

PREPARING NORTH CAROLINA'S WORKFORCE FOR TODAY *AND* TOMORROW



2014 - 2016 **strategic plan**

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March 2, 2015

The Honorable Pat McCrory
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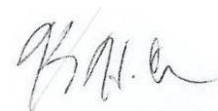
Dear Governor McCrory:

The following plan, *Preparing North Carolina's Workforce for Today and Tomorrow*, is the result of the NCWorks Commission's desire to create a comprehensive workforce development system that is transformative, sustainable, and demand-driven. Not only has the commission approved strategic goals that take advantage of our system's current strengths, it also proposed new strategies for aligning our services in a way that results in high-quality workers trained for in-demand occupations.

In 2014, you launched the NCWorks initiative, reshaping how North Carolina's workforce system responds to the needs of job seekers and employers. The NCWorks Commission is now pleased to present you with a comprehensive implementation plan that sustains the momentum.

I am proud of the hard work and dedication of our team who created and assembled the comprehensive strategies that the commission now presents to you.

Respectfully,



Korey Coon, Chair
NCWorks Commission

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All photographs found throughout this report are of North Carolina businesses, workers, products, and places of commerce.

These are just a few of the many reasons North Carolina consistently ranks at the top among places to live and do business!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE CREATION OF the NCWorks Commission's 2014-2016 Strategic Plan included an extraordinary engagement effort from North Carolina's workforce development stakeholders, leaders, and professionals. A special thanks to our elected officials, appointed commission members, workforce development partners, and staff for their dedication and support of transforming North Carolina's workforce development system.

Governor

The Honorable Pat McCrory

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE NCWORKS COMMISSION oversees the state's workforce development system, develops policy, and advises the Governor, General Assembly, state and local agencies, and businesses on how to strengthen the state's workforce. The commission is required by state law to create, each biennium, a comprehensive strategic plan for North Carolina's workforce system that includes goals and objectives; an assessment of programs, policies, and delivery of services; and recommendations. The commission began work in the fall of 2013 to develop a new plan for the 2014-2016 biennium. This plan provides the framework for all workforce agencies to use to create a more aligned and coordinated system. This improved workforce system will strengthen services to individuals and businesses, and produce better outcomes.

The commission established a task force to develop the strategic plan that included its members as well as representatives from local workforce development boards, economic development, and community colleges. After extensive stakeholder work and programmatic reviews, the following system-wide goals and objectives were created for the workforce development system:

- **Create an integrated, seamless, and customer-centered workforce system.**
- **Create a workforce system that is responsive to the needs of the economy.**
- **Prepare workers to succeed in the North Carolina economy and to continuously improve their skills.**
- **Use data to drive strategies and ensure accountability.**

This plan provides a framework for state and local leaders to use to strengthen the state's workforce development system. The information contained within this report provides the initial phase in the development of data-driven recommendations for North Carolina's workforce development system. ●



INTRODUCTION

NORTH CAROLINA'S ECONOMY has experienced major changes over the last decade as a result of structural and technological changes that were accelerated by the Great Recession. At the same time, studies in North Carolina and at the federal level identified weaknesses in the workforce development system that were keeping the state from providing the best possible service to businesses and job seekers. The NCWorks Commission heard these messages and developed a strategic plan to address the weaknesses in the system and as a result improve the economy of North Carolina.

In 2011, the NCWorks Commission released the *North Carolina State of the Workforce 2011-2020* report which examined North Carolina's workforce through an in-depth analysis of economic and employment data. This study found that the recession accelerated the shift to a knowledge-based economy and many workers were not prepared for the jobs that exist in today's economy. Key findings from this study include:

- **Layoffs were accelerated during the recession due to long-term structural changes to the economy.** Industries are constantly exploring ways to increase productivity. Since the start of the Great Recession in 2007, many companies moved operations offshore to find financial savings while others redesigned their business processes through the use of new technology. As companies started rehiring, they are looking for more highly-skilled workers than those that were laid off during the recession.
- **Workers are competing for fewer good-paying jobs which demand higher skills.** There are fewer low-skill, middle-wage jobs available and they are at a greater risk of elimination as a result of technological and operational changes. Workers laid off from these jobs are finding that they don't have the skills necessary for the careers offering wages similar to what they once earned.
- **Laid off and young workers in rural areas have limited alternatives for employment.** Manufacturing job losses in small cities and rural areas of North Carolina were high during the recession and in many places resulted in few viable employment alternatives. As the economy continues to recover, job seekers will have to seek jobs in new industries or in other locations.
- **Workers must increase their skills.** More and more new jobs being created will require at a minimum some post-secondary education, many in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines. Companies are increasingly replacing ►

lower-skilled workers with more highly educated or trained employees and job seekers need to increase their skills to meet these new demands.

The study noted that these challenges are interrelated and must be addressed intentionally and as a whole if North Carolina is going to improve the state's economy. In addition, the issues need to be addressed in collaboration with the state's educational and economic development systems.

In 2012, the Program Evaluation Division of the North Carolina General Assembly completed a study on the state's workforce development system. This study found a complicated array of workforce development programs and services that were not integrated nor strategically aligned with economic development. The division also found that state-level coordination was insufficient to ensure an integrated workforce development system. This study led to the passage of legislation to strengthen the workforce development system.

The study noted that these challenges are interrelated and must be addressed intentionally and as a whole.

Recently, there has been an increased focus on workforce issues. Almost every week there is a story in the news about how businesses can't find the talent they need or how job seekers can't find meaningful

employment. These stories highlight the need for a stronger workforce development system that helps businesses find the talent they need and people find employment to support their families.

The NCWorks Commission heard these messages and recognized the need for a stronger workforce development system. The commission developed a strategic plan that provides the framework necessary to create a more unified, customer-centric workforce development system that listens and responds to the needs of businesses, and trains workers to be successful in the current and future economy. ●



WORKFORCE ASSESSMENT

PRIOR TO THE development of the strategic plan, the NCWorks Commission completed a review of workforce development program plans, policies, and services across agencies. The commission reviewed workforce program funding levels and sources, service provision types, special populations served, and business outreach initiatives. The following table summarizes the information obtained during this review. ►

	Total Awarded Funds Received PY 2012-2013	Federal Funds Received	State Funds Received	Other Funds Received	Number of Counties Served	INDIVIDUAL SERVICES					EMPLOYER SERVICES		PERFORMANCE MEASURES					
						Skill Development & Training	Employment Services	Subsidized Employment	Support Services	Adult (A), Youth (Y)	Employment Services	Training Programs	Entered Employment	Average Earnings	Employment Retention	Education/Training Credentials	Others	
DOA	DISPLACED HOMEMAKERS	\$ 289,670		✓		35	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
	AMERICAN INDIAN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM	\$ 247,991	✓			59	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓						
	WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT	\$ 79,691,240	✓			100	✓	✓	✓	✓	A, Y	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
DOC	WAGNER PEYSER	\$ 19,836,199	✓			100	✓	✓			A, Y	✓		✓	✓	✓		
	TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE	\$ 35,189,270	✓			100	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	VETERANS' PROGRAM	\$ 5,446,000	✓			100	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	APPRENTICESHIP	\$ 1,604,477	✓	✓	✓	100	✓				A		✓	✓	✓		✓	
	BIONETWORK	\$ 4,726,369		✓		100	✓				A	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
	CUSTOMIZED TRAINING	\$ 23,587,840		✓		100	✓				A	✓	✓					✓
NCCCS	SMALL BUSINESS CENTER NETWORK	\$ 6,223,799		✓		100	✓	✓			A	✓						✓
	BASIC SKILLS	\$ 89,175,304	✓	✓		100	✓				A			✓				✓
	OCCUPATIONAL CONTINUING EDUCATION	\$ 100,512,939		✓	✓	100	✓	✓			A			✓			✓	
	POSTSECONDARY CAREER TECHNICAL & VOCATIONAL EDUCATION	\$ 372,928,057	✓	✓	✓	100	✓				A			✓			✓	✓
	COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT	\$ 19,820,106	✓			100	✓	✓	✓	✓	A, Y							
	FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES	\$ 14,476,394	✓	✓	✓	100	✓	✓		✓	A			✓	✓	✓		
NCDHHS	T.A.N.F.	\$ 29,914,664	✓	✓	✓	100	✓	✓	✓	✓	A			✓	✓	✓		
	EMPLOYMENT SERVICES (VR)	\$ 108,292,534	✓	✓	✓	100	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	EMPLOYMENT SERVICES (SERVICES FOR THE BLIND)	\$ 16,741,913	✓	✓		100	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓				
	LONG-TERM VOCATIONAL SUPPORT	\$ 11,081,429	✓	✓		100	✓				A, Y			✓	✓	✓		
	SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT	\$ 3,501,499	✓	✓	✓	100	✓	✓	✓	✓	A		✓	✓	✓	✓		
DPI	CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION	\$ 430,661,949	✓	✓		100	✓	✓			Y			✓			✓	✓

Each of the state plans varied significantly and common definitions were not used across programs. Despite these limitations, many similarities between programs were identified. North Carolina's workforce development programs are mission driven and prioritize employment, career counseling, and assessments for the adult population. The commission found that the majority of programs offered some type of skill development and employment services for adults while only five programs served youth.

Overall, North Carolina's programs are service driven with a focus on mission and target populations.

Programs provided similar services like resume development, career counseling, and skill development. However, the commission found that although it seems duplicative, North Carolina's workforce development programs serve very different target populations. Programs have specialized services geared towards meeting the needs of their customers such as employment specialists trained to help individuals with disabilities find career opportunities.

In addition, the commission found that while many programs provide services to employers, these efforts were not a focus of the programs. In many cases it was difficult to determine what services were provided to employers through the plan review.

Overall, the commission found North Carolina's programs to be service driven with a focus on mission and target populations. There was, however, a general lack of focus on quality customer service, the skills gap, business outreach, and services to youth. ●





STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

AFTER REVIEW OF the state agency workforce development program plans, the NCWorks Commission identified the need for a comprehensive strategic plan for workforce development that would provide a framework for North Carolina's workforce development system. To develop this new comprehensive strategic plan, the commission established a task force that included members of the commission as well as representatives from local workforce development boards, economic development, and community colleges. Members of this task force represented businesses, community colleges, K-12 schools, local workforce programs, community service organizations, and economic development organizations.

The task force began meeting in the fall of 2013 and began with a review of the commission's current strategic plan and recent reports. The task force determined that the commission needed to update all elements of the strategic plan including the vision, mission, goals, and objectives.

