myFUTURENC

2 million by 2030

NORTH CAROLINA'S STATE OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT REPORT

20 25

Economic Prosperity for All North Carolinians

To ensure North Carolina remains economically competitive now and into the future, in 2019, with bipartisan support in the General Assembly and a signature from the Governor, the state of North Carolina adopted one of the most ambitious goals in the nation—to have 2 million North Carolinians aged 25-44 to hold an industry-valued credential or postsecondary degree by 2030.

By increasing educational attainment opportunities for all, North Carolina creates upward mobility and enhanced economic prosperity for our citizens and communities while also meeting the current and future workforce needs of business and industry. Additionally, higher levels of education enhance entrepreneurship which can help boost local economies, especially in rural areas of the state.

OUR VISION

North Carolina employers have the necessary skilled workforce to meet business demands, and every individual in the labor market earns a family-sustaining wage in a personally fulfilling career. This positions our state to remain economically competitive now and into the future.

OUR MISSION

- myFutureNC promotes work of all sectors and helps find and fill gaps to drive educational access and attainment outcomes that align with and fulfill employer needs.

- myFutureNC promotes a shared vision for an education-to-workforce continuum across North Carolina—from early childhood through adulthood—and aligns and supports local, regional, and state actions that will dramatically increase attainment of industry-valued credentials and postsecondary degrees.

*my*FUTURENC

2 million by 2030

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Investments for All North Carolinians

North Carolina has many successes to celebrate, and we have hope for a future filled with economic prosperity for all North Carolinians. Our state has a booming economy, and **for the fifth consecutive year, we've ranked among the top three of America's Top States for Business**. Our excellent business climate, robust educational infrastructure, and ongoing statewide collaboration made this distinction possible.

> *To remain competitive, we call to action all policymakers, state and local leaders, and North Carolinians to move forward with a sense of urgency and pull out all the stops to increase educational attainment and meet the state's codified goal of 2 million by 2030!*

Every year has improved, but our state remains short of its educational attainment goal. The consequences include a skilled workforce shortfall, income inequality, limited upward mobility, reduced economic development opportunities, and policy implications. We cannot linger—*education is economic development, quality health, public safety, and prosperity!*

In 2031, it is projected that 85% of good jobs will require workers to have an education beyond high school; however, **only 31% of ninth-grade public school students** in our state graduate high school on time and **earn a college degree or certificate within six years after graduation**. This rate has remained stagnant pre- and post-COVID, and the state's education-to-workforce pathway doesn't work for all. Although on-time enrollment of current students younger than 18 years old will not impact the 2 million by 2030 goal, on-time enrollment and academic readiness remains essential to increasing the attainment of high school graduates now and beyond 2030.

Though we've made progress in attainment—with 1.66 million North Carolinians aged 25-44 currently holding a degree or credential, reflecting **a 15% growth in four years**—we are still 13,279 individuals short of where we need to be at this time. Unfortunately, this shortfall puts North Carolina behind, and at this pace, we are projected to fall short by 55K with a degree or credential by year-end 2030. Given the twelve-month lag in data availability, we strive to meet the goal by 2029 to celebrate in 2030. However, projections show us falling short by 95K individuals with a degree or credential in 2029 if the state doesn't take immediate action.

To address our current shortfall, first, we must focus on immediate opportunities for adults to earn credentials and college degrees. myFutureNC and critical sector leaders conducted a comprehensive review and identified nine **evidence-based attainment strategies** to close the educational attainment gap. The review demonstrates North Carolina would benefit from sustained efforts 1) to provide more adult learners **access** to education beyond high school and 2) to increase **completion** of degrees and industry-valued credentials. While no silver bullets were unearthed in these strategies, we confirmed that NC is already implementing many things research says we need to do. We need to do more of it and faster.

Second, we must continue building on successful early education foundations in math and reading and preparing for our future workforce by better bridging and providing seamless pathways from K12 to one of the three E's—postsecondary enrollment, enlistment, or employment in a job paying a family-sustaining wage. We must also provide seamless transitions between and within our postsecondary institutions.

Third, we must ensure these credentials and college degrees align with current and futuristic labor market needs.

This report highlights successes, gaps and clear solutions to achieve 2 million by 2030. Overall, investing in our future requires short- and long-term vision, budget commitments, strategic planning, and collaboration across sectors to address the challenges and opportunities. *As identified through our Policy Recommendations on page 23 of this report, we encourage the General Assembly to proactively and strategically invest in education, workforce, infrastructure, and North Carolinians so we can create a brighter future for all.*

We are grateful for the ongoing support from our **Board of Directors**, **funders**, **Commissioners**, **team**, and many partners, as well as the corporate community, state and local leaders, practitioners, and policymakers working to realize our shared vision for attainment.

Cecilia K. Holden
President/CEO
myFutureNC

John A. Fraley
Board Chair
myFutureNC

The Gap to the Goal

In keeping with Session Law 2019-55, myFutureNC reports annually on the progress of the State reaching the postsecondary attainment goal to have 2 million residents aged 25-44 with a postsecondary degree or high-quality credential by 2030. To measure progress, myFutureNC leverages data from the U.S. Census Bureau captured through the American Community Survey (ACS), the nation's primary source for tracking educational attainment. Unfortunately, the data lags by one year, so the data reflecting 2030 educational levels will not be available until the end of 2031. So, to celebrate in 2030, we must achieve the goal by 2029 such that the data reflects this at the end of 2030.

In response, myFutureNC is tracking data to both 2029 and 2030. Current projections show the state will fall short by 54,826 individuals with a degree or credential by the year 2030 if the State does nothing more. We must accelerate progress to close this gap and declare success in 2030!

2 MILLION

CURRENT ATTAINMENT
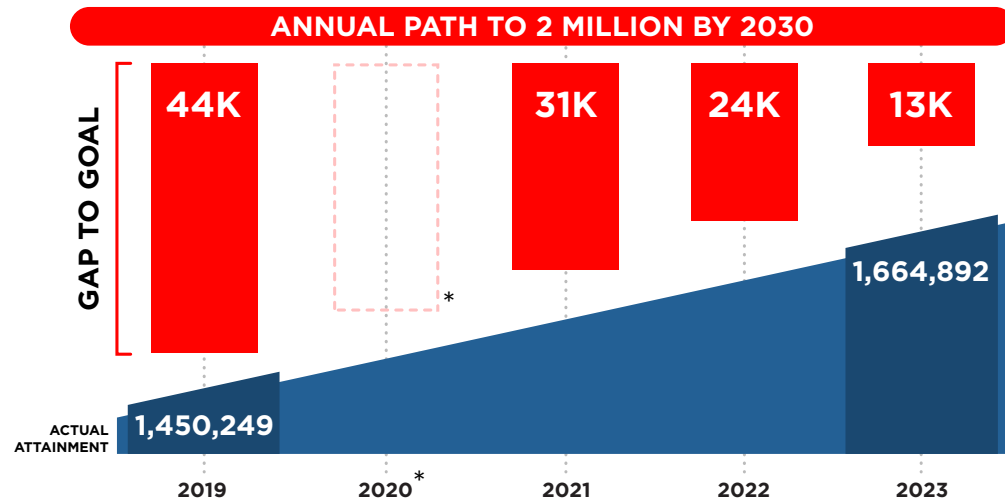
1,664,892
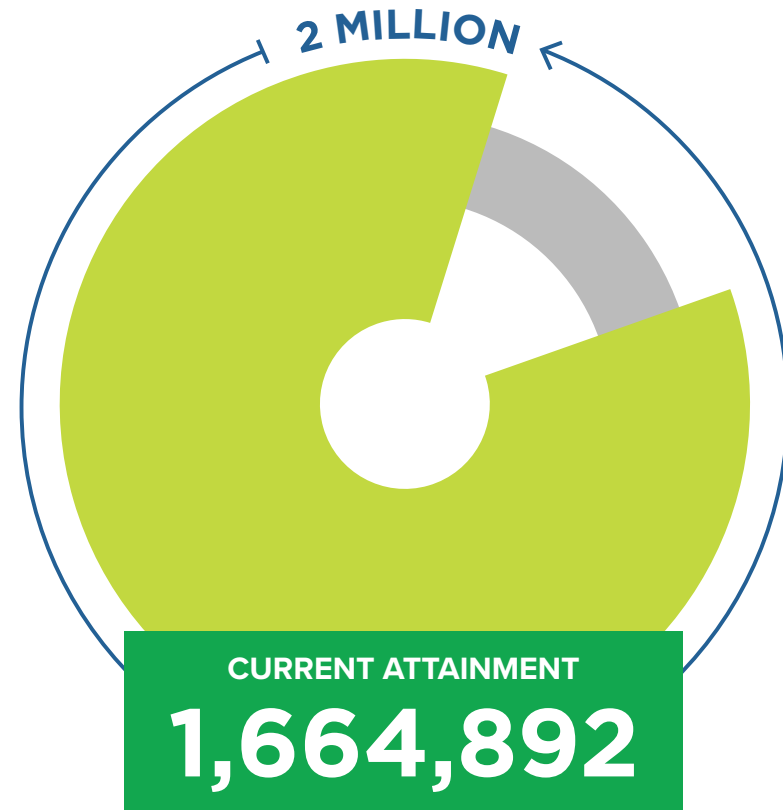
As of December 2024

MEASURING PROGRESS

In addition to the 2 million by 2030 goal, myFutureNC monitors progress on **18 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** that are leading benchmarks for educational attainment, aligned around four key transition points:

- **Academic Readiness**
- **College & Career Access**
- **Postsecondary Completion**
- **Workforce Alignment**

Progress Toward 2 Million: NC is Closing the Gap to 2030

ANNUAL PATH TO 2 MILLION BY 2030

GAP TO GOAL

44K   *   31K   24K   13K

1,664,892

ACTUAL ATTAINMENT   1,450,249

2019   2020*   2021   2022   2023

* Pandemic disruptions led the Census Bureau to **skip the 1-year ACS estimates** for 2020.

