fund" would be created to support training, education, and wraparound services for participants, including funding for childcare, transportation, and housing. Local WDBs would enroll participants in this program.
- Community health workers (CHWs) would be trained to help Medicaid beneficiaries navigate the program and access resources.
- DHHS and Commerce will partner with the Government Data Analytics Center at the North Carolina Department of Information Technology to support the measuring of required performance goals.

**Benefits**

- Increased participation in workforce development programs by Medicaid beneficiaries.
- Improved job opportunities and career advancement for beneficiaries.
- Potential for higher wages and economic stability.

**Challenges**

- High volume of potential participants (more than 500,000 Medicaid beneficiaries).
- DHHS, Commerce, and local WDBs cannot implement the new program without new funding.
- Need for outreach and education to encourage participation. To support communication and outreach efforts, in addition to using CHWs, communication needs include the use of
  - social media and digital advertising development services,
  - website and communication tools, and
  - training and surveys.

**Supporting Healthcare Workforce Development**

Commerce, DHHS, and partner education agencies are also proposing new programs and additional funding for existing programs to expand the healthcare workforce. The focus will be on recruitment, retention, and wage subsidies for critical sectors. Each partner (Commerce, DHHS, DPI (Department of Public Instruction), NCCCS (North Carolina Community College System), UNC (University of North Carolina), NCICU (North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities), NC AHEC (North Carolina Area Health Education Centers)) has recommended items for inclusion in the new and proposed expanded programs. To fund all the programs (listed, in part, below) would require a minimum of \$46 million annually and \$20 million in non-recurring funding to NCCCS in the first year of the biennium. Many of the identified items are in alignment with existing efforts to support work-based learning and short-term workforce credential funding.

These new/expanded programs include

- work-based learning and apprenticeship programs for youth and adults,
- Short-Term Workforce Development Grants,
- healthcare-sector partnerships,
- success coaches and navigators at community colleges, and
- grants to support the development of new programs and the expansion of existing programs at postsecondary institutions across the state.

A [table outlining the budget for such services](#) is found in Chapter 4.

**Legislation Needed**

To implement the plan to support workforce development opportunities for Medicaid beneficiaries and the expansion of the healthcare workforce, Commerce and DHHS must secure new state funding to address gaps and provide services at the scale needed to achieve meaningful impact across the state. No additional performance metrics or additional legislation are identified at this time.

## Timeline

- **January–July 2025:** Engage with key legislative stakeholders
- **July 2025:** Secure funding from the North Carolina General Assembly
- **January 2026:** Launch of the Medicaid Workforce Development Fund with new state funding
- **June 2026:** Regular performance evaluation and reporting
- **August 2026:** Legislative review and adaptation
- **Ongoing (post–August 2026):** Continuous improvement and ongoing evaluation

# Chapter 1.

## Medicaid Workforce Plan

### Introduction and Methodology

#### Introduction

On December 1, 2023, the U.S. government approved an expansion of the Medicaid Program to reach new populations, which impacted the start date of this work. North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper signed House Bill 76 into law on March 27, 2023, which expanded Medicaid services to a projected 600,000 more North Carolinians. This Medicaid expansion legislation also requires the creation of a comprehensive workforce development program and mandates that certain reports be submitted to the North Carolina General Assembly. Extracts from House Bill 76 are set out below.

SECTION 2.1.(a) No later than December 1, 2024, the Secretary of the Department of Commerce (Secretary) shall develop a plan to create a seamless, statewide, comprehensive workforce development program, bringing together new opportunities with the current workforce development opportunities within the Department of Commerce (Commerce), the Department of Labor (Labor), and other State agencies.

...

SECTION 2.2.(a) In collaboration with Commerce, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) shall develop a method by which to assist individuals enrolled in the North Carolina Medicaid program and other relevant social service programs with accessing appropriate workforce development services. DHHS shall develop a plan for assessing the current employment status and any barriers to employment of newly enrolled Medicaid beneficiaries.

As of October 2024, Medicaid expansion has provided coverage to approximately 553,000 North Carolinians (see DHHS, NC Medicaid, Division of Health Benefits, [Medicaid Expansion Dashboard](#) (last updated October 4, 2024)). More than one in three new enrollees are between 19 and 29 years old and live in rural communities (see [Medicaid Expansion Dashboard](#)). Many of the new enrollees work in retail stores, hospitality services, and other businesses that might not provide access to employer-sponsored health insurance (see Cooper press release, 2024, in the [References](#)). Affording non-employer-sponsored healthcare coverage can be quite a challenge for many individuals, and this problem is compounded by an increase in healthcare spending per capita in the United States (see American Medical Association, 2024, in the [References](#)).

Before December 1, 2023, Medicaid eligibility limits were set at 37 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) for parents and at 0 percent for other adults. However, as of December 1, 2023, adults between the ages of 19 and 64 with higher incomes (up to 138 percent of the FPL, which is \$41,000 for a family of four) now qualify for Medicaid (see Raphael and Rudowitz, 2023, in the [References](#)). Due to the new eligibility policy, single adults, or those without children, may now qualify for Medicaid (Cooper press release, 2024). As noted above, prior to the expansion of



the program, North Carolina Medicaid income-eligibility limits were 37 percent of the FPL for parents (\$9,198 for a family of three in 2023) and 0 percent for other adults.

Precedent from other states indicates that there are advantages to supplementing Medicaid expansion with workforce development services. The intentional connection has expanded economic and employment outcomes for beneficiaries. In response to the directive of HB 76, and based on the assumption that similar intentionality in North Carolina could lead more North Carolinians to self-sufficiency, the Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) at the North Carolina Department of Commerce (Commerce) and DHHS collaborated on this Medicaid Workforce Plan. The two entities engaged the UNC School of Government's (SOG) ncIMPACT Initiative (ncIMPACT) as a permitted third party to facilitate input from all required partners on developing a comprehensive plan and on producing initial reports to the North Carolina General Assembly, to be delivered by December 1, 2024. Required partners include the following: The state Department of Labor (DOL), the NCWorks Commission, the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS), the North Carolina Area Health Education Centers (NC AHEC), the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC), the state Department of Public Instruction (DPI), the University of North Carolina (UNC), DHHS, hospitals and healthcare providers licensed in the state, prepaid health plans as defined under G.S. 143B-431.01(b), the NC Chamber, any North Carolina community organization with relevant expertise, and local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs).

While DHHS and Commerce collaborated closely on leading the development of the Medicaid Workforce Plan, leaders from both the public and private sectors were valuable contributors to this effort.

## **Methodology for Developing a Comprehensive Medicaid Workforce Plan**

A core team consisting of DWS and DHHS leadership managed the plan-development process. The first deliverable—selecting a facilitator—was completed in May 2024 with the selection of ncIMPACT.

### **Kick Off**

The core team and the facilitator organized an in-person kick-off meeting on May 15, 2024, at the DHHS campus in Raleigh. Facilitated by Professor Anita Brown-Graham of ncIMPACT, the kick-off meeting served as an introductory and brainstorming session. The core team convened partner agencies required by the legislation (DOL, NCWorks, NCCCS, NC AHEC, DPI, UNC, hospital and healthcare providers licensed in the state, prepaid health plans, EDPNC, the NC Chamber, and local WDBs) and other community organizations with relevant experience, including the Department of Adult Correction (DAC) and NCICU. Together, the parties built the framework for developing a plan to provide Medicaid recipients with access to workforce development services.

The kick-off meeting was a success, resulting in the creation of five subcommittees, the designation of a subcommittee lead for each one, and a proposed timeline to complete the comprehensive plan.

### Subcommittee: Defining Success

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**Lead:** Anita Bachmann, UnitedHealthCare

**Members, department of affiliation:**

- Nathan Copley, Commerce
- Brian Perkins, Alliance Health
- Sarah Wilson, Alliance Health
- Heidi Chan, AmeriHealth Caritas North Carolina
- Angela Boykin, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBS), Healthy Blue (Medicaid plan)
- Eamonn McAteer, BCBS, Healthy Blue
- Chris Paterson, Carolina Complete Health
- Troy Hildreth, WellCare
- Dr. Andrea Crowley, NCCCS
- Tatyana Kelly, North Carolina Healthcare Association

### Subcommittee: Jobseeker Services and Employer Engagement

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**Lead:** Dr. Annie Izod, Commerce

**Members, department of affiliation:**

- Pat Sturdivant, Capital Area Workforce Development Board
- Agreta Limerick, Commerce
- James Bain, Commerce
- Dr. Jenni Harris, Commerce, Business Services
- Dr. Michelle Johnson, NCCCS
- Sandra Thompson, NCCCS
- Sara Bennett, Piedmont Triad Regional Workforce Development Board
- Wendy Walker-Fox, Piedmont Triad Regional Workforce Development Board
- Jennifer McArthur, Mid-Carolina Council of Governments
- Chris Egan, DHHS
- Kenneth Bausell, DHHS
- Trey Michael, DPI
- Jeanne Turner, DPI

### Subcommittee: Agency Data Sharing

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**Lead:** Jay Ludlam, DHHS

**Members, department of affiliation:**

- Malinda Todd, Capital Area Workforce Development Board
- Darrin Ballard, Commerce
- Michael Hoskins, Commerce
- Nancy Cross, DPI
- Meihui Bodane, Commerce
- Dr. Bill Schneider, NCCCS
- Mary Grillo, Department of Adult Correction (DAC)
- Melanie Bush, DHHS

### Subcommittee: North Carolina's Healthcare Workforce Needs

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**Lead:** Jeff Debellis, Commerce

**Members, department of affiliation:**

- Andy MacCracken, NC AHEC
- Jasmin Vokel, Capital Area Workforce Development Board
- Freeman Denton, Commerce
- Victor Glover, Commerce
- Barbara Burt, DPI
- Debra Derr, NC Chamber
- Melissa Smith, NCCCS
- Tatyana Kelly, North Carolina Healthcare Association
- Katherine Restrepo Martin, UNC System
- Chris Chung, EDPNC
- Commissioner Josh Dobson, DOL
- Joyce Rice, GuilfordWorks
- Karen Wade, DHHS
- Emily McGee, DHHS

### Subcommittee: Community Outreach and Engagement

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**Lead:** Andrew Gardner, NCCCS

**Members, department of affiliation:**

- Marcy Gardner, NCCCS
- Anne Bacon, NCCCS
- Anna London, Charlotte Works
- Angela Cline Karchmer, Gaston County DHHS, Gaston County Workforce Development Board
- Dr. Danielle Harrison, GuilfordWorks
- Duna Long, Turning Point Workforce Development Board, Inc.
- Oscar Miranda Tapia, NCICU (North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities)
- Tom West, NCICU
- Pamela Perry, Carolina Complete Health
- Andrew Beal, Commerce
- LaQuana Palmer, DHHS
- Kristie VanAuken, Department of Public Instruction

## Subcommittees

After intensive brainstorming at the kick-off meeting, the five subcommittees were created to divide tasks efficiently and to provide subject matter expertise. The subcommittees are as follows: Defining Success, Jobseeker Services and Employer Engagement, Agency Data Sharing, North Carolina's Healthcare Workforce Needs, and Community Outreach and Engagement. At the kick-off meeting, the subcommittees worked on suggestions and recommendations for the comprehensive plan. Each subcommittee included a team lead, a core team/DWS representative, and participants gathered from various partner organizations.

To best guide the subcommittees, DWS and DHHS leadership developed committee charges and legislative focal areas to direct the subcommittee's research and outcomes. Subcommittee participants were tasked with addressing their individualized committee charges through a chapter outline and then through a full chapter report. To provide cohesion between the reports, DWS developed a budget and chapter report template for the subcommittees to use to outline their findings and financial needs throughout the Medicaid Workforce Plan project. The budget template represented a more hands-on approach, allowing the subcommittees to categorize necessary funds, highlight any recurring costs, and provide justifications for these costs. The chapter report guided the subcommittees through the necessary elements of their reports, with sections on background, timeline for implementation, opportunities for improvement, responses to charges, and legislative content. Commerce and ncIMPACT provided feedback on each document produced by the subcommittees, allowing for correction and deeper analysis.

## Draft Report

The core team leads and the subcommittee leads met on September 19, 2024, to review each chapter provided by the subcommittees and an outline for the full report. The core leads and ncIMPACT analyzed and synthesized the subcommittees' final reports, recommendations, and budgets into the final comprehensive plan.

## Final Report

The final report and plan are organized as follows: Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the comprehensive plan and describes the methodology behind its development. Chapter 2 outlines the problem being addressed, including an overview of the Medicaid expansion population, the healthcare workforce needs in North Carolina, and other economic and occupational projections. Chapter 3 summarizes existing workforce development services and known gaps therein, providing an overview of the many organizations across the state working to support jobseekers. Chapter 4 outlines what it would take to properly support the Medicaid expansion population, with recommendations, policy proposals, and budgetary funds from the subcommittees to accomplish the goals of the legislation. Chapter 5, the conclusion, provides a summary of the key takeaways, benefits, and challenges of the comprehensive plan–development process.

North Carolina is using many strategies to enroll eligible individuals in Medicaid expansion. For example, in October 2023, DHHS launched a new website with basic information about the expansion, including who is eligible, what benefits are covered, and how to apply. Also included is a toolkit of English- and Spanish-language resources that providers and organizations can use to conduct outreach about the state's expansion of Medicaid. That said, it will take additional strategies to provide workforce development supports for new enrollees.

## Chapter 2.

# What Is the Problem We Are Trying to Address? Who Receives Medicaid?

### Overview

Medicaid recipients come from diverse backgrounds and have a broad spectrum of needs. Medicaid primarily serves low-income individuals and families. In North Carolina, this includes adults without children. Exact eligibility criteria differ by state, especially after the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) Medicaid expansion. A significant portion of Medicaid recipients are children. Medicaid is a key provider of healthcare for pregnant women, particularly those with lower incomes, ensuring access to prenatal care and delivery services.

For some recipients over the age of 64, Medicaid provides an important complement to the services they also receive through Medicare, such as long-term care or nursing home services. The program also serves people with disabilities, providing them with medical care and support services. Many Medicaid recipients have chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, or asthma, which require ongoing medical care and management along with the need for mental health services. This can include treatment for depression, anxiety, substance use disorders, and other conditions. While Medicaid beneficiaries who received access through the expansion are employed, they earn low wages and are not likely to have access to private health insurance through their employer or to be able to afford it.

Because Medicaid covers a wide range of people with varying needs, a “typical” recipient could be a child in a low-income household, a working adult without access to employer-based insurance, or a person over the age of 64 requiring long-term care. Regardless, the common thread is economic vulnerability and the need for affordable healthcare services.

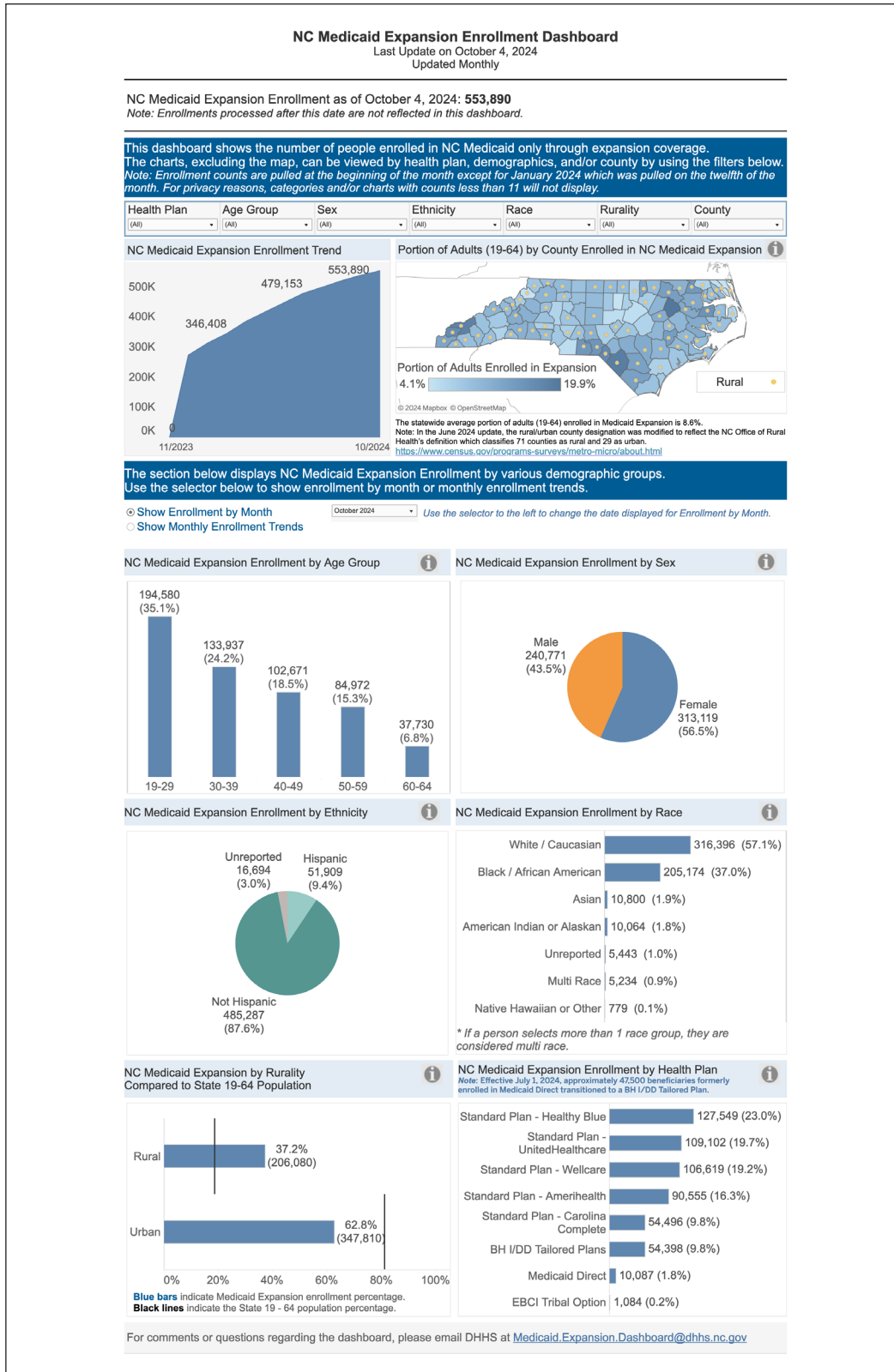
### Medicaid Expansion Population

Since Medicaid was expanded (December 1, 2023), approximately 553,000 people across North Carolina have been enrolled. In comparison to the general population demographics across the state as a whole, the expansion population is young—nearly 60 percent are between 19 and 39 years of age—and rural. While the largest percentage of the expansion population is white (57.1 percent), the percentage of Black/African American new Medicaid recipients (37.0 percent) is higher than the representation of that population in the state (see Figure 2.1, below). In 2022, 20 percent of the North Carolina population was Black/African American. Given the age, rurality, and racial makeup of the Medicaid expansion population, this group may be more likely to face economic disadvantages.

### North Carolina's Healthcare Workforce

Discussions of expanding North Carolina's Medicaid eligibility requirements revealed that a significant number of individuals and families in the state are struggling to afford health insurance and needed services. Medicaid expansion presents an opportunity to improve both

Figure 2.1. NC Medicaid Expansion Enrollment Dashboard



health outcomes and financial security for vulnerable populations. But it also highlights the need for a coordinated effort to improve access across the state to education, training, and employment opportunities that will lead to good-paying jobs with benefits.