As stated in the *North Carolina State of the Workforce 2011-2020* report, if North Carolina is going to address its workforce challenges it must do it intentionally and in collaboration with the state's educational and economic development systems. In an effort to ensure the task force was aligned with these systems, the task force requested input from local workforce organizations, educational entities, and economic development groups throughout the process. The feedback and input that was received by the task force was used to develop and strengthen the strategic plan.

There were also several other strategic planning efforts related to workforce development happening at the same time the commission was developing its strategic plan. These efforts were accomplished by various organizations, including the Economic Development Board, Education Cabinet, Community College System, and State Board of Education.

Task force members ensured that the commission's Strategic Plan was aligned with the direction of the state's education and economic future.

Task force members participated in each of these efforts to ensure that the commission's strategic plan was aligned with the strategic direction of the

state's education and economic future. Task force members participating in these other planning efforts reported back to the group on the recommendations related to workforce development and included these ideas in the commission plan. As a result, the commission's workforce development strategic plan aligns with those of our key partners.

After the strategic plan was developed by the task force, it was presented to the full commission for approval. On March 7, 2014, the NCWorks Commission approved the 2014-2016 Strategic Plan. ●





VISION, MISSION, CHARGE, & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

THE FIRST STEP for the task force was to review and revise the vision and mission for the workforce development system. A vision statement is a picture of the future that provides the framework for all strategic planning. While a vision statement doesn't tell us how we're going to get where we want to go, it does set the direction for planning. The task force recognized the importance of working with both individuals and businesses to create a strong workforce development system.

VISION

To grow the North Carolina economy by strengthening the state's workforce and connecting employers to skilled, high quality employees.

In order to achieve the vision for the state, the task force developed a mission statement for the NCWorks Commission. A mission statement is the purpose for an organization and its reason for existing. It should guide the actions of the organization and provide the framework within which the organization's strategies are developed. This mission statement developed by the task force focuses on the need for a strong workforce system that prepares workers to meet the needs of businesses so that all North Carolinians can find economic prosperity.

MISSION

To ensure North Carolina has an innovative, relevant, effective, and efficient workforce development system that develops adaptable, work ready, skilled talent to meet the current and future needs of workers and businesses to achieve and sustain economic prosperity.

Next, the task force developed a charge for the commission to ensure that it is working to achieve the vision and mission. A charge is a statement that states what the organization's responsibilities are to ensure it's working to meet the vision and mission. The task force identified the role of the commission to set policy for the workforce development system and to be accountable for strengthening the system. An innovative, relevant, effective, and efficient workforce development system will help achieve the vision and mission stated above. ►

CHARGE

The NCWorks Commission develops policies and strategies which enable the state's workforce to compete in the current and future global economy.

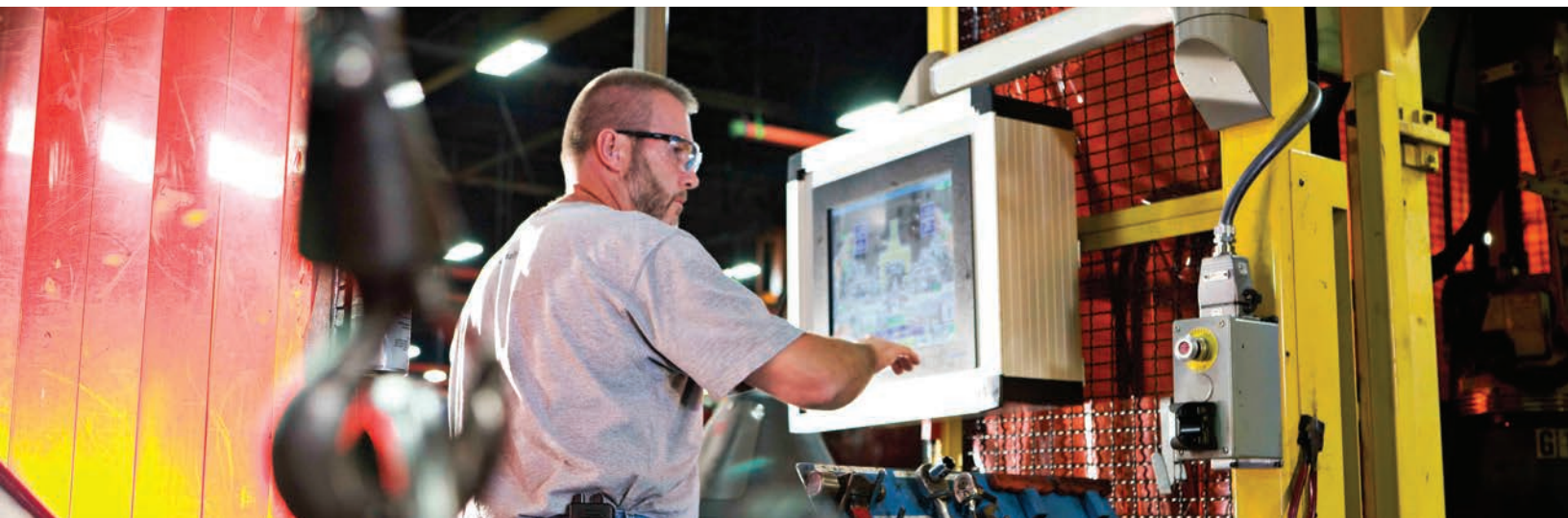
The commission leads, builds partnerships, forms alliances, and is accountable for strengthening North Carolina's innovative, relevant, effective, and efficient workforce development system.

As the task force began developing goals and objectives for the strategic plan, the members realized there were several principles that applied to all goals and objectives. Instead of repeating these common themes with each goal, the task force created guiding principles that apply to all goals and objectives.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Strategies will be developed locally, regionally, and statewide to address the unique needs of different areas of the state.
- Best practices will be identified and replicated across North Carolina.
- The workforce system will be flexible and adaptable to the changing needs of the economy and the state.
- Strategies will focus on the needs of today's economy and developing talent for tomorrow.
- The workforce system will focus on target industries and career clusters.

The task force then established strategic goals focused on creating an accountable, customer-oriented, demand-driven system of workforce development services. ●





GOALS & OBJECTIVES

BASED ON THE established guiding principles and stakeholder input, the task force developed four strategic goals to create and support the vision for the workforce system.

GOAL 1

Create an integrated, customer-centered, and seamless workforce system.

In 2013, North Carolina's workforce development programs received \$1.4 billion in federal, state, and local funding. Six state agencies used these funds to assist North Carolinians with obtaining and maintaining employment through workforce services, training programs, and education. The agencies and programs comprising North Carolina's workforce system serve businesses, adults, dislocated workers, and youth.

The commission recognizes that North Carolina's public workforce development system is a key part of the state's economy. It is comprised of a variety of programs with a broad range of activities that serve a diverse group of people. It includes a group of interactive and interdependent entities, programs, and services. Activities range from self-service activities online, to staff assisted services in a workforce office, to multi-year training programs at a public school or community college. In addition, programs serve people with varying levels of education, employment experience, and barriers. Individuals may participate in a single program or activity or may be eligible to receive services through a variety of programs and entities. The system exists to help businesses find qualified workers to meet their present and future workforce needs and to help individuals gain the skills and training they need to obtain and maintain employment.

However, the current workforce development system, while having some of the best programs in the country, doesn't always operate as a cohesive system. There are many places across the state where there is a seamless system for workforce development, but it is inconsistent statewide. The task force recognized that the state needed to strengthen the system by integrating programs and services and ensuring that the system is customer-centered. Too often programs serve customers based on their funding source, individual missions, and location. Although the programs have common goals and desired outcomes, programs do not have aligned outreach efforts or strategies—there is no common brand, or shared marketing efforts.

This goal is the foundation for the other goals of the strategic plan. If North Carolina's workforce development system is going to meet the ►

needs of businesses and prepare workers for the jobs that are needed, then the system must be aligned and focused on the customer. The commission drafted objectives around this goal that create a system of services to best meet the needs of North Carolina employers and job seekers.

Objectives:

- **Align partner services and strategies.**
- **Develop a common brand to be used across workforce programs that is recognizable to all customers.**
- **Increase awareness of and accessibility to workforce services.**
- **Develop shared marketing strategies that promote the talent in North Carolina.**

Why it's important:

An integrated system will allow all customers to access timely and relevant services from a multitude of touch points wrapped around a customer service core. Achievement of this goal will result in a system moving in the same direction with the same goals. Citizens will experience better service while businesses will find a trusted partner to turn to for their workforce development needs. And, workforce development programs will have improved outcomes. ●

GOAL 2

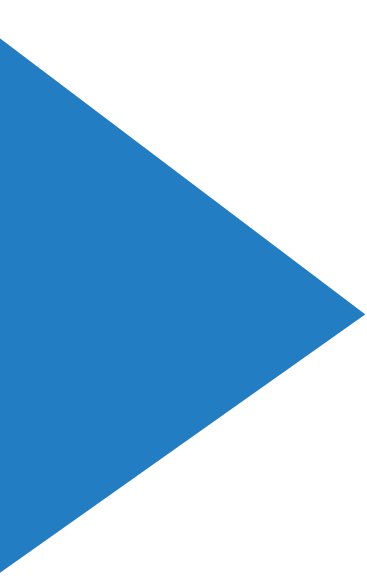
Create a workforce system that is responsive to the changing needs of the economy.

Too often businesses state that they don't understand the complexity of the workforce development system. Businesses want services that provide value to their company, are easy to understand, and accessible.

Too often workforce development programs operate independently from other programs and contact employers separately to offer their services, but because those services are not aligned and easy to understand, many businesses give up.

In addition, there are many businesses that don't even know about the programs specifically designed to meet their diverse needs. North Carolina's workforce development system has some of the best programs in the country that train workers to meet the needs of businesses – but businesses can't take advantage of these services if they aren't known.

Finally, the workforce development system needs a strong relationship with economic development organizations across the state to understand the needs of the current and future economy. This strong relationship will also help the workforce development system prepare the workers that are needed by new and expanding businesses in North Carolina. ►



The commission drafted objectives around this goal that will help the business community know about the resources available in North Carolina, ensure the system provides the services that businesses need, is easy for the business community to access, and will strengthen connections with the economic development community.

Objectives:

- **Ensure the workforce system is relevant, valuable, and easy to access by the business community.**
- **Develop and strengthen connections between workforce development and economic development.**
- **Develop and implement a coordinated and seamless approach to engage business and respond to business needs.**

Why it's important:

In order for the North Carolina economy to continue to recover from the Great Recession and grow, it is important for the workforce development system to be responsive to the needs of the economy. A strong workforce is often stated as one of the top reasons a business decides to grow or move its operations.

