



SPOTLIGHT ON LOCAL WORKFORCE INNOVATIONS

NCWorks Mobile Career Center: Opportunities on Wheels

Imagine being homeless, lacking transportation to get to a career center, or being a veteran needing help compiling a resume, a parent wanting to get back into the job market, an employer wanting to assist employees with offboarding during a layoff, or a justice-involved citizen needing guidance on the next steps. These are all North Carolina residents that the NCWorks Mobile Career Center can support. This mobile unit offers workforce services at locations throughout the state, based on requests that come through a local Workforce Development Board. Workforce professionals from the area where the unit is deployed are then assigned to assist with multiple career service activities. Reservations are on a first-come, first-served basis, with "Rapid Response" events taking top priority over other crisis situations. Rapid Response is an early intervention program that helps employers and workers facing layoffs, closures, and other sensitive business actions.



When this mobile unit drives up anywhere in North Carolina, it is a symbol of our commitment to reach out and serve our people and our businesses - connecting talent to jobs, in both urban and rural areas."

MACHELLE BAKER SANDERS
Secretary, N.C. Department of Commerce

In other cases, a local board can request the unit for a community resource fair or a veterans' event, where individuals with barriers to employment can utilize work-based resources like resume writing, labor market information, and training opportunities, as well as seeking assistance from local outreach organizations. The mobile unit has been spotted traveling far and wide across our great state to provide guidance where there is a need for these essential services. This mobile career center meets individuals where they are in their job-search journey and brings the services of a traditional career center to them - from career counseling to a space for a job interview.

Jazmine Holt, Administrative Specialist with the North Carolina Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Solutions, explained that through Rapid Response, "We provide in-person or virtual services early on to ensure that employees have a smooth and successful transition

into new jobs. The NCWorks mobile unit provides access to the NCWorks.gov website, which allows access to available job vacancies. The mobile unit has 12 individual workstations, including internet access, Smart TV's and a private conference room with access to wheelchair lifting. The program serves dislocated workers, families, and N.C. communities to address layoffs, while assisting job seekers and helping with NCWorks.gov registration."

Rapid Response began with the passage of the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act of 1988. This is a U.S. labor law that protects employees, their families, and communities by requiring most employers with 100 or more employees to provide notice, 60 calendar days in advance, of planned closings and mass layoffs of employees. Jazmine Holt explained, "We quickly respond to these notices and meet with the management team of the business early on to develop a plan of action on how to best serve the employees." Rapid Response has also incorporated strategies to help manufacturers avert or prevent layoffs. There is increased focus on this industry, since most manufacturing jobs do not require a college degree but provide a livable and sustainable wage. But North Carolina's workforce partners can use the Mobile Career Center as a tool to help meet the talent needs of employers in all sorts of industries.

North Carolina's new mobile unit launched early in 2023, replacing a previous "career center on wheels" that dated from 2006, and featuring upgrades in technology as well as comfort. In its first year, the new NCWorks Mobile Career Center was dispatched to 30 different counties and 37 communities across North Carolina, logging more than 14,000 miles on the road and visiting each of the state's eight Prosperity Zones at least once.

The first major trip for this new unit was to Haywood County, as part of the Rapid Response to the significant layoffs at Pactiv Evergreen, impacting almost 1,100 workers. Another major event was a Rapid Response job fair in Taylorsville, as that area dealt with the sudden closure of the Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams furniture plant, affecting more than 500 workers. The mobile unit was essential to the success of that event. It has also been to an NCWorks Commission meeting, several special cross-state job fairs that North Carolina held in partnership with the state of South Carolina, a military veteran talent attraction event, a job fair for State agencies in Raleigh, numerous community resource fairs, and more. It's even participated in the Rocky Mount Christmas parade!

"Led by our First in Talent Plan, we are emphasizing North Carolina's workforce as key to our economic development success, because our greatest asset is our people," N.C. Commerce Secretary Machel Baker Sanders said in 2024. "When this mobile unit drives up anywhere in North Carolina, it is a symbol of our commitment to reach out and serve our people and our businesses - connecting talent to jobs, in both urban and rural areas."



NCWorks Commission staff join Mobile Career Center staff members for a tour of the mobile unit's interior.



The NCWorks Mobile Career Center provides assistance with next steps during a transition or layoff.

REQUEST SERVICES

Make a request for the NCWorks Mobile Career Center through your local Workforce Development Board or local NCWorks Career Center. Contact information is available at www.NCWorks.gov.

► About the Series

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

The NCWorks Commission is the state's Workforce Development Board. Led by a private sector chair, the 37-member, Governor-appointed commission includes representatives from the business community, heads of state, workforce agencies, educators, and community leaders.

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