INCREASE IN ATTAINMENT NUMBERS

Educational attainment in North Carolina grew by 3.5% in the past year, adding 56,792 credentialed individuals. Since 2019, attainment has risen by 14.8%, with the number of credentialed individuals aged 25-44 increasing from 1.45 million to 1.66 million—a gain of 214,644.

PROJECTED SHORTFALL

Based on current trends, North Carolina's attainment will reach 1,945,174 by 2030, with a projected gap of 54,826 individuals. Given the 12-month reporting lag in Census data, North Carolina must meet the 2 million attainment goal by 2029 to celebrate in 2030. **Projections indicate that attainment will reach 1,905,275 by 2029, requiring an additional 94,725 individuals to achieve the milestone.**

REDUCING SHORTFALLS TO MEET NC'S 2 MILLION BY 2030 GOAL

2019 Overall Trajectory

400K Projected Shortfall (2019)

1.6 MILLION

Current Overall Trajectory

55K Projected Shortfall (2025)

1.95 MILLION

2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS
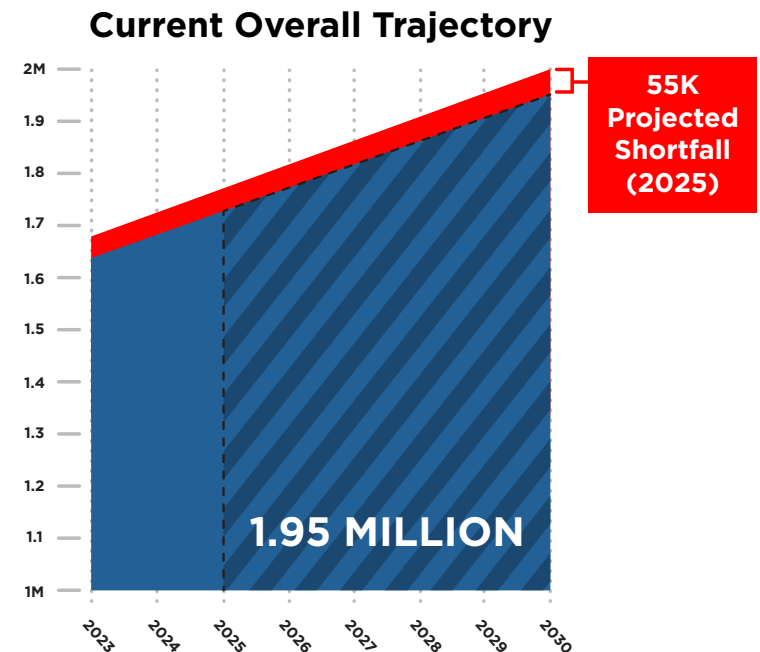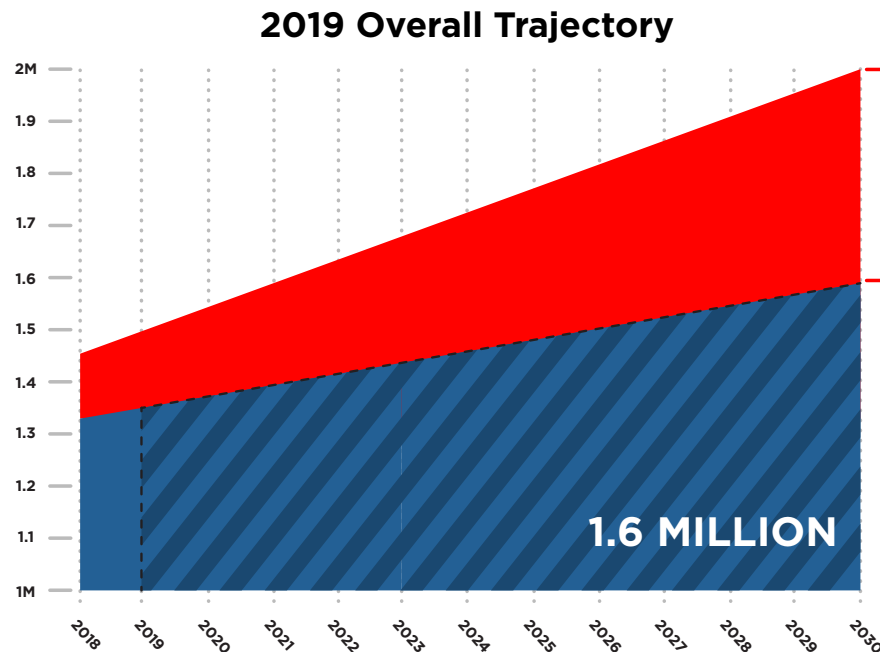
Hon. John A. Fraley
Board Chair
Retired Representative, NC General Assembly, UNC
Board of Governors

Hon. Deanna Ballard
Retired Senator, NC General Assembly

Kathryn Black
Executive in Residence, Eshelman Innovation

Marshall Cherry
CEO, Roanoke Cooperative

Kevin Howell
Chief External Affairs Officer, UNC Health and UNC
School of Medicine

Anna Spangler Nelson
Chairman, Spangler Companies

Gary J. Salamido
President and CEO, NC Chamber

Secretary Machelle Baker Sanders

Lynn J. Good
Vice-Chair
Chair, President and CEO, Duke Energy

Peter Hans
President, UNC System

Sen. Michael Lee
Senate President Pro Tempore Berger's Designee,
NC State Senate

Eric C. Davis
Chair, NC State Board of Education

Dr. A. Hope Williams
President, NC Independent Colleges and Universities

Rep. Donny Lambeth
Speaker of the House Moore's Designee, NC House
of Representatives

Dr. Jeff Cox
President, NC Community College System

MC Belk Pilon
Secretary and Treasurer
President and Board Chair, John M. Belk Endowment

Matthew Scott
District Attorney, Robeson County

Carol Steen
VP of Talent and Human Resources, Biltmore Farms

Maurice "Mo" Green
State Superintendent, NC Department of Public
Instruction

Ann Goodnight
Senior Director of Community Relations, SAS

**2024 Board of Directors included John
F.A.V. Cecil, Geoff Coltrane, David Mounts
Gonzalez, and Catherine Truitt.**

Cross-Sector Collaboration Ensures More Opportunities for NC

Our cross-sector Board of Directors oversees the myFutureNC 501c3 nonpartisan non-profit. With individuals from each of our eight economic prosperity zones, the board represents business, education, policymaking, and philanthropy, and encapsulates a wide range of perspectives, expertise, and experiences. This bipartisan group of influential leaders in our State is laser-focused on providing opportunities for all North Carolinians and a skilled workforce for all employers through informed decision-making and innovative solutions that lead to better outcomes. The myFutureNC Board is positioned for continued success and positive impacts within every local community and our state at large.

Advisory Board of Commissioners

Our commissioners are ambassadors for North Carolina's 2 million by 2030 goal, vision, and initiatives. In this role, they provide insights and feedback about on-the-ground efforts to increase postsecondary attainment, share ideas, input, and critical feedback needed to enhance the more prominent, ongoing postsecondary attainment agenda in North Carolina, and help build capacity for myFutureNC to execute its mission and make progress towards North Carolina's educational attainment goal.

- **Kevin Austin**, *VP of Manufacturing, Austin Electrical Enclosures*
- **Emma Battle**, *President & CEO, Higher Ed Works*
- **Brenda Berg**, *President & CEO, BEST NC*
- **Dr. Valerie Bridges**, *Retired, Former Superintendent, Edgecombe County Public Schools*
- **Anita Brown-Graham**, *Professor, ncIMPACT Initiative at the UNC School of Government*
- **Bryant Buck**, *Executive Director, Mid-East Commission Council of Governments*
- **Sherry Carpenter**, *Chief Organizational Development and Mission Advancement Officer, Goodwill Industries of Northwest NC, Inc.*
- **John F.A.V. Cecil**, *President and CEO, Biltmore Farms*
- **Dr. Lisa Chapman**, *President, Central Carolina Community College*
- **Dr. Mark D'Amico**, *Professor of Higher Education, UNC Charlotte*
- **Tare Davis**, *County Commissioner, Warren County*
- **Dr. Kandi Deitemeyer,** *President, Central Piedmont Community College*
- **Dr. John D. Denning**, *Senior Advisor, John M. Belk Endowment*
- **Rhonda Dillingham**, *Executive Director, NC Association for Public Charter Schools*
- **Natalie Haskins English**, *President & CEO, Wilmington Chamber of Commerce*
- **Steve Evans**, *Vice President, Community Development, Smithfield Foods, Inc.*
- **David M. Farris**, *President & CEO, Rocky Mount Area Chamber of Commerce*
- **Hannah Gage**, *Former Chair, UNC Board of Governors*
- **Representative James D. Gailliard**, *Pastor, Word Tabernacle Church*
- **Mark Garrett**, *Superintendent, McDowell County School District*