New jobs in high-growth and emerging industries are key to economic vitality of North Carolina. Understanding the workforce needs of these industries and preparing workers to meet the needs of companies is key. Increased communication and collaboration between workforce partners locally, regionally, and at the state level is essential to developing a strong workforce development system that businesses can use to grow their businesses. ●

GOAL 3

Prepare workers to succeed in the North Carolina economy and continuously improve their skills.

The speed of change in the economy is increasing. Not only has the North Carolina economy shifted from one focused on agriculture and manufacturing to one that is focused on the knowledge economy, but the types of jobs have also changed. Employers want people with more education and training than was required in the past. Today, middle-skill jobs, which require more than a high school education, but less than a four year degree, make up the largest segment of jobs. To succeed, workers must stay informed of new technology and continually increase their knowledge and skills.

North Carolina's workforce development system is designed to help workers find good-paying jobs by assessing skills, providing information on careers, connecting people to needed training and education programs, and referring people to jobs. However, one of the challenges of the current system, which is operated by five different ►

state agencies, is that the information provided to individuals is not always consistent from program to program.

In addition, it is essential for the state's workforce programs to target its limited resources to careers in high-growth and emerging industries. Providing consistent information to individuals and strong programs in critical career clusters will not only help individuals find good-paying jobs, but it will also help businesses find the talent they need to grow.

One of the best ways to help individuals gain skills and learn more about a career is through work-based learning. These programs combine classroom education with on-the-job experience, and individuals gain valuable work experience while learning new skills. The commission recognizes the need for consistent information, a focus on high-growth and emerging industries, work-based learning opportunities, and it supports policies that shift our culture to one that embraces life-long learning.

Objectives:

- **Strengthen career development services and ensure consistency across programs.**
- **Enhance programs and enrollment in critical career clusters by targeting resources.**
- **Strategically coordinate programs among workforce partners to develop skill and education pathways.**
- **Become a national leader in providing structured work-based learning.**

Why it's important:

North Carolina's ability to grow its human capital and raise educational attainment levels is necessary to compete in today's economy. A unified workforce development system will reap the benefits of best practices and resources that will reach participants who may not otherwise be available for lengthy academic and skills preparation.

Educational attainment is a key factor in determining the ability of workers to perform in increasingly knowledge-based work in every industry and occupation. Employers see value in industry recognized credentials in high-growth career clusters. Not implementing a unified workforce plan would create a missed opportunity to demonstrate North Carolina's commitment to innovate and provide business and industry with the skilled workforce they need to be competitive.

Data indicates that access to education and training impacts the lives of North Carolinians when looking at the average salaries and unemployment rates of workers. When workforce agencies and economic development work together to create career pathways, it increases the overall prosperity of job seekers. ●

GOAL 4

Use data to drive strategies and ensure accountability.

Workforce development programs have traditionally been accountable to their funding source such as the U.S. Department of Labor. Each program has its own performance measures and until recently there were no statewide performance measures for the entire workforce development system. This lack of statewide performance measures made it impossible to assess the effectiveness of workforce development activities in the state.

Session Law 2012-131 required the NCWorks Commission to develop system-wide performance measures to assess the effectiveness of the workforce development system. These new measures will help program administrators and state leaders understand the effectiveness of the workforce development system and where improvements can be made.

Data must also be used to make well-informed decisions about critical career clusters and determine where to target limited resources. With declining financial resources and a multitude of service, training, and education opportunities, the system must determine where its resources will have the greatest effect.

The workforce development system must also gather, evaluate, and utilize feedback from businesses and individuals about their experience with the system. This information will help the system and its individual programs understand what's working, and where improvements are most urgently needed.

The commission has drafted objectives around this goal that will ensure that data is used to target resources, understand the value of programs to customers, and to assess the system's effectiveness.

Objectives:

- **Develop a consistent and coordinated approach of identifying critical career clusters that workforce system partners will use to target resources to meet the needs of the economy.**
- **Gather, evaluate, and utilize information on the usage and quality of services.**
- **Measure and report on the effectiveness of the workforce development system.**

Why it's important:

The *North Carolina State of the Workforce 2011-2020* reports that the majority of jobs lost during the last recession will not return, therefore new jobs in high-growth and emerging industries are key to the state's economic vitality. The commission will use data to identify these emerging critical career clusters and target resources around them. Collecting, understanding, and using data effectively is critical in guiding a successful workforce development system. ►

Not only will data drive strategic goals, but it will be used to ensure accountability across the entire system. Applying common methods across a wide range of workforce programs offers a comprehensive and consistent, program-by-program look at North Carolina's workforce. This accountability is key in routinely and rigorously measuring how well the workforce development system works for North Carolina's workers and employers. ●



STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN 2014-2016



preparing north carolina's workforce
for today *and* tomorrow

NCWorks
Commission



INTRODUCTION

Strategic Action Plan

A GUIDING PRINCIPLE of the NCWorks Commission's Strategic Plan was that action steps would be developed locally, regionally, and statewide to address the unique needs of different parts of the state. As an initial step, the Strategic Planning Task Force gathered information from key partners on activities, initiatives, and best practices that are strengthening the workforce development system. Specifically, the task force received information from:

- **Workforce Development board directors who convened local partners and business leaders to identify local and regional best practices;**
- **Division of Workforce Solutions staff through a facilitated conversation;**
- **Career and Technical Education Coordinators with the Department of Public Instruction strategy discussion; and**
- **Community College staff through their Align4NCWorks Learning Summits held across the state.**

The task force identified common themes found throughout this dialogue and used this information to develop a draft strategic action plan around four core elements:

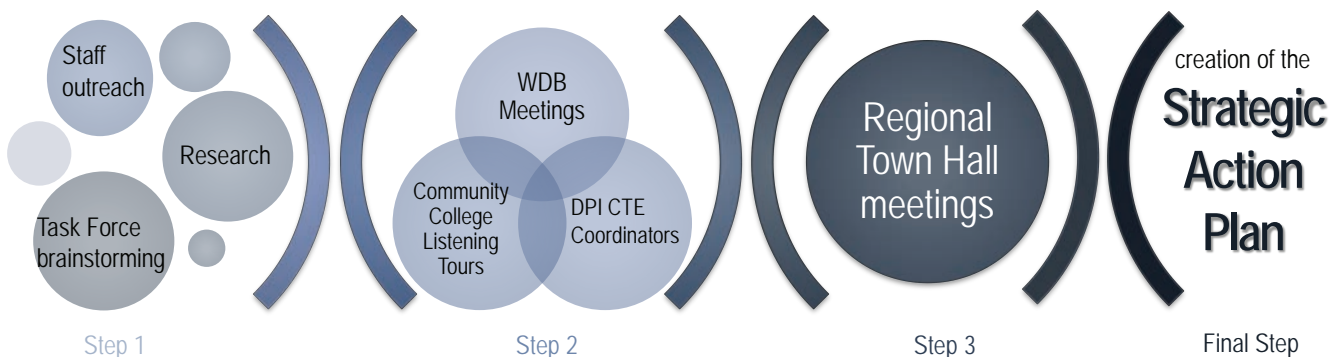
- **System Alignment and Transformation**
- **Strengthen Customer Services**
- **Career Pathways**
- **Accountability**

Once the draft action plan was developed, the Strategic Planning Task Force hosted regional town hall meetings in Greenville, Raleigh, Greensboro, and Hickory. The town hall sessions focused on sharing best practices and ideas that are already meeting the needs of today's businesses and individuals. Representatives of NCWorks career centers, local workforce offices, workforce development boards, community colleges, departments of social services, not-for-profits, and public school representatives from across the state provided feedback, best practices, and strategies around the four core elements of system alignment, improving customer services, career pathways, and accountability. Attendees also worked in small groups to identify practical solutions to implement the commission's strategic plan. ►

Over 200 workforce development professionals representing 70+ local organizations from across the state enriched the draft action plan with robust and powerful dialogue. The town hall meetings also:

- Highlighted the many positive relationships already working at the local level;
- Provided a framework for other areas to implement best practices; and
- Helped the commission better understand the barriers to implementing action steps.

The task force used this feedback to enhance and finalize the Strategic Action Plan which outlines the tactical implementation measures needed to achieve the commission’s strategic goals.



Action Steps:

The following pages contain the twenty action steps necessary to help transform North Carolina’s workforce development system. An action step details the who, what, when, and how of the activities, programs, and initiatives required to meet the goals and objectives of the NCWorks Commission’s Strategic Plan. Action steps can include identification of new or modified policies, development of programs, and other actions necessary to implement the plan. Action steps answer the question, “How do we get there?” Each action step is uniformly organized to easily provide the following:

- Description
- Strategic benefit
- Implementation timing
- Lead and supporting entity(ies)
- Benefits to the local workforce efforts and customers
- What success looks like
- Cost
- Consequences of no action
- Potential obstacles
- Accountability

The number of Action Steps included in this plan reflect the commission’s commitment to transformation and signals a call for change in the way North Carolina invests in its workforce development system.

Moving Forward:

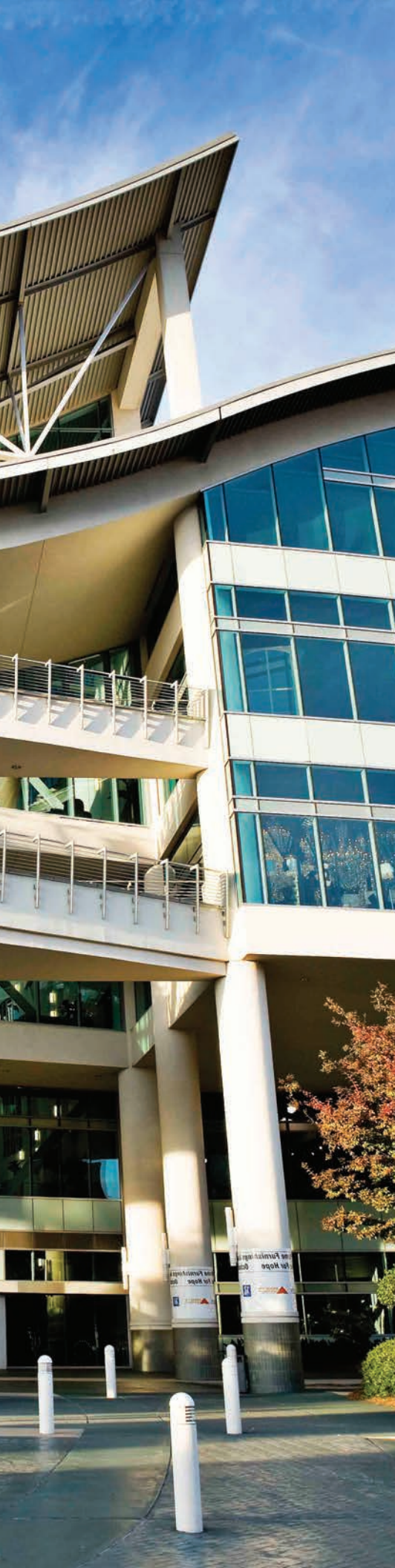
The NCWorks Commission is focused on developing an innovative, relevant, effective, and efficient workforce development system. North Carolina has some of the best workforce development programs in the country, but the lack of a consistently coordinated system has at times limited the effectiveness of the system. An integrated, seamless, and customer-centric system which responds to the needs of businesses and helps prepare workers to meet those needs will help grow the state’s economy.