## Current and Future Workforce Needs

Based on the most recent state employment projections published by the North Carolina Department of Commerce, North Carolina is expected to grow jobs throughout the next decade: from 2022 to 2032, 509,540 new jobs are expected to be added, with an annual growth rate of 1.0 percent.

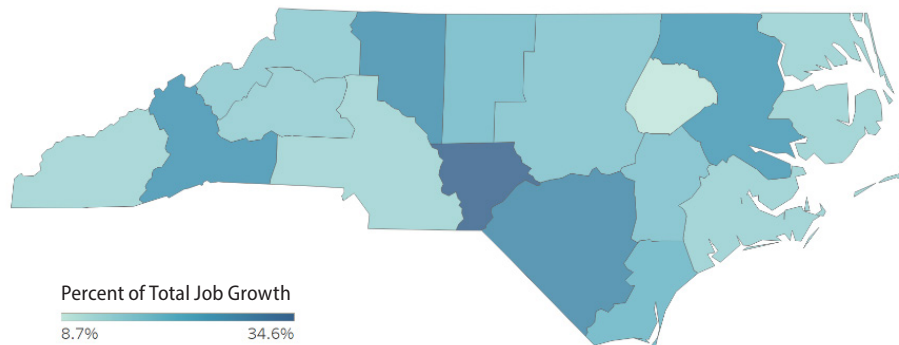
Pre-Medicaid expansion data from the U.S. Census Bureau shows that 46 percent of Medicaid recipients in North Carolina in 2021 were already employed, either part-time or full-time. North Carolina’s workforce goals should not only include employment, however. They should also include expanding career opportunities with a greater number of work hours, higher annual wages, and good benefits, including health insurance coverage. The analysis we are undertaking reveals a complex landscape of opportunities and challenges across various sectors of North Carolina’s economy.

## Employment Projections

### Industry Projections

The healthcare and social assistance sector of North Carolina’s economy stands out as a primary area of growth. This sector is projected to account for 13 to 35 percent of total job growth in most regions of the state between 2021 and 2030 (see Figure 2.2). The sector is a particularly promising one for Medicaid recipients due to its range of entry-level positions, many of which require less than a four-year degree, and its clear career advancement pathways. For instance, an individual might start as a medical assistant, progress to a licensed practical nurse, and eventually become a registered nurse, with each step offering significant wage increases.

**Figure 2.2. Share of Projected Job Growth in North Carolina from Healthcare and Social Assistance Sectors, 2021–2030**



Source: N.C. Department of Commerce, Labor & Economic Analysis Division, *2021–2030 North Carolina Sub-Prosperity Zone Industry Employment Projections*. This is the latest regional, sub-state employment projection available as of August 2024.

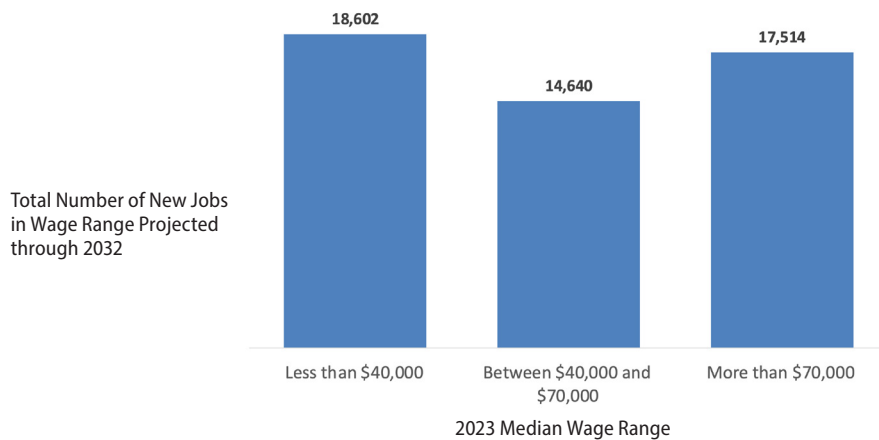
The highest proportion of Medicaid recipients by age are 19 to 29-year-olds (who make up 35 percent of the Medicaid expansion population). Given this, bolstering support for these promising entry-level jobs is likely to benefit many individuals in the expansion population.

But healthcare is not the only sector offering opportunities. Professional, scientific, and technical services, as well as transportation and warehousing positions, are showing robust growth in urban areas. In non-urban regions, construction is emerging as a key growth sector. Each of these industries presents unique opportunities for career advancement and wage growth.

### Occupational Projections

North Carolina’s projected job growth spans across not just multiple industries, but also many occupation groups, earnings levels, and educational requirements. This diversity can benefit Medicaid recipients who may struggle to find entry-level positions, as well as individuals who need better-paying, stable career paths. Figure 2.3 displays the average number of new jobs projected statewide through 2032, based on 2023 median wage ranges.

**Figure 2.3. Projected Average Annual Job Growth in North Carolina through 2032, Based on 2023 Median Wages**



Source: N.C. Department of Commerce, 2022–2032 North Carolina Occupational Employment Projections.

In addition to developing jobs by creating entirely new positions, job openings can also be created via labor force exits and employees switching jobs. Table 2.1 shows that there will be plenty of opportunities in North Carolina in the future, regardless of a job candidate’s existing skills and interests. For example, the healthcare support occupation group is projected to provide slightly more than 31,000 job openings annually to the state economy through 2032, with roughly 3,400 of those coming from new jobs. Moreover, all seventeen occupations in this group require less than a four-year degree. The continued need for these jobs in the state, along with the lower educational requirements they carry, has the potential to provide stable careers for Medicaid recipients.

**Table 2.1. Projected Annual Job Openings in North Carolina through 2032, by Occupation Group and Based on 2023 Median Wages**

Occupation Group	2023 MEDIAN WAGE		
	Less than \$40,000	Between \$40,000 and \$70,000	More than \$70,000
Food Preparation- and Serving-Related	83,888	580	0
Sales and Related	47,460	19,369	3,562
Transportation and Material Moving	56,987	11,547	576
Office and Administrative Support	38,345	28,865	0
Production	20,916	16,602	87
Management	0	1,987	31,085
Healthcare Support	23,652	7,497	258
Business and Financial Operations	0	8,844	21,652
Educational Instruction and Library	10,985	12,971	2,964
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	2,950	6,875	14,032
Building, Grounds Cleaning, and Maintenance	20,635	2,567	12
Personal Care and Service	17,445	4,347	0
Construction and Extraction	7,073	14,674	14
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	1,099	17,658	2,566
Computer and Mathematical	0	1,794	12,921
Protective Service	7,374	4,326	390
Community and Social Service	1,745	6,628	0
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	1,455	5,350	693
Architecture and Engineering	0	2,231	3,884
Life, Physical, and Social Science	0	2,582	2,124
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	3,969	716	0
Legal	0	1,570	885

Source: N.C. Department of Commerce, 2022–2032 North Carolina Occupational Employment Projections.

While North Carolina is projected in the future to see faster rates of new job growth in occupations with higher educational requirements, most projected job openings in the state through 2032 are expected to be in occupations with little to no formal educational requirements. This is due, in part, to the low pay for positions that require low levels of education and the heavy turnover that occurs as a result. This creates opportunities for many individuals to enter the labor market and find entry-level work, although at potentially low wages. Table 2.2 shows that for individuals with a high school diploma or less, there are slightly more than 320,000 projected annual openings through 2032 for jobs that have a 2023 median wage of less



**Table 2.2. Projected Annual Job Openings in North Carolina through 2032, by Bureau of Labor Statistics Minimum Education Requirement and Based on 2023 Median Wages**

Minimum Education Required	2023 MEDIAN WAGE		
	Less than \$40,000	Between \$40,000 and \$70,000	More than \$70,000
No Formal Educational Credential	196,170	2,972	12
High School Diploma or Equivalent	123,870	97,238	9,248
Postsecondary Non-Degree Awarded	15,240	25,933	300
Some College, No Degree	5,039	8,519	0
Associate’s Degree	2,094	6,803	2,034
Bachelor’s Degree	3,565	32,753	75,022
Master’s Degree or Above	0	5,362	11,089

Source: N.C. Department of Commerce, 2022–2032 North Carolina Occupational Employment Projections. The minimum education requirements listed are from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

than \$40,000 and 100,000 projected annual openings for jobs that have a 2023 median wage of between \$40,000 and \$70,000.

North Carolina’s industry and occupational projections show robust job growth and opportunities for individuals of all skill, interest, and experience levels, including in healthcare. The challenge ahead is to match workers to these positions.

### Labor Market Conditions and Employer Needs

While projections show ample job opportunities, as outlined above, understanding current labor market conditions is crucial for effectively matching workers to jobs. North Carolina’s tight labor market has created a favorable environment for Medicaid recipients seeking employment. Commerce’s Labor & Economic Analysis Division (LEAD) estimated that there was exactly one jobseeker for every job opening statewide in 2023. While conditions have been loosening, demographic projections suggest that this trend may persist, potentially offering long-term opportunities for sustainable employment.

Increasing awareness of job opportunities can help unemployed individuals find work. According to Commerce’s 2024 *Employer Needs Survey*, two-thirds of employers who faced hiring challenges in 2023 blamed an overall lack of applicants for their struggles.

## Chapter 3.

# Existing Workforce Development Services and Known Gaps

In this chapter, we detail workforce development programs and services currently available throughout the state. Importantly, we identify existing gaps within the available services that pose barriers for individuals wishing to access them. This includes a discussion of the challenges for both Medicaid beneficiaries and for individuals, regardless of Medicaid status, attempting to enter the healthcare workforce. Opportunities to address these known gaps are discussed in the following chapter.

### How North Carolina's Workforce Development System Serves Jobseekers

North Carolina has a strong workforce development system that provides a diverse set of workforce programs and services to individuals with the goal of helping jobseekers and students obtain and maintain employment through career, training, education, and supportive services. The state's workforce development system also helps businesses stay prosperous by finding qualified workers. The NCWorks system is a partnership of state and local workforce development organizations that provides an array of services geared to assisting individuals with defining career pathways, skills assessments, work readiness, occupational skills training in high-demand occupations and industry sectors, work-based learning opportunities, employment searches, and job referrals. NCWorks assists employers through an array of business services in multiple areas, including job recruitment, retention, layoff aversion, labor market information, and training.

NCWorks is the state's unified workforce development system and an instrumental partner in ensuring North Carolina's economic future. The primary partners involved in career-search and job-placement assistance are the state's twenty Local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) and the North Carolina Department of Commerce's (Commerce) Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS). The WDBs provide oversight, planning, and administration support to NCWorks Career Centers. DWS is the state administrative entity for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I and Title III programs. The WIOA includes five titles: Workforce Development Activities (Title I), Adult Education and Literacy (Title II), Amendments to the Wagner-Peyser Act (Title III), Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Title IV), and General Provisions (Title V). Title I, whose programs are primarily administered through the Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor, covers three state formula grant programs, multiple national programs, and Job Corps (the country's largest career training and educational program for individuals aged 16 through 24). Title II, whose programs are administered by the U.S. Department of Education, includes a state formula grant program and "national leadership activities" (which focus specifically on adult education and literacy issues).

Title III amends the Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933, which established the Employment Service (ES), a nationwide system of public employment offices. The law's goal is to improve the labor market by connecting people looking for work with employers looking for workers. The ES is part

of the American Job Center service-delivery system and offers services to both jobseekers and businesses.

Title IV of the WIOA amends the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which authorizes the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities. Title V includes provisions for the administration of the WIOA. DWS provides Wagner-Peyser, Veterans Services, and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) staffing in NCWorks Career Centers.

## Virtual Resources for Jobseekers and Career Planners

Given the complex landscape of job opportunities and the varied needs of Medicaid recipients in North Carolina, a personalized approach to career development is essential. Fortunately, workforce and education partners across the state have collaborated to create several resources to support jobseekers in their pursuit of living-wage employment and career growth. Data and career-planning resources exist to aid jobseekers and counselors in identifying in-demand occupations, potential pathways, labor market information, education and training opportunities, support resources, and available jobs. Below are some of the available resources.

- [NCWorks Online](#). The NCWorks.gov website is a product of the state's workforce development system and is designed to assist North Carolina jobseekers in finding employment and advancing their careers. The platform offers a variety of tools and resources, including job searches, résumé creation, and access to training and education programs. Jobseekers can utilize NCWorks Online to search for job openings across the state, apply for positions, and receive personalized career assessments. The site also provides information on local job fairs, workshops, and labor market trends, helping users make informed career decisions.
- [NCcareers.org](#). The NCcareers.org website serves as North Carolina's primary online resource for career exploration and development, catering to jobseekers, students, parents, educators, and career counselors. The platform provides essential tools and information to help users identify their skills and interests, explore various occupations, and understand local job-market demands. Users can access a range of resources, including career assessments, detailed occupational data, and information about education and training opportunities. The site is designed to assist individuals at all stages of their careers. With insights into current and future job needs in North Carolina, NCcareers.org aims to empower users to make informed decisions about their career paths and enhance their employability.
- [Star Jobs](#). The North Carolina Star Jobs tool, developed by Commerce's Labor & Economic Analysis Division (LEAD), is a user-friendly resource designed to help individuals identify promising career opportunities in the state. It features a star rating system and categorizes more than 700 occupations based on factors such as wages, projected growth rates, and job openings, allowing users to quickly pinpoint high-potential careers. Users can customize their searches by geography, wage levels, education requirements, and career clusters.

## NCWorks Career Centers Offer Integrated Service Delivery

In 2013, North Carolina implemented an integrated service-delivery model for its NCWorks Career Centers. This model focuses on enhancing customer service and is organized around the provision of services to customers, not discrete funding streams and programs offered in silos. In North Carolina, WIOA Title I adult and dislocated worker programs and Title III Wagner-Peyser Employment Services program are the operational backbone of the NCWorks Career Centers. Career centers implementing the unique service-delivery model deploy integrated staffing and technology to generate an integrated customer pool and customer flow. Career center staff are organized by function, not by program or agency affiliation (funding source), to serve customers efficiently and effectively. Staff are organized this way and are cross-trained so that they have the capacity to serve all customers and are knowledgeable about all the services their center offers. Integrated staffing is a team-based approach that results in streamlined and seamless service delivery. The pandemic increased and emphasized the need for virtual services and provided the opportunity for career center staff to provide a vast array of services to North Carolinians beyond the walls of the career centers. There are more than eighty NCWorks Career Centers or access points across the state ready to serve youth and adults.

Every NCWorks Career Center

- is locally responsive and demand-driven;
- is governed by a local WDB, comprised of private-sector representatives, local elected officials, and WIOA core partners;
- provides access to a full range of core employment-related services to help businesses find the skilled workers they need and help jobseekers find satisfying careers;
- delivers services through an integrated service-delivery strategy;
- can now also provide a variety of virtual services to both jobseekers and employers.

Given the importance of increasing worker skills and raising the overall educational attainment level in the state, the unified North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) is a critical asset to the NCWorks system. All fifty-eight community colleges in the state have linkages with their local WDBs and with NCWorks Career Centers. All community colleges are classified as Eligible Training Providers and offer instruction for individuals taking part in Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. In addition, NCCCS has administrative oversight for the state's registered apprenticeship program, ApprenticeshipNC. Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs are often coordinated through North Carolina's community colleges, and many are led by employers. Community colleges that operate Adult Education/Literacy programs on behalf of the state are well positioned to offer integrated education and training, providing foundational skills and occupational skills.

## North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

DHHS contributes to the NCWorks system through both cost sharing and the provision of services. NCWorks and DHHS have an infrastructure and cost-sharing agreement, under which DHHS allocates an average of \$300,000 annually to local WDBs, which in turn provide NCWorks services to individuals with disabilities participating in WIOA Title IV vocational rehabilitation programs, which DHHS administers. Additionally, DHHS's vocational rehabilitation programs regularly provide reviews and consultations on NCWorks' website and

program accessibility, and its vocational rehabilitation counselors will also schedule time to work directly in several of the NCWorks Career Center locations to provide information and referral services for individuals with disabilities.

In North Carolina, there are two entities with administrative responsibility for the services provided under the WIOA Title IV Rehabilitation Act program: The Division of Employment and Independence for People with Disabilities (EIPD) and the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB). Both EIPD and DSB are administratively housed within DHHS. DSB is responsible for the administration of Title IV vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to individuals who are blind, deaf and blind, and visually impaired, and EIPD is responsible for the administration of Title IV VR services to individuals with all other disabilities.

The state of North Carolina has eighty-seven local VR office locations with counseling staff, vocational evaluators, employment placement specialists, and other staff, as appropriate, to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities who require specialized VR services. Specific arrangements and staffing patterns vary from site to site depending on local needs and agreements.

DHHS also provides a connection to NCWorks through its Division of Social Services (DSS) and its Division of Child and Family Well-Being, the latter of which administers North Carolina's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, known as Work First, and the programs it provides, including employment and training instruction. DHHS also oversees the state's SNAP (nutrition benefits) employment and training program and its Economic Opportunity/Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds for emergency services, along with other programs focused on the well-being and health of North Carolina's workforce, such as the DHHS Opioid Action Plan, which offers services and strategic approaches for curtailing the significant stresses that opioid and substance use places on families and the workforce. The Action Plan has demonstrated great success.

DSS provides administrative oversight for the state's Work First TANF employment program and the CSBG programs. DSS also provides oversight and support to the 100 county social services agencies that deliver benefits and services to individuals and families. The Division of Child and Family Well-Being has administrative oversight of SNAP employment and training programs. The North Carolina Division of Aging has administrative responsibilities for the state's Senior Community Service Employment Program, while the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services oversees the state's long-term vocational support services.

DHHS and its divisions and programs are a critical component of the NCWorks system. DHHS ensures that persons with disabilities, TANF employment program participants, and other workforce program participants can access core workforce services matching their unique needs. Vocational rehabilitation staff participate on local WDBs, and the DHHS secretary is a member of the NCWorks Commission. DHHS remains an active partner with the NCWorks Commission and the state's workforce development system and supports NCWorks' efforts to provide more universal access to placement and training services, to integrate programs by offering a common core of information and services, and by offering consumers more choices regarding where and how they get services.

## North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS)

NCCCS provides hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians open-door access to affordable and diverse learning environments to improve their education, transform their careers, and change their lives. It is the third-largest community college system in the nation, with programs and services provided through fifty-eight multi-campus locations.

NCCCS offers academic and training programs at all the state's community colleges through its curriculum, continuing education, and economic development divisions. Program areas include Animals and Environment, Arts and Media, Beauty and Personal Care, Business and Leadership, Education and Teaching, Engineering and Construction, Healthcare and Medicine, Hospitality and Food, Languages, Law and Public Safety, Real Estate, Science and Research, Technology and Computers, Trades and Mechanics, Transport and Logistics, and University Transfer. These programs may include associate degrees, diplomas, certificates, or individual courses.

NCCCS also administers the WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program known as College and Career Readiness (CCR). Instruction is offered in basic skills, high school completion, integrated English literacy and civics education, English language acquisition, job readiness, and digital skills. CCR students may co-enroll in career pathways while improving their basic skills or completing preparation for a high school equivalency. CCR instructional programs are offered at all North Carolina community colleges and at eleven community-based organizations in the state.