- **Susan L. Gates**, *Special Advisor on Education, SAS*
- **Dan Gerlach**, *Owner, Dan Gerlach LLC*
- **Atrayus O. Goode**, *President & CEO, MENTOR NC*
- **Brianna Goodwin**, *Executive Director, Robeson County Church and Community Center*
- **Dr. Mary Hall**, *Professor Emeritus, Wake Forest School of Medicine Department of Family Medicine Charlotte campus*
- **The Honorable D. Craig Horn**, *Retired, NCGA*
- **Karen Howard**, *Commissioner, Chatham County*
- **Dr. Jason Hurst**, President, *Cleveland Community College*
- **Dr. Rob Jackson**, *Superintendent, Buncombe County Schools*
- **Dr. Tony Jackson**, *Superintendent, Chatham County Schools*
- **A.J. Jaeger**, *Executive Director, Belk Center of Community College Leadership and Research*
- **Mark Jerrell**, *Commissioner, Mecklenburg County*
- **Barbi Jones**, *Executive Director, Cabarrus Regional Chamber of Commerce*
- **Mike LaBrose**, *County Commissioner, Caldwell County*
- **Dr. Laura Leatherwood,** *President, Blue Ridge Community College*
- **Dr. Amanda Lee**, *President, Bladen Community College*
- **Rebecca McCall**, *Commissioner, Henderson County*
- **Dr. Jeff McDaris**, *Retired Superintendent of Transylvania Couty Schools*
- **Dr. Patrick Miller**, *Retired K-12 Superintendent*
- **Darryl Moss**, *Board of Directors, Golden Leaf Foundation*
- **Jenni Owen**, *Director, NC Office of Strategic Partnerships*
- **Dr. Mark Poarch**, *President, Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute*

- **Andrea Poole**, *Executive Director, North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority*
- **Jeanette Proffitt**, *Finance Executive, Bank of America*
- **Mebane Rash**, *CEO & Editor-in-Chief, EducationNC*
- **Dr. Travis L. Reeves**, *Superintendent of Surry County Schools*
- **David Rice**, *Executive Director, Higher Ed Works*
- **Dr. Althea Riddick**, *Chair, Gates County Board of Commissioners for the Sunbury District*
- **Dr. Todd Roberts**, *Chancellor, North Carolina School of Science and Math*
- **Dr. Jenna Robinson**, *President, James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal*
- **Dr. Lawrence Rouse**, *President, Pitt Community College*
- **Mark Sale**, *Superintendent, Swain County Schools*
- **Dr. David Shockley,** *President, Surry Community College*
- **Dr. Javaid Siddiqi**, *President, The Hunt Institute*
- **Mark Stowers**, *President, Tolle Lege Inc.*
- **Jeff Toner**, *President, James Tool Machine & Engineering Inc.*
- **Margaret Turlington**, *Director, Simple Gifts Fund/ Anonymous Trust*
- **Elaine Townsend Utin**, *Co-Founder and Executive Director of LatinxEd*
- **Dr. Kimberly Van Noort**, *Chancellor, UNC Asheville*
- **Wendy Walker-Fox**, *Workforce and Economic Development Director, Piedmont Triad Regional Council*
- **Dr. Brent Williams**, *Superintendent, Lenoir County Public Schools*
- **Dr. Stelfanie Williams**, *VP for Durham & Community Affairs, Duke University*
- **J. Bradley Wilson**, *CEO Emeritus, Blue Cross Blue Shield*
- **Mary A. Winston**, *President & CEO, WinsCo Enterprises*
- **Tracy Zimmerman**, *Vice President, Policy and Communications, Neimand Collaborative*
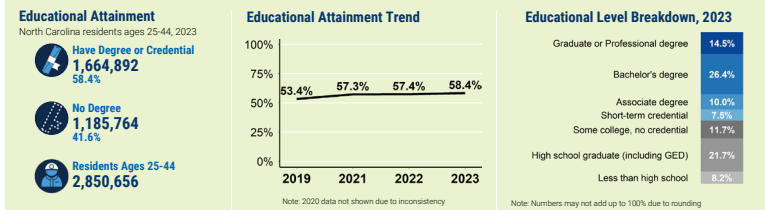
2025 County & Regional Attainment Profiles

myFutureNC's 2025 Attainment Profiles offer a comprehensive look at educational attainment across North Carolina. There are individual Attainment Profiles for each of NC's 100 counties. Each consists of a 2-page document showcasing 100 data indicators. These indicators include general information and four key transition points: academic readiness, college & career access, postsecondary completion, and workforce alignment. The profiles are invaluable tools for local stakeholders and communities that provide a deeper understanding of educational achievement at various levels and across different regions.

Recognizing the need for data that reflects the broader regions served by many stakeholders, myFutureNC has developed regional profiles for prosperity zones, workforce development boards, councils of governments, and regional charter schools. These profiles ensure a more comprehensive perspective on educational and workforce trends. All profiles can be accessed on the **myFutureNC Attainment Profiles** page.
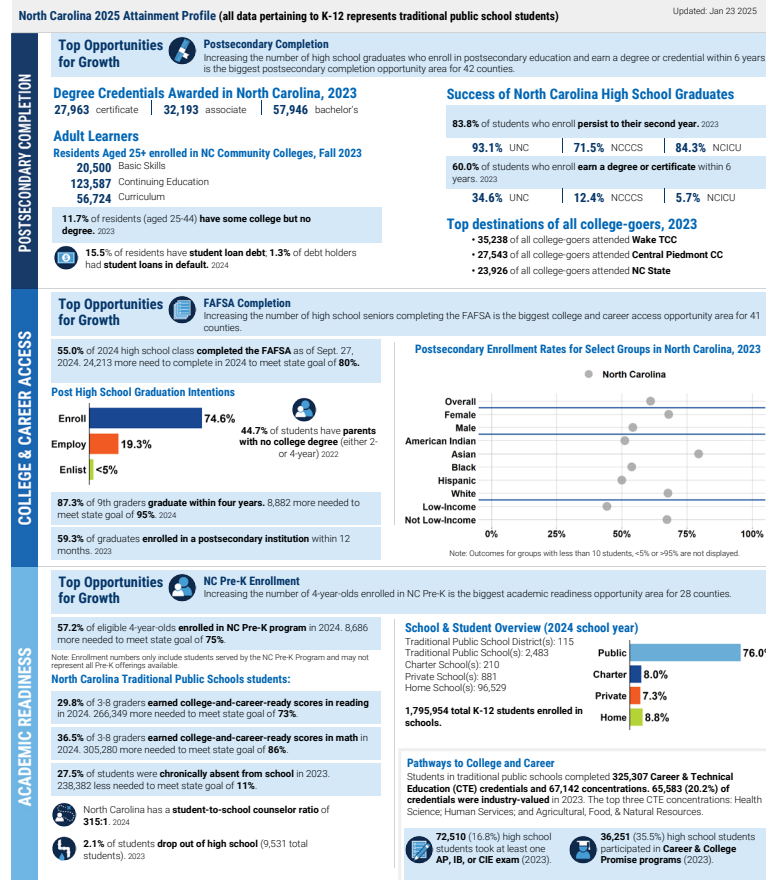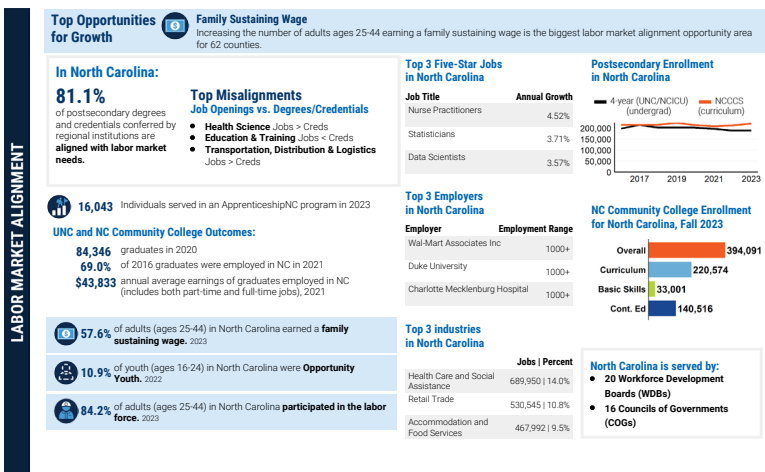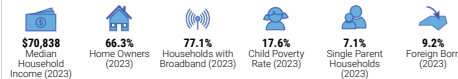

North Carolina

myFutureNC 2025 Attainment Profiles
2030 State Attainment Goal: 2 million

Educational Attainment
North Carolina residents ages 25-44, 2023

- **Have Degree or Credential** 1,664,892 — 58.4%
- **No Degree** 1,185,764 — 41.6%
- **Residents Ages 25-44** 2,850,656

Educational Attainment Trend
- 2019: 53.4%
- 2021: 57.3%
- 2022: 57.4%
- 2023: 58.4%

Note: 2020 data not shown due to inconsistency

Educational Level Breakdown, 2023
- Graduate or Professional degree: 14.5%
- Bachelor's degree: 26.4%
- Associate degree: 10.0%
- Short-term credential: 7.5%
- Some college, no credential: 11.7%
- High school graduate (including GED): 21.7%
- Less than high school: 8.2%

Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Population Spotlight
2020 Census: 10,439,459
2023 Estimate: 10,835,491
Change: 396,032

Growth Rate 3.8%

Race/Ethnicity
- Amer. Indian: 0.8%
- Asian/Pac. Isl.: 3.3%
- Black: 19.9%
- Hispanic: 11.4%
- Multiracial: 4.3%
- White: 59.8%

- **$70,838** Median Household Income (2023)
- **66.3%** Home Owners (2023)
- **77.1%** Households with Broadband (2023)
- **17.6%** Child Poverty Rate (2023)
- **7.1%** Single Parent Households (2023)
- **9.2%** Foreign Born (2023)

LABOR MARKET ALIGNMENT

Top Opportunities for Growth — Family Sustaining Wage
Increasing the number of adults ages 25-44 earning a family sustaining wage is the biggest labor market alignment opportunity area for 62 counties.