The following Strategic Action Plan clearly defines how the state will achieve its goals and objectives.

The following Strategic Action Plan clearly defines how the state will achieve the goals and objectives outlined at the beginning of this report. Together, the Strategic Plan and the Strategic Action Plan provides a roadmap for how the state will strengthen its workforce

development system over the next two years. The commission will track the progress towards achieving the goals and objectives in the strategic plan as well as the strategies in the Strategic Action plan. With more information on the system, the commission will develop recommendations for the Governor and General Assembly for how to continue to strengthen the state’s workforce development system to achieve and sustain economic prosperity. ●





ACTION STEPS

System Alignment and Transformation

NORTH CAROLINA'S WORKFORCE development system includes multiple agencies, programs, and funders working to meet individual missions. The health of the future economy requires a move towards agency collaboration, policy alignment, innovation, and systematic communication.

- Establish a committee of state-level agency representatives to coordinate and align policy.
- Create councils in each of the Prosperity Zones that include education, workforce, economic development, and industry leaders.
- Launch the *NCWorks* brand that all workforce development system programs will use to help customers recognize the value of the system.
- Create the *NCWorks Promise* that establishes value and trust with customers interacting with the system.
- Develop and implement a system-wide and consistent outreach strategy.

Establish a committee of state-level agency representatives to coordinate and align policy.

System Alignment and Transformation

Description

The NCWorks Commission will establish a sub-committee comprised of the leaders of the state agencies that oversee workforce development programs, including the Departments of Administration, Commerce, Health and Human Services, Labor, Public Instruction, and the NC Community College System. With more than 20 programs responsible for meeting the needs of today's job seekers and businesses, a state-wide group is needed to help coordinate and integrate workforce programs across agencies. This group will be responsible for:

- Identifying policies that need to be aligned across agencies;
- Using performance data to guide policy and procedures;
- Addressing and removing procedural barriers that inhibit alignment;
- Establishing policies and procedures that foster local partnerships;
- Establishing an NCWorks brand and guidelines for use of the brand;
- Developing joint marketing materials;
- Creating a customer feedback mechanism; and
- Establishing cross-training and joint professional development opportunities for staff.

This sub-committee will meet at least quarterly and will be responsible for several of the action steps listed below, including:

- System Alignment & Transformation – Launch the NCWorks brand and identity that all workforce development system programs will use to help customers recognize the value of the system.
- System Alignment & Transformation – Create the NCWorks Promise that establishes value and trust with customers interacting with the system.
- Strengthen Customer Services – Develop a consistent menu of services and activities highlighting business and industry engagement opportunities.
- Accountability – Develop an annual workforce development system report card with universal success metrics.
- Accountability – Create metrics based on consistently collected customer feedback to strengthen the workforce development system.

Strategic Benefits

By identifying duplication, gaps, and opportunities for strengthening the state's workforce development system, this sub-committee will foster a system that is responsive, effective, customer-oriented, and easy to access. This sub-committee will also provide the process, tools, and principles needed to support workforce staff across agencies and programs. ►

Implementation Timing

The commission will establish the committee in January 2015 and the state-agency subcommittee will meet quarterly thereafter through December 2016.

Lead Entity

NCWorks Commission

Supporting Entities

Department of Administration

Department of Commerce

Department of Health and Human Services

Department of Labor

Department of Public Instruction

NC Community College System Office

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

A more coordinated workforce development system, with policies and procedures developed at the state level, will help provide the guidance and support to local workforce development programs to develop or strengthen a more coordinated local workforce development system. This group will identify and remove barriers to enable and support local collaboration. Partnership and support at the local level will improve services to customers through smoother system entry and seamless service delivery.

What Success Looks Like

Sub-committee will meet by the February 2015 commission meeting and create a timeline for accomplishing associated goals by spring 2015.

Cost

Costs associated with meetings and associated work will be covered by the administrative funding of the commission.

Consequence of No Action

North Carolina's workforce development system will continue to have duplication, gaps, and missed opportunities without a state-level coordinating group. Programs will continue to operate independently and work together on an ad-hoc basis without truly integrating services. The system will not be able to achieve a system-wide customer service approach that helps individuals and businesses easily access programs and services needed. Individuals and businesses will continue to be confused by the myriad of services and programs available.

Potential Obstacles

Workforce programs across agencies are regulated by different federal and state agencies with different rules, performance measures, and funding requirements. Agency leaders will need to find ways to integrate and coordinate programs without putting their program performance in jeopardy.

Accountability

The sub-committee will report its progress to the NCWorks Commission quarterly. ●

Create councils in each of the Prosperity Zones that include education, workforce, economic development, and industry leaders.

System Alignment and Transformation

Description

State-level coordination and alignment can provide the framework, structure, and support for an integrated workforce development system, but it's local and regional activities that must truly be aligned to improve the system. The need for regional councils recognizes the uniqueness of North Carolina's regions and the need to develop and deliver services that meet these unique needs.

Prosperity Zones were established by legislation in 2014 to promote collaboration for prosperity within the state. Recognizing the importance of the workforce development system and its connection with economic development, the Economic Development Board recommended the creation of these councils in its Jobs Plan. The councils will bring together education, workforce, economic development, and industry leaders to develop strategies for strengthening the workforce system at the local and regional level.

The councils will create an opportunity for education and workforce partners to listen and respond to the needs of industry by creating programs that supply a pipeline of talent by better preparing job seekers to meet the needs of employers in local communities.

Strategic Benefits

The councils will be comprised of education, workforce development, economic development, and business leaders and will focus on development of regional strategies that enhance services to individuals and employers through resource integration and collective planning. The work of the councils will ensure a consistent and comprehensive approach to workforce development in each region to meet the current and future training needs of employers. This approach will improve system outcomes by strengthening connections between job seekers and employers.

Implementation Timing

Creation of regional councils in each Prosperity Zone by January 2015 with regularly scheduled meetings beginning in spring 2015. ▶

Lead Entity

Department of Commerce,
Division of Workforce Solutions

Supporting Entities

Economic Development Partnership
of North Carolina
Local Businesses
Local Education Agencies
Workforce Development Boards
NC Community Colleges
University of North Carolina System

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

Regional councils will help ensure the education and workforce system are aligned with the needs of industry in the region. By listening to the needs of industry, education, and workforce development providers, councils will be able to establish programs and services that will help develop the talent needed for high-quality jobs and connect talent with employers. In addition, the councils will strengthen communication and collaboration among community partners, improving the quality of local services, fostering integration, and encouraging innovation.

There is also a higher return on investment due to the highly focused and efficient use of resources achieved via this collaboration. Workforce development stakeholders and elected officials can have greater confidence that services being delivered are those most valued by their clients.



What Success Looks Like

Councils will be established in spring 2015 and will begin meeting in summer 2015 and regional plans will be developed by January 2016.

Cost

Regional partners will identify staffing strategy and identify capacity building expenses to ensure a smooth implementation.

Consequence of No Action

Lack of a regional alignment, coordination, and strategy to meet the needs of industry will result in programs continuing to offer services separately, frustrating individuals and businesses that may need services from multiple programs.

North Carolina will not realize the efficiencies that can be achieved by focusing investments on specific high-growth, high-demand industries.

Potential Obstacles

Regional councils require strong leadership that inspires cooperation and communication.

Accountability

Councils will submit a regional workforce development plan to the NCWorks Commission by July 2016. ●

Launch the *NCWorks* brand and identity that all workforce development system programs will use to help customers recognize the value of the system.

System Alignment and Transformation

Description

Currently, workforce development programs and services are branded under a variety of names, making it difficult for customers, individuals and businesses, to identify where to get workforce development services. In April 2014, Governor McCrory announced NCWorks and the need for the workforce development system to work under one name.

A single brand is needed to create a seamless workforce development system that is easily identifiable to all customers. NCWorks will be used as the brand for the core workforce development programs housed in the Department of Commerce, NC Community Colleges, and Department of Public Instruction.

Strategic Benefits

Citizens, businesses, and key stakeholders will find value in North Carolina's workforce development system when the overwhelming complexity is minimized and services streamlined.

A single brand for the entire workforce development system will eliminate the historic focus on individual program services and replace it with a state-wide approach.

A common brand also reduces confusion for those unfamiliar with the system by simplifying the message and increasing the efficiency of statewide outreach.

Implementation Timing

Some workforce development programs have already started using the NCWorks name. Additional programs in the Departments of Commerce and Public Instruction, as well as the NC Community College System, will begin labeling their services with the NCWorks name in January 2015, with all programs using the brand by July 2015. ►

NCWorks
career center

NCWorks
customized training

NCWorks
career and
technical education

Lead Entity

NCWorks Commission,
State Agency Sub-Committee

Supporting Entities

Department of Administration
Department of Commerce
Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Instruction
NC Community College System Office

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

Creating and using a single name for workforce development services brand provides consistency across the state. Using one name will eliminate confusion among customers.



What Success Looks Like

State and local workforce development programs adopt brand and guidelines by July 2015.

Cost

The interagency working group, in collaboration with their local access points, will determine the costs associated with the transition to NCWorks.

Consequence of No Action

Use of multiple agency and program names confuses stakeholders, impairs economic development activities, and detracts from the services that benefit job seekers and businesses. North Carolina will be seen as having a disjointed workforce development system that isn't focused on providing comprehensive services to businesses and individuals.

Potential Obstacles

Supporting unique initiatives and local autonomy while providing a consistent message across the state could prove difficult. Many programs have invested time and money in their current brand and may be reluctant to give up their unique name. Developing branding guidelines that provides a consistent name, while giving programs some flexibility to recognize their program, could be challenging.

Accountability

The state agency sub-committee will report quarterly to the NCWorks Commission on the number of local partners that have adopted the NCWorks brand according to the branding guidelines. ●

Create the *NCWorks Promise* that establishes value and trust with customers interacting with the system.