In addition to the programs highlighted above, there are many other programs available through Commerce, DHHS, the North Carolina Department of Administration, and the state Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Please see the appendixes below for more detailed information.

See [Appendix A](#) for a list of North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) programs

See [Appendix B](#) for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs

See [Appendix C](#) for the North Carolina Department of Administration (DOA) American Indian Workforce Development Program

See [Appendix D](#) for a list of North Carolina Department of Commerce (Commerce) programs

See [Appendix E](#) for a list of North Carolina Community College System programs

See [Appendix F](#) for a list of additional state and federal programs

## NCWorks Employer Engagement

NCWorks collaborates with government agencies, economic developers, educational institutions, the private sector, and others to provide integrated workforce solutions that engage and support employers. From talent recruitment to tax credits and more, NCWorks helps employers find and manage the workforce they need by connecting them with jobseekers who utilize NCWorks

Career Center services. NCWorks engages with employers in numerous ways that will support Medicaid beneficiaries and recipients of relevant social services programs.

- Recruitment—recruiting, screening, and providing qualified applicants to help employers fill critical openings.
- Accessing untapped talent pools—connecting employers with talent that might be overlooked, including youth, veterans, people with disabilities, older workers, and jobseekers with criminal records.
- Training—offering training resources and funding for new or existing employees through on-the-job training and off-site classes at local colleges and other training venues.
- Apprenticeships—providing technical assistance and resources to support apprenticeships, combining on-the-job training with classroom learning to foster long-term growth.
- Labor market information—supplying the latest labor market information, economic forecasts, and local wage and salary data to help employers maintain competitive pay.
- Tax credits and incentives—assisting employers in taking advantage of tax credits and incentives for hiring individuals from eligible target groups who face significant barriers to employment.

### **North Carolina’s Training and Education Partners Supporting the Healthcare Workforce**

There is a concerted effort across the education and workforce sectors, among others, in North Carolina to address the needs of the healthcare workforce. Below are examples of various projects on this topic.

#### **Local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) and Commerce**

Commerce and local WDBs are committed to supporting the expansion of the healthcare workforce across North Carolina. These entities have engaged in statewide and regional activities to promote access to career pathways for learners and jobseekers, provide funding for education and training, and address the specific needs of regional healthcare employers through sector partnerships. Commerce served as co-lead (with DHHS) for the Caregiving Workforce Strategic Leadership Council, which was designed to create goals and strategies to address the distinct needs of nurses, behavioral health providers, and direct-care workers across the state. Commerce continues to support DHHS, NC AHEC (North Carolina Area Health Education Centers), and other partner organizations in implementing the strategies identified in the plan to support workforce development opportunities for Medicaid beneficiaries and the expansion of the healthcare workforce.

Local WDBs across the state recognize the critical role they have in developing the healthcare workforce. Since 2018, these organizations have created career pathways in the nursing, allied health, life sciences, and healthcare fields. The pathways, certified by the NCWorks Commission, are used to support jobseekers entering healthcare, first through short-term credentials like the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) credential and then by providing a clear pathway to stack on additional credentials and degrees that increase the knowledge, skills, and ability to earn family-sustaining wages. For example, the Capital Area Workforce Development Board recently announced a \$250,000 investment of WIOA funds for continuing education to promote current

CNAs to licensed practical nurses (LPNs) and registered nurses (RNs) and for retention efforts for current nursing students. The Board is seeking to deepen its understanding of retention issues for nurses by identifying strategies for employers and by engaging with nurses who have retired from the profession.

Finally, rural and urban local WDBs use sector partnerships to become more responsive to the workforce needs of regional healthcare employers. The goal of these sector partnerships is to align the shared needs of employers in areas such as training, recruitment, and retention. GuilfordWorks, the Workforce Development Board for Guilford County, hosts regular “touch points” with employers, including an annual Healthcare Workforce Summit. Now in its fourth year, the summit facilitates broad strategic discussions between employers, educators, and community partners from the perspective of the healthcare industry.

### **North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI)**

DPI’s Office of Career and Technical Education is actively collaborating with various partners across the state to expand the healthcare workforce. These partners include organizations that both employ healthcare professionals and are impacted by workforce development efforts. Specifically, DPI’s Health Science Education program is working to enhance secondary education courses that lead to careers in healthcare. Current offerings include Nurse Aide, Pharmacy Technician, Emergency Medical Technician, and Medical Assisting. These courses provide students with the opportunity to enter the workforce directly after high school or to further their postsecondary education. As a member of the National Consortium for Health Science Education, DPI regularly collaborates with health science educators across the United States to expand certification programs in North Carolina. To support these educators, DPI offers professional development opportunities designed to help teachers meet healthcare licensure requirements and remain in the classroom. A key priority of DPI’s Health Science Education program is to promote, in partnership with ApprenticeshipNC, healthcare work-based learning opportunities across the state. This includes traditional internships, pre-apprenticeships, and apprenticeships that help students explore potential career paths in healthcare. Currently, DPI’s Office of Career and Technical Education offers pre-apprenticeships in pre-nursing and healthcare professions, which include specializations such as Medical Assisting, Pharmacy Technician, and Emergency Medical Technician. DPI has partnered with leading healthcare organizations such as UNC Health, Duke Health, Cone Health, Atrium Health, East Carolina University (ECU) Health, and Novant Health. It also actively engages with professional associations, including the North Carolina Healthcare Association, the North Carolina Healthcare Facilities Association, LeadingAge North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Health, and NC AHEC.

### **North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS)**

NCCCS is actively addressing the issue of healthcare-workforce demand through strategic initiatives and funding, thanks to high-cost expansion and startup funds provided by the General Assembly. Currently, NCCCS is distributing funding (more than \$45 million) to all fifty-eight of the state’s community colleges. These funds are helping the colleges expand critical healthcare programs—including \$13.1 million allocated to Nursing programs (associate’s degree program, practical nursing program); \$10.3 million allocated to Emergency Medical Services programs; and \$3.1 million allocated to Medical Sonography programs—alongside other high-demand fields such as Dental Assisting, Respiratory Therapy, and Surgical Technology.



DHHS's Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Disorders, in partnership with NCCCS, is developing an advanced training program for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and continuing education courses for Peer Support Specialists. DSPs provide vital support to individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health issues, or physical disabilities, while Peer Support Specialists assist individuals in recovery, drawing on their firsthand experiences to foster independence and fulfillment. This credit-bearing DSP program, which leads to a certificate applicable toward an associate's degree in human services, aims to enhance DSPs' skills through comprehensive coursework and has a targeted implementation date of August 2025. Both initiatives are designed to improve retention and career advancement opportunities in the field.

### University of North Carolina (UNC) System

The UNC System Office is allocating a sizable portion of a \$40 million appropriation from the North Carolina General Assembly's 2023 Appropriations Act to assist twelve university nursing programs expand BSN degree (Bachelor of Science in Nursing) student enrollment, nursing degree completion, and NCLEX (a nursing licensure examination) pass rates. The System acknowledges a variety of healthcare workforce shortages and challenges related to the geographic distribution of healthcare professionals, most especially among nurses, who make up the [largest portion](#) of the state's healthcare workforce. According to the [NurseCast](#) model created in 2021 by UNC's Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research, North Carolina could potentially face [a shortage of up to 18,600 registered nurses by 2033](#), largely due to increased patient care demands from North Carolina's aging population, a retirement wave across nursing faculty, and professional burnout that has been [exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

The nursing-program expansion initiative was designed in response to [Section 8.3 of Session Law 2022-74](#), in which the General Assembly required the UNC System and NCCCS to provide feedback on resources needed to increase nursing degree completions by at least 50 percent. In March 2024, the UNC System launched a competitive response for proposals (RFP) process for nursing programs to submit proposals on how they would expand nursing enrollment, improve student retention, and increase BSN degree completion and NCLEX pass rates. Participating nursing programs were required to provide an implementation timeline, nursing enrollment and degree completion data by cohort from Assessment Year (AY) 2017–18 to AY 2023–24, and enrollment and degree completion goals. Nursing programs were also required to demonstrate how a non-recurring program expansion grant would be self-sustaining. A review panel comprising representatives from the UNC System Office, NC AHEC, and the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research vetted each nursing program's expansion-timeline proposals. Most nursing programs that applied received grant funding for the following initiatives to implement their proposed enrollment and degree completion expansion goals:

- faculty recruitment and retention;
- student support services for pre-nursing and nursing students;
- expansion of clinical training partnerships for nursing students;
- preceptor incentives;
- simulation-lab capacity expansion;
- start-up costs for new pre-licensure nursing degree pathways, such as accelerated BSN programs or programs specifically for military-affiliated students; and
- technology and equipment upgrades.

The UNC System Office has imposed annual reporting requirements on all twelve nursing schools under which the schools must begin collecting baseline data to measure the impact of nursing-program expansion efforts made possible by the legislature.

In the 2023 Appropriations Act, the state legislature also made an historic appropriation of \$23.5 million to the UNC System Office to establish the Rural Residency Medical Education and Training Fund. The System Office designed this fund for ECU and UNC-Chapel Hill graduate medical education (GME) programs to establish or expand rural residency programs with a focus on primary care specialties. This initiative presents another significant opportunity for North Carolina to shape a physician workforce that will provide better access to healthcare for patients living in rural and underserved areas. Annual reporting requirements on how these funds are implemented as well as on the future placement of graduating residents will make these public GME investments transparent to state policymakers.

Complex federal formulas and outdated policies for direct and indirect GME payments under Medicare and Medicaid make it difficult to assess how rural and underserved patients benefit from physician pipeline training programs. The Rural Residency Medical Education and Training Fund authorizes six residency programs to grow rural training options: family medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, internal medicine, general surgery, and psychiatry. Eligible uses of these funds include salary and benefits for residents, student loan repayment incentives, preceptor payments, housing and travel costs, and new GME program feasibility studies. Both ECU and UNC-Chapel Hill can also receive enhanced Medicare GME funding if greater than 50 percent of new rural training programs take place in rural areas that meet federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) rural requirements. Otherwise, greater than 30 percent of training must take place in a clinical facility located in a rural area that meets the criteria of the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy. The System Office's overall mission with regard to the Rural Residency Medical Education and Training Fund is to produce more primary care resident graduates who will practice medicine in areas of need.

### North Carolina Area Health Education Centers (NC AHEC)

NC AHEC, in collaboration with the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine, has leveraged nine regional area health education centers to develop and to provide and support educational activities and services that focus on primary care in rural and under-resourced communities. The partners' goal is to recruit, train, and retain the workforce needed for a healthy North Carolina. NC AHEC and the School of Medicine accomplish this work through six service lines:

- **Health careers.** Develop and deploy programming to encourage students to choose careers in healthcare.
- **Student services.** Support health sciences student rotations in rural communities, including by providing safe and affordable short-term housing in those communities.
- **Graduate medical education.** Provide financial support for, and in some instances sponsor, primary care medical residencies throughout North Carolina.
- **Continuing professional development.** Leverage relationships with North Carolina's academic institutions to provide continuing education and training for healthcare professionals.
- **Practice support.** Deploy experienced coaches to support essential community medical practices with the resources needed to adapt to the evolving practice environment (including, for example, implementing electronic health records,

Medicaid managed-care contracting, quality-improvement initiatives and deploying evidence-based practice models like Collaborative Care).

- **Library services.** Provide librarians and access to the NC AHEC Digital Library to support clinicians' access to up-to-date clinical information.

In addition to NC AHEC's partnership with the School of Medicine, the state's regional area health education centers have important partnerships throughout the regions they serve and frequently act as independent convenors to identify and lead collaborations to address community health and healthcare workforce challenges. An important example is the NC Center on the Workforce for Health (Center), which implements the NC Health Talent Alliance, a partnership between the Center and the NC Chamber Foundation, which deploys "talent pipeline management" services throughout North Carolina.

### **[NC Center on the Workforce for Health \(Center\)](#)**

The Center provides a forum for health employers, workers, educators, and policymakers to facilitate action to address today's workforce crises and to strategically plan for the future. The Center builds upon a partnership between NC AHEC, the North Carolina Institute of Medicine (NCIOM), and the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research and works to align workforce planning efforts that address the health needs of North Carolina by providing trusted information, curating best practices, and advancing action from the best available research.

Some of the Center's current initiatives are outlined below.

- The Caregiving Workforce Strategic Leadership Council selected the Center to facilitate the implementation of its 2024 report, which identifies sixty-one actions that state agencies and education partners can take to improve the nursing, behavioral health, and direct-care workforces in North Carolina.
- The NC Health Talent Alliance is a partnership between the Center, the NC Chamber Foundation, and regional area health education centers that leverages the nationally recognized Talent Pipeline Management® framework to convene employer-led collaboratives that drive regional action on critical shared workforce needs in collaboration with education partners. The Center worked with the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research to develop, deploy, and analyze an employer needs survey that represents 1,000 healthcare facilities and a talent-supply survey covering more than 80 health education programs across the state.
- A Solutions Playbook that provides an interactive package of regional data analysis; needs-assessment models; and a curated library of case studies, best practices, toolkits, and related research.
- Through its new membership in the National Forum of State Nursing Workforce Centers, the Center is advancing recommendations of the NCIOM Task Force on the Future of the Nursing Workforce.

### **North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU)**

NCICU serves as the statewide voice of private, nonprofit higher education. NCICU's thirty-six colleges and universities include major research universities, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), colleges for women, traditional liberal arts and science institutions, a work college, and a two-year college. The \$14.2 billion economic impact of NCICU's sector of higher

education and its 66,000 employees, many of whom provide direct healthcare, is central to North Carolina's public interests and its future. Of the total degrees awarded in North Carolina each year, one in four bachelor's degrees and one in three graduate and professional degrees are awarded by NCICU institutions. Among all professional degrees awarded annually in the state, 90 percent of physician assistants' degrees are earned at NCICU institutions. The percentage of North Carolina pharmacy degrees earned at NCICU institutions is 62, and the percentages for NCICU medical and nursing degrees is 60 and 43, respectively. To help students attend college, NCICU colleges and universities award more than \$1 billion in financial aid each year. In addition to this private aid, 47 percent of all North Carolina students at NCICU campuses receive federal Pell Grants, and close to 15,700 North Carolinians receive a North Carolina Need-Based Scholarship at an average award of \$5,280. NCICU believes that this assistance to students is crucial to preparing the next generation of North Carolinians, many of whom will be pivotal to our state's healthcare workforce.

### **Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)**

One of DHHS's priorities is to build a strong and inclusive workforce that supports early learning, health, and wellness across North Carolina. To this end, it partnered with Commerce to address workforce needs in key areas through the Caregiving Workforce Strategic Leadership Council, which is described below.

Many DHHS divisions play an important role in strengthening the healthcare workforce. The Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services (DMH/DD/SUS) is working to support Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), who provide essential in-home and community-based services to beneficiaries with intellectual and developmental disabilities. To address the critical shortage of DSPs, DMH/DD/SUS released the [Direct Support Professional Workforce Plan](#), which outlines a multiyear strategy to ensure that every beneficiary with an intellectual or developmental disability has the care and resources they need to thrive. The plan also guides the use of the North Carolina General Assembly's historic \$835 million investment in behavioral health services, granted in 2023. Of this, \$115 million will strengthen the behavioral health workforce through recruitment and retention bonuses, training, and loan repayment programs, while \$385 million will increase Medicaid rates for providers of behavioral health and intellectual and developmental disabilities services.

The Office of Rural Health (ORH) supports equitable healthcare access in rural and underserved communities by providing funding, training, and technical assistance to deliver high-quality, innovative, accessible, and cost-effective services, ensuring the growth and sustainability of the state's healthcare safety net. ORH administers multiple grant programs to support healthcare operations, including provider salaries and capital projects. Its Placement Services Program recruits and retains primary care, dental, and behavioral health professionals for rural areas. The office partners with state residency programs and 3RNET, a nationwide healthcare recruiting database. ORH also works with federal, state, and local entities to identify provider shortage areas and administers incentive programs such as loan repayment, service bonuses, and the CONRAD 30 J-1 Visa Waiver program. All placement services are provided at no charge.

There are many additional supports and services available for creating a pipeline to the healthcare workforce across the state. See [Appendix G](#) for a list of state healthcare-workforce programs, spanning high schools, postsecondary institutions, employers, educators, workforce development organizations, and the public. Even with these investments, more is needed to ensure that North Carolina has a diverse, talented healthcare-sector workforce.

## Caregiving Workforce Strategic Leadership Council

Recognizing the importance of increasing its resilient caregiver workforce, DHHS and Commerce convened a Caregiving Workforce Strategic Leadership Council (Caregiving Council) to generate solutions for strengthening the state's nursing, behavioral health, and direct-care workforce. The Caregiving Council launched in early 2023 and released an inaugural report in 2024, "[Investing in North Carolina's Caregiving Workforce](#)."

The Caregiving Council comprises leaders from DHHS, Commerce, NCIOM, DPI, NCICU, NC AHEC, the NC Center on the Workforce for Health, NCCCS, the NCWorks Commission, the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research, the State Board of Education, the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC), UNC Health, the UNC School of Medicine, the UNC System, and others who contribute through the Caregiving Council's working groups.

The areas of focus and recommended actions set out in the Caregiving Council's report are useful to inform broader efforts to improve workforce conditions in the healthcare sector among Medicaid recipient populations. In particular, the report's recommendations related to direct-care workers and unlicensed behavioral health workers present significant opportunities for better alignment of workforce programs that could also improve access to care.

## Direct Care

Of all those working in health careers, individuals in the direct-care workforce are likely disproportionately eligible for Medicaid. The median hourly wage of direct-care workers in North Carolina is \$12.59, and nearly half of direct-care workers live in low-income households. The direct-care workforce is also poorly defined. While many roles exist in traditional settings, such as skilled nursing facilities, other roles fall more loosely within direct care, particularly in home-based settings.

The Caregiving Workforce Strategic Leadership Council recommends a series of strategies to

1. define what the direct-care workforce is,
2. advance the data landscape for the direct-care workforce,
3. create a living wage for direct-care workers, and
4. expand apprenticeship programs in the direct-care area.

If the state can implement all these actions, its ability to better define and serve Medicaid recipients who could be or who are employed in direct-care settings will be enhanced. Better defining and measuring the direct-care workforce will improve the delivery of services to people in those roles. Improving wages for these workers may reduce their reliance on Medicaid and similar services. Providing direct-care apprenticeships will create replicable pathways for individuals to advance from entry-level to high-wage positions within healthcare.

## Behavioral Health

North Carolina is currently experiencing a behavioral health crisis marked by a surge in demand and a shortage of care professionals in the field. Two in five North Carolinians live in a mental-health-professional shortage area. The behavioral health field largely relies on higher-credentialed, licensed positions that require at least a master's-level education. The behavioral health workforce also includes an array of unlicensed positions, many of which do not follow clear career paths.

Five strategies recommended in the Caregiving Workforce Strategic Leadership Council's 2024 report referenced above present opportunities to improve services for Medicaid recipients in the behavioral health workforce.

1. Advance the data landscape for the behavioral health workforce.
2. Define the unlicensed behavioral health workforce and identify professional pathways therein.
3. Incent recruitment and retention for publicly funded mental health roles, including both licensed and unlicensed professionals.
4. Increase training and credentialing for peer-support professionals.
5. Establish regular intervals for behavioral health rate adjustments.

