

NCWorks Certified Career Pathways



“The investment in
NCWorks Certified Career Pathways
is paying dividends, and a job ready
North Carolina is the benefit.”

Catherine Moga Bryant

Executive Director, NCWorks Commission



NCWorks
career pathways

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
Letter from Governor Roy Cooper	4
Executive Summary	5
Letter from Dr. Dion Clark.....	6
Introduction	7
Synthesis of Best Practice Criteria.....	9
<i>Criterion I: Demand-Driven and Data Informed</i>	9
<i>Criterion II: Employer Engagement</i>	11
<i>Criterion III: Collaborative</i>	14
<i>Criterion IV: Career Awareness</i>	16
<i>Criterion V: Articulation and Coordination</i>	19
<i>Criterion VI: Work-Based Learning</i>	21
<i>Criterion VII: Multiple Points of Entry and Exit</i>	23
<i>Criterion VIII: Evaluation</i>	25
Supplementary Research & Data Analysis.....	27
<i>Positive Impact: Success Stories from the Field</i>	27
<i>Easing the financial burden for enrollees</i>	28
<i>Upskilling enrollees for gainful employment</i>	29
<i>Regional support, capacity building, and collaboration for workforce partners</i>	30
<i>Domino effect that inspires other successes</i>	31
Improvement Opportunities: Recommendations for the Future	33
<i>Enhanced marketing efforts to parents, students, and front line staff</i>	34
<i>Continuing Momentum from Development to Implementation</i>	35
Conclusion.....	37
Appendix	39





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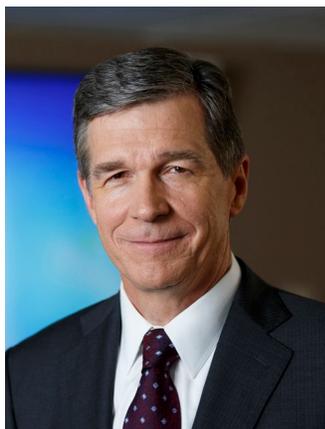
The North Carolina Workforce
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The North Carolina Department of Commerce





OFFICE OF GOVERNOR
ROY COOPER



Dear Friends:

My office is pleased and proud to present this One-Year Impact Report on NCWorks Certified Career Pathways. NCWorks Certified Career Pathways are a key element of NC Job Ready, my workforce development initiative to ensure North Carolinians are ready for the jobs of today and tomorrow. Having information about career options and access to the training needed to prepare for those careers is critical to being job ready. NCWorks Certified Career Pathways provide seamless career paths to help job seekers enter high-wage, high-demand jobs in their communities.

In fewer than three years, 35 NCWorks Certified Career Pathways have been established in information technology, advanced manufacturing, health care, transportation, hospitality, tourism and other growing industries. In the regions of the state that are served by these Career Pathways, worker training and preparation have improved, employers are finding more well-trained, qualified workers and the North Carolina workforce is finding career opportunities that provide family-sustaining jobs.

I am grateful to the NCWorks Commission members and staff for their leadership in the development and implementation of this initiative. Their success is the result of the collaborative efforts of North Carolina's employers, workforce development professionals, educators, local elected officials, community organizations and other champions of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways.

NCWorks Certified Career Pathways are an important part of our commitment to make North Carolina the best place to live, work and do business. I recently announced the Finish Line Grants program, which helps community college students facing unforeseen financial emergencies complete their training. Finish Line Grants, along with NCWorks Certified Career Pathways, help to provide career seekers the training they need to get good paying jobs. From the high school student thinking about the future to the mid-career professional seeking a career change, North Carolina's workforce is nimble, highly trained and job ready.

Sincerely,

Roy Cooper

Executive Summary



Catherine Moga Bryant

Executive Director, NCWorks Commission

In 2014, partners from the N.C. Department of Commerce, N.C. Department of Public Instruction and the N.C. Community College System formed a team to

leverage the energy and enthusiasm of existing career pathways programs nationally and around the state. Relevant data, including from the NC Jobs Plan, the NCWorks Commission Strategic Plan and the Pathways to Prosperity Harvard University Pilot Program, pointed to career pathways as an integral part of the future of workforce development.

The team believed North Carolina should lead in the effort and began to take definitive steps toward developing a standardized career pathways system in the state. In early 2015, with a \$200,000 grant from the John M. Belk Endowment, the team hired two individuals whose mission would be to develop and implement the NCWorks Certified Career Pathways model in North Carolina.

The NCWorks Career Pathways director and research assistant began by listening - to employers, workforce development professionals, elected officials and other stakeholders. There was consensus about the importance of the work, but ideas about how to accomplish the goal were as diverse and varied as the state itself.

After all the data were collected and reviewed, the career pathways team developed eight best practice criteria and a process for career pathway certification. The first team to apply for and receive certification - the Northeast Region - had been a part of the Pathways to Prosperity pilot program. Six months after certification of the Northeast's career pathway in health care, Cumberland County received certification for a pathway in transportation.

From there, other regional teams began submitting pathway applications from each prosperity zone and workforce development board service delivery area of the state. In fewer than three years, 35 NCWorks Certified Career Pathways have been certified in healthcare, transportation, advanced manufacturing, hospitality and tourism, information technology and other high-wage, high-demand industry sectors.

Each NCWorks career pathway is certified for three years. After the first year of certification, each team is required to complete a one year check-in. This is the first formal interaction the career pathways team has with the NCWorks Commission after pathway certification. The one year check-in is vital for the Commission to stay abreast and informed of the progress toward the goal of a highly trained, job ready workforce. It also serves as a self-assessment for the career pathways team. The one year check-in requires the team to revisit its initial application and assess changes in labor market and employment trends, post-certification collaboration, career pathways enrollment and other inputs.

Thirteen NCWorks Certified Career Pathways reached one year of implementation by June 30, 2018.

This report provides a high level synthesis of the lessons learned, successes and strategies for improvement as gleaned from the one year check-ins. Additionally, this report includes supplementary qualitative data from focus groups and interviews with career pathways stakeholders, including employers, pathway participants, front line staff and other workforce development professionals.

NCWorks Certified Career Pathways have had a meaningful impact on the North Carolina workforce and the data indicate they will continue to. The effect of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways on education and training programs, career seeker preparation and employer needs cannot be overstated. The investment in NCWorks Certified Career Pathways is paying dividends and a job ready North Carolina is the benefit.

Letter from Dr. Dion Clark



Dr. Dion Clark
NCWorks Career Pathways Director

Workforce Development Colleagues,

This One Year Impact Report tries to capture for the reader the last four years of the career pathways journey. The hard work, the vision, the collaboration and the challenges - all of it is reflected within the pages of this document.

Preparing this report required the state team to reflect and consider how far we have come and how many people played a part in the success of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways. No work of this magnitude is accomplished in a vacuum and no one person (or two, or three people) can do it alone.

To that end, I would like to thank the many state, regional and local partners who helped birth NCWorks Certified Career Pathways and further establish North Carolina as a national leader in workforce development.

Especially, I would like to thank current and former team members from NCDPI and NCCCS, Jo Anne Honeycutt, John Kirkman, Linda Weiner, Lisa Chapman, Matt Meyer, Anne Bacon and Bob Witchger.

I also extend sincere thanks to the N.C. Department of Commerce Division of Workforce Solutions for housing Lauren and me, providing financial, staff and structural support for the project and for the leadership provided by current and former senior staff including, Napoleon Wallace, Danny Giddens, Mark Edmonds and Will Collins.

I would be remiss if I did not also thank CharlotteWorks and its CEO, Danielle Frazier, for providing supplementary staff and structural support to Lauren and me for the past (nearly) four years. Thank you for making us a part of the CharlotteWorks team.

To Catherine Moga Bryant, the Executive Director of the NCWorks Commission, I offer my heartfelt thanks. This initiative is a success because of your vision, leadership and persistence.

To my research team members, Lauren Coffey and Callie Womble Edwards - great job! I am so proud of the work you have done here.

Finally, and above all, I thank God for this opportunity.

In service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Dion Clark". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Dion Clark
NCWorks Career Pathways Director

Introduction

NCWorks Certified Career Pathways are the result of vision, strategy, collaboration and hard work on the part of numerous local, regional and statewide workforce development professionals across North Carolina.

The career pathways certification endeavor was born out of two major workforce development initiatives. In December 2013, the North Carolina Economic Development Board published the “North Carolina Jobs Plan” which highlighted career pathways systems of education and training as integral to the state’s overall workforce development strategy.

In 2014, the NCWorks Commission (Commission) published its strategic plan entitled, “Preparing North Carolina’s Workforce for Today and Tomorrow,” wherein it designated “certified” career pathways as one of its four action plan steps for the preparation of a nimble, thriving workforce.

In addition to these projects, in 2014 Congress passed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This federal legislation requires state and local boards to develop and implement strategies to support career pathways.

With these federal and state mandates, the Commission charged North Carolina workforce development partners with the creation, development and implementation of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways. NCWorks Certified Career Pathways are seamless systems of education and training that prepare workers for high-wage, high-demand careers. They are created, developed and implemented by a team of engaged employers, workforce development boards, K-12 school systems, colleges and community partners.

Each of the state’s 23 workforce development boards is responsible for the creation and implementation of two certified career pathways. The goal of these pathways is twofold: 1) to match worker training to current

and future employer needs and 2) to encourage and incentivize small and large employers to build and expand in North Carolina.