System Alignment and Transformation

Description

A brand promise is what an organization commits to its customers who interact with it. It isn't a description of what the organization does but instead a description of how the organization creates and delivers value. Developing a brand promise and then meeting that promise will help develop trust between North Carolina's workforce development system and its customers including businesses, job seekers, and students. The promise must describe the benefit of the system, be authentic and credible, and it must be maintained. In addition, strategies for disseminating and training staff across programs on the promise and how to meet the promise will need to be developed.

Strategic Benefits

The brand promise will provide a clear expectation of all workforce development professionals that work with students, job seekers, and businesses. The brand promise will establish universal core beliefs that, when followed, create value and trust with all customers. The brand promise will provide a unifying premise that programs and staff can stand behind increasing overall customer satisfaction.

Implementation Timing

The state agency sub-committee will develop the brand promise by July 2015. The working group will recommend strategies for the implementation of the brand promise by fall 2015.

Lead Entity

NCWorks Commission,
State Agency Sub-Committee

Supporting Entities

Department of Administration
Department of Commerce
Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Instruction
NC Community College System Office
Workforce Development Boards

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

A brand promise provides a set of core values for all partners to uphold. The promise protects the brand which all staff can stand behind with a sense of pride and ownership. The promise helps eliminate confusion, while empowering staff to deliver world-class customer service. Workforce customers know what to expect when they access the workforce development system. The brand promise sets up customer and student expectations and eliminates presumptions that often lead to real disappointment. ▶

Staff are empowered to meet the workforce development needs of participants as they strive to protect the NCWorks brand. Job seekers, businesses, and students have a realistic understanding of how the system can benefit them. Customer service is consistent system-wide, regardless of access point.



What Success Looks Like

The NCWorks Promise is created and rolled out system-wide by July 2015. Local implementation of the brand promise begins in the fall of 2015. Customer satisfaction increases 12 months after implementation.

Cost

The working group will identify costs for training and outreach in their recommendations as well as development and implementation of a participant feedback survey.

Consequence of No Action

Customer expectation exceeds the reality of North Carolina's workforce development service delivery system, which increases frustration leaving the system and brand vulnerable.

Potential Obstacles

Institutionalizing the NCWorks Promise and empowering local workforce staff to support it could be challenging. The NCWorks Promise requires consistent messaging, staff training, and support from all levels of the workforce development system.

Accountability

NCWorks partners will survey customers at least annually and report an analysis of the results to the NCWorks Commission (this feedback will be included as part of the accountability action step). ●



Develop and implement a system-wide and consistent outreach strategy.

System Alignment and Transformation

Description

Customers of the state's workforce development system may access more than one service. For example, a business looking to grow will need to increase the size of its workforce immediately but also ensure there is a pipeline of workers to continue to fill those positions. The company may be interested in customized training as well as apprenticeship programs to ensure it can fill its current and future workforce needs. The workforce development system needs to develop outreach strategies that provide information on the full range of services available.

Currently, each program promotes its services separately, leaving many businesses and individuals confused about what services are available to meet their needs. In addition, combining services across programs is often left up to the customer to figure out. A consistent outreach strategy needs to be developed at the state level that allows for customization at the local level.

Strategic Benefits

Among the benefits of a unified branding identity will be a new opportunity to market a revamped, simpler, easy to access, user-friendly workforce system. Because of the variety of local identities, marketing the entire system on a statewide basis to all customer groups has been difficult, at best. In addition to a new common name, the core values and characteristics of the system, embraced as foundation elements across the system, should be emphasized.

An outreach strategy that encompasses the entire workforce development system will eliminate confusion among customers, citizens, and stakeholders while increasing access and participation.

Implementation Timing

The state agency sub-committee will begin meeting in spring 2015 and develop outreach strategies and materials by September 2015. Local areas will be able to customize the materials created to more accurately reflect services provided locally and will begin using the materials by January 2016. ►

Lead Entity

NCWorks Commission,
State Agency Sub-Committee

Supporting Entities

Department of Commerce
Department of Public Instruction
NC Community College System Office
Workforce Development Boards

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

A consistent outreach strategy will help customers better understand the full range of services available to help meet their needs. Individuals and businesses will understand the employment and training opportunities available across agency and program. Workforce development system staff will have a better understanding of their role in the system and how to help customers navigate it. Economic development professionals will be able to easily explain the workforce development services available to businesses interested in locating or growing a business in North Carolina

What Success Looks Like

State agency sub-committee launches a system-wide outreach campaign by January 2016.

Cost

Estimated at \$50,000 for the development of joint outreach materials.

Consequence of No Action

Businesses and individuals continue to find the workforce development system confusing and difficult to access the full-range of services available. Economic developers struggle to market North Carolina to new and existing business.

Potential Obstacles

Supporting unique initiatives and local autonomy while providing a consistent message across the state could prove difficult.

Accountability

State agency sub-committee will present outreach strategies and marketing materials as well as a dissemination strategy to the NCWorks Commission in February 2016. ●



ACTION STEPS

Strengthen Customer Services

NORTH CAROLINA'S WORKFORCE development system must be coordinated in such a way that the delivery of services, staff development activities, and technological advancements ensure that all customers have access to relevant workforce development activities in a timely and effective manner.

- **Develop a consistent menu of services and activities highlighting business and industry engagement opportunities.**
- **Identify and launch a customer relationship management tool that all workforce development partners are required to use.**
- **Investigate how work-based learning activities could be incorporated into agreements with companies receiving state economic development incentives.**
- **Expand the number of *NCWorks Certified Work-Ready Communities*.**
- **Create a framework for ensuring cross-trained, qualified staff have the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to support the local delivery system.**
- **Initiate the process of interfacing *NCWorks Online* with North Carolina's array of workforce development case management systems.**

Develop a consistent menu of services and activities highlighting business and industry engagement opportunities.

Strengthen Customer Services

Description

There are many ways for businesses to engage with the workforce development system that will help businesses access the services they need and provide opportunities for individuals to gain work experience necessary to be a successful candidate for employment. A recent survey of businesses found that lack of work experience was one of the top three reasons employers were having difficulty finding the talent they need. However, businesses may not be fully aware of the ways they can connect with the workforce development system to provide opportunities that both help individuals gain the experience they need and develop a pipeline of talent to meet the businesses' need.

Workforce development programs need to work together to identify all the ways that businesses can interact with the workforce development system from facility tours, to internships and externships, to apprenticeships, and on-the-job training opportunities. Then, business outreach specialists can share information with the businesses on the full-range of activities, across programs, in which a business can engage to help develop the talent needed to grow their business.

Strategic Benefits

By providing a consistent menu of services available to businesses that list the full-range of services and opportunities available, more businesses will work with the system to develop the talent needed for their business and industry. In addition, workforce development specialists will have a better understanding of the programs offered across the system that work with businesses and will be better able to assist students and customers identify opportunities to gain work experience.

Implementation Timing

The state agency sub-committee will meet in spring 2015 and complete an inventory and analysis of business services by July 2015. A comprehensive menu and description of activities will be completed by September 2015. Local and regional business services professionals will use the list to engage businesses by January 2016. ►

Lead Entity

NCWorks Commission,
State Agency Sub-Committee

Supporting Entities

Department of Administration
Department of Commerce
Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Instruction
NC Community College System Office
Workforce Development Boards

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

Once a consistent menu of services is developed at the state level, local teams of business service professionals can use this menu, customize it to reflect the opportunities at the local or regional level, and use the menu to interact with businesses in their region. This consistent menu of services can be used across programs, helping to create a coordinated business services strategy.

What Success Looks Like

Menu of services will be developed and business services staff will use it to engage businesses by January 2016.

Cost

None

Consequence of No Action

Businesses will continue to not fully understand the opportunities for interacting with the workforce development system to help develop the talent they need to strengthen and grow the workforce in their business and industry. In addition, business service professionals across the state will not have a consistent set of information that they can use to connect with businesses.

Potential Obstacles

Some agencies may be reluctant to partner with other workforce development programs due to the competition for placements and business contacts.

Accountability

The state agency sub-committee will present the menu of services to the NCWorks Commission and share information on use of the menu at the local level as well as successes and challenges at the February 2016 meeting. ●



Identify and launch a customer relationship management tool that all workforce development partners are required to use.

Strengthen Customer Services

Description

A customer relationship management tool is software that manages an organization's interactions with business customers. The workforce development system will use this technology to organize, automate, and synchronize outreach, marketing, customer service, and technical support for every business client regardless of agency interaction.

The workforce development system can benefit from a customer relationship management tool that will store and share information about businesses needs across agencies and programs. Currently, programs have their own way of collecting and maintaining information about their visits with businesses that often isn't shared across programs. As a result, many businesses are visited by staff from more than one workforce development program because there isn't an easy way to share information about visits and business needs with staff from other programs.

A customer relationship management tool will enable a business services professional to store information about a business, document information about a visit and the needs of that business, contact other business service professionals if services are needed through another program, and follow up to ensure services are provided. This seamless transfer of information across programs will help coordinate services across businesses and create a system that is easy to access for businesses.

Strategic Benefits

This tool will help business service professionals ensure a seamless system through shared information on business needs, smooth hand-offs between programs, and follow up on delivery of services. Using this tool will provide a more cohesive, less redundant response to businesses.

Implementation Timing

The customer relationship management tool is purchased by January 2015. Training will be provided to business service professional across agencies and programs throughout the spring of 2015 and the tool will be in full use by June 2015. ►

Lead Entities

Department of Commerce
NC Community College
System Office
Workforce Development Boards

Supporting Entities

Local Education Agencies
Economic Development Partnership of
North Carolina

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

The customer relationship management tool allows local and regional business service professional to collaborate and allocate resources more effectively to better meet the needs of area businesses. Coordinated engagement with the private sector is also less confusing for the business and helps establish trust with the workforce development system.

What Success Looks Like

This tool will be purchased and business service professionals will use it by June 2015.

Cost

Estimated at \$75,000 annually to purchase and maintain the tool. An additional \$10,000 will be needed for professional development and the creation of on-line learning modules.

Consequence of No Action

North Carolina's business clients are burdened by the workforce development system response and become disenfranchised with the system.

Potential Obstacles

Homegrown tools in regions, and within agencies and programs will be replaced by a system-wide tool. There is also a cultural shift from an individual program focus to that of collaboration and teamwork system-wide.

Accountability

The Division of Workforce Solutions will report to the NCWorks Commission on the usage and impact of the tool to include the number of listed businesses, registered partners, number of referrals, and other analytics, as made available. ●



Investigate how work-based learning activities could be incorporated into agreements with companies receiving state economic development incentives.

Strengthen Customer Services

Description

The North Carolina economy is recovering, and companies are interested in locating and growing in the state. A key factor in a company's decision to locate or grow is the availability of a qualified workforce that has the skills and experience to meet the company's needs. Businesses can play a major role in helping individuals gain these skills and experiences through work-based learning.