Implementing these strategies will help the state better define the behavioral health workforce and better identify ways to target workforce supports and career pathways for individuals starting in low-wage, unlicensed roles. While the behavioral health workforce includes many high-paying positions, the current demand for services increases the need to expand capacity through lower-paid, unlicensed positions.

## Ongoing Action

The Caregiving Workforce Strategic Leadership Council (Caregiving Council) selected the NC Center on the Workforce for Health to facilitate and coordinate ongoing implementation and alignment of sixty-one action items identified in the Caregiving Council's 2024 report. This work will continue to evolve, and collaborations formed during the course of the work will last through many years. Alignment of these efforts with similar plans to improve workforce planning in healthcare will strengthen the state's impact on the health of North Carolina's residents. More information about the Caregiving Council can be found on the organization's [website](#).

## Barriers for Individuals and Gaps in Workforce Development Service Delivery

Even with strong investment in existing workforce development programs coming from federal, state, and local partners, individuals still face barriers to accessing and successfully completing training and education programs. This section gives an overview of these barriers at both the individual and systemic levels.

Challenges faced by underemployed and under-resourced populations are described in the WIOA Barrier Set located in Section 3 of the law. To reiterate, the WIOA is a federal law that was enacted in July 2014 to improve the country's workforce development system. The WIOA Barrier Set is reflective of the barriers faced by many underemployed or under-resourced populations who are eligible for Medicaid. Furthermore, some Medicaid beneficiaries may experience multiple barriers as described in the Barrier Set. As outlined in the Barrier Set, populations who may face barriers to work include

- displaced homemakers;
- low-income individuals;
- Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians;
- individuals with disabilities, including youth with disabilities;
- older individuals;
- ex-offenders;

- homeless individuals, including homeless children and youth;
- youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system;
- individuals who are English-language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers;
- farmworkers (as defined at WIOA Section 167(i)) and individuals within two years of exhausting their lifetime eligibility under the TANF program;
- single parents (including single pregnant women); and
- long-term unemployed individuals.

### Barriers to Education and Training for New and Returning Learners

North Carolina is a leader in investing in training and education programs to ensure that tuition and fees at both public and private institutions are affordable. Despite these efforts, new and returning learners still face challenges in accessing, affording, and completing programs.

#### Tuition and Fees

Tuition assistance and scholarship programs such as Next NC Scholarships, Longleaf Commitment grants, the NC Promise Tuition Plan, and the North Carolina Need-Based Scholarship for Private College Students are making college affordable for students. However, students enrolling in short-term workforce development programs, primarily at community colleges, currently have limited access to financial aid.

#### Wraparound Services for Learners and Workers

Providing access to basic needs and supportive services remains crucial to ensuring that students can complete training and education programs and enter the workforce as engaged employees. This includes access to food, transportation, housing, and childcare. Childcare, in particular, remains a barrier to the delivery of adequate workforce services due to the limited availability of funds from existing federal and state-supported programs, including a childcare subsidy administered by DHHS, WIOA Title I funding for supportive services available through local WDBs, and childcare grants available to eligible community college students.

Employers across North Carolina continue to face these same challenges when trying to recruit and retain employees. According to the *Commerce’s 2024 Employer Needs Survey*, employers identified several barriers faced by job applicants that contributed to the employers’ overall hiring difficulties (see Table 3.1). See [Appendix H](#) for a list of key partners and local organizations involved in wraparound support and cross-referrals.

**Table 3.1. Barriers for Workers That Contribute to Employer Hiring Difficulties**

Barrier	Percentage (%) of Employers Citing Barrier
Transportation	23
Childcare	20
Commuting Distance	17
Criminal Record	14
Drug Screening	6

## Barriers to Healthcare Employment

Healthcare is a diverse and high-demand industry struggling with significant retention and recruitment issues across various fields (e.g., nursing, pharmacy, home health) and experience levels (e.g., entry-level vs. experienced). These issues fuel ongoing healthcare workforce shortages, preventing vulnerable populations such as Medicaid recipients, rural communities, low-income communities, and communities of color from receiving timely, quality care. For those with limited transportation options, the lack of accessible, affordable healthcare can quickly become life-threatening.

Interestingly, Healthcare is also a sought-after industry in which to work, second only to Retail and Food Services for working Medicaid recipients, according to 2021 data from the U.S. Census Bureau's *American Community Survey* (ACS). Approximately half of Medicaid recipients participate in the workforce either full-time or part-time, according to the Census Bureau's *American Community Survey 1-Year Data* for 2022, while balancing caregiving/childcare concerns. Commerce's *2024 Employer Needs Survey* identifies childcare, transportation, and commuting distance as the top three barriers employers see as limiting their applicant pools (see Figure 3.1, above). The NCIOM Task Force on the Future of the Nursing Workforce recently released "[Time for Action: Securing a Strong Nursing Workforce for North Carolina](#)," a report detailing the barriers to and recommendations for recruiting and retaining a strong workforce. Though specific to nursing, the report's workforce analyses and conclusions are applicable to other healthcare fields.

According to the NCIOM report, recruitment in the healthcare sector is an ongoing problem. Some potential workers simply lack information about the many career pathways and ladders available under the healthcare umbrella. Others may want to change careers to healthcare from other industries. Many may lack access to the financial, social, and academic supports needed for successful entry into the healthcare workforce. Healthcare workers leave the industry for many reasons, including workplace bullying, racism, harassment, violence, inadequate staffing ratios, a high documentation burden, lack of inclusion in decision-making opportunities, and frustrating payment models.

## Additional Workforce Program Needs

It is important that existing resources for healthcare workforce development efforts be leveraged as part of the effort we are now undertaking. However, a Medicaid-expansion enrollee's work status may make them ineligible for workforce programs designed to help individuals find employment. For this population, new programs and/or support are critical. Below are some key points to consider in serving this population.

- Outreach efforts should be made to inform individuals enrolled in Medicaid expansion of available services.
- Eligibility for existing workforce development programs is not based solely on being a Medicaid recipient.
- Receipt of Medicaid benefits is not a data point that all existing workforce development programs must collect. Tracking Medicaid recipients' participation in a given program while assuring adherence to all applicable regulations will require some level of technical coordination and further research.
- As indicated previously, most Medicaid recipients are employed. Targeting workforce development support to individuals who are employed and interested in career



progression or a change in career path will be different from serving those who are not employed.

- Coordination between employers, educators, workforce development staff, healthcare organizations, and other stakeholders is needed to reduce barriers and assist Medicaid recipients in navigating various services.
- Collaboration and data sharing across multiple agencies for these populations will be key to tracking information and reporting accurate outcomes.

[Appendix I](#) highlights a focus-group methodology that was used to improve access to workforce development services for Medicaid expansion enrollees.

### **Priority Focus: Justice-Involved Individuals**

In January 2024, North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper signed Executive Order (EO) 303, Establishing a Unified Approach to Improving Education, Rehabilitation, and Reentry Services for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated People in North Carolina. The order set forth a whole-of-government approach to addressing education, rehabilitation, and reentry for these populations across the state. Additionally, EO 303 commits North Carolina to joining Reentry 2030, a national initiative that aims to dramatically improve reentry success for people exiting prison and those under supervision.

As part of EO 303, DHHS is directed to submit a waiver to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) which, if approved, will allow for pre-release enrollment in Medicaid for individuals exiting state prison to ensure coverage post-release as well as for 90 days pre-release. To prepare for waiver approval by CMS, NC Medicaid worked with the state Department of Adult Correction (DAC) to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to allow for data sharing through the North Carolina Department of Information Technology's Government Data Analytics Center (GDAC); post-approval, additional systems changes will begin to take place. The waiver has been submitted and is waiting for approval. Additionally, DHHS will create mechanisms to allow people to be pre-screened for federal and state benefits (e.g., TANF, SNAP, Medicaid, and Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP)) before leaving prison, including ensuring that processes exist for people who are preparing for release and who are otherwise eligible for Medicaid to receive Medicaid services immediately upon release.

As of September 2024, North Carolina was one of six states chosen to participate in the inaugural Medicaid and Corrections Policy Academy, which is run by the Council of State Governments Justice Center and funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance at the U.S. Department of Justice. The Policy Academy is a dedicated forum and intensive training and technical assistance opportunity for policymakers leading state corrections, Medicaid, and behavioral health agencies. These cross-agency teams will work together to develop a shared vision for reentry services; build partnerships; and identify strategies to harness Medicaid to improve access to health coverage, care, and reentry outcomes. Teams will develop action plans to address the challenges of implementing reentry best practices related to Medicaid. The Policy Academy consists of six meetings from September 2024 through February 2025. The members of North Carolina's team include two representatives from NC Medicaid, two representatives from DHHS, three representatives from DAC, and a representative from the Governor's Office. The goal is for North Carolina, through EO 303 and the Policy Academy, to be able to ensure that

currently incarcerated and eligible North Carolinians can receive Medicaid starting on the first day of their release as well as receive employment services.

In EO 303, Commerce is tasked with enhancing services for incarcerated individuals to promote education, training, and workforce development. Commerce is working on several initiatives to support the goals of the EO, including increasing the number of “second-chance” employers interested in hiring individuals with criminal records, supporting the removal of barriers so that these individuals can obtain jobs with family-sustaining wages, and increasing the number of incarcerated people receiving career services through NCWorks prior to release. Commerce’s Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) is implementing a new module on the NCWorks platform to provide secure access for incarcerated individuals. This module will create a website separate from the NCWorks.gov site, but data will be shared between the two systems. The new website will be set up to allow incarcerated individuals to apply for jobs with employers who have been designated by NCWorks as willing to hire formerly incarcerated individuals. These jobs, designated as “second chance” jobs, will be set up with an application that is internal to the website. A given employer and an incarcerated individual can communicate through a DAC case manager who will review and approve all messages. This process allows an incarcerated individual to apply for a job before they are released. Once an individual is released from prison, their account and all information related to it will be available on the NCWorks.gov site, where they can continue their job search, if necessary.

## Chapter 4.

# What Would It Take to Meet the Workforce Needs of Medicaid Recipients (Funding, Legislation, Timelines)?

In this chapter, we provide a detailed discussion of the types of programs that need to be created as well as expanded if we are to fully serve Medicaid beneficiaries' workforce needs and address the existing gaps in the healthcare workforce. A description of costs and needed legislation is included in the discussion.

### Helping Medicaid Beneficiaries Find Higher-Paying Jobs with Access to Private Health Insurance

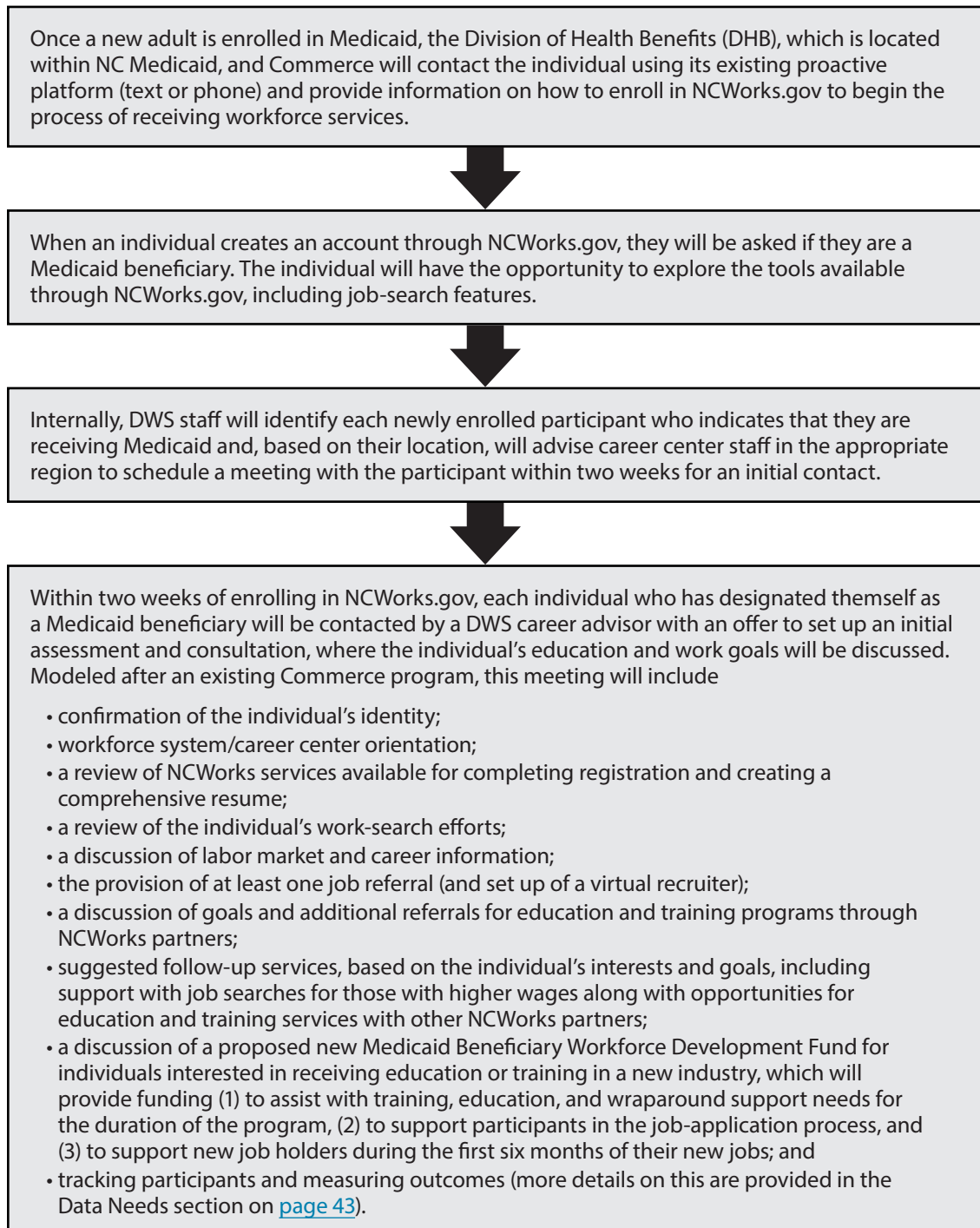
In order to best serve Medicaid beneficiaries with workforce services, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the state Department of Commerce (Commerce) are proposing the creation of the Medicaid Beneficiaries Workforce Development Program. Helping Medicaid beneficiaries access workforce support services will require coordination and data sharing between DHHS and Commerce. DHHS would be responsible for identifying individuals to receive workforce support services that will be offered by Commerce. The Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS), located within Commerce, would be the entity responsible for implementation of the proposed comprehensive plan. This partnership would bring greater awareness of critical workforce issues and greater participation in workforce services available to North Carolinians. In addition to facilitating data sharing to support connecting individuals with needed services, data sharing will also be required between the two agencies to report on required objectives.

Each year, on average, DWS, in partnership with local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), serves 100,000 individuals facing barriers to employment throughout the state. The current workforce development–assistance system is at capacity, given the limited funding resources currently available to support jobseekers in finding jobs, training, and education programs. This funding shortfall is especially troublesome, given that, under existing income requirements for Medicaid, individuals who would qualify for Medicaid would benefit greatly by participating in education and training programs in high-demand, high-growth fields that lead to careers with family-sustaining wages.

Since the expansion, approximately 553,000 people enrolled in NC Medicaid; that number is expected to reach 600,000 within the first two years of the expansion. Due to the scale and resource requirements of the expansion, Commerce and DHHS suggest that monthly outreach efforts be made by Commerce to connect with 50,000 individuals via the NCWorks platform. While it is challenging to estimate how many individuals would be interested in taking advantage of available services, the plan and budget described in this chapter are modeled on a conservative 10 percent uptake rate by Medicaid beneficiaries. Applying this 10 percent figure to the 600,000 estimated Medicaid enrollees in the two years following expansion means that 60,000 individuals would be served by the plan, increasing the total number of individuals served by NCWorks by 60 percent.

Each participant would undergo an initial assessment with trained career advisors. There is a cost involved in such assessments. If the individual is then referred to training and education services, there are additional costs for tuition, fees, required materials, and supportive services to ensure that the learner completes recommended programs. Potential additional budgetary needs will depend on the full extent of the data collected, the scope of services provided, and the number of Medicaid expansion beneficiaries served.

**To help facilitate this coordination, DHHS and Commerce propose the following process:**



## Enhanced Communication and Cross-Referral

### Enhanced Communication

The plan detailed above relies on individuals currently enrolled in Medicaid taking the first step to requesting engagement with North Carolina's workforce development system via automated messaging. However, some individuals may be hesitant to engage with limited information. We thus believe it will be vital to ensure that trusted community partners are trained as to the resources available to Medicaid beneficiaries and the process for assisting beneficiaries, and these trusted partners must have a standard practice for cross-referrals. To do this, we propose (1) enhanced training for community health workers (CHWs) to support Medicaid beneficiaries in navigating the workforce development system and (2) the procurement of a third-party cross-referral platform.

**CHWs are frontline public health professionals** who serve as a bridge between healthcare services and the communities with which they work. CHWs often come from the communities they serve, which enables them to build trust and rapport with individuals, particularly those who might face barriers to accessing healthcare. CHWs work to improve health outcomes by offering relevant health education to their communities, connecting individuals to healthcare and social services, and advocating for community needs.

CHWs provide education on various health topics, including disease prevention, nutrition, exercise, and managing chronic conditions. They can deliver information in ways that are accessible and understandable to community members, considering cultural, linguistic, and literacy differences. CHWs often engage in outreach efforts to identify individuals not currently receiving healthcare services. They assist with enrolling people in Medicaid and other public health programs, helping them navigate the often-complex application processes. CHWs also help Medicaid recipients navigate the state's healthcare system, ensuring that they receive appropriate services and follow-up care. A CHW might accompany an individual to a medical appointment, help them understand treatment plans, and coordinate care between different providers. This role is particularly important for individuals with complex health needs who require services from multiple healthcare providers or agencies. CHWs advocate for the needs of their communities within the healthcare system, ensuring that the voices of marginalized populations are heard. They often help address social determinants of health that are within reach of local communities, such as housing, food security, and transportation, by connecting individuals to community resources and services. CHWs also provide emotional and social support, which can be crucial for individuals facing health challenges or navigating a complicated healthcare system.

For Medicaid recipients with chronic conditions (such as diabetes, asthma, or hypertension), CHWs play a key role in helping them manage their health. This can include teaching self-management skills, monitoring symptoms, and encouraging medication adherence. They also lend support in instances where transportation and financial assistance are needed to ensure that chronic diseases are managed (e.g., refrigeration and utility bill payment). Because CHWs often come from the communities they serve, they are well-equipped to provide care that is culturally and linguistically appropriate. This cultural competency can improve communication, reduce misunderstandings, and increase both trust and health outcomes among those CHWs serve by assisting patient–healthcare provider relationships. CHWs frequently conduct home visits to provide healthcare education, follow-up care, and wellness checks, particularly for those who may have difficulty accessing traditional healthcare settings due to mobility issues, transportation barriers, or fear of stigma.

