

Criteria for NCWorks Career Pathways:

Criteria	Overview	Description
Demand-Driven and Data-Informed	Create Pathways that meet documented needs within the region. Utilize data from verified state, regional and local sources to determine shortages and opportunities for economic growth.	Pathways must be created in sectors of the economy that have a demonstrated economic and workforce development need. These sectors must be validated by all partners and meet one or more of the following indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing, with a demand for jobs and included in economic development plans to attract industry that requires skilled workers, • Identified as having documented gaps in the labor supply and shortages of skilled workers to fill current or future openings, • Aligned with the State’s Jobs Plan • Inclusive of occupations identified on the NC Department of Commerce’s Hot Jobs publication.
Employer Engagement	Employers lead the development of pathways by identifying needs within industry sectors and knowledge and skills needed to address gaps. Employers provide essential input into careers, curricula and courses along pathways that will meet local and regional workforce demands.	Pathways are developed through partnerships with a group of engaged employers that represent various aspects of the industry sector. Engaged employers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to long term participation in the pathway system, • Determine which occupations within the cluster are included in the pathway, • Identify knowledge, skills and abilities needed to work in this industry sector, • Identify learning outcomes and help design and vet the education and training components, • Provide for and participate in a variety of work-based learning opportunities, • Recommend certificates and credentials required for key occupations in the pathway, • Hire individuals who successfully exit the pathway.
Collaborative	Develop partnerships with all levels of secondary and postsecondary education, the workforce community, local government officials and community leaders to ensure buy-in. Effective teams will be those that provide students a consistent, committed message along each career pathway.	Pathways must be developed collaboratively and have input, leadership and commitment from the following organizations (at a minimum): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Educational Agency - representation from secondary school systems in the identified region; could include Superintendent, CTE Director, or Curriculum Director, • Higher Education - representation from public and private 2- and 4- year institutions in the identified region; could include President, Vice President/Chief Academic Officer, CTE Dean, Vice President/Workforce Development or Continuing Education program area deans,

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Workforce Development Board - representation from the local workforce development boards in the identified region; could include director, business service representative, or program area specialists, ● Industry – representation from employers within the sector for the pathway being developed, ● Community – representation from local leaders in the collaborative such as commissioners and town leaders as well as local economic development partnerships and Chambers of Commerce.
Career Awareness	<p>Make students aware of career pathways, educational requirements and work-based learning opportunities. Develop training opportunities for each partner that provide career advising to students to ensure a consistent message and awareness of career opportunities along pathways.</p>	<p>Career awareness requires knowledgeable system staff advising students and jobseekers on the multiple opportunities along a high-growth pathway. At a minimum, career advising and counseling strategies must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A description of the career advising strategies in place for all local partners working with students and jobseekers. This descriptions must include professional development and cross-training opportunities which ensure and sustain knowledge of and consistent use of the career pathway across agencies, ● Academic support and advising of students in setting career goals beginning in middle school and continuing throughout high school and community college, ● The use of short-term or time limited work-based learning opportunities (such as job shadowing, mentorships, field trips, etc.) that help individuals explore careers and prepare individuals to enter longer term work-based learning opportunities such as paid internships, related work experience, pre-apprenticeship, registered apprenticeship, etc. ● A continuum of other activities around career exploration, awareness, the relationship between the individual's interest, skills and abilities to occupational choice, skill development, etc., ● The use of labor market data and job growth projections in the identified region, ● Deliberate connection of older youth and adults to NCWorks Online ● Joint professional development by all partners to ensure consistent understanding of workforce demands and career and economic development in the region.

<p>Articulation and Coordination</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for students to obtain knowledge, skills and credentials efficiently. Maximize use of articulation agreements to encourage coordination of educational offerings. Encourage obtainment of stackable credentials to reduce duplication and foster a streamlined progression along the career pathway.</p>	<p>A program of study includes a comprehensive, structured approach for delivering academic and technical education to prepare individuals for postsecondary education and career success that connects skilled graduates to job opportunities. Rigorous programs of study must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide integrated academic, technical, and occupational skills training through classroom, on the job, online and experiential learning for individuals to meet employer needs, ● Offer secondary students the opportunity to earn postsecondary credit through programs such as Career and College Promise, ● Provide individuals opportunity to earn academic and technical certificates, diplomas, and degrees, ● Include coordinated, non-duplicative progression of courses that allow for articulated credit, for prior learning and in accordance with existing articulation agreements between institutions, ● Allow individuals to stack credentials such as career readiness certificates, industry validated recognized third party certifications, and state licenses or certificates.
<p>Work-Based Learning</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for students to incorporate work-based learning into their programs of study. Recruit the business community to lead in the development and implementation of work-based learning opportunities.</p>	<p>Pathways must include work-based learning as a strategy for career exploration and workforce engagement related to the individual's program of study or training/employability plan. Work-based learning is a critical part of the pathway system that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provides skills development related to the individual's program of study or training plan and offers course credit, ● Includes in-depth industry tours, shadowing, mentorships, project based learning, service learning, cooperative education, structured volunteer experiences, junior achievement, internships, apprenticeships, etc., ● Provides for a structured experience that is supported with demonstrated commitment from employers.
<p>Contain Multiple Points of Entry and Exit <i>including Non-Degree Training On-Ramps</i></p>	<p>Be flexible and creative in providing opportunities for students to enter and exit career pathways. Develop a system of crediting students for earned credentials, prior learning and demonstrated job skills. Reduce duplication of coursework and training whenever possible.</p>	<p>Pathways must be designed to easily allow individuals to enter and exit at different points without duplicating credit/effort. Where possible, pathways must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include non-degree training that articulates credit to degree pathways (including awarding credit for appropriate prior learning experiences, attained third-party certifications or Badges), ● Provide special considerations for veterans to demonstrate skills based on experience (i.e., MOS or Badges) and provide accelerated

		<p>educational/training opportunities for gap fulfillment,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include postsecondary registration with Department of Labor's RACC program to offer registered apprenticeship completers a pathway to complete their postsecondary degree.
Evaluation	<p>Develop a plan for assessment that defines success, measures progress toward goals, investigates outcomes and points to opportunities for improvement.</p>	<p>Pathways must include a plan for assessment of outcomes that are developed and approved by the pathway partnership team. This plan must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Baseline data, ● Definition of success including goals and timelines, ● Regular assessments, ● Mechanism for updating the pathway and associated strategies.