North Carolina leaders should investigate how work-based learning activities could be incorporated into agreements with companies receiving state and/or local economic development incentives. There are a variety of types of work-based learning in which a business could engage including internships for students, externships for educators, co-ops, and apprenticeships. Businesses would benefit from these programs by helping to develop the future talent they need to maintain or grow their business.

Strategic Benefits

By including conversations on work-based learning into economic development incentive conversations, more work-based learning opportunities will be developed across the state. With lack of work experience being a key factor that hinders businesses from finding the talent they need, more opportunities are needed for individuals to gain work experience. In addition to helping individuals gain experience, work-based learning programs will also help develop the pipeline of future workers for that business and industry.

Implementation Timing

Department of Commerce staff will investigate opportunities during 2015 and report to the NCWorks Commission in February 2016.

Lead Entity

Department of Commerce

Supporting Entities

Economic Development Partnership of
North Carolina
NCWorks Commission

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

Individuals will have more opportunities for work-based learning and employers will help develop a pipeline of talent. ►



What Success Looks Like

Department of Commerce staff identify ways to incorporate work-based learning opportunities into economic incentive agreements by December 2015.

Cost

None

Consequence of No Action

Not only will new and emerging businesses miss out on an exciting opportunity to give back to North Carolina, but they will miss the opportunity to implement successful work-based learning activities which are a proven strategy for businesses to train and grow their own workers while minimizing risk.

Potential Obstacles

Economic conditions could limit business and industry ability to implement work-based learning activities.

Accountability

The NCWorks Executive Director will report to the NCWorks Commission in February 2016. ●



Expand the number of NCWorks Certified Work-Ready Communities.

Strengthen Customer Services

Description

The availability of a skilled and ready workforce drives economic development activities throughout North Carolina. The Certified Work-Ready Community certification demonstrates the employability of a local workforce, which strengthens the important connection with economic development.

This initiative rewards the many workforce partners and local employers who have committed to improving the skill level of its workforce and achieves high standards

of workforce quality. Local businesses benefit from this partnership through lower employee turnover, decreased training time and costs, and related efficiencies that enhance North Carolina's global competitiveness. Several states have explicitly credited the Certified Work-Ready Communities program with attracting large businesses like Google and Gatorade to its certified communities.



In North Carolina, Work-Ready Communities meet four criteria:

- Signed letters of commitment to workforce excellence from workforce partners
- Demonstrated annual increases in the high school graduation rate working toward the goal of 94%
- Demonstrated achievement of Career Readiness Certificates (CRCs) issued to the labor force based on goals established by ACT as part of the national Certified Work Ready Communities initiative
- Demonstrated employer commitment to workforce excellence by obtaining support from employers that recognize, prefer, or require the CRC for recruitment and hiring

Once certified, communities will receive a certificate and template that may be used to create signs for posting at gateway points and business areas within the community. Achievement of work-ready status will be announced by the Governor and communicated to the media and appropriate state agencies. They will also have the right to use this status in their own marketing and promotion.

Strategic Benefits

The NCWorks Certified Work-Ready Communities initiative will enhance economic development by demonstrating the community has a workforce with documented foundational skills as measured by the independently awarded Career Readiness Certificate. This certificate will also increase awareness of local employment opportunities and technical education alternatives for job seekers and students. ►

There is a renewed focus on the graduation rate while encouraging students to obtain a portable credential that demonstrates achievement and a certain level of foundational workplace skills.

Implementation Timing

This is an ongoing process with communities across North Carolina exploring Certified Work-Ready Community certification.

Lead Entity	Supporting Entities
Department of Public Instruction	Local Education Agencies NC Community Colleges Workforce Development Boards NC Chamber of Commerce

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

The process of creating and maintaining a Certified Work-Ready Community requires collaboration and partnership between workforce partners and local businesses. Benefits include the creation of a skilled and talented workforce pipeline that better meets the needs of businesses and local job seekers. In addition, these counties receive national exposure via publications and the ACT website.



What Success Looks Like

Twenty-five NCWorks Work-Ready Communities certified by December 2016.

Cost

Estimated at \$20,000 for licenses to national ACT Career Readiness Certificate database.

Consequence of No Action

Counties and regions miss out on a unique opportunity to improve economic development activities, support business and industry, and improve workforce outcomes.

Potential Obstacles

The Career Readiness Certificate is an emerging assessment that many North Carolina businesses are unaware of. Stakeholders will have to educate local employers not only on the importance of this tool, but the many intangible benefits of establishing a work-ready community.

Accountability

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction will report semi-annually to the NCWorks Commission on implementation including the number of applicants. ●

Create a framework for ensuring cross-trained, qualified staff have the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to support the local delivery system.

Strengthen Customer Services

Description

Workforce development staff historically have been deployed to meet the specific mission of the program for which they are employed. In this time of doing more with less, many staff simply do not have the support or time to learn about the many workforce services available in their area. This lack of foundational knowledge at the local level decreases opportunities to create an integrated, seamless, and customer-centered system statewide.

Local, regional, and state stakeholders agree that a high level of customer service should be one of the cornerstones of the brand architecture for North Carolina's workforce delivery system.

Achieving a high level of customer service is dependent on knowledgeable staff with the confidence and understanding of the system that is required to perform all aspects of their jobs.

NC Works
training center

Strategic Benefits

Cross-training will reduce barriers to service delivery by increasing access, eliminating silos, and encouraging local partnerships. Staff are a vital element in transforming fragmented workforce development programs into a more seamless system.

Well-trained, knowledgeable staff will successfully guide job seekers and business customers through a system that best meets their needs. Staff will be empowered to use their knowledge to implement innovative strategies.

Employees involved in cross-training programs will become skilled at tasks outside the usual parameters of their jobs and become greater assets for the workforce development system, as well as knowledge and skills that benefit them personally.

An effective framework, combined with decreasing redundancy, will help institutionalize cross-training across the state.

Implementation Timing

A task force with representatives from each workforce development partners is established by January 2015. The task force will conduct a needs assessment by March 2015 and roll out a strategy by September 2015. ►

Lead Entity

NCWorks Training Center

Supporting Entities

Department of Commerce
Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Instruction
NC Community College System Office

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

A more aligned and integrated system allows local workforce programs to maximize funds while providing the best possible services to job seekers and businesses.

What Success Looks Like

A cross-training strategy with local flexibility is developed by September 2015 and training begins October 2015.

Cost

The task force will use the needs assessment to determine training costs.

Consequence of No Action

Customers will not benefit from an integrated, aligned system. Programs will continue to operate in silos and the workforce development system could be considered inefficient. Without this foundational element, re-branding the system will have little meaning other than a new logo for the same ad-hoc approach to service delivery.

Potential Obstacles

Overcoming cultural and historical practices that impact knowledge transfer. Supporting staff to attend training typically may require time away from serving customers.

Accountability

The NCWorks Training Center will report annually to the NCWorks Commission on the number of trainings and participants. ●



Initiate the process of interfacing *NCWorks Online* with North Carolina's array of workforce development case management systems.

Strengthen Customer Services

Description

There are nearly a dozen case management systems in North Carolina that are used by workforce development programs to track services provided to participants that could include tuition reimbursement amounts, referrals to other agencies, counseling notes, etc. These case management systems are required for data collection and federal reporting. Currently, there is no integration or interface between these systems, requiring extra work on the part of customers and staff. For example, as customers access the workforce system through different agencies, they are required to resubmit eligibility and/or demographic information, which is time consuming and redundant.

Also, the workforce system does not have a way of tracking services across agencies, which increases the chances of duplication of funds and services. This lack of information also impacts the referral process and decreases staff efficiency.

The logo for NCWorks online, with "NCWorks" in a large, bold, blue sans-serif font and "online" in a smaller, blue sans-serif font below it.

This interface between agencies creates a user-friendly environment for both job seekers and workforce staff.

Strategic Benefits

The long-term goal of creating a common interface between programs will require investigation, resources, and technology expenditures. The value of achieving this goal, however, is improved customer service, streamlined access, and elimination of both redundant and time-intensive bureaucratic processes. The benefit of initiating this action step moves the pendulum forward.

Implementation Timing

Subject expert group will be established by March 2015 and develop recommendations by November 2015.

Lead Entity

Department of Commerce,
Division of Workforce Solutions

Supporting Entities

Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Instruction
NC Community College System Office

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

Technology integration has the potential to have the largest impact on improving overall customer service by eliminating duplication and improving access to ▶

information. Fast forward several years, a system interface could also allow NCWorks Online to validate degrees, certificates, and diplomas, further improving the types of accessible data.



What Success Looks Like

Recommendations for interfacing workforce systems approved by the NCWorks Commission by November 2015.

Cost

None

Consequence of No Action

Individual programs will continue to operate in silos, placing an undue burden on customers and decreasing overall satisfaction. The workforce development system will be considered cumbersome and inefficient. Business customers will remain disengaged, negatively impacting the system's job seekers. Job seekers will be disenfranchised with fragmented services and leave the system before finding employment.

Potential Obstacles

Lack of available subject matter experts, agency champions, and legislative support.

Accountability

The Division of Workforce Solutions will present recommendations on how to interface case management systems to the NCWorks Commission in November 2015. ●





ACTION STEPS

Career Pathways

NORTH CAROLINA'S WORKFORCE development system must implement strategies that support the customer's transition from education to employment along high-growth career ladders. Career pathways take advantage of the best available tools and resources to better serve customers and are founded on partner collaboration and targeted resources. Pathways give customers an edge by providing up-to-date information on opportunities in their community, including critical career clusters and work-based learning opportunities.

- Develop accessible and consistent *NCWorks Career Pathways* for critical industry clusters with multiple entry/exit points.
- Require workforce development partners use *NCWorks Career Pathways* to target resources towards helping individuals gain the skills and experience needed for in-demand occupations.
- Establish a memorandum of understanding with all statewide education and workforce development entities to get all workforce system participants enrolled in *NCWorks Online*.
- Develop a single portal for career information.
- Connect Small Business Centers to workforce delivery access points to increase entrepreneurship locally.

Develop accessible and consistent *NCWorks Career Pathways* for critical industry clusters with multiple entry/exit points.

Career Pathways

Description

The development of career pathways is key to engaging industry and ensuring the education and training pipeline at the local level is aligned with the needs of local businesses. Career pathways are purposeful plans for education and training leading to knowledge and skill acquisition and successful careers. Pathway development is led by engaged employers who identify the skills, credentials, and experiences needed to be successful in high-demand occupations. Local education and workforce partners use the data to craft programs of study across the educational spectrum and provide workforce services that offer individuals the opportunity to gain the targeted skills, credentials, and experiences. Education partners ensure that courses/trainings contain the knowledge and skill development identified by industry partners.