CHWs are an important link in the economic development of North Carolina's communities. They often help the individuals entrusted to their care with resources that enable them to maintain a job and to secure childcare, transportation, and other related services. CHWs can be employed in both rural and urban settings. Through the North Carolina Community Health Workers Association, CHWs can be certified and exposed to specialty training. The Association is responsible for maintaining a database of all certified CHWs in the state. The Standard Core Competency Training (the program that leads to CHW certification) is offered and maintained through the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) and taught by the Association.

Cross-training CHWs to understand workforce programs will help them to assist newly enrolled Medicaid recipients and allow them to connect recipients to job training assistance and career counseling when and where they need it. Local WDBs can work with their local area CHWs and be workforce champions for their local communities. Local WDBs can also lead outreach and training efforts for CHWs to learn about their local area workforce ecosystems. Additionally, CHWs can help Medicaid recipients navigate what is known as the benefits "cliff" (where an increase in income, however small, can lead to a significant loss of benefits).

### **Cross-Referral**

Mapping cross-referral systems and the roles of different assistance organizations in different workforce areas could help to identify opportunities for enhancing existing partnerships across the workforce development system. In order to effectively serve Medicaid beneficiaries with workforce services, a cross-referral mechanism must be developed between social services, NCWorks, and educational institutions to connect beneficiaries to workforce education/services and streamline access to support services. Cross-referrals could be achieved through intentional manual processes and technology systems and processes. To do this effectively, current systems, including NCCARE360, findhelp.org, and other resources already operating in this ecosystem, should be leveraged to support expanded cross-referrals within the workforce system. By integrating these technological strategies into the plan to support workforce development opportunities for Medicaid beneficiaries and the expansion of the healthcare workforce, outreach, communication, and support services for Medicaid beneficiaries will be enhanced, thereby increasing awareness, access, and opportunities for positive advancement.

### **Additional Communication Needs**

To help Medicaid beneficiaries effectively access family-sustaining employment, the following technological tools and strategies are recommended:

1. **Social media and digital advertising.** Utilize social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to reach the target demographic. Paid advertisements on these platforms can enhance visibility and engagement. Consider additional online advertising options, like Google Ads, to broaden outreach efforts. Partner with a media consultant or contractor to create impactful digital content for these campaigns. Alternatively, leverage vendors that are already assisting the state with marketing materials to produce content. Develop short videos and digital content focused on careers in demand, particularly in healthcare. Direct beneficiaries to NCcareers.org and use a consistent, inspiring theme such as "What's Next?" to guide beneficiaries toward workforce development services.

- 2. Website and communication tools.** Update the DHHS website with new messaging to ensure that Medicaid beneficiaries receive the latest information. Invest in software for text messaging and email outreach, such as Constant Contact, to enhance communication with beneficiaries. Also, evaluate the potential costs of two-way video-meeting software licenses, like Microsoft Teams, for virtual interactions between staff and clients.
- 3. Training and surveys.** Utilize Learning Management Systems (LMSs) like the NCWorks Training Center to deliver and manage training programs. These platforms enable the development of online courses and modules that are accessible to staff from county departments of social services and NCWorks Career Centers. Develop video tutorials, interactive modules, and supplementary materials to cover new workflows and tools. This includes training on effectively using new communication technologies for assisting Medicaid beneficiaries. Use platforms such as SurveyMonkey or Qualtrics to design and distribute surveys to Medicaid beneficiaries. These platforms offer advanced features for creating detailed surveys, collecting responses, and analyzing data. Implement online surveys to gather information on beneficiaries' career aspirations, employment barriers, and training needs. Include both quantitative questions (e.g., multiple choice, rating scales) and qualitative questions (e.g., open-ended responses) to obtain a comprehensive understanding of their needs and challenges. Ensure that surveys are accessible (e.g., multiple languages) and user-friendly to maximize response rates and data accuracy.

See [Appendix J](#) for examples of NC Medicaid's outreach strategies, including community engagement efforts and targeted campaigns to increase awareness of and access to Medicaid services, particularly in workforce sectors with high percentages of uninsured workers.

## Expanding the Healthcare Workforce

Employment barriers impact both healthcare workforce recruitment (getting employed) and retention (staying employed), so effective strategies for removing the barriers must address both of these major concerns. Communities should coordinate—e.g., by creating sectoral partnerships between employers, educators, workforce development staff, and other stakeholders—in analyzing issues and barriers to create a sustainable healthcare workforce pipeline.

### Recruitment

Per the [North Carolina Institute of Medicine \(NCIOM\) report referenced in Chapter 3](#), healthcare educators should offer students financial aid; provide mentorship and hands-on learning experiences; hire academic coaches and/or career counselors; and customize training programs based on local market data, industry needs, and employer input. Strong coordination between employers, educators, workforce development staff, healthcare organizations, and other stakeholders should reduce recruitment barriers.

### Retention

Promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) principles and including healthcare workers in decision-making opportunities creates a positive atmosphere with less burnout and turnover. Support networks for underrepresented groups in healthcare, such as Medicaid

recipients, could help promote and attract students. The NCIOM report urges healthcare leaders to address significant salary disparities between clinical instructors, healthcare practitioners, and contract practitioners (e.g., traveling nurses) by evaluating current payment models.

### **Wage Subsidies for Critical Sectors**

Implementation of wage subsidies in critical sectors such as childcare and healthcare, where many Medicaid beneficiaries are employed, would directly support wage increases for low-income workers. In crafting the proposed plan, we explored models from other states that have successfully implemented wage-enhancement programs, which offered valuable insights into potential policy adaptations for North Carolina.

The upskilling strategies we propose include further leveraging accelerated workforce training programs, also called short-term workforce development programs, which allow individuals to quickly enter the workforce. These programs can crosswalk into more-advanced technical training programs that lead to an advanced degree. This will afford the degree recipient higher earning potential.

### **Budget**

To effectively serve Medicaid expansion beneficiaries and continue expanding and retaining the healthcare workforce, additional funding is needed. Table 4.1 outlines the annual recurring costs to support Medicaid beneficiaries in obtaining higher-paying jobs while Table 4.2 details funding needed from multiple agencies and organizations collaborating to support healthcare workforce development.



**Table 4.1. Budget for Helping Medicaid Beneficiaries Obtain Higher-Paying Jobs with Access to Employer-Sponsored Health Insurance\***

<b>Service</b>	<b>Annual Recurring Cost</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Medicaid Beneficiary Workforce Development Career Advisors</b>	\$3,500,000	Funding for up to 40 full-time employees (FTEs) housed within the Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) and local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) to support Medicaid beneficiaries with workforce development. This cost is inclusive of salary, benefits, and equipment/infrastructure.
<b>Medicaid Beneficiary Workforce Development Oversight and Staffing</b>	\$750,000	Funding for DWS to support the program management and implementation of the Medicaid Beneficiary Workforce Development Program. Includes one new FTE for IT services.
<b>Medicaid Beneficiary Workforce Development Fund</b>	\$10,000,000	Funding to local WDBs to provide education, training, and supportive services to Medicaid beneficiaries entering high-demand training and education programs. Allocates \$500,000 to each local WDB.
<b>Community Health Worker Training</b>	\$500,000	Includes the upskilling of existing community health workers (CHWs) to navigate the workforce development system and the training of new CHWs in underserved communities.
<b>Third-Party Cross-Referral Platform</b>	\$3,000,000	Funding will allow local WDBs, career centers, the state Department of Adult Correction, and local community organizations working with Medicaid beneficiaries to provide cross-organization referral on a single system.
<b>Outreach Materials</b>	\$250,000	Funding for outreach collateral, targeted social media ads, and other innovative strategies to reach the target population.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$18,000,000</b>	

\* The costs estimated in this table are based on a plan to serve 10 percent of the beneficiaries who enroll in the first two years following Medicaid expansion.

**Table 4.2. Budget for Supporting Healthcare Workforce Development**

Service	Annual Cost	Description
<b>Youth Pre-Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning in Healthcare</b>	\$3,000,000 (R*)	Funding to the state Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) to distribute to local districts and community college partnerships (\$300,000 per partnership); modeled after the Surry-Yadkin Works program.
<b>Apprenticeship Program Development and Support for Healthcare Programs</b>	\$5,000,000 (R)	Funding to ApprenticeshipNC; modeled after apprenticeship expansion grant programs.
<b>Work-Based Learning Experiences</b>	\$5,000,000 (R)	Funding for local WDBs to work with healthcare employers to support work experience and on-the-job training contracts for workers. \$250,000 per local WDB.
<b>Short-Term Workforce Development Grants</b>	\$10,000,000 (R)	Funding to expand grant programs to support community college grants for students in Short-Term Workforce Development Credentials programs, including in healthcare.
<b>Healthcare-Sector Partnerships</b>	\$5,000,000 (R)	Funding available for local education and workforce collaboratives to start and sustain healthcare-sector partnerships.
<b>Success Coach/Navigator Expansion</b>	\$5,000,000 (R)	Success coaches will assist Medicaid beneficiaries in accessing wraparound services and college and career opportunities. One coach will be assigned to each of the state’s fifty-eight community colleges. Focus will be on healthcare pathways.
<b>Support Service Fund</b>	\$2,000,000 (R)	Allocation will provide a wraparound service fund to each community college in the state and will cover resources such as mental health counseling, transportation assistance, and childcare support.
<b>Workforce Initiative Operationalization</b>	\$1,000,000 (R)	Funding will enhance proposed and existing healthcare workforce initiatives and services across the state’s community colleges by supporting operational staff who will oversee key programs identified in the comprehensive plan, including pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, and success coaching.
<b>Growing the Healthcare Workforce</b>	\$20,000,000 (NR**)	North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU) institutions award 90 percent of the physician assistant degrees, 62 percent of the pharmacy degrees, and 60 percent of the medical degrees awarded by North Carolina institutions. But the state is not educating enough healthcare professionals to meet current needs and fill available positions. This problem will continue to be exacerbated as North Carolina’s population continues to increase in age. A targeted grant to assist independent colleges and universities in educating this crucial workforce would be money well spent.
<b>The Center on the Workforce for Health</b>	\$2,500,000	Provides support from the Strategic Workforce Trust (SWFT) fund to the North Carolina Area Health Education Centers (NC AHEC) to establish the NC Center on the Workforce for Health. The Center will use data-driven analysis and other resources to target interventions addressing an estimated shortage of 12,500 registered nurses and 5,000 licensed practical nurses by 2033. Funds will also help ensure that the supply of other health and direct-care workers meets demand across the state. The Center will create two positions to lead efforts to strengthen the direct-care workforce across various settings and populations.
<b>Direct Support Professional Development</b>	\$5,000,000	Provides \$5 million to DMH/DD/SUS to strengthen the Direct Support Professional (DSP) workforce. Funding will support the creation of high school and community college courses for DSPs, offer scholarships and paid apprenticeships, and create incentive programs to improve DSP retention rates.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$63,500,000</b>	

\*R = Recurring cost.

\*\*NR = Nonrecurring cost.

## Legislation Needed

In order to implement any aspect of this proposed plan, more funding is needed, as Commerce and DHHS do not have funding readily available to address noted gaps and provide services at the scale needed for meaningful impact across the state.

No additional performance metrics are identified at this time. Both DHHS and Commerce will need to work in collaboration with the North Carolina Department of Information Technology's Government Data Analytics Center (GDAC) to integrate data within and across various DHHS and Commerce programs. By building on the existing data and analytical infrastructure available through GDAC, DHHS and Commerce could expand existing data-sharing agreements and analytical processes to match Medicaid beneficiaries to available employment and wage information.

Beginning February 1, 2025, DHHS, in collaboration with Commerce, will be required to report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Medicaid and the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services on Medicaid participation numbers and outcomes of workforce development programs for Medicaid beneficiaries and beneficiaries of other relevant social service programs (Workforce Development Opportunities annual report). DHHS and Commerce do not anticipate this work starting until funding is made available and, therefore, will not have any progress metrics to report on February 1, 2025.

## Data Overview

Session Law 2023-7 outlines several performance metrics and outcomes that DHHS is required to report on in the Workforce Development Opportunities annual report. Meeting existing performance targets may prove challenging due to data limitations. Agencies required to report data have outlined their processes for attaining required targets and have, when relevant, described anticipated issues related to obtaining desired outcomes; this information is included in the next subsection. Note that DHHS will only be tracking information on Medicaid beneficiaries, as work with other benefits programs will need to be phased in over time.

## Data Needs

DWS recommends following the standard Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) performance timeline for reporting data, which uses multiple cohorts of participants. Under this approach, it will take three reporting years to get complete data. The chart below identifies the data-collection process, which will, assuming funding is provided, start on July 1, 2025.

## Data Points That Must Be Reported

***1. Total number of Medicaid beneficiaries and beneficiaries of other relevant social services programs who have participated in workforce development services, including the number of individuals who completed an assessment by a workforce development case manager or similar professional.***

DWS and DHB will work together to coordinate a process for identifying individuals who are Medicaid-eligible based on the expanded criteria and who are then subsequently enrolled in a DWS workforce program. This work will rely on existing relationships with GDAC and Commerce's Labor & Economic Analysis Division (LEAD) and on direct file transfers between agencies. Due to resource constraints and the high number of Medicaid expansion beneficiaries,

DHHS and Commerce suggest that monthly outreach efforts be made by Commerce to connect with 50,000 individuals via the NCWorks platform.

**2. A breakdown of the types of workforce development services or programs that participants have utilized, including specific information about the activities participated in by beneficiaries of Medicaid and other relevant social services programs.**

Workforce services provided to Medicaid beneficiaries by DWS and local WDBs will be tracked through DWS’s existing case-management platform.

**3. General demographic information for the beneficiaries of Medicaid and other relevant social services programs who participated in workforce development programs.**

Demographic information of Medicaid beneficiaries receiving employment services will be collected through DWS’s existing case-management platform.

**4. The average length of time that individuals who participated in workforce development programs and were themselves eligible for Medicaid benefits or who were eligible for benefits under other beneficiaries of Medicaid and other relevant social services programs remained eligible for those benefits.**

Regarding the data needed by Commerce to determine the length of participation in a workforce program, data sharing through GDAC would be possible as often as daily. During the previous program year, individuals who were enrolled in one of DWS’s programs for more than one day had an average enrollment length of 136 days. If an individual no longer receives any staff-assisted service after 90 days, DWS’s case-management platform will exit them back to the date of last service, so a majority of workforce program enrollments are only for one day.

**5. The number of individuals who were employed or reemployed in a position providing higher wages because of participation in a workforce development program.**

In order to appropriately track required data points 5 and 6, we propose engaging LEAD to do the appropriate matching of data between DWS, DHB, and Division of Employment Security. Commerce has identified long-standing challenges that will impact the collection of this data. Specifically, data on when individuals obtain employment is not available immediately. To address this concern, the committee proposes developing a questionnaire for participants to fill out once they end their engagement with a given workforce development program.

Commerce recommends tracking cohorts of participants on the following schedule:

	February 2027	February 2028	February 2029
<b>Program Participation Dates</b>	July 2025–June 2026	July 2026–June 2027	July 2027–June 2028
<b>Employment Q2*</b>	Not available	July 2025–June 2026	July 2026–June 2027
<b>Employment Q4**</b>	Not available	Not available	January 2026–December 2026

\*Q2 = second quarter of the fiscal year.

\*\*Q4 = fourth quarter of the fiscal year.

**6. The number of individuals who no longer qualified for Medicaid or for any other relevant social services program due to obtaining gainful employment or higher wages as a result of participation in any workforce development program.**

To track this data point, a data match will need to be performed in collaboration with LEAD and/or GDAC. DHHS and DWS need to determine the appropriate time frames for tracking individuals following their participation in workforce programs, as real-time data of participant employment and Medicaid qualification are not available. Commerce has identified long-standing challenges that will impact the collection of this data. Specifically, data on when individuals obtain employment is not immediately available. To address this concern, the committee proposes developing a questionnaire for participants to fill out once they end their engagement with a given workforce development program.

### **Data Challenges in Meeting Reporting Requirements**

The collection and analysis of the data required to measure progress on the reporting requirements set out above will likely be resource-intensive and administratively burdensome. DHHS and Commerce will have to navigate disparate data systems, develop and implement data-sharing agreements, and ensure appropriate staffing to analyze the data and glean insights for program improvement. If the involved departments decide to engage other entities (e.g., prepaid health plans) in the delivery of workforce development programs for Medicaid beneficiaries and for beneficiaries of other relevant social services programs, they will need to consider how these entities will build the required data infrastructure and ensure that adequate staffing and cost needs are met.

DHHS and Commerce believe that the current metrics for evaluating the required data points are sufficient to begin to understand the efficacy of a new program to support Medicaid beneficiaries. Together they are exploring other potential data points and metrics for future reporting periods, including the following:

- **Number of individuals who received referrals to other services**  
This data will only be obtainable if a third-party referral system is funded and implemented.
- **Employment status of individuals prior to participation in workforce development programs**  
To measure progress on this data point, there will need to be clear definitions of the term “workforce development programs.”
- **The type of healthcare coverage individuals transitioned into when they were no longer eligible for Medicaid because of their participation in workforce development programs**  
This information is essential to understanding whether individuals were able to enter new jobs that provide access to health insurance, thereby ensuring that they do not have gaps in healthcare coverage. The involved agencies need to explore with partners existing opportunities for collecting this information.