In North Carolina:
81.1% of postsecondary degrees and credentials conferred by regional institutions are **aligned with labor market needs.**

Top Misalignments — Job Openings vs. Degrees/Credentials
- Health Science Jobs > Creds
- Education & Training Jobs < Creds
- Transportation, Distribution & Logistics Jobs > Creds

16,043 Individuals served in an ApprenticeshipNC program in 2023

UNC and NC Community College Outcomes:
- **84,346** graduates in 2020
- **69.0%** of 2016 graduates were employed in NC in 2021
- **$43,833** annual average earnings of graduates employed in NC (includes both part-time and full-time jobs), 2021

- **57.6%** of adults (ages 25-44) in North Carolina earned a **family sustaining wage.** 2023
- **10.9%** of youth (ages 16-24) in North Carolina were **Opportunity Youth.** 2022
- **84.2%** of adults (ages 25-44) in North Carolina **participated in the labor force.** 2023

Top 3 Five-Star Jobs in North Carolina

Job Title	Annual Growth
Nurse Practitioners	4.52%
Statisticians	3.71%
Data Scientists	3.57%

Top 3 Employers in North Carolina

Employer	Employment Range
Wal-Mart Associates Inc	1000+
Duke University	1000+
Charlotte Mecklenburg Hospital	1000+

Top 3 industries in North Carolina

	Jobs	Percent
Health Care and Social Assistance	689,950	14.0%
Retail Trade	530,545	10.8%
Accommodation and Food Services	467,992	9.5%

Postsecondary Enrollment in North Carolina
- 4-year (UNC/NCICU) (undergrad)
- NCCCS (curriculum)

NC Community College Enrollment for North Carolina, Fall 2023
- Overall: 394,091
- Curriculum: 220,574
- Basic Skills: 33,001
- Cont. Ed: 140,516

North Carolina is served by:
- 20 Workforce Development Boards (WDBs)
- 16 Councils of Governments (COGs)

North Carolina 2025 Attainment Profile (all data pertaining to K-12 represents traditional public school students)
Updated: Jan 23 2025

POSTSECONDARY COMPLETION

Top Opportunities for Growth — Postsecondary Completion
Increasing the number of high school graduates who enroll in postsecondary education and earn a degree or credential within 6 years is the biggest postsecondary completion opportunity area for 42 counties.

Degree Credentials Awarded in North Carolina, 2023
- 27,963 certificate
- 32,193 associate
- 57,946 bachelor's

Adult Learners
Residents Aged 25+ enrolled in NC Community Colleges, Fall 2023
- 20,500 Basic Skills
- 123,587 Continuing Education
- 56,724 Curriculum

11.7% of residents (aged 25-44) **have some college but no degree.** 2023

15.5% of residents have **student loan debt; 1.3%** of debt holders had student loans in default. 2024

Success of North Carolina High School Graduates
- **83.8%** of students who enroll **persist to their second year.** 2023
  - UNC: 93.1% | NCCCS: 71.5% | NCICU: 84.3%
- **60.0%** of students who enroll **earn a degree or certificate** within 6 years. 2023
  - UNC: 34.6% | NCCCS: 12.4% | NCICU: 5.7%

Top destinations of all college-goers, 2023
- 35,238 of all college-goers attended Wake TCC
- 27,543 of all college-goers attended Central Piedmont CC
- 23,926 of all college-goers attended NC State

COLLEGE & CAREER ACCESS

Top Opportunities for Growth — FAFSA Completion
Increasing the number of high school seniors completing the FAFSA is the biggest college and career access opportunity area for 41 counties.

55.0% of 2024 high school class **completed the FAFSA** as of Sept. 27, 2024. 24,213 more need to complete in 2024 to meet state goal of **80%.**

Post High School Graduation Intentions
- Enroll: 74.6%
- Employ: 19.3%
- Enlist: <5%

44.7% of students have **parents with no college degree** (either 2- or 4-year) 2022

87.3% of 9th graders **graduate within four years.** 8,882 more needed to meet state goal of **95%.** 2024

59.3% of graduates **enrolled in a postsecondary institution** within 12 months. 2023

Postsecondary Enrollment Rates for Select Groups in North Carolina, 2023
(North Carolina)
Overall, Female, Male, American Indian, Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, Low-Income, Not Low-Income
Note: Outcomes for groups with less than 10 students, <5% or >95% are not displayed.

ACADEMIC READINESS

Top Opportunities for Growth — NC Pre-K Enrollment
Increasing the number of 4-year-olds enrolled in NC Pre-K is the biggest academic readiness opportunity area for 28 counties.

57.2% of eligible 4-year-olds **enrolled in NC Pre-K program** in 2024. 8,686 more needed to meet state goal of **75%.**
Note: Enrollment numbers only include students served by the NC Pre-K Program and may not represent all Pre-K offerings available.

North Carolina Traditional Public Schools students:
- **29.8%** of 3-8 graders **earned college-and-career-ready scores in reading** in 2024. 266,349 more needed to meet state goal of **73%.**
- **36.5%** of 3-8 graders **earned college-and-career-ready scores in math** in 2024. 305,280 more needed to meet state goal of **86%.**
- **27.5%** of students were **chronically absent from school** in 2023. 238,382 less needed to meet state goal of **11%.**

North Carolina has a **student-to-school counselor ratio of 315:1.** 2024

2.1% of students **drop out of high school** (9,531 total students). 2023

School & Student Overview (2024 school year)
- Traditional Public School District(s): 115
- Traditional Public School(s): 2,483
- Charter School(s): 210
- Private School(s): 881
- Home School(s): 96,529

- Public: 76.0%
- Charter: 8.0%
- Private: 7.3%
- Home: 8.8%

1,795,954 total K-12 students enrolled in schools.

Pathways to College and Career
Students in traditional public schools completed **325,307 Career & Technical Education (CTE) credentials and 67,142 concentrations. 65,583 (20.2%) of credentials were industry-valued** in 2023. The top three CTE concentrations: Health Science, Human Services; and Agricultural, Food, & Natural Resources.

- **72,510** (16.8%) high school students took at least one **AP, IB, or CIE exam** (2023).
- **36,251** (35.5%) high school students participated in **Career & College Promise programs** (2023).

CAROLINA DEMOGRAPHY · myFUTURENC 2 million by 2030 · John M Belk Endowment · UNC CAROLINA POPULATION CENTER

Mapping Progress: North Carolina's Journey to Increased Educational Attainment

GROWTH ACROSS 79 COUNTIES

5 pp. North Carolina's attainment rate, the share of adults aged 25-44 with a degree or credential, has increased by 5 percentage points from 53.4% in 2019 to 58.4% in 2023.

This growth is seen in 79 of the state's 100 counties, with 26 counties achieving over 5 percentage points of growth, reflecting the power of local efforts in driving educational success. However, 21 rural counties experienced declines in attainment rates during this period, underscoring the need for further investment and focus. **We must ensure all 100 counties share in North Carolina's progress and achieve meaningful growth in educational attainment.**

Scan the QR code to **explore County-by-County Progress**

2025 Champions for Attainment

myFutureNC recognizes the following Champions for Attainment for their exemplary work underway at the local, regional, and/or state level. This work is connected to advancing **myFutureNC's Evidence-Based Attainment Strategies** to increase access and completion rates among North Carolina's adult learners.

REVITALIZING CAREERS & A COMMUNITY
THE VOLT CENTER'S IMPACT

The Volt Center in New Bern, NC, is a workforce development training hub offering hands-on learning in trades, including construction, diesel systems, electrical, HVAC, clean energy, plumbing, and welding. Originally constructed in 1947 as an electric power plant, the Volt Center was transformed into a state-of-the-art facility via partnerships with federal, state and local governmental, community and non-profit organizations. The center features flexible classrooms, labs, and training spaces for conducting programs that are continuously evolving to meet emerging employment needs. Focusing on underserved populations, including justice-involved individuals, the Volt Center provides accessible education and job opportunities, with 4,425 completers since 2019 providing a robust workforce pipeline to local employers.

CHAMPIONING SECOND CHANCES CAN BEGIN WITH ONE PERSON

Gregory Singleton has dedicated his career to expanding educational and workforce opportunities for underemployed, unemployed, and justice-involved individuals. Through innovative initiatives like the Keys to Freedom, Job Readiness Boot Camps, and Building Bridges, he has empowered countless people with essential soft skills, reentry support, and pathways to meaningful employment. Singleton's personal experiences, including overcoming the challenges of incarceration, have driven him to rewrite correctional institution curricula, lead reentry councils, and form partnerships that address systemic barriers and promote social and economic stability. As the Director of Strategic Initiatives at **Opportunities Industrialization Center of Rocky Mount** (OIC), he champions second chances, guiding individuals towards growth, dignity, and career success. This includes his work with counties as they develop local reentry councils.

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL

CAMPBELL UNIVERSITY'S SECOND CHANCE INITIATIVE

Campbell University's Second Chance Initiative provides educational opportunities for incarcerated individuals by offering associates and bachelor's degree programs at two medium custody facilities in North Carolina. The initiative focuses on high-demand fields such as substance abuse counseling. It supports students, many of whom have no previous post-secondary experience, through comprehensive orientation and technology training. With partnerships and articulation agreements to facilitate credit transfer and continued education, the program aims to ensure students can complete their degrees inside and outside the correctional setting. Additionally, post-release support through collaborations with organizations like the **Arise Collective** helps graduates find jobs aligned with their academic focus.

INCREASING PERSISTENCE & COMPLETION

EMPOWERING TRANSFER SUCCESS AT APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY

The **Aspire Appalachian Program** at **Appalachian State University** offers a streamlined pathway for transfer students from 27 partner community colleges in North Carolina, ensuring robust support and clear paths to completing both associate and bachelor's degrees. Students benefit from guaranteed admission, dedicated academic advising, admission counseling, financial aid guidance, and priority consideration for scholarships, provided they maintain a GPA of 2.25 or higher. The program significantly boosts degree completion rates, with App State's transfer students outperforming the national average by over 22%. Focused on high-demand fields, Aspire Appalachian removes barriers to entry, eases credit transfers, and offers comprehensive resources to foster student success and retention.