Career pathways will focus on North Carolina's "hot jobs," which identify in-demand occupations by region, and the industries identified in the Governor's Economic Development Board's *Jobs Plan*. The pathways will include "on- and off-ramps" for citizens at different phases of their careers, including students in high school, community college, or university; veterans; unemployed or dislocated workers; and underemployed individuals or those who want to advance their careers.

Currently, an integrated team is creating a framework for defining, developing, and implementing clear, concise, and comprehensive career pathways with more rigorous requirements than those currently in place. The commission will approve the framework and establish processes for endorsement of career pathways. Pathways will then be developed through local industry-education partnerships and submitted to the NCWorks Commission for official endorsement. Once endorsed, the pathways will carry the NCWorks brand and be available online so all education and workforce partners, as well as the public, can access the information.

Strategic Benefits

North Carolina's consistent and focused effort on career pathways will help individuals be ready for work in a shorter time period because they can follow a path that leads to success without duplication of effort and added cost. Employers will benefit from participation by helping to create a pipeline of talent to meet their needs and validating program quality. The result will be a stronger economy and an improved quality of life.

This step will ensure that North Carolina's training institutions use the information found in career pathways to establish both short- and long-term training that prepares individuals for in-demand jobs. ►

Implementation Timing

The NCWorks Career Pathway framework will be approved in February 2015 and the process for endorsement approved May 2015. The commission will begin endorsing NCWorks Career Pathways by August 2015.

Lead Entities

NCWorks Commission
Local Education Agencies
Workforce Development Boards
NC Community Colleges
University of North Carolina Campuses

Supporting Entities

Department of Commerce
Department of Public Instruction
NC Community College System Office
University of North Carolina System

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

Pathways will be developed locally and regionally, strengthening the relationships between business and the local workforce development system. The information available in pathways will be focused on programs, courses, and credentials available locally and regionally. By preparing students for in-demand jobs in their communities, these programs and classes have the potential to decrease the number of weeks unemployed while increasing employment outcomes.

What Success Looks Like

Three NCWorks Career Pathways will be developed and endorsed by the NCWorks Commission in each of the state's Prosperity Zone regions by December 2015.

Cost

\$200,000 for staff to coordinate and facilitate the development of career pathways across the state.

Consequence of No Action

The workforce development system is considered ineffective if students and job seekers leave training without the necessary skills to find quality employment in today's economy. Students will receive training for jobs that may or may not be in-demand in their community, making the workforce development system appear ineffective.

Potential Obstacles

The general concept of career pathways has been used for several years. Moving forward, stakeholders may be reluctant to develop new pathways using the commission's framework.

Accountability

The NCWorks Commission will endorse NCWorks Career Pathways. ●

Require workforce development partners use *NCWorks Career Pathways* to target resources towards helping individuals gain the skills and experience needed for in-demand occupations.

Career Pathways

Description

NCWorks Career Pathways will focus on local and regional in-demand occupations. But, development of the pathway is only the first step. The next step is to help individuals enroll in career pathways programs to ensure that there is a pipeline of workers for these occupations. To do this, education and workforce development partners need to target their resources on career awareness and increasing enrollment in career pathways.



As resources for the education and the workforce development system continue to shrink in North Carolina and across the country, programs will need to focus their efforts to be more efficient and effective. Targeting resources towards helping people enroll in career pathways for high-demand occupations will help the workforce system be more efficient with its resources; individuals gain access to high-demand occupations and improve their quality of life; and business have the workforce they need to be successful and grow.

As part of this action step, the state agency sub-committee will determine how to track enrollment in the NCWorks Career Pathways after determining a baseline dataset.

Strategic Benefits

Targeting resources toward career pathways for in-demand occupations will help create a pipeline of talent needed for companies. In addition, successful participants in these programs will be ideal candidates for open positions in their local communities.

Implementation Timing

By July 2015, agencies will begin to target their resources to help individuals learn about and enroll in the NCWorks Career Pathways. ►

Lead Entities

Local Education Agencies
NC Community Colleges
Workforce Development Boards
NCWorks Commission

Supporting Entities

Department of Commerce
Department of Public Instruction
NC Community College System Office
University of North Carolina System

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

Pathways provide individuals with the training they need to find in-demand, quality employment in their communities. Career pathways also help provide the needed talent to meet business needs.

What Success Looks Like

Enrollment in NCWorks Career Pathways programs across institutions increases by 20 percent by December 2016.

Cost

This action step requires refocusing of current resources.

Consequence of No Action

Limited resources will be used to train and educate job seekers for careers that do not exist in their community, making the workforce development system appear ineffective. Meanwhile, businesses looking to expand will not have the workforce needed to do so.

Potential Obstacles

Participating workforce development agencies may be reluctant to target major resources towards pathways if it appears contradictory to individual goals.

Accountability

Workforce development boards will report annually to the NCWorks Commission on training expenditures. Education partners will report annually to the NCWorks Commission on enrollment in career pathways programs. ●



Establish a memorandum of understanding with statewide education and workforce development entities requiring the use of *NCWorks Online*.

Career Pathways

Description

NCWorks Online is the state’s job-matching system that helps connect people to jobs and helps businesses find the talent they need. Individuals can develop a resume, assess their skills, find training to gain the skills they need, and apply for jobs. Businesses use the system to post jobs and find the talent they need. In addition, the system includes labor market information by industry, occupation, and region.

This system is a valuable tool for individuals, businesses, economic developers, and workforce development partners. As more individuals register and use NCWorks Online, businesses will have a larger pool of talent to select from for their workforce needs. In addition, NCWorks Online can be a valuable tool for showing businesses interested in locating or growing in North Carolina that the state has the workforce they need to be successful.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) will require other state agencies to use NCWorks Online to help individuals develop an online resume and look for jobs.

Strategic Benefit

NCWorks Online is a proven technology that is meeting the needs of North Carolina’s businesses and job seekers. By encouraging the State’s workforce development system to use NCWorks Online, the commission will ensure a coordinated approach to obtaining labor market analysis, job placement tools, and business engagement resources.

It also increases the awareness and use of online job matching system while increasing the use of the workforce development system as a resource for employers to identify, screen, match, interview and prepare candidates for work.

Implementation Timing

The memorandum of understanding will be signed by July 2015. ►

Lead Entity

Department of Commerce,
Division of Workforce Solutions

Supporting Entities

Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Instruction
NC Community College System Office
NCWorks Commission
University of North Carolina System

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

Customers appreciate a one-stop shop as much as they appreciate receiving consistent information that is both automated and available 24/7. The technologically advanced NCWorks Online also improves the workforce development system's credibility.



What Success Looks Like

Signed MOU by July 2015 and a 20 percent increase in registrations in NCWorks Online by July 2016.

Cost

None

Consequence of No Action

The state will have inefficiencies, expenses, and the further allocation of limited resources to redundant technology.

Potential Obstacles

Staff will need to be trained on the multiple tools in NCWorks Online. Agencies may be reluctant to use the system if staff are using up-to-date on another commercially available labor exchange system.

Accountability

The Division of Workforce Solutions will submit the MOU to the NCWorks Commission by July 2015 and report on registrations annually. ●

Develop a single portal for career information.

Career Pathways

Description

There is a variety of readily available career information sites, listings, web pages, and portals supported by various agencies and programs. The amount of information is often overwhelming for students and job seekers especially if the data is inconsistent.

An interagency working group of partners should review and assess the career information currently available and make recommendations to create a single web portal. This web portal will be a hub where students and job seekers can turn to find relevant and accurate career information. This hub will not replace available career information but provide appropriate navigation to the best resources.

Strategic Benefit

A single portal will provide job seekers and student's one place to access appropriate career information which will reduce confusion and frustration. The portal will also help ensure that workforce development professionals across agencies give the same information and guidance.

Implementation Timing

A working group will be established by March 2015 to develop a strategy for a portal by January 2016. The group will make recommendations on implementation by May 2016.

Lead Entities

Department of Commerce
Department of Public Instruction
NC Community College System Office
University of North Carolina System

Supporting Entity

NCWorks Commission

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

Customers improve their career exploration activities and use data to justify costly investments in training and education. Customers are better informed while workforce professionals have the necessary tools to support today's job seekers.

What Success Looks Like

An accessible career information portal is developed by December 2016.

Cost

The working group will make recommendations on costs.

Consequence of No Action

Students and job seekers are overwhelmed by the sheer amount of data that appears contradictory or difficult to understand. Data is not used to help individuals explore new careers, particularly those in high demand. ▶

Potential Obstacles

Currently there are a number of sites with career information that have dedicated users. It may be difficult to create a new portal that merges all the information available. In addition, the workforce system serves a wide variety of people of different ages, backgrounds, experiences, and barriers. Developing one site that will be able to provide the information needed for all groups may be difficult.

Accountability

The state inter-agency team will present recommendations to the NCWorks Commission by May 2016 and demonstrate the portal in February 2017. ●

Connect Small Business Centers and workforce delivery access points to increase entrepreneurship locally.

Career Pathways

Description

For many people, starting a business is the best strategy to increase their wages, support their family, and improve their quality of life. Small Business Centers located on community college campuses across the state have resources to help individuals start businesses and be successful in these ventures. Stronger connections between NCWorks Career Centers and Small Business Centers will help people know about and investigate the opportunities for starting small businesses.

Entrepreneurship is key to North Carolina's continuing economic recovery. The Small Business Centers have been preparing individuals for future entrepreneurship opportunities for 30 years, making them a vital partner of the local workforce development system. The information available through the Small Business Centers should be made available to all customers accessing the system.

The Small Business Centers should work with workforce development boards to ensure that information on entrepreneurship is shared and made available in a variety of ways to job seekers.

Strategic Benefit

By connecting the Small Business Center with the local workforce delivery career centers, job seekers are exposed to exciting career alternatives that can help lift families out of poverty and improve the local economy.

Implementation Timing

Small Business Center staff will begin conversations with workforce development board staff about opportunities to connect in February 2015.

Lead Entity

Small Business Centers

Supporting Entity

Workforce Development Boards

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

The connection between workforce access points and the Small Business Centers increases awareness of entrepreneurship opportunities. There is also an opportunity to invest in creating businesses and employers with local roots providing more stability to the local economy. ▶



What Success Looks Like

Increase of 20 percent in referrals between NCWorks Career Centers and Small Business Centers by February 2016.

Cost

None

Consequence of No Action

Entrepreneurship and small business growth is a major economic driver in the United States. Without the availability of entrepreneurship information, training and support, North Carolina will lag behind other states and likely miss opportunities to innovate and grow locally-owned businesses.