North Carolina launched a pilot program, Pathways to Prosperity, which served as a test run of the State’s pathway model. Pathways to Prosperity was integral in the development of the eight best practice criteria, which underpin each NCWorks Certified Career Pathway. NCWorks certification requires each career pathway to meet these eight best practice criteria:

- **Demand-Driven and Data Informed**
The data indicate a regional or local need for the pathway.
- **Employer Engagement**
A group of engaged employers leads the effort to develop a regional career pathway within a particular industry sector.
- **Collaboration**
Employers, educators, workforce development professionals and other champions work together to develop and implement the pathway.
- **Career Awareness**
Current and future career seekers as well as front line staff have all the information that they need about the career and training opportunities along the pathway.
- **Articulation & Coordination**
The pathway partners work together to minimize duplication of coursework and credentialing.
- **Work-Based Learning**
Career seekers find suitable opportunities for on-the-job training, internships,





apprenticeships and other hands-on learning opportunities.

- **Multiple Points of Entry and Exit**

The process of entering and exiting the pathway is made simple to reduce duplication of coursework and to streamline the pathway trajectory.

- **Evaluation**

Effective measures of success are utilized to ensure the pathway has maximum impact in the industry sector within a given region.

The Northeastern Region was the first team to submit an application to the Commission for certification. Twenty counties, three workforce development boards, 21 K-12 school systems and nine colleges across the region collaborated to develop a career pathway in health care. Once submitted, the application was given to the Interagency Review Team (IRT), which consists of workforce development partners from local and state agencies who review certification applications and make recommendations to the Commission. After a rigorous review, the IRT recommended certification of the health care pathway to the Commission which accepted the recommendation. In February 2016, the Commission certified its first career pathway in the Northeastern Region of North Carolina.

Six months later in August 2016, the Commission certified Cumberland County's Collision Repair and Refinishing Technology Pathway within the transportation industry sector. From there, regional teams across the state received NCWorks certifications of career pathways in manufacturing, health care, nursing, transportation and logistics, information technology, hospitality and tourism, skilled trades and construction. Through the end of 2018, 35 career pathways have been certified by the NCWorks Commission across North Carolina.

NCWorks certification lasts three years, after which time the regional teams must apply for renewal of their certifications to the Commission. As a part of its commitment to prepare a job-ready workforce, the Commission requires each career pathway team to submit a one year check-in. This requirement affords the IRT and the Commission an opportunity to assess each

team's progress toward its stated success measures as identified in the evaluation section (Criterion VIII) of the career pathway application.

As of June 30, 2018, 13 teams have completed one year of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways implementation and have submitted their one year check-ins to the Commission. This report represents a high level overview of those check-ins, compiled to provide the reader an understanding of the successes and challenges, as well as lessons learned and best practices developed through the process of creating, developing and implementing NCWorks Certified Career Pathways.

In addition to a synthesis of the check-ins, the research team conducted a series of focus groups and interviews with many stakeholders, including employers, educators and pathway participants. Career pathways stakeholders shared stories from the field, opportunities for improvement and recommendations for the future of career pathways. Specifically, the research team conducted a focus group with the NCWorks Career Pathways Facilitators, who serve alongside local teams in seven of the state's eight prosperity zones. The team also conducted a focus group with the IRT, which was instrumental in the development of the eight best practiced criteria and is deliberate in the careful review of each pathway application submitted to the Commission. Finally, the research team conducted separate interviews with individuals from workforce development boards, community colleges, industry, and – perhaps most importantly – the career seekers who are served by NCWorks Certified Career Pathways.

The combination of one year check-ins, focus groups and interviews provides a rich understanding of the impact of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways on the North Carolina workforce. The goal of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways is to match worker training to employer need. One year into the implementation phase, the early indicators are that the initiative is effective and impactful, with numerous intended and unintended successes manifesting throughout the process.

Synthesis of Best Practice Criteria

CRITERION I

Demand-Driven and Data Informed

The data indicate a regional or local need for the pathway.

In order to obtain NCWorks certification, each career pathway must meet eight best practice criteria. First, the career pathway must be demand-driven and data informed. Demand-driven and data informed is the Commission's requirement that each certified career pathway be within an industry sector that is in high-demand, provides an opportunity for workers to earn high-wages and will continue to provide employment and advancement opportunities well into the future.

A demand-driven and data informed pathway is essential to ensure that worker training matches employer need and that well-trained workers will find career opportunities that provide sustainable, livable wages with opportunities for career advancement.

To demonstrate that a career pathway seeking NCWorks certification was driven by demand, each career pathways team provided local, regional, state and/or national data as a part of its initial application. Broadly, this data came from many sources including the Labor & Economic Analysis Division (LEAD) within the N.C. Department of Commerce, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, chambers of commerce and numerous employer survey

instruments. Without exception, each of the 13 career pathways teams included in this report demonstrated to the Commission's satisfaction a local and regional need for the career pathway that was submitted and subsequently certified.

After one year of implementation, pathways teams reviewed their data sources to determine what changes could be seen in the data, if any. Changes in employment trends

would require the workforce development professionals to reconsider the education and training programs provided to career pathway participants. With the goal of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways being to match worker training to employer need, if

a review of labor trends demonstrated a shift in employer needs, education and training professionals would make changes to their curricula and program offerings to meet dynamic workforce needs. Across the regions, each of the teams found that - one year into pathway implementation - there was still a need for the pathway and the education and training it provides. Many regions saw the demand and/or average wages within the particular industry sector increase.

The one year check-ins indicated an uptick in qualified, well-trained workers finding work-based learning, job training and employment opportunities within the industry sectors. The importance of requiring each career pathway meet the

“When we talk about certified career pathways, local teams actually have to develop a pathway that meets the needs of the region, and I think that, that’s a big distinction.”

— Kris Xaypangna

Southwest Region Career Pathways Facilitator





demonstrated need of the region cannot be overstated; demand-driven pathways make the service delivery to employers and workers more efficient, effective and successful in meeting the stated goal of matching worker training to employer need.

TRANSPORTATION

Cumberland County Region

During the first year of career pathway implementation, national data indicated that the average income for production technicians increased nearly \$1,000 per year and 60 percent of all auto repair shops surveyed indicated having hired at least one entry level technician in the previous year. Locally, wages increased more than \$1,650 per year for collision repair technicians.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Capital Area Region

The Capital Area region of the state received the first certification in Information Technology, commensurate with the needs of the region. An analysis of the NC Commerce Star Jobs Report indicates that 14 occupations along the IT career pathway are rated as at least 4-star jobs and nine of those as 5-star jobs within the North Central Economic Development Prosperity Zone (which includes the Capital Area region). Current market trends indicate that completers along the IT career pathway will find ample career opportunities in high-demand, high-wage jobs.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

Northeastern Region

In December 2017, Governor Roy Cooper announced the State's largest ever investment in manufacturing in eastern North Carolina. Triangle Tyre, a Chinese tire manufacturing company, is creating 800 jobs and adding \$2 billion to the North Carolina economy. The advanced manufacturing career pathway is poised to deliver the current and future pipeline of well-trained workers that employers must have in order to thrive. Once Triangle Tyre is at full capacity, the average salaries of its workers will exceed the county average by more than \$20,000 per year. The strategic training, employer engagement and collaborative resources of the current NCWorks Certified Career Pathway in advanced manufacturing has the power to change the lives of families and the economy within the entire region.

HEALTH CARE

Eastern Carolina Region

The relevant data indicate that health care employment in the region is predicted to grow by 11% over the next decade with an average wage of \$52,000 per year. The health sciences pathway trains workers in nursing, radiography, respiratory therapy and health care business among other occupations. The training provided through NCWorks Certified Career Pathways is essential to meet the growing need and attract and retain businesses in the eastern region of North Carolina.

Synthesis of Best Practice Criteria

CRITERION II

Employer Engagement

A group of engaged employers leads the effort to develop a regional career pathway within a particular industry sector.

The second of the eight best practice criteria a career pathways team must demonstrate is employer engagement. Historically, when workforce development professionals

created worker training programs, employer engagement and input were limited. Generally, employers were considered to be served by the programs, rather than full partners in program development and implementation. The Commission requires regional teams to engage employers from the outset of career pathway creation. The result is that employers are an integral part of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways.

Employers inform course material, assist in curriculum development, host and participate in career fairs, teach industry-specific courses and workshops, provide work-based learning opportunities and commit to hiring individuals exiting the career pathway.

NCWorks Certified Career Pathways teams rely on existing partnerships to inform, engage and recruit new employers when developing career pathways for certification. The teams

utilize industry round tables that clarify training and education requirements essential for pathway participants to succeed in a specific industry. Most local teams recruit employers to participate in interactive follow up panels ensuring consistent employer engagement in the face of inevitable change within industry sectors.