## Proposed Timeline for Plan Implementation

<p>January–July 2025</p>	<p><b>Engage with Key Legislative Stakeholders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stakeholder Engagement, Input.</b> Assess the plan’s effectiveness and gather feedback from stakeholders and legislative bodies. Identify and discuss funding needs.</li> </ul>
<p>July 2025</p>	<p><b>Secure Funding and Approvals from the North Carolina General Assembly</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Approvals.</b> Obtain final approvals for the plan and the budget.</li> <li>• <b>Initial outreach preparation.</b></li> <li>• <b>Hire and train staff.</b> Hire staff for outreach and communication roles and begin training them on the new initiatives. Include community organizations that want to engage in outreach and communication efforts in those training sessions.</li> <li>• <b>Develop communication materials.</b> Create and refine communication materials, including digital content, flyers, and social media posts. Create toolkits for community organizations so that they can help amplify the message and tailor messages to those they serve.</li> </ul>
<p>January 2026</p>	<p><b>Launch of Medicaid Workforce Development Fund</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pre-launch allocation.</b> Funding will be needed prior to implementation of the fund, as the launch will not be possible without it.</li> <li>• <b>Fund setup.</b> Officially establish the Medicaid Workforce Development Fund and begin allocating resources for job-training programs, wage subsidies, and sector-based upskilling programs.</li> <li>• <b>Creation of robust cross-referral and navigation systems.</b></li> <li>• <b>Development of needed mechanisms.</b> Implement cross-referral mechanisms between social services providers, NCWorks, and educational institutions to streamline access to resources.</li> <li>• <b>Integration with networks.</b> Begin integrating efforts with educational and training networks for resource accessibility.</li> <li>• <b>Communication and outreach launch</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Digital and traditional media.</b></li> <li>◦ <b>Social media campaigns.</b> Launch targeted social media campaigns on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn to raise awareness about new resources and support services.</li> <li>◦ <b>Paid advertising.</b> Create paid digital ads and print media to reach a broader audience.</li> <li>◦ <b>Community engagement.</b></li> <li>◦ <b>Town halls and webinars.</b> Host virtual town halls and webinars to inform Medicaid beneficiaries and stakeholders about available resources and how to access them.</li> <li>◦ <b>Train community partners.</b> Provide training for community partners on communication toolkits and opportunities to be Medicaid Messengers or Medicaid Ambassadors.</li> <li>◦ <b>Partnership events.</b> Organize events in collaboration with community-based organizations to reach Medicaid beneficiaries directly.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>June 2026</p>	<p><b>Regular Performance Evaluation and Reporting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Initial data collection.</b></li> <li>• <b>Evaluate impact.</b> Start collecting data on job-placement rates, wage improvement, participant satisfaction, and outreach effectiveness.</li> <li>• <b>Feedback collection.</b> Gather feedback from Medicaid beneficiaries and partners on the effectiveness of communication efforts and make necessary adjustments to those efforts.</li> </ul>

(continued)

(continued)

<p><b>August 2026</b></p>	<p><b>Legislative Review and Adaptation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>First annual review.</b></li> <li>• <b>Impact assessment.</b> Conduct the first annual review to assess the impact of the legislation and identify areas for improvement.</li> <li>• <b>Evaluate communication strategies.</b> Review the effectiveness of communication and outreach efforts, including digital campaigns and community engagement activities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ongoing (post–August 2026)</b></p>	<p><b>Continuous Improvement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Engage in ongoing evaluation.</b></li> <li>• <b>Monitor performance.</b> Continue monitoring performance metrics and adjust programs and strategies based on data and feedback.</li> <li>• <b>Refine communication.</b> Regularly update communication strategies and materials based on ongoing feedback and performance outcomes.</li> <li>• <b>Make sustained outreach efforts.</b></li> <li>• <b>Maintain engagement.</b> Keep up outreach efforts through digital channels, community events, and partnerships to ensure continued awareness and access to resources.</li> <li>• <b>Adapt messaging.</b> Adapt messaging to reflect any changes in programs or resources and continue engaging with community leaders and partners.</li> </ul>

### Additional Considerations

Ensuring that North Carolina offers impactful workforce development opportunities to Medicaid beneficiaries and beneficiaries of other relevant social services programs requires that DHHS and Commerce engage in a process of continual assessment and improvement of the opportunities offered. As such, DHHS and Commerce should consider establishing a new committee/working group to support implementation of the new plan, evaluate the performance of workforce development programs, and collaborate with state/community partners to develop a continuous quality-improvement plan.

## Chapter 5.

# Conclusion

This report builds on existing knowledge of North Carolina's significant labor needs, particularly in the healthcare sector. The report comprehensively reviews North Carolina's existing workforce development system, including its strengths in providing diverse services to jobseekers and businesses. Despite North Carolina's robust system of integrated workforce service delivery, the report recognizes existing barriers to the delivery of services and examines potential barriers for the Medicaid expansion population looking to utilize these jobseeking services. The report examines the usual challenges faced by underemployed and under-resourced populations as defined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Barrier Set. These barriers include factors such as limited access to financial resources, lack of childcare support, and transportation obstacles. The healthcare field, in particular, faces its own recruitment and retention challenges, with potential workers lacking information about available career paths and facing difficulties accessing necessary support systems.

This knowledge of the existing landscape paved the way for the Medicaid Expansion Working Group to delve into identified gaps in the system and to propose solutions specifically tailored to address the needs of Medicaid recipients seeking to enter or advance within the workforce, particularly within the healthcare sector. By recognizing current limitations and building upon existing programs, North Carolina can create a more inclusive and accessible workforce development system that empowers individuals of all backgrounds to achieve living-wage employment and contribute to the state's economic vitality.

DHHS and Commerce propose a new Medicaid Beneficiaries Workforce Development Program to help Medicaid beneficiaries access job training and education programs. The total cost of the program would be \$18,000,000 in recurring costs.

### Key Points

- The new program would involve collaboration between DHHS and Commerce to identify Medicaid beneficiaries and connect them with workforce development services offered by NCWorks.
- NCWorks would conduct initial assessments of beneficiaries and recommend services based on individual goals.
- A new Medicaid Beneficiary Workforce Development Fund would be created to support training, education, and wraparound services for beneficiaries.
- Community health workers (CHWs) would be trained to help beneficiaries navigate the new program and access resources.

### Benefits

- Increased participation in workforce development programs by Medicaid beneficiaries.
- Improved job opportunities and career advancement for beneficiaries.
- Potential for higher wages and economic stability.



## Challenges

- High volume of potential participants (more than 500,000 Medicaid beneficiaries).
- Limited funding resources.
- Need for outreach and education to encourage participation. To support communication and outreach, in addition to the work of CHWs, needed tools include
  - social media and digital advertising development services,
  - website and communication tools, and
  - training sessions and surveys.

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## Appendix A.

# North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Programs

[www.ncdhhs.gov](http://www.ncdhhs.gov)

### Community Services Block Grant Program

The [Community Services Block Grant program](#) provides flexible funding to help communities address local needs, particularly in workforce development. This initiative is designed to empower individuals by offering essential resources and support that lead to sustainable employment. The program includes job training assistance, offering tailored training programs that focus on high-demand sectors, helping individuals acquire new skills or improve existing ones. It also provides career guidance, assisting individuals in understanding the steps needed to reach their employment goals, such as résumé building, interview preparation, and soft skills development.

### Food and Nutrition Services

The [Food and Nutrition Services program](#) goes beyond offering food assistance by integrating workforce development services to help recipients improve their job prospects. The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) job assistance program, known as Work First (WF), aims to provide temporary financial assistance while promoting long-term self-sufficiency through employment.

### Employment and Independence for People with Disabilities (EIPD) (General Vocational Rehabilitation Agency under WIOA Title IV)

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title IV [EIPD program](#) is dedicated to helping individuals with disabilities achieve their employment goals through specialized support services. It offers customized training programs that include career counseling services, assisting participants in identifying career options that align with their skills and interests and offering guidance on how to prepare for and pursue these careers. Job placement services are a key component, helping individuals with disabilities secure meaningful employment and collaborating with employers to create supportive work environments. To help individuals overcome barriers to employment, the program provides access to adaptive equipment and counseling. The program also works closely with employers through recruitment services to encourage the hiring of individuals with disabilities, providing support to both employers and employees to ensure successful job matches. The long-term vocational support services program is designed to offer ongoing assistance to those who need extended help to achieve and maintain employment.

### **Services for the Blind (WIOA Title IV)**

The [Services for the Blind program](#) specifically serves individuals who are blind or visually impaired, offering a wide range of services to support their employment goals and help them achieve meaningful employment. Job training assistance focuses on specialized training programs that equip individuals with the skills needed to enter the workforce. Vocational evaluations and assessments are conducted to thoroughly evaluate each participant's strengths, preferences, and needs, which helps create personalized employment plans tailored to their unique circumstances. The program also provides resources for employers, offering information and support to help them accommodate employees who are blind or visually impaired, ensuring their smooth integration into a productive work environment.

To provide practical experience, the program offers paid internships, creating opportunities for participants to gain valuable work experience that could lead to permanent employment. Job accommodations and assistive technology are provided to ensure that participants have the tools and support they need to perform their jobs effectively. The program also offers ongoing job coaching and supported employment services, helping participants maintain and excel in their positions.

### **Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP)**

[SCSEP](#) is designed for older adults (aged 55 and over) who are seeking employment, helping them stay active in the workforce while contributing to their communities. The program provides training opportunities to help older adults update their skills and adapt to new workplace technologies. It offers resources such as career counseling and job-readiness support, focusing on helping participants transition into new roles or industries. Additionally, job placement services assist older adults in finding positions that align with their skills and interests, often emphasizing part-time or flexible opportunities.

### **NC Medicaid Division of Health Benefits**

The [NC Medicaid Division of Health Benefits](#) aims to encourage beneficiaries to pursue competitive integrated employment in various ways. The program assists participants in identifying and developing their career interests and skills while providing long-term job support. In addition, it offers benefits counseling and connects participants with Social Security Administration work incentives, helping them understand their benefit options.

## Appendix B.

# North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs

[www.dpi.nc.gov](http://www.dpi.nc.gov)

The [CTE program](#) is designed to prepare students for postsecondary education and the workforce by offering comprehensive career pathways that align with industry needs. With a wide array of courses in sixteen “career clusters,” the program gives students the opportunity to explore and prepare for diverse occupations. Dual enrollment options with the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) allow students to earn college credits while still in high school. Career development focuses on awareness, exploration, preparation, and participation, helping students understand the world of work and the various career options available to them. This includes career counseling, the development of personalized career plans, and access to resources that guide students from awareness to active participation in their chosen fields.

The program emphasizes durable employability skills, including the development of soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, which are essential for success in any career. A strong focus on personal development also prepares students to be adaptable and resilient in the workplace.

Work-based learning and hands-on experiences are provided through opportunities such as job shadowing, mentoring, cooperative education, internships, pre-apprenticeships, and apprenticeships. These experiences allow students to apply classroom learning in real-world settings and gain valuable work experience before graduation.

Industry certifications give students the chance to earn recognized credentials that enhance their employability and demonstrate their expertise in specific areas. These certifications are aligned with the CTE course pathways and can give students a competitive edge in the job market. In addition, technical and academic skill development is supported through participation in Career Technical Student Organizations, which promote leadership, service learning, and the application of technical knowledge in competitive and real-world scenarios.

## Appendix C.

# North Carolina Department of Administration (DOA) American Indian Workforce Development Program

[www.doa.nc.gov](http://www.doa.nc.gov)

The [North Carolina American Indian Workforce Development Program](#) is designed to address the unique employment needs of American Indian communities within the state. This program recognizes the cultural, economic, and social challenges that American Indians face in the workforce and aims to provide targeted support to help individuals achieve sustainable employment and economic self-sufficiency.

Customized training programs offer opportunities that align with the local job market's needs and the skills of the American Indian population. These programs may focus on high-demand sectors such as healthcare, construction, and technology—industries with significant job opportunities. They are designed to be culturally sensitive, honoring the unique heritage and traditions of American Indian communities. This approach ensures that participants feel respected and understood, which can enhance their engagement and success in the program. The following key services are provided as part of the North Carolina American Indian Workforce Development Program:

### Career Counseling and Job Readiness

- **Personalized Career Planning:** Participants receive one-on-one career counseling to help them identify their strengths, interests, and career goals. Counselors assist in creating individualized career plans that outline the steps needed to achieve these goals.
- **Job-Readiness Workshops:** The program offers workshops on résumé writing, interview skills, workplace etiquette, and other essential job-readiness topics. These workshops are tailored to address the specific challenges that American Indians might face in the job market.

### Job Placement and Retention Services

- **Employer Partnerships:** The program collaborates with local employers who are committed to hiring from the American Indian community. These partnerships often include efforts to create inclusive workplaces that respect and value cultural diversity.
- **Ongoing Support:** Once participants are placed in jobs, the program offers ongoing support to help ensure job retention. This support may include job coaching, conflict-resolution assistance, and access to additional resources if workplace challenges arise.

### Supportive Services

- **Transportation and Childcare Assistance:** To reduce employment barriers, the program may offer assistance with transportation and childcare, making it easier for participants to attend training sessions and maintain employment.

- **Access to Technology:** Recognizing the importance of digital literacy in today's job market, the program provides access to computers and the Internet for job searches, online training, and other employment-related activities.

### Community and Cultural Engagement

- **Engagement with Tribal Communities:** The program works closely with tribal leaders and organizations to ensure that its services are relevant and accessible to the American Indian population. This collaboration helps in building trust and ensuring that the program meets a community's specific needs.
- **Cultural Events and Networking:** The program may also organize events that celebrate American Indian culture and provide networking opportunities for participants. These events help build a sense of community among participants and can lead to additional job opportunities.

### Youth Programs and Early Career Support

- **Youth Training and Mentorship:** Special programs for American Indian youth focus on career exploration, mentorship, and early job training. These initiatives aim to prepare young people for the workforce by exposing them to diverse career paths and helping them develop the skills necessary for future success.
- **Education and Career Pathways:** The program collaborates with local schools and educational institutions to create clear pathways from education to employment. This might include partnerships with vocational schools, community colleges, and universities that offer programs aligned with the needs of American Indian students.

By offering targeted support and resources, the program seeks to improve employment rates among American Indian communities in North Carolina. Through sustainable employment, participants achieve financial independence and reduce reliance on public assistance. By fostering cultural pride and community connections, the program aims to strengthen ties within American Indian communities, enabling individuals to thrive both personally and professionally.

## Appendix D.

# North Carolina Department of Commerce (Commerce) Programs

[www.commerce.nc.gov/programs-services-directory](http://www.commerce.nc.gov/programs-services-directory)

### National Farmworker Jobs (NFJP) Program

The [NFJP Program](#) is a U.S. Department of Labor initiative aimed at providing services to migrant and seasonal farmworkers who are employed in agricultural work. This program helps ensure that these workers, who often face significant economic, social, and health challenges, have access to the resources and support they need to improve their employment opportunities, working conditions, and overall quality of life.

The program provides a range of employment services to MSFWs, including job placement, job-search assistance, and career counseling. It also offers training opportunities to help workers gain new skills or improve existing ones, making them more competitive in the job market. This training may include vocational training, literacy classes, English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, and certification programs in various trades. Because MSFWs often face multiple barriers to stable employment, the program offers supportive services, including transportation and housing assistance, referrals to affordable childcare, and access to healthcare. Some emergency services, such as food assistance and facilitating access to legal aid, may also be provided.

Due to the often-isolated nature of agricultural work, many MSFWs may be unaware of the services available to them. The program's outreach workers visit farms, labor camps, and other locations to provide information and assistance on resources, labor rights, safety regulations, and protections against exploitation.

The MSFW program tries to ensure that farmworkers are aware of their rights under labor laws, including wage and hour protections, safe working conditions, and protection from discrimination. It works in partnership with other agencies, such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), to ensure employer compliance with labor standards. This aspect of the program is essential for protecting workers from exploitation and ensuring that they receive fair treatment and compensation.

The program educates MSFs on health and safety topics, such as preventing workplace injuries, reducing exposure to pesticides, and maintaining personal health. This education is essential for minimizing the physically demanding and hazardous risks associated with agricultural work. In some cases, the program may help MSFWs access legal services, particularly if they encounter wage theft, unfair labor practices, or unsafe working conditions.

By offering job placement services and training opportunities, the MSFW program helps workers find better jobs, whether in agriculture or other sectors. This can lead to higher wages, more stable employment, and improved job security. The program's supportive services address the basic needs of MSFWs, such as housing, healthcare, and childcare, which can be difficult to access due to the transient nature of their work.



## Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I and Title III

The [North Carolina Department of Commerce Workforce Solutions Division](#) has administrative responsibility for WIOA Title I (adult, dislocated worker, and youth workforce development) and Title III (provided under the Amendments to the Wagner-Peyser Act) programs. The services are delivered through local, comprehensive NCWorks Career Centers located within the state's twenty local [Workforce Development Boards](#) (WDBs). The WDBs work to ensure that high-quality workforce services are available to individuals and businesses across the state. Each local board includes representatives from the Division of Workforce Solutions, local community colleges, and local Employment and Independence for People with Disabilities (EIPD) programs to promote coordination and capacity building at local and regional levels.

North Carolina's twenty WDBs provide operational oversight of the NCWorks Career Centers. The NCWorks Commission (the state workforce development board) develops and sets policies that guide the operation of the career centers. All comprehensive NCWorks Career Centers provide and/or have access to Title I and Title III services. Staff at these centers collaborate with community colleges and vocational rehabilitation offices to offer referral services across programs. Some career centers are co-located within community colleges, social services offices, and vocational rehabilitation offices.

NCWorks Career Centers provide workforce development services and facilitate access to core partner services, as well as to programs and activities offered by one-stop partners identified in the WIOA. Services provided (both virtually and in-person) to job seekers and those seeking to upgrade their skills include

- career assessment and guidance,
- access to training and educational programs,
- access to information about job fairs and workshops,
- access to information about the labor market,
- assistance in searching for jobs,
- résumé and cover letter preparation,
- practice interviewing for jobs,
- free computer and Internet access, and
- help registering with and using NCWorks Online.

Services provided (both virtually and in-person) to employers include

- job applicant screening and qualified candidate referrals,
- valuable and up-to-date labor market information and projections, including wage data,
- information on tax credits for hiring specific groups of workers,
- space for conducting job interviews,
- assistance in arranging job fairs,
- workshops on employer-related topics,
- employee training resources,
- layoff- and closure-prevention services, and
- information about federal bonding (insurance for hiring at-risk workers).

## Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program

[TAA](#) is a federal program designed to help workers who have lost their jobs or had their hours and wages reduced due to the adverse effects of foreign trade. This includes layoffs or downsizing caused by increased imports or shifts in production to foreign countries. The TAA program provides services and benefits aimed at helping these workers regain employment, upgrade their skills, and adjust to changes in the labor market. By acquiring in-demand skills, displaced workers become more competitive, leading to better job opportunities and long-term career growth.

Eligible workers can access a range of training and educational programs through the TAA program, including vocational training, on-the-job training, and higher education courses that lead to degrees or certifications in high-demand fields. The training costs, such as tuition, books, and fees, are covered by the program. Workers enrolled in TAA-approved training programs may be eligible for Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA), which provide income support similar to unemployment benefits. This assistance helps workers meet their financial needs while they undergo training and search for new employment. TRA benefits can extend beyond regular unemployment insurance, providing additional weeks of financial support.

The TAA program provides financial assistance for job search expenses, including travel costs for interviews or job fairs, allowing workers to expand their job search beyond their immediate area. For those who secure employment in a different location, relocation assistance is also available. This includes moving costs and a lump-sum payment to support their transition. The TAA program includes a Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC) to help workers pay for health insurance during this period of transition. The HCTC covers a significant portion of the premium costs for qualified health plans, COBRA continuation coverage, or coverage through a spouse's insurance plan.

TAA's reemployment services include career counseling, job search assistance, résumé writing workshops, and interview preparation. These services are tailored to help workers quickly find new employment that matches their skills and experience. Case-management services may be offered to develop individualized reemployment plans. The TAA program includes a wage subsidy component, known as the Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance (RTAA) or Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance (ATAA) program, specifically for older workers (typically those aged 50 or older). This subsidy helps bridge the gap between a worker's previous wage and the lower wage they may receive in a new job. It is designed to encourage reemployment, even if the new job pays less than the previous one.

## Jobs for Veterans State Grants

The [Jobs for Veterans State Grants](#) program is designed to help veterans and eligible spouses find meaningful employment and access resources that enhance their careers and quality of life. The program is part of the state's efforts to support veterans who are transitioning from military service to civilian employment, leveraging their skills and experiences while addressing any challenges they may face during the transition.

The program connects veterans with employers who are seeking to hire individuals with military experience. Veterans receive assistance in finding job opportunities that align with their skills, interests, and career goals. They benefit from one-on-one counseling to explore their career options, identify transferable skills from their military service, and develop personalized

career plans. They also learn to craft résumés that highlight military skills and experiences relevant to civilian employers, receive interview coaching to improve their chances of securing a job, and gain an understanding of civilian workplace culture.

The program employs Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs). DVOP specialists provide intensive services to veterans who face significant barriers to employment, while LVERs focus on increasing veterans' employment opportunities through outreach to employers. LVERs work closely with veterans to provide tailored services based on their unique needs and employment goals.