Potential Obstacles

Due to the nature of wage reporting, local workforce development programs currently do not have a way to count new business start-ups in their performance measures. Therefore, the agencies that support future entrepreneurs often cannot claim a successful outcome.

Accountability

The NC Community College System Office will report annually to the NCWorks Commission on number of referrals and strategies being implemented to increase entrepreneurship information provided at NCWorks Career Centers. ●

ACTION STEPS

Accountability

FROM USING DATA-DRIVEN decision making to improve workforce programs to providing performance dashboards to stakeholders, system accountability is wide-ranging and imperative to North Carolina's workforce development's future. Accountability should also lessen the burden on local providers while improving outcomes.

- Develop an annual workforce development system report card with universal success metrics.
- Create metrics based on consistently collected feedback from customers to strengthen the workforce development system.
- Modify North Carolina's wage records to require the collection of employee occupation codes to better assess the outcomes of those individuals who participate in the workforce development system.
- Pilot consumer reporting that provides industry-recognized credentials to better assess the outcomes of those individuals who participate in the workforce development system.

Develop an annual workforce development system report card with universal success metrics.

Accountability

Description

While each workforce development program typically has multiple performance measures, many of them mandated by the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor, universal success metrics give North Carolina customers a consistent look at the results of the workforce system. These results will be displayed via a report card and provide a common framework to measure our workforce system's progress across a wide variety of programs. This dashboard will be easy to access and understand, and will highlight the employment, wage, and training results for each workforce development program.

The NCWorks Commission established an inter-agency working group which is currently working on a set of core performance measures. Measures look at employment and educational enrollment status of former participants across program. These core performance measures are supported by each workforce development agency and will be the foundation for the report card.

Strategic Benefit

The dashboard will improve program accountability and help stakeholders, job seekers, and businesses assess programs. The dashboard will help improve the workforce development system's reputation by offering an easy to understand tool that is available on-demand.

Implementation Timing

The inter-agency working group has developed performance measures and will continue to work to improve them. As a next step, the group will develop an online dashboard to exhibit the information. The dashboard will be accessible by January 2016.

Lead Entity

NCWorks Commission

Supporting Entities

Department of Administration
Department of Commerce
Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Instruction
NC Community College System Office

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

An annual report card will help customers, policy makers, and program managers review information on program success and will increase accountability, change the ►

focus from numbers served to outcomes of service delivery, and provide customers with an easy to understand tool. The dashboard will provide customers with additional information to use for their training and education decisions.



What Success Looks Like

By January 2016, an approved dashboard that is easy to access and understand is made available to the general public.

Cost

Potential costs for website development will be covered by current funding through the Workforce Data Quality Initiative grant and the work of the National Governor's Association Policy Academy.

Consequence of No Action

Customers, policy makers, and program managers will not have consistent information for each program and will have to go to multiple websites or reports to find existing program information.

Potential Obstacles

North Carolina's workforce development programs have different goals reflective not only of the population served but funder's requirements. In addition, success as defined for one program is not always the same definition of success used for another program.

Accountability

The inter-agency working group will demonstrate the new dashboard to NCWorks Commission in February 2016. ●

Create metrics based on consistently collected customer feedback to strengthen the workforce development system.

Accountability

Description

Each workforce development agency has historically been responsible for measuring the overall satisfaction of its clients. Measuring this level of satisfaction is program-specific and lacks consistency.

The newly created workforce development system requires universal customer satisfaction metrics based on a consistent feedback loop. The analysis of the feedback will be used to strengthen North Carolina's workforce development system.

The workforce development system must be continuously responsive to its customers. With so many programs delivering services to job seekers and businesses, the NCWorks Commission needs to work with workforce development agencies to establish a continuous improvement process that canvases all customers regardless of access point, seeks to understand their challenges, and provides a mechanism for strengthening the system based on that understanding. This data will be used to create customer satisfaction metrics aimed at continuously improving the system.

Strategic Benefit

A consistent set of customer satisfaction measures provides a simple way to determine if programs are meeting the needs of clients. Using customer feedback to strengthen programs helps the system stay relevant.

Implementation Timing

Analysis of current feedback tools will be completed by April 2015. Development of the strategy to implement a customer feedback mechanism will be completed January 2016.

Lead Entity

NCWorks Commission,
State Agency Sub-Committee

Supporting Entities

Department of Administration
Department of Commerce
Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Instruction
NC Community College System Office

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

By measuring what is important to customers, the system avoids the pitfalls associated with "measuring for measurements' sake." The new metrics will be beneficial ►

and have the ability to change and shape the workforce system to meet the needs of today's job seeker and business customers.



What Success Looks Like

A customer feedback loop established and metrics based on the analysis effective by January 2016.

Cost

The interagency group will determine costs as part of their recommendations.

Consequence of No Action

Many customers receive services from more than one workforce development program. Without a consistent customer feedback mechanism, the program manager and policy makers will not know the true success of the workforce development system. In addition, program administrators will not have the information needed to improve programs to ensure high quality customer service.

Potential Obstacles

Programs and agencies may be reluctant to replace homegrown surveys and tools for a system-wide approach at measuring customer service. In addition, there is no single list of customers to use for a survey.

Accountability

The interagency working group will present annually on the results of the survey and metrics to the NCWorks Commission at the February meeting. ●

Modify North Carolina's wage records to require the collection of employee occupation codes to better assess the outcomes of those individuals who participate in the workforce development system.

Accountability

Description

Every workforce development program is required to measure the employment and wage status for those individuals who left the program. Currently, the only way to access these results is through North Carolina's employer-reported wage records that are collected for tax purposes. Each record lists the industry, the employee, and the total wages paid to that individual quarterly.

The wage records validate the employment and wage goals by simply reporting that an individual is working and their wages. However, the wage records do not reflect the occupation of the employee. This lack of occupation data makes it impossible to determine if the individual is working in the field in which they received training, therefore limiting the ability to measure the effectiveness of education and training programs.

Strategic Benefits

Wage and employment data that supplies information on an individual's occupation will allow stakeholders to analyze the effectiveness of training and education programs state-wide. This data will help identify programs that are successful in providing the training needed to equip job seekers to find employment in their field of study.

Implementation Timing

Research into other state data collection activities and best practices will be completed by July 2015 and staff from the Labor and Economic Analysis Division will develop recommendations for legislative change by November 2015.

Lead Entity

Department of Commerce
Labor and Economic Analysis Division

Supporting Entity

NCWorks Commission

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

Local service providers can target resources towards training programs that help individuals find jobs in the occupation in which they trained and strengthen programs that have lower rates of individuals finding employment in their field of study. This data can also be used to help job seekers and students analyze the outcomes between ►

two or more courses of study. Individuals can use data to make better informed decisions about future careers and training associated with in-demand occupations.



What Success Looks Like

Legislation to collect occupation codes passed by July 2016.

Cost

No costs are associated with modifying legislation to require the collection of occupational data, however there are likely to be costs associated with modifying the data system to collect this new data. The Labor and Economic Analysis Division will estimate the costs associated with this change.

Consequence of No Action

Without this information program staff and policy makers do not know which programs are successful in equipping participants with the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to be successful in the occupation for which they are training. In addition, individuals will not be able to make informed decisions about which programs to enter to have the most success in getting a job in their field.

Potential Obstacles

Currently, the system that collects employment and wage records is out dated and it's likely that it does not have the ability to collect additional information on individuals. A new system is being developed, but implementation of this system is still years away. In addition, some believe that requesting this information from businesses would be a burden.

Accountability

Staff from the Labor and Economic Analysis Division will present their recommendation on how to modify the wage records to the NCWorks Commission in November 2015. ●

Pilot consumer reporting that provides industry-recognized credentials to better assess the outcomes of those individuals who participate in the workforce development system.

Accountability

Description

As industry certifications become more prevalent in the labor market, it is important for educational institutions to establish data-sharing relationships with certifying bodies and for state agencies that manage wage and occupation data to ensure their training programs are well aligned with industry and professional standards. There are challenges impacting the effectiveness of direct collaboration between these groups including legal issues, security of data, and lack of trust. Educational institutions often do not have access to certification exam data, which limits their ability to know if students are leaving their programs well prepared to meet industry-specified competencies.

In the absence of an effective feedback loop between certifying bodies and the workforce development system, students have no way of knowing if a college course will help them pass a certifying exam. Community colleges then lack the data they need to improve their programs, state employment agencies have an impaired ability to effectively assist the workforce system, and certifying bodies have limited data that can be shared with education providers about where their offerings could be better aligned with required skills.

The NC Community College System initiated a conversation with other community college systems and began to hear a consistent need across the country to make progress on this issue. As a result, the system office was encouraged to take a leadership role in leading this national conversation.

Strategic Benefit

A workforce training system will ensure job seekers have the opportunity to complete courses that help them pass in-demand certifying exams. Business customers will rely on local training for a pipeline of talented workers.

Implementation Timing

Beginning in February 2015, the NC Community College System office and Labor and Economic Analysis Division staff will meet to develop report structures, identify needs required to integrate data into NC TOWER (North Carolina's Tool for Online Workforce and Education Reporting), test/validate data, and seek feedback on reports from colleges. Data for all colleges will be available online by December 2015. ►

Lead Entity

NC Community College System Office

Supporting Entities

Division of Workforce Solutions
Labor and Economic Analysis Division
Department of Public Instruction

Benefits to Local Workforce Efforts, Customers

Direct collaboration between certifying bodies and workforce groups allows stakeholders to evaluate if students have the skills needed to meet industry-specified competencies. The system can then allocate resources towards programs that are helping students earn those competencies while making improvements in the programs where students do not have the competencies.

What Success Looks Like

A consumer report on acquisition of industry-recognized credentials is accessible by December 2015.

Cost

Estimated at \$9,000 for NC Community College System Office Data Coordinator redeployment and travel support for workgroup members.

Consequence of No Action

In the absence of an effective feedback loop between certifying bodies, state employment agencies, and post-secondary educational systems, students will have no way of knowing if a college course will help them pass a certifying exam. Community college systems will lack the data they need to improve their programs. State employment agencies will have an impaired ability to effectively assist the workforce system. Certifying bodies will have limited data that can be shared with education providers about where their offerings could be better aligned with required skills.

Potential Obstacles

Collecting information on industry-recognized credentials requires third-party certifying organizations to share information on the individuals who received certifications with the state. Some organizations may be unwilling to share this information. In addition, there may not be systems in place to collect and use this information systematically.

Accountability

The NC Community College System Office will present the consumer report to the NCWorks Commission in February 2016. ●

NCWorks
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