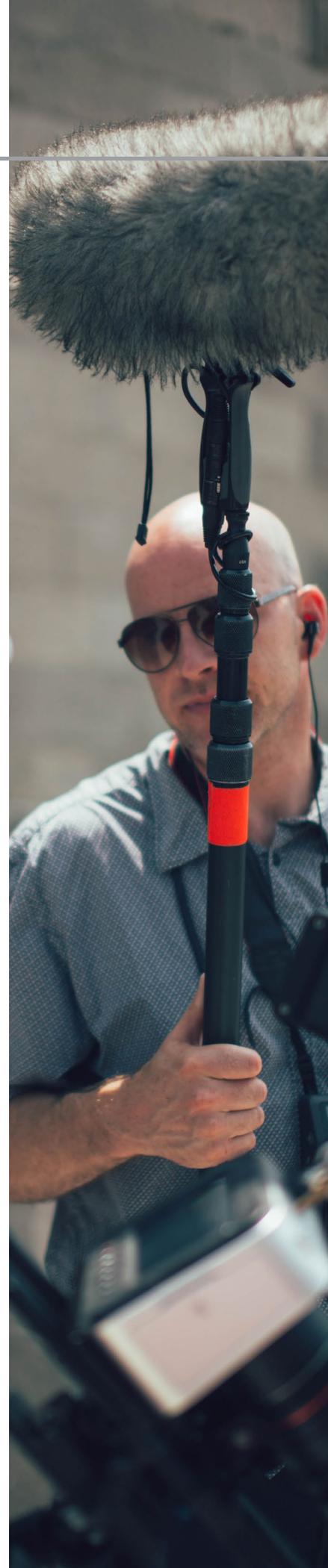
The demonstration of employer engagement varied widely across the 13 career pathways. Some employers expressed an

initial hesitation to participate in the sometimes lengthy process of career pathways development, in part due to a lack of understanding of the expectations and in part due to a concern about whether this effort would produce the stated outcome of

“When it comes to our Hospitality and Tourism pathway, the process brought together employers. They have formed a strong group to work with the educational providers. That’s what we were hoping for in all the pathways, but this group has really taken on the task of being involved in preparing for the next generation of workers.”

— Dr. Gene Loflin

Associate Vice President of Instructional Services for Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College





well-trained workers. To combat this obstacle, the Commission dispatched eight NCWorks Career Pathways Facilitators to each of the state's prosperity zones to work alongside local workforce development partners in bringing employers to the table. The message of the career pathways professionals was simple - this relationship will be mutually beneficial; you help us develop pathways that align worker training to the needs of your industry and we will deliver a well-trained, job-ready workforce. Without exception, the employers said yes.

Employers took leadership roles on career pathways development teams, working groups and subcommittees. They committed scores of work-based learning opportunities and permanent jobs for trained workers. They taught classes at local community colleges and served on panels at conferences and workshops. In short, they became career pathways champions.

HEALTH CARE

Eastern Carolina Region

The State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC) recently awarded Wayne Community College and Wayne UNC Health Care the 2018 Distinguished Partners in Excellence Award. This annual award recognizes an exemplary employer, business or industry that has demonstrated decisive involvement and firm commitment to the professional development of its employees and/or to the development of North Carolina's workforce through its partnership efforts with one or more of the state's community colleges. Both the SBCC and Wayne UNC Health Care were a part of the local career pathways team that developed the Eastern Carolina NCWorks Certified Career Pathway in Health Sciences. This award demonstrates both the importance and success of employer engagement within NCWorks Certified Career Pathways.

HEALTH CARE

Northeastern Region

There are more than 491 large and small employers providing health care work-based learning opportunities for pathway career seekers. The majority of the health care employers in this region provide clinical training and internships for students. During the development and implementation of the pathway, regional health care employers increased the work-based learning opportunities available to students by 91% from 249 in 2014 to 476 by the end of 2016. This increase of health care employer participation in the region is a perfect example of the impact engaged employers can have on the economy of a single region.

TRANSPORTATION

Cumberland County Region

Each year, the collision repair certified career pathway hosts a "Draft Days" event to match well-trained workers with career opportunities. This event is highly regarded and eagerly awaited each year by the industry's employers. Draft Days is an open house for employers to visit the collision repair pathway workshop at Fayetteville Technical Community College (FTCC). Employers are able to interact with the program's instructors, witness students' technical prowess on damaged vehicles, conduct employment interviews with upcoming graduates and determine who may be the best fit for their company. More than 25 companies participated in the 2017 Draft Days event for Cumberland's NCWorks Certified Career Pathway in collision repair. Each program completer received at least one permanent job offer, with some receiving multiple offers.

When the Ford Corporation demonstrated an interest in recruiting veterans and distance learners into the collision repair industry, FTCC created a Transition Tech program within its existing NCWorks Certified Career Pathway to fulfill Ford's request. The Transition Tech program incorporates online learning through Blackboard to streamline the in-person portions of the program and allows students to start training from anywhere in the country.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Capital Area Region

The Capital Area Region Information Technology (IT) team has received strong support from Cisco Systems since implementation of its pathway. Cisco hosted a youth summit in May 2017 geared toward promoting career awareness and career readiness for young adults. Through panels and interactive breakout sessions prospective employees were introduced to several aspects of working in the IT industry and were able to hear firsthand the needs and expectations of potential employers.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

Kerr-Tar Region

During the first year of implementation, 24 advanced manufacturing employers provided on-the-job training and work experience to career seekers along the pathway. One pathway participant in particular received an internship from a local employer. This internship led to the individual enrolling and excelling in a robotics class. While in the course, the enrollee was offered a second internship with a different local employer, which led to full-time employment. Engaged employers provided education and training as well as a high-wage, high-demand job for this career pathway participant.

Employer engagement is the hallmark of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways and requires a consistent effort on the part of workforce development boards, colleges, K-12 school systems, community partners and employers. Employer leadership drives education and training opportunities that provide valuable and relevant work experience and ultimately, permanent careers for pathway participants. Employer engagement is the single most distinguishing factor of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways. The pathways are led by a team of engaged employers that remains committed to the pathway and the job seeker throughout his/her career.



Synthesis of Best Practice Criteria



The third of the eight best practice criteria that career pathways teams must demonstrate is collaboration.

It is important to note here that career pathways existed in North Carolina prior to the NCWorks certification process. Local school systems and colleges had vast networks of high school to college pathways in numerous career and technical education curriculums. Additionally, colleges around the state worked with employers and workforce development boards to develop credentialing programs in all shapes and sizes to meet industry need.

NCWorks certification added a new dimension to existing collaboration efforts. The Commission challenged career pathways teams to get all partners in the room at the same time - local school systems, colleges, workforce development boards, economic development boards, chambers of commerce, career centers, vocational

rehabilitation services, local elected officials, community organizations, and, of course, employers. The heart of the NCWorks career pathways model is breaking down silos and partnering across agencies and sectors. This was certainly a different approach for many groups around the state, but the impact of broader collaboration through the first year of implementation cannot be overstated.

Each of the 13 teams took on the challenge of collaboration in earnest. Around the state,

CRITERION III

Collaboration

Employers, educators, workforce development professionals and other champions work together to develop and implement the pathway.

regional teams convened meetings with dozens of stakeholders. Many teams chose a small group of conveners or champions to help with explaining and encouraging the new collaboration approach. Within the large groups, smaller groups or committees were

formed - often in accordance with the eight best practice criteria. Individuals from any of the assembled agencies or organizations became committee chairs and drove the pathways toward completion. By taking on this large endeavor in smaller bites, individuals found opportunities to work together, get to know each other and develop an NCWorks

“The process of developing a career pathway is a perfect example of collective impact - stakeholders from across the region representing various organizations and business/industry working together to achieve a common goal.”

— Marty Tobey

*Piedmont-Triad Region Career and Technical Education Coordinator for North Carolina
Department of Public Instruction*

Certified Career Pathway that met the needs of the employer and the career seeker.

A review of the one year check-ins indicates that collaboration followed a similar path to employer engagement. The hardest part was convincing stakeholders that the collaboration was worthwhile and would produce results. Career pathways facilitators, along with a small group of conveners and champions, worked to persuade key stakeholders to buy in and recruit others.

One year of implementation demonstrates the success of the collaboration model. Career pathways partners across the board report that broad scale collaboration helped with the success of pathway development and implementation and that, one year later, teams are still working together to implement and improve existing pathways as well as finding ways to collaborate on related endeavors to benefit the local and regional communities as a whole.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

Mountain Area Region

Stakeholders initially had challenges breaking down the silos around organizations that were accustomed to functioning independently. The region persuaded a large group of stakeholders to come together for a regional meeting. In this meeting, each group became aware of the diverse people and perspectives working toward the same goal of training workers for careers in advanced manufacturing. Since then, the region has seen increased collaboration and understanding among entities by working together to plan and implement an NCWorks Certified Career Pathway. In November 2017, these entities held a summit in partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond to determine how their region's employers can meet their talent needs while also improving region-wide economic mobility.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

Region C

The McDowell Workforce Pipeline Committee was a previously existing collaborative of employers and workforce development professionals who developed training and hiring processes to create a talent pipeline to fill advanced manufacturing jobs in the region. This existing committee became the team that would successfully develop and implement the region's advanced manufacturing career pathway. Subsequently, they were able to extend and expand the already important collaboration that was taking place. By widening the scope of stakeholders and increasing the number of career pathway team members, the region was able to train more workers and cultivate qualified applicants to meet industry demands within the region.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

Southwest Region Collaborative

Since certification of their career pathway, the team of stakeholders has continued to meet monthly. These meetings are used to strengthen existing cross-agency partnerships by sharing best practices and training tools, leveraging resources and ensuring consistent messaging is provided to all partners. The team has developed a Southwest Prosperity Zone Quarterly Career Pathways Newsletter to be distributed electronically to all pathway partners within the region. This is a key piece of collaboration; keeping the partnerships together and strong after certification and into the implementation phase.

Collaboration also reaps rewards well beyond the initial certification of the first pathway. The Commission challenged each local workforce development board to create two certified career pathways. Many regions have developed three and in some cases four pathways in different industry sectors. The hard work of building a collaborative has a carry-over effect to subsequent pathway teams as many of the stakeholders are the same and have become champions of NCWorks certification.



Synthesis of Best Practice Criteria



The fourth best practice criterion - career awareness - has a two-fold requirement. The teams must demonstrate how they will make career seekers aware of the education, training and career advancement opportunities along a career ladder. Additionally, it is important for teams to show how any front line staff that serve career seekers will be made aware and kept up-to-date with the opportunities available to career seekers.

