

## SPOTLIGHT ON LOCAL WORKFORCE INNOVATIONS

# Responding to the Unemployment Crisis caused by COVID-19

COVID-19 has altered the technological landscape of many industries. Digital technology is now the center of operation for many industries - from online meetings via Zoom, to companies relying on automated technologies for financial management. Considering such transformations, there is a pressing need for students, industry professionals and unemployed individuals to upskill, reskill and retool in order to gain a competitive edge or have the necessary skills required for emerging roles in the workforce during and post-COVID.

I think it's important for our community to grow and learn skills - whether it's information technology or advanced manufacturing.

ANTHONY ROGERS

*GuilfordWorks Strategic Initiatives Coordinator*

GuilfordWorks - the local Workforce Development Board for Guilford County - has partnered with Coursera to provide unemployed or furloughed jobseekers with job-relevant online learning, at no cost. Coursera, the world's leading online learning platform, established the Workforce Recovery Initiative in early 2020 to help governments worldwide provide unemployed workers with free access to online courses. The initiative's goal is to help impacted workers develop the knowledge and skills to become re-employed.

The U.S. states of Illinois, Arizona, and Oklahoma, as well as the governments of Colombia, Costa Rica, Greece, Malaysia, Panama, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan were the first to make the Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative available to residents. Most recently, GuilfordWorks has become the first local government agency to partner with Coursera in the state of North Carolina to offer this resource.

The GuilfordWorks on Coursera Initiative launched June 15, 2020. Through this partnership, GuilfordWorks provides unemployed and furloughed jobseekers or those with reduced hours, many of whom lack financial resources, with job-relevant online learning. The 3,800 courses on Coursera are taught by the world's leading university and industry educators, covering critical business, technology, and data science skills. The initiative also includes professional certificates, like the Google IT Support Professional Certificate, designed specifically to train people for high-demand jobs.

Through their partnership, Coursera provides the online platform and technology but GuilfordWorks governs participants registered directly through their website. GuilfordWorks documents Coursera invitations, participants and certificates earned through Coursera. Additionally, GuilfordWorks is leveraging local NCWorks career center staff to reach more participants. Career center advisors can send invitations to current participants through WIOA while documenting their training and upskilling. GuilfordWorks is encouraging individuals to invest in themselves by enhancing their skills to become more competitive for opportunities in the future as the economy and job market opens.

### ► Outreach Strategies During Covid-19

Broadband is one of the biggest challenges during this pandemic within rural communities, in addition to an individual's access to internet or Wi-Fi. Coursera is on a platform that is internet-based; however, for those who do not have internet access, they have the option in Guilford County to print course material at their local career center. Additionally, courses are multilanguage and can be targeted to populations where English is not the primary language.

COVID-19 has also impacted traditional marketing methods to reach hard-to-serve populations. Typically, marketing efforts would include distribution of flyers in neighborhoods as well as in-person community outreach fairs. To support the practice of social distancing but still provide resources to residents, GuilfordWorks on Coursera Initiative relies upon digital media marketing during this time. The GuilfordWorks staff are utilizing social media and local news outlets within the Guilford County community. Furthermore, they are marketing within public transit; the buses within Guilford County have the initiative's information inside of buses as well as on the air while buses are in service.

## PROGRAM REVIEW:

# How does the GuilfordWorks on Coursera Initiative benefit NC's Workforce?

### Program Goals

- GuilfordWorks supports the goal of MyFutureNC to have 2 million North Carolinians ages 25-44 with high-quality credentials or post-secondary degrees by 2030 and sees this initiative aiding in that goal through individuals opting to participate in courses through Coursera that result in degrees or credentials.
- Additionally, through this initiative, GuilfordWorks will work to connect individuals that participate in Coursera to employment within the sector for which they have completed.

### Program Highlights

- GuilfordWorks on Coursera Initiative is targeted for Guilford County residents.
- The initiative is offered at no cost to participants, as the cost is assumed by Coursera. Typical courses and certifications range from \$300-\$500 per participant not enrolled through the initiative.
- Registered participants can take up to as many courses as they like through this initiative; however, they must complete courses by December 30, 2020 to earn certificates.
- Typical courses are 2-3 weeks, and some can last up to 3 months, with the shortest courses offered at only 16 hours for participants, providing more opportunities for participants to earn certificates.

### Sign Up and Enroll

Signing up and enrolling is easy. Register at [guilfordworks.org/coursera](http://guilfordworks.org/coursera) and then:

1. Look for an email invitation from Coursera.
2. Accept the invitation and find the right courses for you. Select courses from any of the curated collections.
3. Enroll and start your learning journey on Coursera.

### Registration Deadline: September 30, 2020.

*Free access to courses is available through December 31, 2020. Afterward, continuation with Coursera involves a cost to the user.*



### ► About the Series

Brought to you by the NCWorks Commission, the Spotlight on Local Workforce Innovations series showcases local innovations in collaborative, employer-led workforce development partnerships across our state. The series will highlight promising practices that can be replicated across North Carolina.

The NCWorks Commission is the state's Workforce Development Board. Led by a private sector chair, the 33-member, Governor-appointed commission includes representatives from the business community, heads of state workforce agencies, educators, and community leaders.

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