REBUILDING FUTURES

WORKFORCE ALIGNMENT THROUGH WAYNE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND THE WAYNE COUNTY REENTRY COUNCIL

Wayne Community College (WCC) and the **Wayne County Reentry Council** collaborate to assist formerly incarcerated individuals in reentering society by connecting them with essential resources for a successful transition, such as education, employment services, and basic needs support. Established in 2022, the Council comprises a network of government agencies, businesses, nonprofits, and community organizations aimed at reducing recidivism. WCC is the lead agency, employing a Reentry Coordinator to manage intake and referrals. The College also provides job readiness workshops, training programs, and high-school equivalency testing services. The initiative addresses societal stigma, promotes workforce development, and enhances justice-involved individuals' social and economic stability by fostering partnerships with local employers and offering reentry simulations.

Advancing Academic Readiness for Lifelong Success

KEY
- 🟢 MET/EXCEEDED 2030 GOAL
- 🔵 1%-10% AWAY FROM 2030 GOAL
- 🔴 11%+ AWAY FROM 2030 GOAL

2030 Goal

Indicator	Current	2030 Goal
NC Pre-K Enrollment	57% (2024)	75%
College- & Career-Ready in Reading	31% (2024)	73%
NAEP Fourth Grade Reading	30% (2024)	42%
College- & Career-Ready in Math	37% (2024)	86%
NAEP Eighth Grade Math	31% (2024)	42%
Chronic Absenteeism	27% (2023)	11%
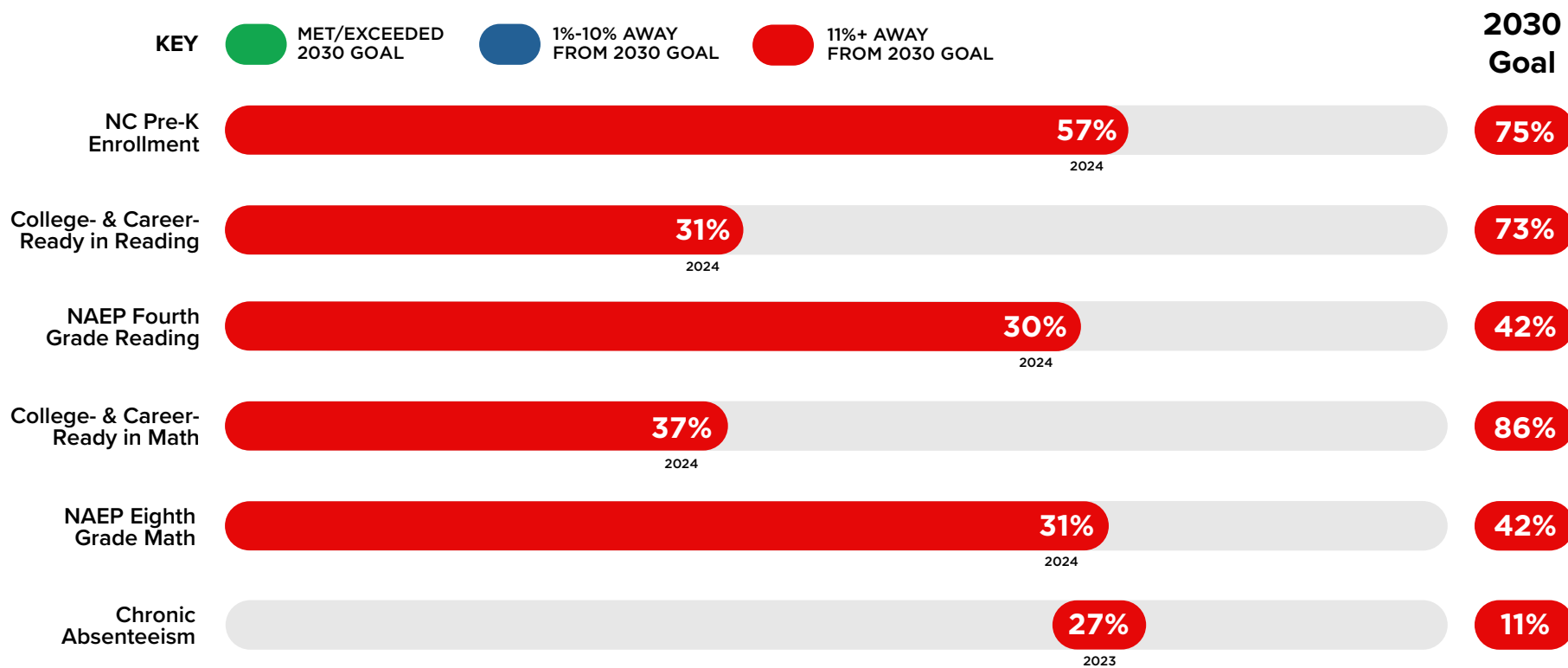
Attendance Improves—Academic Challenges Persist

Chronic absenteeism in North Carolina public schools has shown improvement. In 2023, 27% (417,152 students) were chronically absent, down from a peak of 31% (483k) in 2022, yet still 11 percentage points higher than the pre-pandemic level of 16% (241k students) in 2019. We must continue to support students and families who still face barriers to regularly attending school and encourage attendance of those who are absent by choice.

North Carolina public school students see slight gains in math performance yet declines in reading, according to the 2023-24 state test results. 36.7% of students in grades 3-8 are **college-and-career ready in math**, an increase of 1.8 percentage points compared to last year. However, only 30.5% of students in grades 3-8 achieved **college-and-career-ready levels in reading**, a decline of 0.4 percentage points. This means approximately only 1 in 3 students are on track for college and career readiness in reading and math.

The Power of Early Childhood Education: A Transformative Investment

A CHILD'S FIRST 8 YEARS LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS

The early years of a child's life, particularly from birth to age eight, represent a critical window for brain development and long-term success. During this period, children build the cognitive, social-emotional, and physical foundations that will shape their future learning, workforce readiness, and contributions to society. Research consistently shows that early childhood education (ECE) is one of the most effective strategies to address the educational attainment gap, with long-lasting benefits for children, families, and communities.

INVESTING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD: NORTH CAROLINA'S SMARTEST WORKFORCE STRATEGY

ECE is not just a matter of education—it's workforce development. High-quality early learning programs prepare children for success in school and, eventually, the workplace. Extensive longitudinal research reveals that participants in high-quality ECE programs are more likely to complete high school, attain postsecondary education, and secure stable, well-paying jobs. These outcomes directly strengthen North Carolina's talent pipeline and global competitiveness. Early childhood education is the most impactful workforce investment North Carolina can make, laying the foundation for lifelong productivity.

PAY NOW OR PAY MORE LATER: EARLY CHILDHOOD SAVES TAXPAYER DOLLARS

Investing in early childhood education saves money over time, as shown in research like that from Duke University on the NC Pre-K program. The return on investment comes from reduced special education placements, lower grade retention, decreased juvenile crime rates, and improved health outcomes. These savings ripple through the economy, reducing long-term public expenditures while boosting state revenues. By prioritizing ECE, North Carolina can mitigate costly future interventions and strengthen community well-being.

THE EARLIER, THE GREATER THE IMPACT

Starting early maximizes the benefits of early childhood education. Children who participate in high-quality programs before kindergarten like NC Pre-K experience profound and lasting gains in literacy, math, and social-emotional skills, as documented by research from organizations like the **National Institute for Early Education Research** (NIEER). During the 2023-24 school year, 57% of North Carolina's eligible 4-year-olds from lower-income families enrolled in the NC Pre-K program. Almost half of North Carolina's counties served at least **75% of NC Pre-K eligible children**. By 2030, the goal is to have 75% of eligible four-year-olds in every county enrolled in NC Pre-K, which aligns with the **North Carolina Early Childhood Action Plan**. These early interventions have compounding effects: children who are prepared for kindergarten are more likely to succeed in third-grade reading, a critical predictor of high school graduation and college attainment.

EXPANDING ACCESS TO ECE STRENGTHENS FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

ECE programs provide essential support to families, enabling parents to work, pursue education, and achieve greater financial stability. Access to affordable, reliable childcare options, such as those provided by high-quality programs like NC Pre-K, enhances work-life balance and helps families build strong community networks. By investing in early childhood education, North Carolina empowers families to thrive while setting young children on a trajectory for lifelong success.

Bridging the Gap For North Carolina's Future Workforce

Although current students younger than 18 years old will not count towards the goal of 2 million by 2030, on-time enrollment remains essential to increase the attainment of high school graduates now and beyond 2030. To meet our postsecondary enrollment goal, 95% of ninth graders must graduate high school on time, and 47% of 18-24-year-olds must enroll in college. Unfortunately, NC is eight percentage points behind on the high school graduation goal and seven percentage points behind on the postsecondary enrollment goal to ensure students for our future workforce are tracking towards higher educational attainment.