In short, career awareness is what generates interest and excitement among current and potential career pathway participants, recruiting them on a career path that aligns with their interests and skill set. Effective career awareness strategies encourage career seekers to decide whether a career path is the right fit for them.

There is a need to educate and inform the public about the education and training required to work toward a particular career. Individuals need opportunities to learn which credentials and skills are needed to succeed in their career of interest, how to obtain the needed skills and credentials and

CRITERION IV

Career Awareness

Current and future career seekers as well as front line staff have all the information that they need about the career and training opportunities along the pathway.

the expected wages they can earn in different jobs along a career path. The vast majority of this information is conveyed by the front

line staff who counsel current and potential pathway participants in high schools, colleges, NCWorks Career Centers and other places that individuals seek out professionals to help them with their career search.

Overall, the 13 teams were quite creative in developing resources to inform career seekers and front line staff of education, training and

career opportunities. The teams committed to (and delivered) career ladder maps, informative videos, education and career fairs, staff workshops and many other avenues for improving career awareness.

“Aviation is kind of a fickle industry. It’s not like nursing. You can’t just walk down your block in your neighborhood and find someone in aviation and talk to them about it. It’s very difficult. Nobody’s there to tell you about that pathway. So to me, [the NCWorks Certified Career Pathway] was a great way to get the information about the aviation pathways out there at a very critical time in the industry...”

— Nicolas Yale

Director of the Aviation Program at Guilford Technical Community College

One dynamic that occurred across nearly all applications was a marked distinction between the career awareness resources provided to K-12 students and other career seekers. Because of the long history of high school to college pathways, regional teams had long considered ways to get young people engaged and excited about education and training toward various careers. The Commission urged regional teams to bring that same enthusiasm to resources for older workers, nontraditional students and mid-career professionals. Teams had to be creative in order to engage and inform diverse populations of job seekers.

Career ladders are resources that are used statewide to promote career awareness across all NCWorks Certified Career Pathways. They are a combination of education and wage data within an industry sector - usually packaged in an eye-catching and easy to read way - that provide information for current and future pathway enrollees about the education needed and careers available along a career trajectory. NCWorks Career Pathways Facilitators and their local teams were tasked with creating a career ladder for each NCWorks Certified Career Pathway. These ladders are made available on the NCWorks Certified Career Pathways website and at schools, colleges and career centers around the state. Sharing ideas and tools across regions has become a common way that NCWorks Certified Career Pathways has maximized its efficacy as a workforce development tool.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Capital Area Region

The pathway effort in the region includes the Tech Hire initiative. Tech Hire is a partnership between the Capital Area Workforce Development Board and Wake Technical Community College (WTCC) to provide training programs, job placement and supportive services targeting high-demand occupations along career pathways in networking and cyber security. Tech Hire has increased participant outreach and recruitment efforts by hosting job fairs

and technology expos at local high schools and the community college. Primarily, this initiative targets high school students who have had some computer training but lack the necessary industry credentials to enter the workforce. Qualified students can prepare for in-demand tech jobs with all coursework, books, registration and testing fees waived.

Several local IT employers provide career awareness opportunities to Tech Hire participants. As an example, Cisco and the Research Triangle Park Young Minorities networking group host quarterly lunch and learns, where employees share their IT career paths and how they relate to the beginning of a career trajectory with Tech Hire participants. Through 2018, 254 individuals have participated in the Tech Hire initiative.

NURSING HEALTH CARE

TriadWorks Region

Since implementing their Nursing Health Care Pathway, the region is developing a Toolkit with resources for career counselors and educational advisors in all settings. The Toolkit includes webinars, career cards and process diagrams to assist career counselors in guiding enrollees to participating community colleges and universities. The first three webinars are already available on their website, TriadWorks.org/CertifiedCareerPathways.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

Northeastern Region

In October 2017, the Northeast's NCWorks Certified Career Pathways team hosted an Advanced Manufacturing Event and Open House at the state-of-the-art Regional Aviation and Technical Training Center at College of the Albemarle. This event was open to all job seekers, including students and their parents. Employers in the industry discussed available jobs and the future of advanced manufacturing within their companies.

HEALTH CARE

Eastern Carolina Region

In March 2017, during the implementation phase of their NCWorks Certified Career Pathway in health care, the region hosted a science symposium that included each of the





seven partner community colleges and K-12 school systems. Approximately 170 high school students attended the symposium, which included two industry panels to provide career awareness from health care professionals and experts.

The first panel included health care professionals responsible for hiring and human resources. The employers underscored the sought after technical and soft skills that lead to success within the health care industry. The second panel featured community college staff from health sciences programs who informed the attendees about the types of training available and how essential training is to success in the health sciences industry.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

Region C

McDowell County hosted a regional Manufacturing Awareness Open House at the local community college as part of the region's launch of its NCWorks Certified Career Pathway in advanced manufacturing. Multiple employers were onsite to share information about the industry within the region. In order to raise awareness among job seekers in the community, the local chamber of commerce declared the day, "Manufacturing Awareness Day."

Events, job fairs, interactive online resources and the marketing of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways expose current and future pathway participants to local in-demand and high-wage careers, while giving them the information and tools to begin their career and persist along a career path. Career awareness is embedded into NCWorks Certified Career Pathways and highlights and strengthens the career awareness strategies already being implemented by educators, career counselors and workforce development professionals around the state.

Synthesis of Best Practice Criteria

CRITERION V

Articulation and Coordination

The pathway partners work together to minimize duplication of coursework and credentialing.

NCWorks Certified Career Pathways are workforce development vehicles for career seekers. The fifth criterion - articulation and coordination - serves as “fuel” for the vehicle. More than any of the other criteria,

articulation and coordination work to ensure that career pathways are nimble, dynamic and responsive to the needs of a constantly changing workforce.

Articulation and coordination help pathway participants to receive training and earn credentials in a linear fashion by reducing repetitive coursework and program offerings across education and training partner agencies.

Individuals can obtain knowledge, skills and credentials efficiently because the partners provide integrated academic, technical and occupational skills training through classroom, on-the-job and online learning.

Articulation and coordination encourage job seekers to obtain stackable credentials that reduce course duplication and foster streamlined progression along a career pathway, saving job seekers money and time. NCWorks certification demonstrates

that the partners within each region and industry sector have collaborated closely to develop local and regional agreements and to maximize relevant statewide agreements.

“The certified career pathway process brought together some regional partners for the first time, exposing them to new programs and training opportunities. This engendered deeper collaboration between universities, community colleges and their local education agencies. In some cases, partners realized their own local articulation agreements were out of date, prompting them to revise and strengthen their relationships.”

— Scott Panagrosso

Southeast Region Career Pathways Facilitator

The strength of criterion V is the obvious and inevitable result of a strong criterion III (collaboration). The regional teams that broke down silos and crossed “territories” in order to collaborate in a meaningful way found new and effective ways to streamline programs, reduce duplication of coursework and help career seekers move along a career pathway in a way that maximizes opportunities and minimizes time and other

costs associated with education and training.

The regional teams included in this report committed to articulation where they





could - everywhere they could - to ensure that learning does not suffer and all the requirements of a credential are met. At times, credential programs have been expanded; at other times they have been streamlined. Successful existing programs such as Career and College Promise have been guideposts and integrated partners in the development of articulation and coordination agreements.

Articulation and coordination are the framework from which education and training on an NCWorks Certified Career Pathway coalesce, providing concrete entries and exits for individuals to advance along a career path. This criterion also requires communication and collaboration on the part of multiple education entities and NCWorks Career Centers. The benefit of strong articulation agreements to the pathway participants is immediate and impactful.

TRANSPORTATION

Cumberland County Region

In Cumberland County, strong articulation agreements have made it possible for students to earn additional credits and expedite their path toward credential or degree completion. The recently updated articulation agreement between Cumberland County Schools and Fayetteville Technical Community College is called PACE (Pathway Articulation Credit Earned). Within their NCWorks Certified Career Pathway in transportation, students at Westover High School have the opportunity to earn FTCC course credit in Transportation Technology and Non-Structural Damage I. This has the dual benefit of providing career awareness for high school students and allowing them to earn college credit within a high-wage, high-demand industry sector while still in high school.

Through NCWorks Certified Career Pathways, an Associate in Applied Science degree was created based on the industry's demand for collision repair workers. The program focuses on the Inter-Industry Conference on Auto Collision Repair (I-CAR) technical certification but additional courses were added to the curriculum to create the degree.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

Northeastern Region

During implementation, the region has fast-tracked its advanced manufacturing program through the "I AM" Academy. As early as ninth grade, students can work towards earning college credit in an advanced manufacturing pathway. This is impactful both for students and families who may find the costs of higher education prohibitive for postsecondary studies in the Nash Community College service delivery area.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

Region C

The regional K-12 school systems in Cleveland and McDowell counties have developed and revised unique one-on-one articulation agreements with their respective community colleges. As a result of the career pathway collaborative process, the region's CTE directors partnered and created a manufacturing Career and College Promise program that would serve all four school districts within the region. Not only was this included in the NCWorks Certified Career Pathway in advanced manufacturing, it was also submitted as a part of their annual CTE Strategic Plan application.

A commitment to streamlined articulation and coordination is essential for the success of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways. Across the state, regional teams are developing focused and targeted systems to advance pathway participants along career ladders toward jobs in high-wage, high-demand industry sectors.

Synthesis of Best Practice Criteria

CRITERION VI

Work-Based Learning

Career seekers find suitable opportunities for on-the-job training, internships, apprenticeships and other hands-on learning opportunities.