Veterans can access a range of training and certification programs to acquire new skills or enhance existing ones, including vocational training, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training programs that facilitate their transition into new industries or careers. The program also assists veterans in exploring educational opportunities and understanding how to use their GI Bill benefits for further education and training.

Veterans receive priority of service in all employment and training programs funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, meaning they are given preference for job referrals, training programs, and other employment services. The program also organizes job fairs specifically for veterans, allowing them to meet with employers who are committed to hiring former military personnel. These events provide opportunities for veterans to network, explore different industries, and apply for jobs on the spot.

The program provides additional support for veterans with disabilities, helping them overcome employment barriers through accommodations, access to specialized training, and connections with disability-related resources. Recognizing that military spouses also face unique employment challenges, the program provides services tailored to their needs, including job placement assistance, résumé writing, and career counseling.

For veterans interested in entrepreneurship, the program provides information and resources for starting and running a business. It connects them with small-business development centers, offers guidance on business planning, and helps them access funding or grants.

Beyond employment, the program connects veterans to a wide range of resources, including housing assistance, healthcare services, mental health support, and benefits counseling. This approach helps ensure that veterans receive the comprehensive support they need in all aspects of their lives.

## Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA)

The [RESEA program](#) is a U.S. Department of Labor initiative aimed at helping unemployed workers secure new employment more quickly while ensuring that those receiving Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits meet eligibility requirements. The program specifically targets individuals who are likely to exhaust their UI benefits before finding new employment, as well as those considered high risk for long-term unemployment. It offers personalized services to help unemployed workers secure new jobs, including job search assistance, résumé writing workshops, interview preparation, and job referrals. Participants may also receive labor market information, career counseling, and referrals to job training programs to enhance their skills.

The RESEA program ensures that individuals receiving UI benefits meet its requirements, such as actively searching for work and being available for employment. This includes verifying that participants are participating in required job search activities and helping them develop

a reemployment plan. Participation in the RESEA program is typically mandatory for selected individuals receiving UI benefits, and noncompliance may result in the loss of those benefits.

The RESEA program aims to reduce the duration of unemployment, improve reemployment outcomes, and ensure that those receiving unemployment benefits comply with necessary requirements. This benefits the participants and the broader economy by alleviating the financial burden on the UI system and helping people return to work more quickly.

## Appendix E.

# North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) Programs

[www.nccommunitycolleges.edu](http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu)

- **ApprenticeshipNC** offers students the opportunity to gain on-the-job training while earning an income. Apprentices learn from experienced professionals who have mastered the necessary skills and competencies, ultimately earning a nationally recognized credential in their industry.
- **Career and Technical Education (CTE) Perkins V funding** supports eligible colleges in delivering programs that enhance the academic and technical achievement of CTE students while addressing the emerging needs of the local economy.
- **Human Resources Development programs** provide skill-assessment services, employability training, and career counseling to unemployed and underemployed adults. Courses cover six key components: (1) assessment of individual assets; (2) self-concept; (3) employability skills; (4) communication skills; (5) critical thinking skills; and (6) information technology.
- **The Small Business Center Network** provides confidential business counseling, seminars, webinars, and resource referrals to help start and grow small businesses at no cost to the business.
- **Customized Training** meets the needs of local business and industry through tailored training programs designed to foster economic development and workforce readiness.
- In fall 2023, the North Carolina General Assembly funded a two-year pilot program aimed at supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) within the community college system. This initiative, the **North Carolina Community College IDD Pilot**, helps students achieve their goals for employment and independence without duplicating existing vocational support networks. A partnership between the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Division of Employment and Independence for People with Disabilities (EIPD) and the North Carolina Community College System enables EIPD staff to help students with IDD at six community colleges access vocational rehabilitation (VR) program services.

## Appendix F.

# State and Federal Programs

### Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title II Adult Basic Skills (ABS)

The ABS program is a federal initiative aimed at improving the literacy, numeracy, and essential skills of adults, especially those who lack a high school diploma or equivalent, or who have limited English proficiency. The program is designed to help adults acquire the skills needed to succeed in the workforce, attain higher education, and function effectively in their communities.

The ABS program focuses on improving basic reading, writing, and math skills for adults. These foundational skills are critical for those who have not completed high school or who have been out of school for an extended period. The instruction is often tailored to meet the individual needs of learners, with an emphasis on practical skills that can be applied in everyday life and the workplace.

The program provides test preparation for adults looking to earn a high school equivalency (HSE) credential by taking the General Educational Development (GED) test or the High School Equivalency Test (HiSET). Earning this credential can unlock opportunities for better jobs, further education, and career advancement.

For adults with limited English proficiency, the ABS program provides English language classes that focus on improving speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. These classes help immigrants and non-native speakers become more proficient in English, enhancing their ability to participate in the workforce and their communities. The English Language Arts (ELA) component includes instruction on civics education, covering topics such as U.S. history, government, and citizenship preparation.

The ABS program often incorporates Integrated Education and Training (IET) models, which combine basic skills instruction with workforce training. This approach helps learners acquire academic and occupational skills simultaneously, preparing them for specific careers. IET programs target sectors like healthcare, manufacturing, and technology, providing contextualized learning that aligns with local job opportunities. In addition to academic instruction, the ABS program includes workforce-preparation activities that teach essential skills such as digital literacy, critical thinking, problem-solving, and employability skills (e.g., résumé writing, job search strategies, and interview preparation). These activities can help adults navigate the modern workplace and succeed in their careers.

Some ABS programs include a family literacy component, which focuses on improving the literacy skills of parents so they can better support their children's education. This intergenerational approach strengthens adult and child literacy outcomes and promotes a culture of learning within families.

To ensure that participants can succeed in the program, ABS services often include support such as academic counseling, career guidance, childcare, and transportation assistance. These services aim to remove barriers to participation and help with retention. For adults who have some high school education but have not completed their diploma, the program offers Adult Secondary Education (ASE) courses to help learners complete their high school education and prepare for postsecondary education or employment.

The ABS program under WIOA Title II is a vital resource for adults who need to improve their basic skills to succeed in the workforce, pursue further education, and participate fully in society. Its combination of academic instruction, workforce training, and support services empowers individuals to overcome educational barriers, achieve their goals, and contribute to the economic and social well-being of their communities.

## Job Corps

[Job Corps](#) is a national program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor, but it often partners with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide comprehensive education and vocational training to young people aged 16 to 24. The program aims to help disadvantaged youth gain the skills needed to secure good jobs, pursue further education, or join the military. The program includes the following services:

- **Comprehensive Training:** Job Corps centers offer a wide range of vocational training programs in fields such as construction, healthcare, information technology, hospitality, and manufacturing. These training programs are designed to align with industry needs, ensuring that participants acquire relevant, in-demand skills.
- **Education Services:** In addition to vocational training, Job Corps provides academic instruction, including GED test preparation and high school diploma programs. The integration of education and job training helps participants build a strong foundation for long-term career success.
- **Career Counseling and Job Placement:** Participants receive individualized career counseling to help them identify their career goals and develop a plan to achieve them. Job Corps also assists with job placement, connecting graduates with employers who are seeking skilled workers.
- **Residential Support:** Many Job Corps centers offer residential facilities where participants can live while they complete their training. This support is crucial for young people who may not have stable housing or who need a supportive environment to focus on their education and training.

Currently there are four Job Corps locations in North Carolina: Oconaluftee Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center (Cherokee, N.C.), Schenck Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center (Pisgah Forest, N.C.), Kittrell Job Corps Center (Kittrell, N.C.), and Lyndon B. Johnson Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center (Franklin, N.C.).

## National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP)

The [NFJP](#) is a program funded by the U.S. Department of Labor that provides employment and training services to migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The program aims to help farmworkers and their families achieve economic stability by offering training that leads to more stable, higher-paying jobs. The program includes the following services:

- **Skills Training:** NFJP offers training programs that help farmworkers transition to new careers, whether within agriculture or in other fields such as healthcare, construction, and manufacturing. The goal is to provide farmworkers with skills that are in demand and that can lead to stable employment.

- **Supportive Services:** In addition to job training, NFJP provides a range of supportive services to help farmworkers succeed in their training and employment. This can include assistance with transportation, childcare, housing, and healthcare, which are often significant barriers for migrant workers.
- **Job Placement and Retention:** NFJP works closely with employers to identify job opportunities for program participants. The program also provides post-placement support to help ensure that farmworkers retain their jobs and advance in their careers.
- **Housing Assistance:** Recognizing the unique challenges faced by migrant workers, NFJP offers housing assistance, helping find temporary solutions as well as permanent, affordable housing.

In September 2024, the U.S. Department of Labor awarded Alabama Non-Profit Housing, Inc. \$2.29 million to support career services for migrant seasonal farmworkers and their dependents. Alabama Non-Profit Housing, Inc. will partner with the North Carolina Department of Commerce (Commerce) Division of Workforce Solutions to support eligible individuals and families across the state.

## Unemployment Compensation Programs

Unemployment compensation programs are administered by the states with oversight from the U.S. Department of Labor. These programs provide temporary financial assistance to workers who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own, helping them meet basic needs while they search for new employment. HUD staff collaborate with the staff of unemployment compensation programs to ensure that recipients have access to additional services, including the following:

- **Job-Search Assistance:** Unemployment programs often offer job-search assistance, including access to job listings, résumé writing workshops, and career counseling. These services are designed to help unemployed workers find new jobs more quickly.
- **Training and Education:** Some unemployment programs provide funding for job training and education, helping displaced workers acquire new skills that are in demand in the current job market. This training can be crucial for workers who need to transition to a different industry.
- **Reemployment Services:** Many unemployment programs include reemployment services, which are designed to help workers return to work as quickly as possible. These services may include job fairs, networking events, and connections to employers who are hiring.
- **Housing Stability:** For individuals receiving unemployment compensation, HUD programs can offer additional support to maintain housing stability. This can include rental assistance, foreclosure-prevention services, and utility support, ensuring that individuals can focus on their job search without the added stress of losing their homes.

Further information and application instructions for these programs are available on the [NC.gov website](#). Applications for unemployment benefits are available on [Commerce's website](#).

## YouthBuild

[YouthBuild](#) is a community-based program that provides education, job training, and leadership development opportunities to low-income young people aged 16 to 24. Administered by the U.S.



Department of Labor in collaboration with HUD, YouthBuild programs aim to help young people complete their high school education, gain job skills, and become leaders in their communities. It offers hundreds of programs, including the following:

- **Construction Training:** A core component of YouthBuild is construction training, where participants gain construction skills by building or rehabilitating affordable housing for low-income or homeless families in their communities. This hands-on experience prepares participants for careers in the high-demand construction industry.
- **Education:** In addition to vocational training, YouthBuild provides academic instruction, allowing participants to earn high school diplomas or GED credentials. The program emphasizes the importance of education in achieving long-term career success.
- **Leadership Development:** YouthBuild integrates leadership development into its training, empowering participants to embrace leadership roles within their communities. This helps young people develop the confidence and skills needed to succeed both in the workplace and in life.
- **Job-Placement and Support Services:** After completing the program, participants receive job-placement assistance and ongoing support to ensure a smooth transition into the workforce. This includes access to continued education, job-search resources, and connections to potential employers.
- **Community Service:** YouthBuild programs prioritize community service, encouraging participants to engage in projects that benefit their local communities. This helps participants develop a sense of civic responsibility and strengthens their ties to the community.

Currently, Central Carolina Community College serves as the only YouthBuild grant recipient in North Carolina. More information about the program is available on its website, [www.cccc.edu/youthbuild](http://www.cccc.edu/youthbuild).

These HUD-affiliated programs—Job Corps, the National Farmworker Jobs Program, unemployment compensation programs, and YouthBuild—provide comprehensive workforce development services aimed at helping individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds attain economic self-sufficiency. By offering education, job training, supportive services, and job placement assistance, these programs enable participants to create better futures for themselves and their families. Each program is customized to address the specific needs of its target population, ensuring that participants receive the support and resources necessary for success in the workforce.

## North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT)

[NCDOT](http://www.ncdot.gov) offers several workforce development programs designed to prepare individuals for careers in the transportation industry. These programs emphasize training, education, and employment opportunities in sectors related to transportation infrastructure, construction, and maintenance.

The **On-the-Job Training (OJT) Program** offers valuable training opportunities for individuals in the construction industry, particularly those from underrepresented groups. It aims to equip trainees with the skills needed to become journey-level workers. Participants gain hands-on experience while working on active NCDOT projects in construction trades such as equipment operation, carpentry, and ironworking. By focusing on skills development, the program aims to increase diversity among skilled workers in the transportation industry.

The **Apprenticeship Program** offers apprenticeships in various fields within the department, providing a combination of on-the-job training and related classroom instruction. Apprentices earn while they learn, gaining practical experience in such areas as highway construction, maintenance, and equipment repair. The program is designed to create a pipeline of skilled workers for NCDOT's future workforce needs.

The **Youth Transportation Program** aims to expose high school students to careers in the transportation industry. The program includes field trips, hands-on activities, and job-shadowing opportunities. It focuses on educating students about career paths available within NCDOT and encouraging them to consider transportation-related careers.

The **Engineering Technician Training Program** is designed for high school graduates who are interested in pursuing careers in engineering and transportation. Participants receive paid training and work experience in NCDOT's engineering and construction divisions. The program serves as a pathway to full-time employment with NCDOT upon completion.

The **Workforce Development Program** provides job training and employment opportunities to individuals in economically disadvantaged areas, particularly those affected by transportation projects. The program includes training in construction, maintenance, and related fields. Participants receive support services such as job-placement assistance and career counseling to help them secure employment in the transportation industry.

The **Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Supportive Services Program** offers business-development training, technical assistance, and networking opportunities. It aims to help participants compete for NCDOT contracts and succeed in the transportation industry.

The **Summer Internship Program** provides college students with hands-on experience in transportation-related fields such as engineering, planning, environmental sciences, and public administration. The program helps students gain practical experience, develop professional skills, and explore career opportunities within NCDOT.

The **Civil Engineering Scholarship Program** offers scholarships to students pursuing degrees in civil engineering. Recipients are provided with financial assistance for their education and are given opportunities for summer employment with NCDOT, which can lead to full-time positions after graduation.

These programs are part of NCDOT's broader efforts to develop a skilled and diverse workforce capable of meeting the demands of North Carolina's transportation infrastructure. Through these initiatives, NCDOT supports career growth while addressing the sector's workforce needs.

## North Carolina Business Committee for Education (NCBCE)

[NCBCE](#) is a business-led education and workforce nonprofit in the Office of the Governor, founded in 1983 by Governor Jim Hunt to connect employers with the state's education systems. Known as the state's education and workforce connector, NCBCE unites employers, policy-makers, education systems, workforce boards, and community partners in preparing diverse communities to meet workforce demands. NCBCE is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization led by a board and membership of business leaders from various industry sectors across the state. The organization manages several work-based learning programs, emphasizing youth apprenticeship, including the following:

- **Building Bright Futures (BBF)** is a pilot initiative supporting pre-apprenticeships and Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) in early childhood education.

BBF offers technical assistance, financial support, and resources to pre-apprentices and apprentices, childcare centers, school districts, community colleges, and other RAP partners. BBF aligns with other resources such as the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Education (ECE) and apprenticeship scholarships. All apprentices have trained mentors who are compensated by BBF. Since its launch in January 2023, BBF has registered approximately 400 apprentices across 64 counties across the state.

- [Linking North Carolina with Innovative Talent \(LiNC-IT\)](#) is an employment program that supports early-career autistic professionals. Led by NCBCE, this collective impact initiative unites vocational rehabilitation (VR) services, higher education, service providers, and employers with the shared goal of creating meaningful job opportunities for young adults with autism. The program has received national recognition as a best practice for effectively supporting neurodiverse individuals in the workplace. Harvard's Project on Workforce conducted a case study on the program, highlighting it as a model for supporting autistic adults in the workplace. Caroline Sullivan, Executive Director of NCBCE, was invited to testify before the House Financial Services Committee to share information on LiNC-IT as a model for other states. Since 2018, LiNC-IT has successfully placed 130 individuals in jobs with 48 employers and served 32 youth through a summer program that began in 2024. This summer, a philanthropic program preparing students for a RAP pathway with a focus on biotech was piloted in two counties.
- [Southeastern Education and Economic Development \(SEED\)](#) focuses on growing the advanced manufacturing and agriculture workforce in rural southeastern North Carolina through RAP pathways with local employers. This year, students from four counties will attend the Summer Advanced Manufacturing Academies at two community colleges, launching their Youth Apprenticeship to Registered Apprenticeship Program (YA-to-RAP) pathway in Industrial Systems and Mechatronics. Additional pathways will be developed in Farm Leadership and Business Operations.
- The [Tech Team program](#) was developed to help school districts maintain student technology purchased during the pandemic. It offers students valuable training, certifications, and paid internships. Currently, Tech Team supports student-run help desks in twenty-seven low-wealth districts. The program combines an internship model, classroom-based learning through Career and Technical Education (CTE), and extracurricular clubs. Students are actively involved in computer repairs and user support within their school communities. Since its launch in 2020, thirty-three districts have formed tech teams, benefiting over 640 students.
- [Everyone Charging Forward](#) is a \$30 million, ten-year initiative aimed at fostering an inclusive workforce for the electric vehicle (EV) charging sector. The program was created in response to the rapid growth of the EV charging sector caused by public and private investment, which has created a significant demand for skilled workers. Through this workforce development initiative, the Siemens Foundation aims to ensure and expand equitable access to jobs for individuals from all backgrounds. The inaugural funded partners include NCBCE, the National Governors Association, the National League of Cities, and the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Training Program (EVITP).
- Nonprofit partners are essential to North Carolina's workforce development system. Organizations such as Goodwill Industries, nonprofit literacy councils, community action agencies, community rehabilitation providers, and other nonprofits significantly

contribute to workforce development in their communities. Community-based organizations, including faith-based groups, opportunities industrialization centers, and community development corporations, are often well-positioned to reach underserved populations, providing them with intensive, specialized training and support services.

## U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

**HUD** plays a vital role in providing employment and training opportunities for individuals, particularly those in underserved communities. Through various partnerships and programs, HUD connects people with the resources and support they need to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

HUD offers a range of employment and training programs designed to help individuals, particularly those in low-income or disadvantaged communities, acquire the skills and opportunities they need to secure stable, well-paying jobs. These programs provide access to job training, education, and employment resources, while also supporting broader goals of economic self-sufficiency and community development. Here are some key HUD employment and training programs:

- **The [Section 3 Program](#)** is a HUD initiative that helps ensure that employment, training, and contracting opportunities are provided to low- and very-low-income residents in HUD-assisted housing and their surrounding communities. This program is designed to foster local economic development and improve access to jobs.
- **The [Family Self-Sufficiency Program](#)** helps families in public housing and those receiving Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers increase their earned income and reduce their dependence on welfare assistance and rental subsidies.
- **The [Jobs Plus Initiative](#)** is specifically designed to improve the employment and earnings of public housing residents. It integrates employment-related services with rent-based work incentives and provides community support promoting job readiness and retention.
- **The [Resident Opportunity and Self-Sufficiency Grant Program](#)** provides grants to public housing agencies, tribes, and nonprofit organizations to help connect public housing residents with supportive services, education, and job-training opportunities.
- **The [Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program](#)** provides funding to nonprofit organizations for developing affordable housing through sweat equity and volunteer labor. While its primary focus is on homeownership, the program also includes employment and training components, helping participants work toward homeownership.