KEY
- 🟢 MET/EXCEEDED 2030 GOAL
- 🔵 1%-10% AWAY FROM 2030 GOAL
- 🔴 11%+ AWAY FROM 2030 GOAL

2030 Goal

		2030 Goal
HS Graduation Rate	87% (2024)	95%
ACT Performance	40% (2024)	70%
FAFSA Completion Rate	55% (2024)	80%
Postsecondary Enrollment Rate	38% (2023)	47%
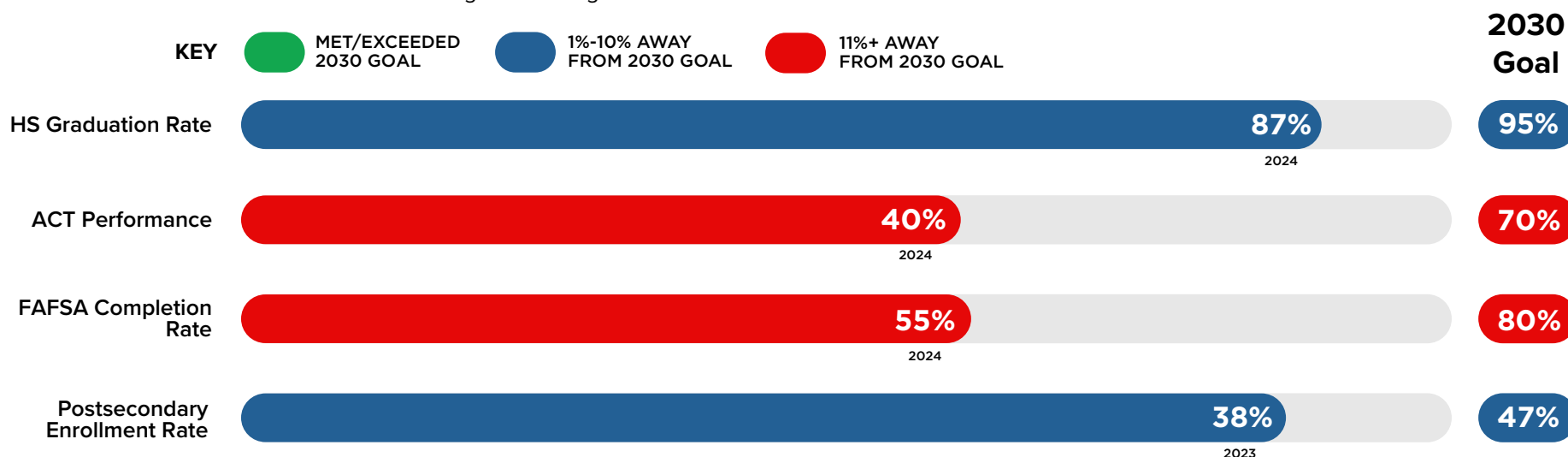
PREPARING STUDENTS TO ENROLL, ENLIST, OR BECOME EMPLOYED

myFutureNC endorsed the **North Carolina Department of Public Instruction** and **State Board of Education's** call for **Career Exploration and Development Plans**, which were to be fully implemented at the start of the 2024 school year. By having a career development plan, students are better prepared to navigate the transition from education to the workforce and to make informed choices around course selection and work-based learning.

Surry-Yadkin Works is a collaborative regional approach to work-based learning. The cross-sector collective includes four K-12 school districts, one community college, two boards of county commissioners, and more than 140 businesses spanning Surry and Yadkin Counties. It is developing a new generation of talent and driving its local economy. Since 2021, students have completed 720 youth internships, earned 3,794 degrees, credentials, and certificates aligned to local workforce needs, and earned **over 12,500 college credits** while in high school.

Initiatives like Surry-Yadkin Works are made possible by North Carolina's investment in **Career and College Promise**, the state's dual enrollment program for high school students, and by **Career and Technical Education** programs that engage students in rigorous and relevant learning to prepare them for postsecondary education and careers.

SURRY-YADKIN WORKS

PLAYBOOK

A REGIONAL, CROSS-SECTOR APPROACH TO DRIVING YOUR FUTURE WORKFORCE
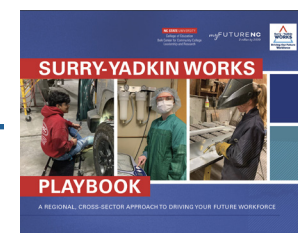
Read more about the Surry-Yadkin Works model in **this playbook** created by the **NC State Belk Center** in partnership with **myFutureNC**, **NC Business Committee for Education**, **NC Department of Commerce**, **Office of NC Governor Roy Cooper**, and **Jobs for the Future**.

Overcoming Barriers & Supporting Students' Postsecondary Success

Challenges that prevent students from enrolling in college vary widely based on socioeconomic, geographic, and individual factors. Some of the most significant barriers include lack of financial aid awareness, limited access to advanced coursework in high school, distance from a postsecondary institution, the complexity of the application and FAFSA process, and lack of belonging or confidence in their ability to succeed in a college environment. Social, cultural, and fundamental need barriers may include language, status as first-generation college students, cultural expectations to prioritize work or caregiving, or families' expectations to remain close to home. Many of these challenges are also reasons college students do not persist and complete their postsecondary programs. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach.

In 2021, the NC State Belk Center **detailed recommendations** to support the college and career transition from high school to beyond:

1. Continue to create opportunities for collaboration between college access and career development organizations.

2. Broaden the scope of services offered by a statewide network of staff.

3. Center the whole family in the decision-making process about college.

4. Streamline access to student-level data and outcomes tracking through a database system. *One of myFutureNC's policy recommendations for the 2025 General Assembly is to provide technology solutions that will **improve course credit mobility** and augment **NC's new common digital transcript** by including student data for those who attend one of our NCICU colleges or universities.*

We are encouraged that efforts to increase educational attainment continue to be supported by state and local policy, philanthropy, and the business sector as it strives to meet current and future workforce needs.

Increasing Access & On-Time Enrollment

CONNECTING LEARNING TO CAREERS

Resources like **NCcareers.org** and the work-based learning **Navigator** are available for students and job seekers to identify high-demand fields, wage estimates, and other data to assist with informed decision-making about career paths and to find career opportunities.

FAFSA IS KEY TO ON-TIME COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

For students embarking on their postsecondary education journey, the first crucial step is completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, commonly known as the FAFSA. This form is the key to unlocking Federal Pell Grants, state need-based grants, and numerous scholarships. Completing the FAFSA is a strong predictor of on-time postsecondary enrollment. In fact, research shows that 88% of seniors who complete a FAFSA go on to **attend college**, a stark contrast to the 49% of students who did not file a FAFSA. For the 2023-2024 cycle, the FAFSA form was updated in 2024, which resulted in a decrease in completion rates from previous years. According to **NCSEAA**, North Carolina's current completion rate stands at 55.2%.

- Financial aid programs are available no matter where a student wants to attend college in North Carolina. Support programs like **Finish Line Grants**, **Federal Pell Grants**, **NC Need-Based Scholarship,** and **Next NC Scholarship** are crucial in making college more affordable by reassuring students and families. However, driving awareness of these resources is equally important.

- NC high school seniors with a 2.8 or higher GPA have two admission options: **NC College Connect** is a program that offers qualified students the opportunity for a simplified application process at select UNC System universities and their local NC community college. The North Carolina Independent Colleges & Universities Direct Admission Program provides NC seniors with a 2.8 or higher weighted GPA with a streamlined application with no fees.

- myFutureNC partners with **NCSEAA** and **GEAR UP NC** to facilitate an annual **Financial Aid Summit** for more than 350 attendees, with participants representing over 100 different organizations, including colleges, financial aid organizations, and 64 NC school districts/charter schools.

STRONG HISTORY GRADUATING PERSONS OF COLOR

North Carolina's 10 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are crucial to the state's economy, **contributing $1.7 billion annually and yielding $1.42 for each dollar invested**. Despite funding challenges, strategic business partnerships have bolstered their impact, aligning academic programs with workforce needs and fostering a skilled labor pool. Overall, undergraduate enrollment in 10 NC HBCUs has steadily grown by 3.7% over the past decade, reflecting their importance. To further increase the impact, we partner through the **NC 10** with **The Hunt Institute**, **EdNC**, and the **Center for Racial Equity in Education (CREED)** to learn from North Carolina's 10 HBCUs and identify best practices in supporting students through degree completion.

Strengthening Postsecondary Success: Progress in Persistence

More North Carolina college students are staying on track, with the first-year persistence rate rising to 79%—a 4-point increase and the highest in five years. While this milestone is significant, completion remains the ultimate goal. Graduation rates show minor changes: slight gains for 2-year public (+1.2) and 4-year private colleges (+0.8) but a slight drop for 4-year public institutions (-0.2). Students who don't finish on time face higher debt, lower earnings, and fewer opportunities.

What's even more exciting is - we're growing our own talent. While North Carolina is definitely importing talent from across the nation, we are actually increasing educational attainment at a faster pace than our population is growing. Since 2019, our 25-44 year old population has grown by 5%, but we saw a remarkable 15% growth in educational attainment.

KEY

🟢 MET/EXCEEDED 2030 GOAL

🔵 1%-10% AWAY FROM 2030 GOAL

🔴 11%+ AWAY FROM 2030 GOAL

2030 Goal

1st-Yr Persistence Rate — 79% (2023) — **80%**

Postsecondary Completion Rate: 4-Yr Public — 76% (2024) — **80%**

Postsecondary Completion Rate: 4-Yr Private — 75% (2024) — **80%**

GOAL: 45%

Postsecondary Completion Rate: 2-Yr Public — 50% (2024)
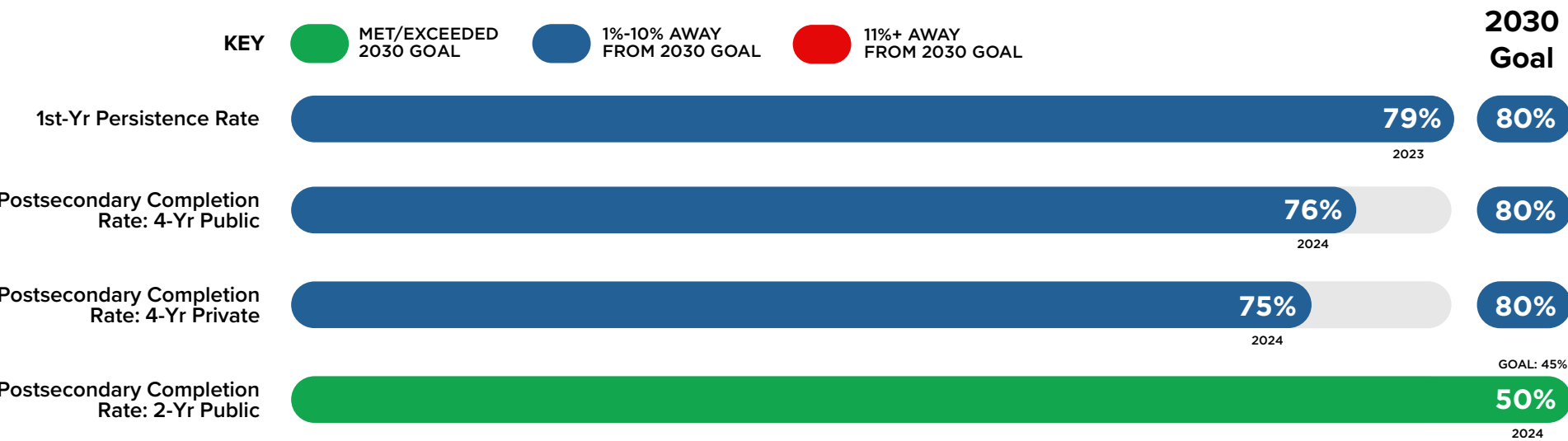
Once Students Start College, They Need to Finish