The sixth criterion, work-based learning, provides a structured experience for career seekers and is supported by a commitment from employers. Work-based learning is a valuable tool for an individual because it provides hands-on experience and skills development to supplement theoretical knowledge at various points along the career pathway. In order to train a job-ready workforce, learning must move outside of the classroom into the real-world settings that give current and future job seekers a better understanding of what will be expected of them as well as the opportunities they will receive along a career path.

NCWorks Certified Career Pathways serve the youngest of students as well as the most senior career professionals. To meet the needs of a diverse group of individuals, work-based learning opportunities are varied in scope and substance. They range from job shadowing and mentoring to the most comprehensive internships, apprenticeships and on-the-job training. Many work-based learning opportunities provide course credit; some are paid and most are a part of an industry recognized credential.

Regional NCWorks Certified Career Pathways teams were asked to report their efforts to develop and promote work-based learning opportunities and to demonstrate committed and continued employer involvement. Each of the teams had multiple employers who provided work-based learning opportunities and leveraged existing offerings, including apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs. In all regions, the goal is to

continue to expand work-based learning programs.

As with other criteria, the quantity and scope of work-based learning opportunities varied among the teams. Without exception each of the 13 teams secured internships, on-the-job training and job shadowing opportunities for pathway enrollees.

NCWorks Certified Career Pathways also helped each region improve its work-based learning offerings within the respective regions. Engaged employers became pathway champions who see the value in a well-trained, job-ready workforce.

“I’ve had companies in Greenville call me and say ‘We really appreciate how you trained your employees! We spend a lot of money on training here but we recognize the value added.’”

— Kim Toler

Training Manager, Nutrien

TRANSPORTATION

Cumberland County Region

In the 2016-2017 school year FTCC began the implementation of Changing Lanes, an Army Career Skills program, through its Corporate & Continuing Education division in partnership with the U.S. Army and Caliber Collision. The program aids





transitioning service members and veterans by allowing them to participate in civilian training, credentialing, apprenticeship and internship programs starting within the first six months after separation from military service. The program is 18 weeks in duration and provides classroom instruction and on-the-job training which consists of students making repairs to vehicles. Students who successfully complete the program are guaranteed job placement at any of Caliber Collision's locations. During the 2016-2017 school year, 53 students had enrolled, 81% completed the program.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Capital Area Region

Lenovo hired 12 WTCC students as paid interns to work at the company for a summer, beginning a new partnership between the company and the college. Participating students earn college credit through WTCC Work-Based Learning Program. The program allows students to receive real work experience, earn money and college credit, and in some cases leads to full-time employment.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

Southwest Region Collaborative

In the Charlotte area, NCWorks Certified Career Pathways have produced programs that are the first of their kind in the region. Several local businesses, American & Efire (A&E), Rochling Engineering Plastics, Dixon Quick Coupling, and GSM Services partnered with the Gaston County Career and Technical Education Program to recruit high school interns during the last half of the school year for full time positions. Through the Gaston School CTE division, students were recruited for employment opportunities in advanced manufacturing. Participating students experience the application and interview process and on-the-job training. In 2016, A&E's program began with two students, one who is still working with A&E and has been promoted since. They now have 11 students participating in the program and hope to provide job assistance at A&E or in the advanced manufacturing field. On May 16, 2018 interns celebrated with the companies in a "Signing Day" to mark their entry into full-time employment with the company of choice. With the partnership between Gaston County Schools and the local business community, the Gaston Workforce Development Board aims to expand this program to include more students in the coming years.

Work-based learning programs within NCWorks Certified Career Pathways help employers recruit and train employees to meet their business needs, reduce training costs and increase retention. Individuals involved in work-based learning programs are able to gain exposure and experience in a professional setting and are taught other fundamentals intrinsic to a professional workplace but often not taught in a classroom. Work-based learning is essential to training a job-ready workforce.

Synthesis of Best Practice Criteria

CRITERION VII

Multiple Points of Exit and Entry

The process of entering and exiting the pathway is made simple to reduce duplication of coursework and to streamline the pathway trajectory.

Similar to articulation and coordination, the seventh criterion - multiple points of entry

and exit - is a key tenet of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways. As the needs of the career pathways enrollee change, access to on- and off- ramps affords the career seeker an opportunity to maximize all of the resources along the pathway.

Multiple points of entry and exit are built into each NCWorks Certified Career Pathway to respond to the needs of the pathway participant. The trajectory of career seekers is often cyclical - periods of education and training

acquisition are followed by stints in the workforce. Often the job seeker will re-enter the pathway for another period of education

and training, with the hopes of moving further along the pathway toward a better job, higher wages or other benefits. This cycle creates the need for multiple points of entry and exit within a pathway and requires career pathways teams to be creative and responsive in the development of career pathways systems.

“We encourage our employees to reach their full potential in healthcare by progressing along the healthcare pathway. So they can start as a Personal Care Attendant through Pre-Apprenticeship and achieve their Certified Nursing Aide through the Apprenticeship program that includes valuable on the job learning. However we have had many caregivers that go on to become nurses or seek other professions in healthcare and we support their development-even if they go beyond our company.”

— Dave Abrams CDIA+

Franchise Owner, ComForCare Home Care

The goal is to provide the quickest path to job readiness, to meet the needs of both career seeker and the employer. This need is

Multiple points of entry and exit do not simply provide career seekers ease of access to the career pathway. They work closely with articulation and coordination (Criterion V) to ensure that a pathway returner has minimal duplication of coursework and credential attainment, reducing time to completion and increasing short and long term career opportunities. The value of stackable credentials is fully realized as career seekers re-enter the pathway.





especially imperative for adult learners and mid-career professionals who are often unable to withstand long periods of unemployment or underemployment. The need to quickly train and retrain them for a high-wage, high-demand job becomes vital.

Each of the 13 teams demonstrated a strong commitment to multiple points of entry and exit. Each one year check-in reveals that the career pathways teams understand the importance and recognize the value of moving career seekers along a pathway in a streamlined and efficient manner, including job seekers who may have exited the pathway and are returning in pursuit of a good job in a high-demand, high-wage industry.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Capital Area Region

In Wake County, the IT Beginnings program is a partnership between Capital Area, WTCC and the City of Raleigh. The program provides entry level IT training and certification for adults aged 18 to 24. This on-ramp is vital for adults who may not have taken IT course offerings in high school. Additionally, the program serves as an on-ramp for Tech Hire, a partnership between Capital Area and WTCC that provides advanced IT training, job programs and supportive services for unemployed and underemployed young adults with other barriers to employment. Through 2018, 254 individuals have participated in the Tech Hire initiative, including 30 incumbent workers seeking career advancement at an IT firm in RTP.

HEALTH CARE

Eastern Carolina Region

Coastal Carolina has developed multi-skill, health care worker (MSHW) cross training certificate programs along the health care pathways. The MSHW is offered in two levels (I and II). A pathway participant can complete level one, earn an MSHW certificate and sit for one of two national health care exams. The participant has the requisite credentials here to exit the pathway and enter the workforce. Or, the individual can continue to level II certification and further enhance his/her career opportunities and income potential.

HEALTH CARE & ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

Northeastern Region

In the Northeastern region, nearly 3,000 high school students completed industry certifications between July 2016 and June 2017. These stackable credentials allow high school graduates to go straight into the workforce or continue adding credentials through higher education and training. The region has added an additional 2,600 credentials at the community college level, demonstrating the many points wherein pathway participants can enter and exit as their education and training needs change.

Stackable credentials within an industry sector make it simpler and more efficient for re-entering pathway participants to quickly add the education and training needed to qualify for jobs in high-wage, high-demand industry sectors. Eliminating or reducing duplicative coursework expedites career seeker education and training attainment, saving time and money in pursuit of a good career at a livable wage. The importance of multiple points of entry is that, whenever the individual seeks to re-enter the pathway for additional education and training, NCWorks certification ensures the process has been simplified and made seamless.

Synthesis of Best Practice Criteria

CRITERION VIII

Evaluation

Effective measures of success are utilized to ensure the pathway has maximum impact in the industry sector within a given region.

The final criterion is evaluation. Evaluation is the criterion that measures how well the career pathways serve job seekers - whether they receive relevant education and training in a streamlined manner that results in a well-paying job in a high-demand industry sector.

Unlike the previous seven criteria, evaluation serves the pathway participant indirectly. As career pathways teams develop, implement, measure and make needed modifications, the career seeker benefits from stronger education and training programs which more closely align worker training to employer need.

The success measures for the evaluation criterion are many and multifaceted. Ultimately, the success of any workforce development program is a worker, fully employed in a good paying job in a growing industry. That is and has been the goal of workforce development efforts in the state for decades. However, beyond employment, there are other markers of program success within NCWorks Certified Career Pathways. The number of pathway participants receiving

relevant education and training is one measure of success. The number of engaged employers within a region, along with the level of their enthusiasm, is also a success measure. Collaboration among agency partners, coupled with their ability to streamline degree and credentialing programs and reduce duplication of coursework certainly can demonstrate the success of a pathway.

Ultimately though, it comes down to jobs - good jobs at a good wage in an industry sector

that will continue to grow well into the future. That is what NCWorks Certified Career Pathways are supposed to attract and prepare workers for.

Each career pathways team determined which success measures would be best for its region and industry sector. Without exception, each team used employment levels

as one of its measures of success. Many also included the number of individuals enrolled in education and training programs as well as the number of work-based learning opportunities offered by employers.

