

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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SENATE BILL DRS45120-NGa-33

Short Title: Establish NCSTARS Grant Program. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Settle, Craven, and Johnson (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE NORTH CAROLINA STRATEGIC TRAINING AND
RELIABLE SKILLS GRANT PROGRAM TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT IN
APPRENTICESHIP AND PREAPPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS AND TO APPROPRIATE
FUNDS FOR THAT PURPOSE.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**PART I. ESTABLISH NORTH CAROLINA STRATEGIC TRAINING AND RELIABLE
SKILLS GRANT PROGRAM**

SECTION 1.(a) Program Established; Purpose. – There is established the North Carolina Strategic Training And Reliable Skills Grant Program (NCSTARS) for the 2026-2027 through 2028-2029 academic years. The purpose of NCSTARS is to provide matching grants to community colleges that partner with nearby public school units and local business partners to develop a regional, work-based learning program to provide opportunities to learn and reinforce key skills for postsecondary opportunities, including apprenticeships and preapprenticeships, to students age 16 and older that are eligible for work-based learning according to the Department of Public Instruction.

SECTION 1.(b) Program Participation; Grant Recipient Selection. – During the 2025-2026 academic year, the Community Colleges System Office shall, in consultation with Surry-Yadkin Works, create an application for community colleges to receive NCSTARS grants. The application shall be made available to all community colleges no later than 60 days after this act becomes law. Applications shall be submitted to the System Office no later than 60 days after the application is made available. The System Office shall select three community colleges to receive NCSTARS grants no more than 30 days after the close of the application period. The System Office shall consult with Surry-Yadkin Works when determining which community colleges shall receive NCSTARS grants. The System Office shall prioritize the selection of applicants whose applications include the establishment of programs substantially similar to the Fostering Learning through Education, Employment, and Trades (FLEET) program operated by Surry-Yadkin Works. The application shall include at least the following:

- (1) A resolution signed by the board of trustees of the community college stating their intention to participate in NCSTARS.
- (2) A resolution signed by the governing body of each public school unit intending to partner with the community college to participate in NCSTARS.
- (3) Letters from at least five local employers stating their intention to partner with the community college to participate in NCSTARS.



- (4) A detailed plan and statement from the community college explaining how the community college will model their program after Surry-Yadkin Works.
- (5) A plan to continue the program beyond the 2028-2029 academic year, regardless of the availability of any State funds.
- (6) Any other information requested by the System Office.

SECTION 1.(c) Grants. – Each participating community college shall receive grants of up to five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) for each year of NCSTARS. The System Office shall provide matching funds in the amount of three dollars (\$3.00) for every one dollar (\$1.00) of local funding contributed toward NCSTARS. Acceptable uses for grant funds include the following:

- (1) Stipends for students.
- (2) Travel expenses for students.
- (3) Staff salaries and benefits.
- (4) Other expenses incurred in the course of participating in NCSTARS.

SECTION 1.(d) Technical Assistance. – Surry-Yadkin Works shall provide ongoing technical assistance to all participating community colleges.

SECTION 1.(e) Initial Report. – The System Office shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by April 1, 2026, on the following:

- (1) The community colleges that were selected to participate in NCSTARS.
- (2) The number of public school units participating in NCSTARS and which community college they are partnering with.
- (3) The number of local businesses participating in NCSTARS and which community college they are partnering with.
- (4) The number of registered apprentices or preapprentices that have been established as a result of NCSTARS.
- (5) The anticipated dollar value of grants to be given out over the course of NCSTARS.
- (6) Any other information the System Office deems relevant.

SECTION 1.(f) Final Report. – The System Office shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by August 1, 2029, on the following:

- (1) The total dollar value of grants that were given out over the course of NCSTARS.
- (2) An evaluation of the effectiveness of NCSTARS.
- (3) The number of registered apprentices or preapprentices that have been established as a result of NCSTARS.
- (4) A summary of local government plans to continue their program beyond the 2028-2029 academic year.
- (5) Any recommended legislative actions to continue or modify NCSTARS.

PART II. APPROPRIATION

SECTION 2.(a) There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Community Colleges System Office the sum of four million seven hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$4,750,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2025-2026 fiscal year to provide grants pursuant to Section 1 of this act. Funds appropriated by this section shall not revert but shall remain available until the end of the 2028-2029 fiscal year.

SECTION 2.(b) Of the funds appropriated by subsection (a) of this section, up to two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) shall be made available to Surry-Yadkin Works for technical assistance. Of the funds appropriated by subsection (a) of this section, up to fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) shall be made available to the System Office for administrative support.

SECTION 2.(c) This section becomes effective July 1, 2025.

PART III. EFFECTIVE DATE

SECTION 3. Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes law.