Students who begin college must complete what they start so they do not end up with debt but no degree, and so employers can find skilled talent to fill open jobs. Considering the "enrollment cliff" that is projected for the second half of this decade, the current rate at which college students persist to their second year and the completion rate for those who do is insufficient to meet the state's educational attainment goal by 2030. The state's goal will require tens of thousands more students to enroll in postsecondary programs, but especially for a higher percentage of students to persist through completion to attain their college degree. Completing college is an investment in one's future, leading to better career options, financial stability, and a range of long-term benefits.

INCREASING ACCESS & SUPPORTING SUCCESS

Project Kitty Hawk (PKH) builds pathways for nontraditional learners to North Carolina's public universities so they can achieve their education and career goals. PKH is accepting applications for 14 online degree programs designed specifically for working adults across UNC System institutions, with 639 students currently enrolled in those programs. PKH has also brought 2,887 students back into 10 UNC System institutions through the PKH Re-Enrollment Program, a first-of-its-kind, system-wide approach to bring former students back to school.

North Carolina community college students transferring to one of **UNC System's** 16 public universities now have access to nearly 1,400 **Transfer Guides**, providing essential information on admissions, course equivalencies, and academic programs. The **guides**, help students match their earned credits to four-year degree requirements and offer user-friendly browsing tools. This initiative, developed over two years, aims to simplify the transfer process and fulfill a statewide agreement to support seamless student transitions.

The **BASE program** at **Wingate University** supports college students at risk of dropping out by providing a free summer session, including six credit hours and activities, aimed at building academic and social foundations. It targets incoming first-year residential students with a GPA under 3.3 or identified for needing extra support. The participants receive continued mentoring, academic advising, and community activities throughout their first year. The program has proven effective at increasing retention rates.

The **49er Finish Program**, launched in 2005 by the Office of Adult Students & Extended Services at **UNC Charlotte**, helps former undergraduate seniors who paused their studies complete their degrees. Eligible students with 90+ credit hours, in good academic, judicial, and financial standing, receive waived application fees and personalized academic advising to ease their readmission and degree completion process. With a current graduation rate of 85% from 1,572 enrolled students, the program is a **Model of Excellence** award winner.

North Carolina Will NOT Meet the Attainment Goal Without Enrolling More Adult Learners

To make up for the projected shortfall of 55K individuals aged 25-44 with degrees and credentials and to achieve 2 million by 2030, we must encourage more adults to attend college and then support them by completing an industry-valued college degree or credential. According to 2023 Census Bureau data, 1.19 million (42%) of North Carolinians ages 25-44 do not have a postsecondary degree or credential, including 334,187 with some college but no degree and 619,101 with only a high school diploma.

Adult learners are typically described as students who enter or return to higher education after age 24. They may be returning to education after a break, seeking to advance their careers, or pursuing personal development goals. Additionally, adult learners are more likely to have competing responsibilities such as work and family, so providing flexible learning opportunities that accommodate their busy schedules is crucial. **55% of NC Community College System's students are adult learners during the 2023-24 academic year.**

When a student's parent earns a degree, it can significantly impact the entire family, including improved career opportunities, increased financial stability, an influential example of valuing lifelong learning and perseverance, and improved quality of life.

PROMISING PRACTICES FOR NC'S ADULT LEARNERS

NC Reconnect focuses on engaging, informing, and supporting adult learners who have completed some college but did not earn a degree or credential. The **John M. Belk Endowment** leads this initiative in partnership with myFutureNC, 25 community colleges, the **NC State Belk Center**, and the NC Community College System. To date, the initiative has successfully re-enrolled 2,743 adult learners. It is projected to re-enroll ~7K adult learners in NC community college by 2030. Read more: **Adult Learner Guidebook**

Train the East: myFutureNC partnered with James Sprunt, Lenoir, Sampson, and Wayne Community Colleges to connect resources provided by **The Anonymous Trust** to support a two-year initiative to help increase the enrollment and completion of Hispanic Students. **Hispanic Serving Institutions** or HSIs are on the rise in North Carolina which is no surprise, as the Hispanic and Latinx population has **grown by over 40% over the last decade**. This increase is also reflected in our schools. **The Hispanic student population has increased significantly and now makes up 22% of all NC public school students, representing 300K students and 99% of the growth of our public school students over the last 34 years.**

Building a Stronger Workforce: Aligning Skills and Opportunities

North Carolina's **labor market alignment** is 81%, indicating that roughly eight of every ten graduates from state postsecondary institutions have attained skills and credentials that match job openings. However, 13 of 16 **Prosperity Zone Sub Regions** fell short of the state average. This suggests that individuals who graduate within a region may need to relocate or commute longer distances to find a job that matches their skills. Similarly, an employer might struggle to find recent graduates with the required skills within that region, posing potential challenges for both graduates and employers.

KEY

- ● MET/EXCEEDED 2030 GOAL
- ● 1%-10% AWAY FROM 2030 GOAL
- ● 11%+ AWAY FROM 2030 GOAL

2030 Goal

	2024	2030 Goal
Labor Market Alignment	81%	85%
Opportunity Youth	10%	9%
Labor Market Participation Rate	84%	86%
Family Sustaining Wage	58%	66%
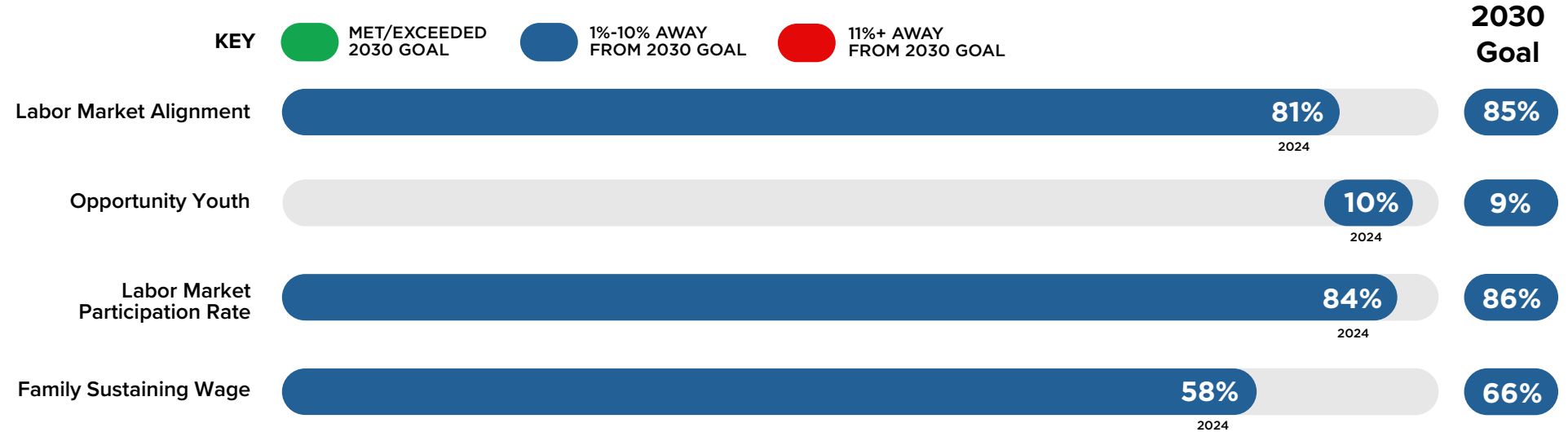
Efforts Are Underway to Align With the Labor Market

WE NEED TO BETTER PREPARE STUDENTS

Communities across North Carolina, particularly rural communities, face a growing talent shortage due to a declining population (49 of 78 rural counties) in the last decade. As workers retire, fewer new candidates are trained to fill their positions. In their efforts to recruit for specialized roles, employers often look to surrounding towns and communities to source talent.

ALMOST HALF OF WORKING NORTH CAROLINIANS ARE NOT EARNING A FAMILY-SUSTAINING WAGE

A **"family-sustaining" or "living wage"** means earning enough to cover necessary expenses—such as food, medical care, childcare, housing, and transportation—without relying on financial assistance from other sources.

42% of North Carolina's prime working age adults (25-44) did not earn a lving wage in 2023. According to the **MIT Living Wage Calculator**, in 2024, a single adult with no children living in North Carolina must earn **an annual income of at least $44,848** to meet this threshold.

See each county's living wage here.

WORKING TO SUPPORT AND ENGAGE NC'S OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

Unfortunately, when students do not see the link between their coursework and goals for the future, many become frustrated and disconnect as early as middle school. One in every ten (10.3% or 134,795) North Carolina 16-24-year-olds were not in school or working in 2023.

Who are NC's opportunity youth?