One year of implementation is not nearly long enough to measure the overall impact of NCWorks certification. But there are many early indicators that can be used as guideposts. Each career pathways team reported clearly defined and articulated success in career pathways implementation through year one.

“It is a difficult thing to do to pull data to be able to reflect the successes. [...] sometimes it’s difficult to collect the data, other times it’s difficult to get the data, or even find time to report the data. However, it is a critical component of the career pathway process.”

— Marty Tobey





Evaluation is needed to ensure that NCWorks certification of new and existing career pathways meets the stated goal of matching worker training to employer need in high-wage, high-demand industry sectors. It also provides stakeholders an opportunity to exploit aspects of career pathways development that are working well and revise or improve upon those that are not working as well as anticipated.

Supplementary Research & Data Analysis

Thirteen career pathways teams reached one year of certification by June 30, 2018 and are included in this report (Exhibit 1).

Additionally, the research team conducted two focus groups and 23 individual interviews with career pathways stakeholders across the state (Exhibits 2 and 3). While the data from the check-ins are vital to provide an understanding of the effects of career pathways implementation within a region, one year check-ins are largely compiled by workforce development professionals. The supplementary data goes further to capture the impact from the perspective of other stakeholder groups, such as individuals on a career path and community partners. The combination of one year check-ins, focus groups and interviews provides a rich understanding of the impact of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways on the North Carolina workforce.

POSITIVE IMPACT: SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE FIELD

The qualitative data analysis reveals four ways NCWorks Certified Career Pathways have had a positive impact on the state since their inception. NCWorks Certified Career Pathways (1) ease the financial burden of education and training for career seekers; (2) upskill career seekers which makes them attractive candidates for gainful employment; (3) facilitate regional support, capacity building and collaboration for workforce partners, and; (4) cause a domino effect and inspire other successes outside of their initial scope. In this section, each of these mechanisms will be discussed by highlighting success stories and quotes from the field.





EASING THE FINANCIAL BURDEN FOR ENROLLEES

“I was top five in my graduating class. I got accepted to UNC-Chapel Hill and that’s kind of where I was headed...but one of my goals was to graduate college debt free and through the Regionally Increasing Baccalaureate Nurses program and staying at home, I’m able to come close or accomplish that goal all together.”

– *Alisha Sechrest*
Career Seeker, Nursing Health Care,
TriadWorks Region

NCWorks Certified Career Pathways are a viable option for traditional college aged students who desire to expand their opportunities in their home communities. Although she was accepted into UNC-Chapel Hill as a high school senior, Alisha Sechrest decided to stay in the Piedmont-Triad region to pursue her postsecondary training through an NCWorks Certified Career Pathway in nursing. Sechrest is the first student to enroll in Davidson County Community College (DCCC)’s *Regionally Increasing Baccalaureate Nurses* (RIBN) Program. Through this program, Sechrest is dually enrolled in both DCCC and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NCA&T). She affirms that staff at both the community college and university have been extremely helpful in providing her with resources and support. Upon successful completion, Sechrest will graduate with an associate’s degree in May 2019 and bachelor’s degree in nursing in 2020. By staying in her home community and completing a portion of her nursing program at DCCC, Sechrest has been able to greatly reduce the cost of the education and training she has received on her way to a career in a high-wage, high-demand industry sector.

“It helped me to work fewer hours while I was in school, so I could really focus more on my school work versus having to worry about can I make the rent this month or can I afford this.”

– *Melissa Wilson*
Career Seeker, Health Care
Northeastern Region

NCWorks Certified Career Pathways also provide support for historically underrepresented students. As a single mom and a full time student, Melissa Wilson had mounting financial responsibilities, which made it difficult for her to focus on her education. As a result of her participation in the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) program, Wilson was able to pay her basic bills and also afford her training program. The WIOA program reimbursed Wilson for daycare expenses, gas mileage tuition and books. In 2016, Wilson graduated with her Registered Nursing license from College of the Albemarle in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. As a part of an NCWorks Certified Career Pathway, the College of the Albemarle was able to collaborate with the local workforce development board to provide education and training as well as support services to Wilson, to expedite her time toward degree completion and reduce her costs.

UPSKILLING ENROLLEES FOR GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT

“The apprenticeship is recognized nationwide...We actually have an employee that his father was in the military and they were stationed in Alaska for a long time and they’re from [North Carolina] so he came back and actually came to work here. And he decided he wanted to go back home, and he was in the apprenticeship program. He was here for a while. He hadn’t got his certificate yet, but he completed everything. We usually have a graduation. He called me and he had gone back to Alaska and he said, “Ms. Kim can you please send me my certificate when you get it because I want to be a permanent employee?” He was a temporary employee. So as soon it came in and I overnighted it to him and he called me and he said “I want to thank you because I now have a permanent position because of that certificate.”

In the above quote, Kim Toler illustrates how a pathway participant secures a permanent position with an industry-led training certificate. The eight best practice criteria, specifically work-based learning and multiple points of entry and exit work in tandem to support individuals in securing local work-based learning opportunities and achieving industry recognized credentials. The role of employer engagement is also essential in creating and promoting industry recognized certifications that lead career seekers to permanent positions. These types of certifications and programs within NCWorks Certified Career Pathways demonstrate to career seekers that the training and coursework they receive is industry-led and useful for job obtainment and career advancement.

“I didn’t really have any experience when I came [to STI]. This was totally different than what I had done at [my last job], but I like it, I know that.”

– *Shelia Stone*

*Career Seeker, Advanced Manufacturing
Southwest Region Collaborative*

After working in the steel industry for almost two decades, Sheila Stone’s company closed. With all of her training and skills in that industry, Stone initially had difficulty finding work. She was out of work nearly a year when her daughter suggested she apply to STI. Through their on-the-job training program, Stone was able to gain the skills she needed to be successful. Today, Stone is a loom creeler in STI’s weaving department. Her experience highlights the importance of work-based learning, which provided a structured experience and was supported by a commitment from STI. Stone’s experience encapsulates the power of engaged employers who support on-the-job training and work-based learning programs. By empowering job seekers and training them to gain industry skills applicable to the local job market a well-trained worker is able to gain life changing employment in a high-wage, high-demand industry.



REGIONAL SUPPORT, CAPACITY BUILDING AND COLLABORATION FOR WORKFORCE PARTNERS

“In January it will be two years since our region received its first certified pathway, so it’s a little too early to tell [the impact], but I do think that by having a regional pathway we’ve been able to leverage funds in order to develop fliers and career information that can be shared with everyone...Our college is smaller than most, so having the help of the whole region to showcase pathways has been beneficial to us... Community colleges in our region have come together as one unit to host career fairs and symposiums. I think having regional certified pathways has helped community colleges collaborate more with each other and that is only going to benefit students.”

– *Bena Weires*
Career Coach, Carteret
Community College

NCWorks Certified Career Pathways align workforce readiness activities between training programs, workforce professionals and employers. NCWorks Certified Career Pathways do not “reinvent the wheel,” rather they coordinate and create structure around existing workforce development initiatives within a region. As one workforce board director once stated, NCWorks Certified Career Pathways put our good work “on steroids.” NCWorks Certified Career Pathways foster awareness by branding high quality and multifaceted strategies collaborators employ to fill in-demand careers in the state. They are, as Dr. Shelley White, VP of Economic & Workforce Development/ Continuing Education at AB Tech, described “a vehicle we can all latch onto.” Ultimately, having an NCWorks Certified Career Pathway communicates a collective strategy for addressing local workforce needs.

Workforce development programs often operate in silos due to lack of time and awareness of potential partnerships. NCWorks Certified Career Pathways remedy this pattern by bringing together decision makers from multiple workforce groups including employers, community

colleges, K-12 school systems and workforce development boards. These groups may not intentionally work together outside of developing an NCWorks Certified Career Pathway. Yet, each of these partners has a vested interest in attracting and retaining more job seekers in high-demand career fields within their region. The act of developing an NCWorks Certified Career Pathway requires diverse leaders to meet regularly, discuss their local workforce needs and work collaboratively toward a common goal. In doing so, NCWorks Certified Career Pathways break down silos and encourage workforce professionals to share best practices and develop mutually beneficial partnerships. Leslie Farris, Strategic Initiatives Coordinator for Western Piedmont Works, stated it succinctly, “it’s a benefit for everybody.”

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“I actually have heard employers say, during our employer panels which are made up of industry panelists, I’ve heard them say ‘I didn’t know that your college taught this,’ or ‘I didn’t know that NCWorks Career Centers could provide that.’ So not only are we getting them all in the same room and they’re networking, but they’re learning.”

– *Patty Thompson*
Northwest Region Career
Pathways Facilitator

By coming together and developing collective strategies, NCWorks Certified Career Pathways foster networking and learning amongst workforce partners. Collaborators who are subject matter experts in their particular agencies also become well versed in the myriad issues and opportunities in their local area. Thus, partners learn about all that is available in the workforce system and how their respective programs fit into the larger ecosystem. Armed with this knowledge, stakeholders are more apt to utilize and share workforce resources in the community. For example, during the process of developing an NCWorks Certified Career Pathway, it is common for employers to learn about classes

and customized training services offered at the local community college and then partner with them to train their employees. New collaborations are not limited to employers, though. In the development of the TriadWorks Region's NCWorks Certified Career Pathway in nursing healthcare, the

local school system shared its ongoing capacity issue: it could only train and graduate ten CNAs per semester due to a lack of instructors. Recognizing the issue, the local community college initiated a partnership to help the school system train more CNAs.

DOMINO EFFECT THAT INSPIRES OTHER SUCCESSES

"I think this is an unintentional success but I have seen groups achieve work-ready community status as a result of these groups working together...I think [NCWorks Certified Career Pathways] brought the right folks together to help that happen."