# Appendix G.

## North Carolina Healthcare Workforce Programs

### Youth Programs

North Carolina has various programs that support healthcare workforce development for young people as well as adults. NCWorks Career Centers serve adult and young adult job seekers, including Medicaid recipients. Surry-Yadkin Works recently launched a successful nursing apprenticeship program that connects high school students to the healthcare industry. Across the state, high schools provide Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes that allow students to explore their interests and acquire technical skills while in school. The North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) and North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU) offer a wide array of healthcare programs. Healthcare training opportunities are available at North Carolina Area Health Education Centers (NC AHEC) and local AHECs.

Several workforce development programs organize health career fairs and awareness campaigns, including those led by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the North Carolina Healthcare Association (NCHA), the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), and NCWorks. Some of the notable programs include the [Healthcare Workforce Collaborative](#) led by the Capital Area Workforce Development Board (CAWD), which recently received \$250,000 for a regional pilot project set to launch in early 2025. Additionally, the North Carolina Chamber of Commerce runs the [Talent Pipeline Management](#) program, which aligns employers, educators, and workforce development initiatives to strengthen workforce pipelines. See [Table G.1](#), below, for some of these programs and resources.

While many workforce development programs target adults, these specific programs are designed for youth aged 24 and under:

#### Youth Aged 16–18

- Middle and high school students can participate in the NC HOSA's [Future Health Professionals](#) program, which introduces them to healthcare pathways and communities. Schools may offer healthcare-focused career academies, help students earn community college credits, and support internships and apprenticeships in the healthcare industry.

#### Youth Aged 18–24

- Young adults aged 18–24 can visit any [NCWorks NextGen Center](#) for career exploration, assessment, and access to healthcare training programs. Eligible youth receive financial support to help reduce employment barriers. Each youth partners with a Youth Advocate for added support and accountability.
- Young adults can also enroll in work-based learning opportunities such as internships, apprenticeships, and work experiences. Workforce development staff often offer incentives to employers who provide internships or apprenticeships, such as guaranteed workers and compensation for lost wages.

**Table G.1. Healthcare Workforce Programs and Resources**

Program/Resource	Lead Entity	Intended Beneficiaries	Services
<b>INTENDED BENEFICIARIES: HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS</b>			
HEALTH	Surry-Yadkin Works	High school students	Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) pre-apprenticeship program, employer connections, health science programs, support for HOSA clubs/advisers, scheduling guest speakers, field trips, tours  <a href="#">Surry-Yadkin Works</a>
HOSA-Future Health Professionals	NC HOSA	Secondary and postsecondary students pursuing healthcare careers	Leadership development, career awareness, competitive events, networking, educational symposium, and scholarships  <a href="#">NC HOSA-Future Health Professionals</a>
NCCCS Programs	NCCCS	High school students and graduates, adult learners, and individuals seeking skill development for new careers or advancement through educational programs	Programs and courses at locations around the state  <a href="#">Program Finder—NCCCS</a>
NCICU Programs	NCICU	High school graduates and adult learners	Various healthcare programs, including associate degrees, doctoral degrees, and certificates  <a href="#">NCICU</a>
<b>INTENDED BENEFICIARIES: POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS</b>			
HOSA-Future Health Professionals	NC HOSA	Secondary and postsecondary students pursuing healthcare careers	Leadership development, career awareness, competitive events, networking, educational symposium, and scholarships  <a href="#">NC HOSA-Future Health Professionals</a>
NCCCS Programs	NCCCS	High school students and graduates, adult learners, and individuals seeking skill development for new careers or advancement through educational programs	Programs and courses at locations around the state  <a href="#">Program Finder—NCCCS</a>
NCICU Programs	NCICU	High school graduates and adult learners	Various healthcare programs, including associate degrees, doctoral degrees, and certificates  <a href="#">NCICU</a>

Program/Resource	Lead Entity	Intended Beneficiaries	Services
<b>INTENDED BENEFICIARIES: POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS (CONTINUED)</b>			
Passport to Health Careers (P2HC) Program; Student Services; Scholars Program; Nursing Clinical Instructor Partner (CIP); Community Health Worker (CHW) Program; Healthy Opportunities Pilot Program; and Other Programs	NC AHEC + nine regional AHECs	Healthcare students and professionals	Career awareness, healthcare training, preceptor support, partnership development <a href="#">NC AHEC Health Careers</a>
Surry Community College and Northern Regional Hospital Program (S.L. 2022-74, § 6.3)	Surry Community College	Nurse educators	Surry Community College and Northern Regional Hospital in Mount Airy, N.C., train and employ up to eight licensed nurse educators, who provide clinical instruction services for nursing students on a full-time basis for affiliated nursing programs <a href="#">Surry Community College</a>
Primary Care Medicine and Psychiatry Targeted Assistance Program (S.L. 2023-134, § 8A.14.(a))	DHHS	Primary care physicians and psychiatrists practicing in North Carolina	An educational loan forgiveness program established for the purpose of addressing the critical demand for physicians in rural and high-need areas of the state. See <a href="#">G.S. 116-209.45</a> (Forgivable Education Loans for Service Program and Fund)
High-Cost Healthcare Workforce Programs Start-Up Funds (S.L. 2023-134, § 6.2.(a))	NCCCS	North Carolina community colleges	A fund that helps community colleges start new programs in high-demand healthcare career fields, including nursing, that require significant start-up funds
<b>INTENDED BENEFICIARIES: EMPLOYERS, EDUCATORS, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STAFF</b>			
NC Health Talent Alliance	N.C. Chamber of Commerce	Employers, educators, workforce/economic development staff	Healthcare-focused total productive maintenance (TPM) training <a href="#">NC Health Talent Alliance</a>
NC AHEC Nursing Education Grants	NC AHEC	Employers, educators, workforce/economic development staff	Funding to expand nursing education at twelve public universities and NC AHEC locations, establishing team-based-care clinical-teaching hubs and addressing barriers to community-based preceptors <a href="#">NC AHEC</a>
Caregiving Workforce Strategic Leadership Council (Caregiving Council)	DHHS, Commerce, NC AHEC	Employers, educators, workforce/economic development staff, caregiving staff	Generates solutions for strengthening the state's nursing, behavioral health, and direct-care workforce <a href="#">Caregiving Council</a>

Program/Resource	Lead Entity	Intended Beneficiaries	Services
<b>INTENDED BENEFICIARIES: THE PUBLIC</b>			
DHHS Behavioral Health Campaign	DHHS	Public	Healthcare awareness <a href="#">DHHS</a>
NCHA Healthcare Career Fairs and Communications Campaign	NCHA	Public	Job fairs and career awareness <a href="#">NCHA</a>
CTE	DPI	Public	Healthcare/career awareness, work-based learning, and job shadowing, as well as pre-apprenticeships (Nurse Aid, Emergency Medical Technician, Medical Assisting) and professional credentials (North Carolina Nurse Aide I, Emergency Medical Responder, Emergency Medical Technician, Pharmacy Technician, Certified Clinical Medical Assistant) <a href="#">CTE</a>
NCWorks Career Centers	Workforce Development Boards	Public aged 18+	Career awareness, employer connections, work-based learning (WBL) connections <a href="#">NCWorks Career Centers</a>
NextGen Center	Workforce Development Boards	Opportunity Youth aged 18–24	Career awareness, employer connections, WBL connections, case management, apprenticeships <a href="#">NCWorks Next Gen</a>



# Appendix H.

## Key Partners and Community-Based Organizations for Wraparound Support and Cross-Referrals

### Government Agencies

- [North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services \(DHHS\)](#)
  - 100 county departments of social services (DSS) locations
  - Food and Nutrition Service Employment and Training (FNS E&T) Program
- [North Carolina Department of Commerce \(Commerce\)](#)
  - Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS)
  - NCWorks
- [Workforce Development Boards \(WDBs\)](#)

### Education Partners

- North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU)
- University of North Carolina (UNC) System and colleges
- North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) and colleges
- North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI)
  - Local school systems

### Community-Based Organizations

- Goodwill Industries of Central North Carolina
- United Way of North Carolina
- The Salvation Army
- Communities in Schools of North Carolina (CIS)
- Transportation authorities
- Housing authorities

### Opportunities Industrialization Centers (OICs)

- Greenville Opportunities Industrialization Center (Greenville OIC)
- Rocky Mount Opportunities Industrialization Center (Rocky Mount OIC)
- Wilson Opportunities Industrialization Center (Wilson OIC)

### Community Action Agencies

- Western Carolina Community Action (WCCA)
- Blue Ridge Community Action
- Greensboro Urban Ministry
- Piedmont Triad Regional Council
- Mountain Projects, Inc.
- Eastern Carolina Human Services Agency (ECHSA)
- Economic Improvement Council, Inc.
- Gaston Community Action, Inc.

- Choanoke Area Development Association of NC, Inc. (CADA)
- Wilmington Area Rebuilding Ministry (WARM)
- Southeastern Community & Family Services, Inc.
- I-CARE, Inc.
- Highland Family Resource Center

### **Local Smart Start Partnerships**

- Smart Start of Mecklenburg County
- Wake County Smart Start
- Smart Start of New Hanover County
- Smart Start of Forsyth County
- Partnership for Children of Cumberland County
- Partnership for Children of Johnston County
- Smart Start Rowan
- Randolph Partnership for Children
- Chatham County Partnership for Children
- Smart Start of Davidson County
- Catawba County Partnership for Children
- Durham Partnership for Children
- Smart Start of Pender County
- Orange County Partnership for Young Children

# Appendix I.

## GuilfordWorks and Community Conversations: A Focus-Group Methodology to Improve Access to Workforce Development Services

Section 2.2(a) of House Bill 76 mandates that individuals enrolled in the North Carolina Medicaid program and related programs have access to appropriate workforce development services. The GuilfordWorks Workforce Development Board used a focus-group approach (see Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024, in the [References](#)) to help individuals in Guilford County access local workforce development services.

During the peak of COVID-19, GuilfordWorks identified the need to develop a strategy to lower employment barriers for community members. Led by Dr. Danielle A. Harrison, the Systemic Barriers Taskforce was established to address the challenges faced by individuals in socially and economically impacted circumstances. Some of the highly impacted neighborhoods in Guilford County reached unemployment rates as high as 24 percent in September 2020—a trend that was reflected in other areas in the state, including the Piedmont Triad Region (Naanwaab, Romero, & Simkins, 2024). These alarming unemployment rates prompted GuilfordWorks to take immediate action by expanding its services in the community.

To determine the needs of residents, GuilfordWorks gained valuable feedback through focused dialogues with the community's stakeholders. In March 2021, the taskforce hosted approximately a dozen "Community Conversations" across Guilford County. The meetings were held in partnership with Goodwill Industries of Central North Carolina and East Greensboro NOW, an economic development agency.

### Methodology

During the [Community Conversations](#) sessions, the taskforce posed key questions aimed at identifying barriers and needs within the Guilford County community. The taskforce members then (1) collected and analyzed data, (2) held follow-up meetings with community leaders, (3) met collectively as a team to debrief, and (4) discussed outcomes and strategies for implementation. The answers gathered during these discussions provided valuable insights.

### Key Insights

The Community Conversations sessions identified the following key obstacles and opportunities for improving employment access in Guilford County.

*Can you help us understand the obstacles preventing individuals in your community from accessing employment?*

- Lack of transportation
- Insufficient technology access and skills
- Limited availability of childcare
- Financial barriers
- Criminal background barriers

*What challenges do individuals in your community face when seeking skills and training needed to become gainfully employed?*

- Criminal background is a hindrance
- Difficulty accessing transportation to and from training and educational facilities
- Insufficient technology access
- Limited Internet availability
- Lack of knowledge about using technology

*How can we heighten access to employment and training services to individuals in this community?*

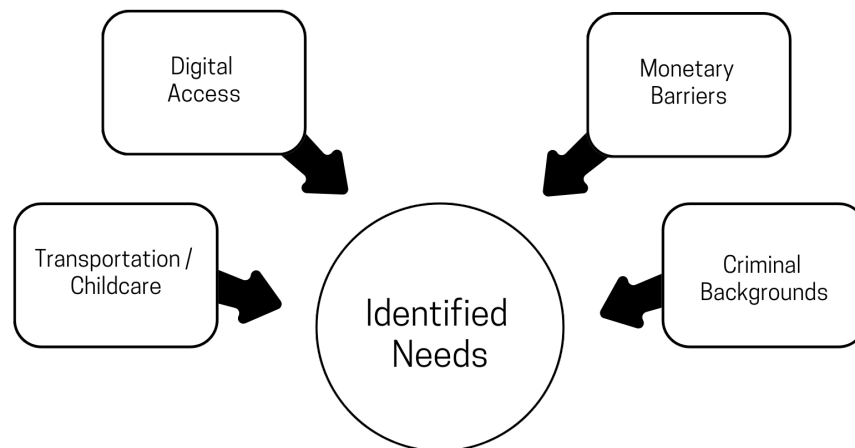
- Implement community outreach initiatives with essential service organizations
- Increase our presence in the community
- Use various types of social media to spread the word about services
- Partner with religious organizations to reach a broader audience

*What information would be helpful for connecting individuals to employment and training opportunities?*

- Understanding the [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#) and its funding requirements
- Identifying employers willing to hire individuals with criminal backgrounds
- Facilitating more community conversations with community organizations and residents

*How can we better engage individuals?*

- Increase community presence
- Host consistent community conversations



## Next Steps

After debriefing, the Systemic Barriers Taskforce constructed a plan to increase educational, training, and employment services in the highly impacted areas of the Guilford County community. Four goals were established to meet the needs of the community and the mission of the organization:

1. Implement continuous staff development and training
2. Offer continuous training and educating to community partners
3. Develop a comprehensive resource guide
4. Increase organizational presence and increase services offered within highly impacted communities



## Conclusion

As of August 2024, GuilfordWorks has successfully launched a [mobile career center](#) that serves as a critical resource across Guilford County, averaging visits from 1,000 individuals annually. This center is equipped with twelve technological workstations and offers Wi-Fi capabilities, so that individuals can access the Internet on their devices. GuilfordWorks has partnered with numerous employers to provide layoff assistance and host recruitment events. In collaboration with community agencies and employers, GuilfordWorks hosts approximately 100 community resource and job fairs each year. The staff actively engages in developmental opportunities, including poverty and reentry simulations and conferences, to stay updated on relevant workforce data and trends. In May 2024, GuilfordWorks held an expungement clinic with a law firm partner where over 300 charges were expunged. The efforts of the Systemic Barriers Taskforce to identify community needs, develop a comprehensive resource guide, and cultivate partnerships have significantly enhanced the delivery of workforce development services and solutions. Through their strategic approach, GuilfordWorks has effectively reduced systemic barriers and addressed the employment needs of the Guilford County community.

## Appendix J.

# NC Medicaid for More People: Strategies for an Outreach Campaign

[medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/about-nc-medicaid](https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/about-nc-medicaid)

### Gaps and Opportunities for Improvement

When Governor Roy Cooper signed the Medicaid expansion bill into law, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) leveraged existing partnerships with community partners and providers—informed by insights gained from COVID-19 outreach—to launch a comprehensive engagement strategy. The campaign, titled “Medicaid for More People,” aimed to achieve three goals: expand coverage, enhance access to care, and foster collaboration with partners. This strategy was based on qualitative and quantitative research, ensuring that it was culturally and linguistically responsive, and involved ongoing collaboration with partners. The various components of the campaign are set out below.

### Immediate Outreach

NC Medicaid implemented these various outreach activities to share information about Medicaid and Medicaid expansion:

- **Advisory Committees:** Beneficiary Advisory Committee, Standard Plans Member Advisory Committee
- **Community Events:** Town hall events and webinars hosted by Medicaid and DHHS
- **Social Media Platforms:** Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X (formerly Twitter)
- **Communications:** Mail and electronic communication (e.g., text, email, robo calls)

### Longer-Term Outreach

This part of the campaign included the following participants and/or events:

- **Community Organizers, Ambassadors, and Navigators:** On-the-ground messengers assisting people with Medicaid coverage
- **Paid Media:** Print and digital ads on social media, local television, and radio
- **Customized Resources:** PSAs, toolkits, fact sheets, infographics, social media posts, posters, and flyers
- **Virtual Townhalls:** Webinars and virtual meetings for public education and input
- **Fireside Chats/“Cafecitos”:** Dialogues between DHHS and community leaders, including viewer Q&A
- **Medicaid Essentials Presenters Network:** Public presentations from trusted community leaders on eligibility and resources

## Outreach/Education/Partnerships

- **Community Network Mapping:** 215 organizations mapped across all 100 North Carolina counties to assess capacity for supporting expansion
- **Training/Speakers Bureau:** Trained individuals educate community groups
- **Implementation Partner Workgroup:** Bimonthly meetings with up to 70 partner agencies across various sectors
- **Application-Tool Demonstrations:** Training for more than 1,000 community members on the ePass portal
- **State and Local Library Partnerships**
- **Philanthropy:** To expand outreach efforts, a funding collaborative committed \$3 million to support two key projects:
  - **Project 1:** Medicaid Expansion Community Education and Training (Legal Aid of North Carolina Navigator Consortium, Care Share Health Alliance, North Carolina Community Health Center Association)
  - **Project 2:** Medicaid Expansion Hotline (Hispanic Federation)
- **Health Equity Portfolio:** Focused outreach to historically marginalized communities, including training, webinars, and surveys
- **Medicaid Ambassador Initiative:** Local support network for navigating Medicaid information and applications

## Workforce-Focused Outreach

In April 2024, DHHS launched a workforce-focused outreach plan targeting sectors with a high percentage of uninsured workers.

- **Leading Occupations:** Cashiers, cooks, laborers, waiters, nursing assistants, landscaping workers, janitors, construction laborers, maids, stockers, retail salespersons, driver/sales workers
- **Targeted Sectors:** Childcare, grocery, nursing/medical assistance, restaurant and lodging, and cosmetology/barbering

## Recommended Workforce Communication and Outreach

- **Trainings and Meetings:** Present slides promoting Medicaid expansion during trainings and meetings and distribute [Medicaid expansion flyers](#).
- **Conferences:** Host sessions and exhibits on Medicaid expansion.
- **Newsletter:** Feature Medicaid expansion information and request that readers pass it on or share the information with others.
- **Email:** Send informational emails with promotional content.
- **Social Media:** Share graphics on social channels.
- **Website:** Add the Medicaid expansion logo and website link.

**Bilingual communication materials** for workforce outreach have been added to the [Medicaid Expansion Communication Toolkit](#).

## Medicaid Expansion Communication Research Findings

In May 2024, DHHS and the Neimand Collaborative conducted quantitative research to assess the effectiveness of the Medicaid expansion communication strategy.

### Key Findings

- Increased awareness and positive perceptions of Medicaid
- DHHS was identified as a leading source of information
- Motivating messages emphasize fee and service transparency
- Enrolled individuals reported positive experiences
- Confidentiality assurances and assistance with the application process improve application rates

### Workforce Communication and Outreach Challenges

Despite a comprehensive plan, outreach efforts were limited by funding and staffing constraints. Additional support could allow for the extension of the Neimand Collaborative contract for more industry-specific materials and for the recruitment of staff to implement activities across Medicaid regions.