STRENGTHENING PIPELINE DEVELOPMENT

Iredell Ready helps individuals explore career paths by partnering with industry, education, and local government to build a skilled workforce. Since 2022, it has boosted high school graduation rates, CTE credentials, and post-secondary enrollment, aligning with state workforce goals. Recognized with a **2024 Excellence in Economic Development Award**, it reflects its founders' commitment to community and economic growth.

Work in Burke, an initiative of The Industrial Commons, boosts postsecondary credentials and workforce connections in Burke County. Through programs like OPT-IN and J.E.T., it provides at-risk youth with internships, mentorships, professional development, and job opportunities, partnering with local employers to support community events and career transitions.

Forsyth Works is a workforce initiative in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County focused on enhancing career development and strengthening the local economy by connecting job seekers, employers, and educational institutions. It prioritizes accessible career pathways in high-demand fields like healthcare, construction, and advanced manufacturing, with a special emphasis on underserved groups and adults without postsecondary education. It aligns training with industry needs and helps workers translate job experience into recognized credentials.

The **NC East Alliance** supports economic growth across 29 rural counties in eastern North Carolina by pushing the limits of rural economic development, workforce training, education, and strategic marketing.

The NC Department of Public Instruction's **Portrait of a Graduate** outlines what NC students must be well equipped with to pursue the broadest range of postsecondary opportunities, whether in college, career, or the military.

The General Assembly created the **Short-Term Workforce Development Grant** program in 2022 and codified it into state law in 2023, along with $1M in recurring funding.

The new **Rural Healthcare Partnerships Toolkit** offers resources for healthcare organizations, community colleges, and partners to close the rural healthcare workforce gap by showcasing successful rural partnership models. Created by the Rural Postsecondary Practices Partnership (RP3), a collaboration among the NCCCS, NC State Belk Center, EdNC, and myFutureNC.

Building NC's Future: Advancing NC Workforce Credentials to Meet High-Demand Jobs

Credentials verify that an individual has the qualifications to perform a job or task effectively. Standard credentials include a high school diploma, college degree, and occupational skills license.

With an increasing demand for employees in essential careers being important to North Carolina's future, **myFutureNC**, **NC Office of the Governor**, **NC Department of Public Instruction**, **NC Community College System**, **NC Association of Workforce Development Boards**, and **NC Department of Commerce** formed the **NC Workforce Credentials Advisory Council**. This collaborative effort, which includes business, industry, and education partners, is crucial in identifying short-term, **industry-valued credentials** needed to fill high-demand and high-growth jobs that will count towards the state's 2 million by 2030 goal.

The NC Workforce Credentials Advisory Council has been proactive in its mission. It has endorsed more than **150 NC Workforce Credentials** and established a structure to engage sectors regularly. Most NC Workforce Credentials can be earned through in-person and online training programs available through our state's career & technical education programs in high schools and our 58 community colleges.

NC WORKFORCE CREDENTIALS PROVIDE FAMILY-SUSTAINING WAGES

For North Carolina to meet its 2 million by 2030 goal, we must engage and support more adults in earning industry-valued credentials that provide a path to economic prosperity.

North Carolina has many high-demand, high-growth jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage. Yet, we don't have enough skilled workers to fill them. While many of these opportunities don't require a college degree, **~330,000 North Carolina jobs require an industry-valued credential or certificate and are projected to grow by more than 11% by 2030**. To meet labor market demands now and in the future, we must increase educational attainment statewide for **NC Workforce Credentials**.
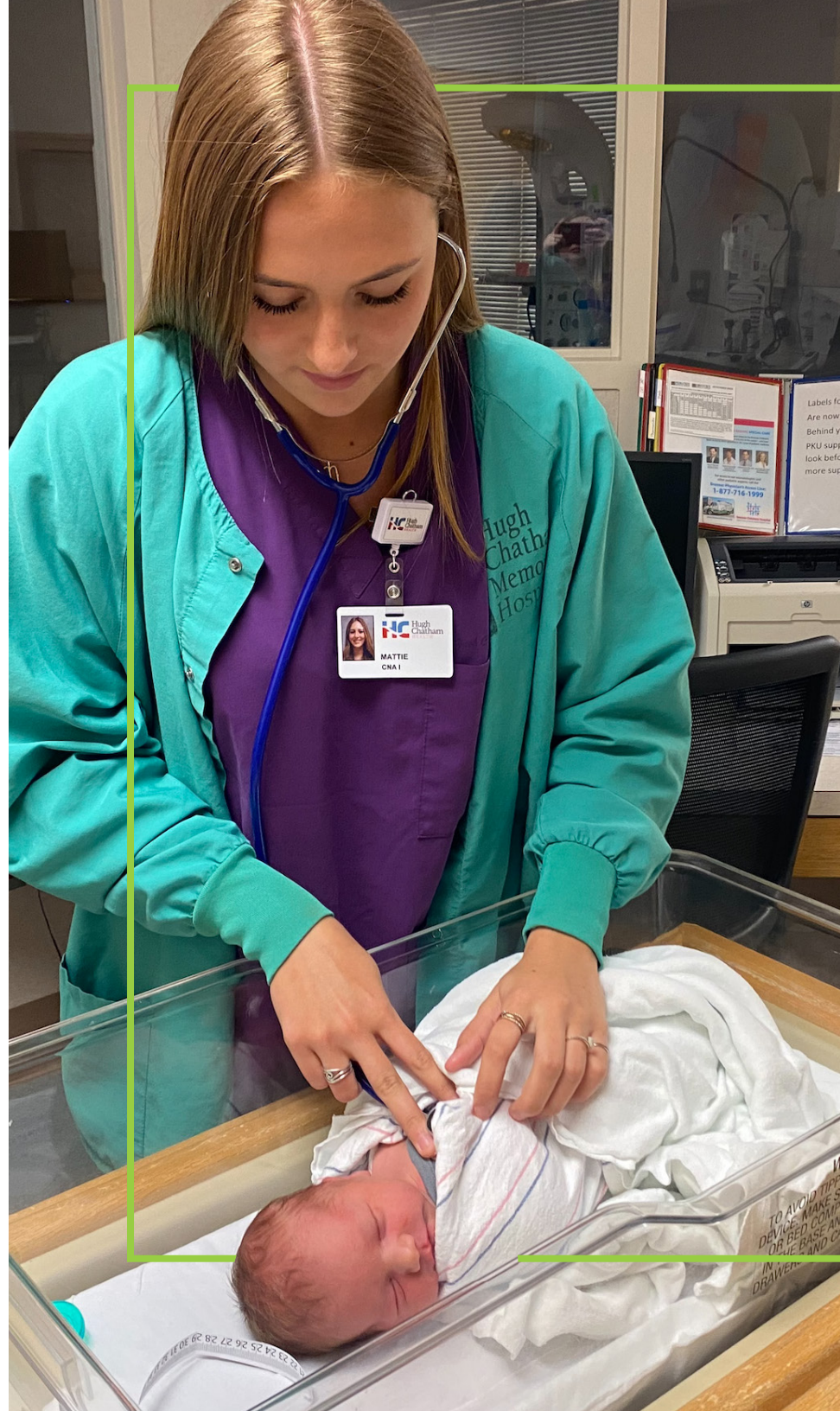
2025 Policy Recommendations

NC WORKFORCE CREDENTIALS

Total: $10.35 Million

Funding—**$350K R + 2 FTE**—for **NC Workforce Credentials** to strengthen alignment between the NC Workforce Credentials Advisory Council's efforts, NC Commerce, NCWorks, education sectors, & employer needs.

Funding—**$10M R**—to support students pursuing industry-valued credentials & outreach to boost enrollment in such programs.

Support (+ possible funding—**$[TBD]**) to improve tracking of certification/licensure completions aligned with industry-valued credentials.

LOCAL/REGIONAL ASSISTANCE

Total: $5.5 Million

Funding—**$5M R**—for technical assistance grants to support local or regional cross-sector collaborations pursuing innovative approaches to improve attainment.

Funding—**$500K**—to support a dedicated project manager & ensure primary outreach/recruitment tools are optimized to support the goals of **AdvanceNC**, a collaborative of major employers working alongside multiple community colleges, 4-year institutions, & workforce development boards across 19 counties to streamline pathways into advanced manufacturing.

PERSISTENCE & COMPLETION

Total: $21.5+ Million

Targeted student assistance for college completion, including extending financial support to 4-year institutions:

- **$8.5M R** to the UNC System for Completion Assistance Programs
- **$6M R** to support NCICU student completion

Funding—**$[TBD]**—to support & expand replication of **TrACE** + **BOOST** programs which help students stay on track & graduate by providing financial, academic, & personal support.

Funding—**~$5M-$7M R**—to augment NC's new common digital transcript and **improve credit mobility**:

- Develop capabilities to provide seamless postsecondary student transfer & reverse transfer between institutions
- Include NCICU in the common digital transcript, at the appropriate time

PARTNER SUPPORT ITEMS

Early foundations for success, including NC Pre-K, support for the Science of Reading, & high-quality implementation of career development plans with connectivity to **NCcareers.org**.

Implementation of Propel NC in alignment with NC Workforce Credentials while also incentivizing regional collaboration & credit for prior learning.

Support for FAFSA outreach + continuation/expansion of direct admission initiatives.

Support for additional NCCCS items: ERP modernization, recurring state support for ApprenticeshipNC, apprenticeship tuition waiver expansion.

Placeholder for potential items related to Hurricane Helene relief.

Acknowledgements

OPPORTUNITIES TO DONATE TO MYFUTURENC

Whether a foundation, individual, or corporate sponsor, our donors are essential in helping myFutureNC support and advance its mission to close the educational attainment gap in North Carolina. If you or your organization would like to learn more about how to support this vital work financially, please contact us at **office@myfuturenc.org**.

CITATIONS

For a list of all citations, please go to **www.myfuturenc.org** to access the online version of the North Carolina State of Educational Attainment Report which includes all citation hyperlinks.