— *Ann Callicut*
Southwest Region Career and Technical Education Coordinator for NCDPI

In addition to being the Southwest Region Career and Technical Education Coordinator for NCDPI, Ann Callicut serves on the IRT which was instrumental in the development of the eight best practice criteria and reviews each career pathways application to determine its suitability for certification. As such, Callicut is in a unique position to observe the evolution of a certified career pathway, from the earliest stages of creation through full-scale implementation. From that perspective, she shares how NCWorks Certified Career Pathways bring local teams together in achieving work-ready community status which was not an initial goal of NCWorks certification but further demonstrates how this work is not done in a vacuum but proves useful for many other areas of workforce development.

"The pathways are starting to drive other conversations, for example, I know that DPI and the North Carolina Community College System are providing Perkins incentive grants to support and expand pathways, preferably certified pathways. I can see this becoming a baseline for us looking at future pathways we develop down the road...I use our certified pathways to determine where I want to put some of my Perkins funds."

— *Dr. Gene Loflin*

As Loflin suggests above, NCWorks Certified Career Pathways are aligned with other funding sources and programs. Perkins incentive grants are one resource available to develop more fully the academic skills as well as the career and technical skills of secondary education students and postsecondary education students who elect to enroll in career and technical education programs. NCWorks certification demonstrates to funders that workforce development programs have met with a rigorous review process, are employer led, meet the needs of the regions employers and job seekers and will train a job-ready community. This is an example of the domino effect that NCWorks Certified Career Pathways have on other programs and services.





“[We have] local implementation certifications...Once our regional pathway is certified at the state level then it’s a two pronged approach - so we take it to the regional level then down to the localized level. So, Pitt Community College, they got theirs in healthcare, so we recognize all the partners specifically in Pitt County, the high schools, the workforce board, and the community colleges, and the employers in that area that had been involved in being able to implement the healthcare career pathway in that local area. We’ve got criteria similar to the state as far as certifying those pathways. We have that in place at the local level where we...[are] also endorsing them on a local level.”

– Larry Donley

Donley, NCWorks Regional Operations Director in the Northeast, describes his region’s local implementation certifications, designed to complement the implementation of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways. The process of local implementation is guided by teams consisting of the same representatives that work together to develop and implement NCWorks Certified Career Pathways - representatives from colleges, K-12 school systems, NCWorks Career Centers and local employers. These teams come together to modify the regional NCWorks Certified Career Pathway to meet local needs and develop and execute implementation that aligns with regional strategies and goals. Local initiatives like these assist in maintaining communication between career pathways partners and help to refine the program at the local level.

Outside of their prescribed outcomes, NCWorks Certified Career Pathways also have several unintentional successes. In other words, there are positive impacts of the NCWorks Certified Career Pathways process that were not in the original intent of the program. The data show that NCWorks Certified Career Pathways teams are more likely to achieve work-ready community status, encourage collaboration on related projects such as Perkins grant funding and successfully implement local programs that complement the state level certification process.

Improvement Opportunities: Recommendations for the Future

A serious review of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways after one year of implementation requires the research team to probe the available data to determine opportunities for improvement. The NCWorks Commission members and staff designed the certification process over a period of years, with consideration to previously existing workforce development programs both in North Carolina and nationally. The available research suggested that a successful workforce development system would include a focus on career pathways in high-wage, high-demand industry sectors.

After one year of implementation, the Commission is committed to a review - not just of the successes of the initiative, but also of the areas wherein the certified career pathways process could be improved. While the success to date makes evident the need for and usefulness of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways, identifying areas for improvement provides workforce development professionals opportunities to make mid-course corrections and upgrades and - as the data warrant - better serve employers and career seekers.

A review of the supplemental qualitative data reveals at least two opportunities to strengthen NCWorks Certified Career Pathways going forward. The first opportunity is in the outreach of career pathways to job seekers - including students and parents - and the front line staff that serves them. The second opportunity to strengthen career pathways is by maintaining the momentum from pathways development to pathways implementation. The data indicate various recommendations within these two opportunities to enhance the NCWorks Certified Career Pathways.





ENHANCED OUTREACH EFFORTS TO PARENTS, STUDENTS, AND FRONT LINE STAFF

“I think the pathway is a great tool, I’m not sure it’s being marketed as strongly as it needs to be.”

– Warren Crow, Director of Health Careers and NA Training Program & Assistant Professor
Guilford Technical Community College

“I think the biggest impact is going to be the awareness. The more you can advertise the career pathways and get that awareness out there, the better. [...] If we can use this to get that knowledge base out across the state, we can get everybody at three percent or less unemployment rate, rather than just the counties that have the good, growing, expanding Aviation businesses like we do. That’s where I’m really hoping this will work because under the community college system the way in which we can advertise is limited. I can advertise in Guilford County, but I cannot advertise in areas that may need job growth outside of my county.”

– Nicolas Yale

“I think there has been too much programming around everyone having to have a four year university degree, and it’s depleted our trades: masonries, electricians, mechanics... background, basic machining principles, design and blueprint reading, and that creates a void for most of the manufacturers looking for this talent, especially right now with unemployment less than four percent. It makes it very difficult to [get] the people you need.

Our struggle is getting candidates prepared to enter the workforce in the manufacturing or production environment. I think we do a really good job offering different pathways in North Carolina, but we’re not getting enough kids in those classes to build a pool of candidates that are qualified so I think we have a lot of work to go. But North Carolina Manufacturing Institute is another initiative to try to fill that gap.”

– Kevin Smith, Site Operations Manager
Doosan Bobcats

NCWorks Certified Career Pathways is a brand within workforce development; it is a strategy for coordinating education and training programs that prepare workers for high-wage, high-demand careers. However, the pathways brand and its associated programs are not always well known or understood among many job seekers, including students, parents or the front line staff that advises them. Partners describe how job seekers and staff are often unaware of the diverse opportunities available through an NCWorks Certified Career Pathway. While career pathways programs are available and have great potential to impact the career trajectories of enrollees, their impact is limited to the scope of the audience they attract. In short, no matter how successful a pathway program is, if its marketing is not reaching the masses, this creates a ceiling to the success of the pathway. Stakeholders described the barriers they encountered when marketing NCWorks Certified Career Pathways to different groups such as limited funding and lack of staff with the requisite expertise to reach youth and young adult career seekers. Increasing resources for and knowledge about outreach are essential to improve pathways outreach.

NCWorks Certified Career Pathways partners agree that enhanced outreach efforts are needed to better educate job seekers about the education and training programs that form the pathway. Partners also confirm that many parents are unaware of career opportunities available to their students outside of a four-year degree, and the training programs that prepare students for those fields. Career awareness activities and subsequent education and training programs should not only target students, but also their decision-makers, the parents. Furthermore, pathways programs are often introduced to job seekers by front line staff, such as high school teachers and advisors. Thus, stakeholders underscore that more intentionality can be directed to ensure these staff members have the information they need to counsel career seekers about the various paths they can take along their career ladder.

CONTINUING MOMENTUM FROM DEVELOPMENT TO IMPLEMENTATION

“It would be great to reconvene the creators of the pathway and have a robust conversation. Is there anything you would change at this point? Is there anything that we should be monitoring that we are not monitoring? [...] We are probably about 18 months out from the certification of the nursing pathway, and I think it would be great to look at reconvening those committees.”

– *Warren Crow*

“I think that it is very early in the implementation process to be able to measure the impact of the pathway program. I am excited about the broad and diverse needs that the pathways will meet, and I believe we need to work closely with the school system to develop an effective implementation plan. As with any new initiative, there will be challenges. Meeting individual student needs will be one of the greatest challenges of the program, and I think that educating the school staff even beyond the school counselors, will be critical for the success of the program. School counselors, CDCs, and teachers will all need to have knowledge of the program and its purpose in order to help students be successful and to disseminate the pathway information. I am hopeful that working together with the schools will bring about the positive results and clarity the pathways were created to provide.”

– *Lisa Lassiter, Administrator of Vidant Health Careers, Vidant Health*

“I think that many of them, the employers, came to the initial planning meeting saying “This is my level of involvement, I’m going to give you input and then you, community colleges, you, K-12, you’re just going to go out and make it happen.” And the whole idea, in my mind, was that the planning was a part of making sure that all the parties, especially employers, continued to come to the table and actively participate in the implementation and success of the identified pathways.”

– *Dr. Gene Loflin*

“The piece that I think we’re still trying to improve upon would be getting the staff members in our NCWorks career centers to understand that they’re doing all this pathway work, even though they may not realize that it’s defined as pathway work. A lot of times they’ll have questions, at least early on in our process, like “I don’t know if I understand it. What does it exactly mean for me working in the career center?” We had to break it down and talk to them about it. Well, you’re already meeting with clients job searching and they have questions about what are my options for careers. What information are you sharing with them about that particular career? And who are your contacts to try to connect them to learn about furthering their education? [...] And then finally the light bulb goes off in their mind that “Oh, I am already doing this.”

– *Larry Donley*

In addition to the need to better communicate career pathways opportunities to job seekers - including students and parents - and the front line staff that serves them, career pathways teams must maintain the momentum of career pathway development through career pathway implementation, which can be challenging. Many stakeholders, including employers, view the certification of the pathway as the “end” of the journey, rather than what it really is - the beginning of the real work of training a job-ready employee for a great career in a growing industry.

The importance of continuing momentum after the certification of a pathway is imperative to the success of the pathway. The more successful pathways are those that - after certification - are able





to keep the employers engaged, host follow up meetings and summits, continue to share ideas and resources and leverage existing partnerships and collaboration.

Partners indicated that there were resources and support during the development and certification of the career pathways. Once the career pathways were certified, many partners underscored a lack of resources available to guide them through the implementation of the career pathways plans. Put differently by Dr. Gene Loflin, “The birthing ain’t easy, but the raising is even harder.” In particular, pathways partners discussed how continuing momentum is difficult and suggested having regular check in meetings with the pathways creators to foster ongoing communication and collaboration.

In addition to engaging stakeholders overall, continuing to engage employers after a pathway is certified was also highlighted as especially challenging. Employers can be incredibly busy, which makes continuous communication difficult. This difficulty is compounded by lack of understanding regarding implementation tasks. Employers may expect their efforts during the development phase to be sufficient, assuming that the pathway will be self-sustaining once it is certified by the Commission. However, from the workforce development perspective, employer engagement is critical to the success of career pathway implementation. Consequently, workforce professionals repeatedly cited employer engagement as what makes the NCWorks Certified Career Pathways unique from other pathways programs.

This misalignment of employer engagement expectations speaks to a larger implementation challenge, which is ensuring that all partners have the same understanding of their respective roles in the implementation of the pathway. Many pathways partners feel as though their roles in the certification process are clearly defined, however, guidelines for the implementation component are open ended. Partners need to determine their roles in the implementation of the pathway and view implementation as a continuation of collaboration and employer engagement. Webinars, career pathways events and other outreach methods should continue to be utilized to support the pathway implementation strategies of local teams. In order to achieve the long term success of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways, champions of this work and partners across the state must continue to educate stakeholders, engage employers, train and retrain front line staff and set clear expectations of career pathways implementation.

Conclusion

NCWorks Certified Career Pathways are the result of vision, strategy, collaboration and hard work on the part of numerous local, regional and statewide pathways champions across North Carolina.

Many workforce development partners, including the NCWorks Commission, the NC Economic Development Board, local workforce development boards, universities, community colleges, K-12 school systems and community partners and champions have put in countless of hours creating, developing, implementing and reviewing certified career pathways to ensure that the North Carolina workforce is prepared to meet the challenges of the current and future economy.

From the first pathway certified by the NCWorks Commission - healthcare in the Northeastern Region - to the 35th pathway - advanced manufacturing in Eastern Carolina, regional teams have engaged employers, convened stakeholders, provided hours of staff training and leveraged existing relationships to develop a workforce training system that is nimble, dynamic and responsive to the needs of the North Carolina workforce.

The 35 NCWorks Certified Career Pathways in North Carolina are in healthcare, transportation and logistics, manufacturing, hospitality and tourism and other high growth, high-wage industry sectors across the state. Thirteen of these pathways have reached a level of maturity that allows for observation, review and analysis of the career pathways systems, both as a statewide initiative and regionally - as on the ground partners implement the education and training programs that prepare a job-ready workforce.

Information and idea sharing are a key component of career pathways success. The One Year Impact Report provides rich sharing of ideas, successes and opportunities for improvement that each team can utilize to strengthen its pathway systems on the way to matching worker training to employer need. As North Carolina considers its future in workforce development, this report provides career pathways stakeholders an opportunity to exploit successful programs and initiatives and to leverage opportunities for improvement to ensure that career pathways certification and implementation remain an integral part of workforce development, training and preparation for a generation.





Appendix

NCWORKS CERTIFIED CAREER PATHWAYS REACHING ONE YEAR MARK BEFORE JUNE 30, 2018

EXHIBIT 1

Prosperity Zone	Sector	Date Certified	WD Board(s)	Counties
Northeast, North Central	Healthcare	2/17/2016	Northeastern, Region Q, Turning Point	Currituck, Camden, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Chowan, Gates, Washington, Tyrell, Dare, Hyde, Hertford, Bertie, Martin, Pitt, Beaufort, Northampton, Halifax, Nash, Edgecombe, Wilson
Sandhills	Collision Repair	8/10/2016	Cumberland County	Cumberland
North Central	Information Technology	11/9/2016	Capital Area	Wake, Johnston, Durham, Caswell, Person, Granville, Vance, Warren, Franklin
North Central	Advanced Manufacturing	11/9/2016	Kerr-Tar	Wake, Johnson, Durham, Caswell, Person, Granville, Vance, Warren, Franklin
North Central, Sandhills, Piedmont- Triad	Nursing	11/9/2016	Northwest Piedmont, Davidson Works, Guilford County, Regional Partnership (Triad Works)	Forsyth, Davie, Surry, Stokes, Rockingham, Yadkin, Caswell, Davidson, Guilford, Alamance, Montgomery, Moore, Orange, Randolph
Northeast, North Central	Advanced Manufacturing	11/9/2016	Northeastern, Region Q, Turning Point	Currituck, Camden, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Chowan, Gates, Washington, Tyrell, Dare, Hyde, Hertford, Bertie, Martin, Pitt, Beaufort, Northampton, Halifax, Nash, Edgecombe, Wilson
North Central	Health Life Sciences	11/9/2016	Durham	Wake, Johnson, Durham, Caswell, Person, Granville, Vance, Warren, Franklin
Western	Advanced Manufacturing	11/9/2016	Mountain Area	Madison, Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania
Southeast	Health Sciences	2/8/2017	Eastern Carolina	Carteret, Craven, Duplin, Greene, Jones, Lenoir, Onslow, Pamlico, and Wayne
Western	Advanced Manufacturing	2/8/2017	Southwestern	Cherokee, Graham, Clay, Macon, Jackson, Haywood, Swain
Western	Hospitality & Tourism	2/8/2017	Mountain Area	Madison, Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania
Southwest, Northwest, Western	Advanced Manufacturing	2/8/2017	Region C	Cleveland, McDowell, Polk, Rutherford
Southwest	Advanced Manufacturing	2/8/2017	Centralina, Charlotte Works, Gaston	Gaston, Lincoln, Iredell, Rowan, Cabarrus, Stanly, Union, Anson, Mecklenburg

FOCUS GROUP

EXHIBIT 2

Total Focus Group Count: 2	Stakeholders
Focus Group 1	Interagency Review Team Members (4)
Focus Group 2	NCWorks Career Pathways Facilitators (7)

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS PER PROSPERITY ZONE

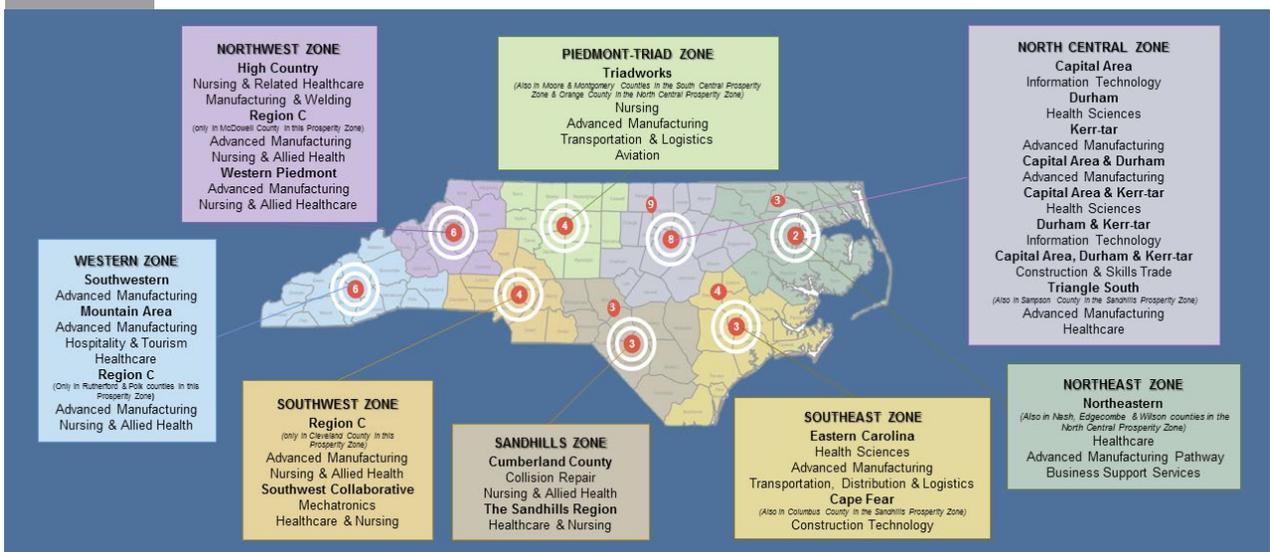
EXHIBIT 3

Prosperity Zone	Stakeholders
Northeast	NC Commerce, Enrollee (Health Care), Employer (Health Care), Employer (Health Care)
Southeast	Employer (Advanced Manufacturing), Community College, K-12
Sandhills	NC Commerce
Piedmont Triad	Enrollee (Health Care), Employer (Health Care), Community College (2)
Southwest	Enrollee (Advanced Manufacturing), Employer (Advanced Manufacturing), Community College, Workforce Development Board, K-12
Northwest	Employer (Advanced Manufacturing), Workforce Development Board, K-12
Western	Community College (2), Workforce Development Board

TOTAL PARTICIPANT COUNT: 23

NCWORKS CERTIFIED CAREER PATHWAYS TO DATE: NOVEMBER 2018

EXHIBIT 4



Please note that there are 35 NCWorks Certified Career Pathways as of November 2018. The Map below reflects 39 pathways to account for the pathways in Region C, which crosses the Northwest Prosperity Zone, the Western Prosperity Zone and the Southwest Prosperity Zone.





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