North Carolina

Analyzing the learner continuum in North Carolina.

North Carolina’s Workforce Credentials initiative is a great example of how the state is thinking about pathways quality and working collaboratively across agencies and industry to support the postsecondary attainment goal. The NC Workforce Credentials workgroup is focused on identifying high-quality credentials that are valued by employers and support in-demand living wage jobs. North Carolina is well-positioned to build on this progress and address remaining gaps such as the need to strengthen its access to, and use of, outcomes data, reduce legal barriers for employer engagement, and broaden its cross-sector shared definitions and priorities.

STRENGTHS

• North Carolina’s focus on CTE grade expansion to middle school and development of postsecondary and business partnerships.

• North Carolina’s integrated college acceleration offerings, funding and incentives that support learners in obtaining college credit in high school.

• North Carolina’s last mile grant, Finish Line Grants, for emergency needs.

OPPORTUNITIES

• Conduct a full audit of secondary and postsecondary CTE program offerings for alignment, quality and equitable access.

• Strengthen the longitudinal data system, including governance, to evaluate program quality and learner outcomes.

• Expand statewide articulation mechanisms and processes for credit obtained in K-12 to postsecondary institutions.
LEARNER PATHWAYS

Ensure vertical alignment to workforce needs, robust funding, collaboration across agencies and equitable access for all students.

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<td>HIGH-QUALITY CTE PROGRAMS</td>
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**HIGH-QUALITY CTE PROGRAMS**
Align all CTE programs with high-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations that reflect the state’s economic and workforce priorities. Ensure that these programs feature the academic and technical skills and knowledge learners will need to be successful.

**TARGETED CTE PROGRAM FUNDING**
Dedicate state funding for CTE programs—but only if they are aligned to high-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations. Target specific funds for pathway completion and demonstrated learner outcomes.

**AUDIT FOR QUALITY AND EQUITY**
Conduct a biennial audit of CTE programs for quality and equity to ensure that all learners have access to high-demand, high-skill and high-wage pathways. Collect school- and student-level data to evaluate outcomes of CTE programs against established shared metrics for quality and equity.

**STATE CROSS-AGENCY SHARED PRIORITIES**
Establish shared priorities and collective accountability across state agencies and education systems for learner pathway development, supports and success. Ensure that business and industry have a seat at the table and can lead discussions related to demand and training requirements.
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

There is no formal state statute in place to address vertically aligned, high-quality state CTE programs of study. However, all programs of study offered in the K–12 North Carolina Certified Career Pathways and postsecondary are developed in collaboration with employer advisory committees and supported by identified workforce needs utilizing labor market data.

North Carolina’s Perkins V plan, implemented July 2020, outlines that programs of study linking secondary and postsecondary levels of education are being updated and aligned to meet new standards outlined in the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment. Perkins V will be benchmarked and measured by a set of performance measures reported annually to the Department of Education through a secondary-postsecondary consolidated annual report. At the postsecondary level, associate of applied science program review occurs every three years with business and industry input to ensure alignment with employer needs. Programs are added or retired through a process that requires State Board of Community Colleges approval.

In 2015, the NCWorks Commission approved NCWorks Certified Career Pathways criteria to establish the standards for the development of career pathways across the state. All Certified Career Pathways must be demand driven and data informed and include employer engagement, collaboration across sectors, career awareness, articulation and coordination, work-based learning, multiple points of entry and exit, and an evaluation plan. These pathways were reviewed and approved by a team of workforce professionals including Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act staff, high school CTE staff and community college CTE staff.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

Once North Carolina has had time to implement the new Perkins V changes, North Carolina can conduct a thorough audit of its K–12 and postsecondary CTE programs of study to (a) ensure that the programs of study align with state workforce and economic demands and projections in high-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations; (b) determine where there are program gap opportunities; and (c) ascertain program quality. A plan should be developed and implemented to phase out all misaligned or low-quality programs of study and phase in revised or new high-quality programs of study fully reflective of the state’s priorities.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Delaware – Career and Technical Education Programs
- Tennessee – Career and Technical Education Programs
- Texas – Program of Study Initiative

RESOURCES

- NCWorks Commission
- NCWorks Certified Career Pathway
- NCWorks Commission Strategic Plan, 2019-23
- NC Perkins V State Plan
- CTE
- NCCareers.org

POLICIES

- NC Code Annotated § 115C-64.15. Education and Workforce Innovation Commission
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

CTE funding is provided for CTE teachers in grades 8–12, but the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) serves grades 6–12.

In 2017 the North Carolina Education and Workforce Innovation Commission (EWIC), North Carolina State Board of Education and North Carolina superintendent of public instruction developed the Career and Technical Education Grade Expansion Program. Established under G.S. 115C-64.17, the Career and Technical Education Grade Expansion Program is designed to expand CTE programs by prioritizing the inclusion of students in sixth and seventh grade through grant awards provided to selected districts for up to seven years from its inception.

In 2020 the EWIC implemented a competitive grant to be used by schools and districts to leverage a partnership with a public or private university or community college and regional businesses and business leaders to foster innovation in education that combines academic rigor and skills development.

Previously North Carolina had an industry credential attainment bonus whereby teachers were eligible to receive a bonus per student that earned an industry certification or credential. For 2019–20 the funds were repurposed to pay for a bonus for all teachers. Funds are available for Certiport licensees through a statewide agreement for Microsoft Office Specialist and Microsoft Technology Associate Certification. North Carolina was the first state to offer the Microsoft IT Academy program in high schools statewide.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

North Carolina can consider funding CTE teachers for grades 6–12. North Carolina also can consider additional targeted state funding to help incentivize local education agencies in their development and implementation of high-quality, aligned programs of study. This could include funds to support the startup and sustainment of high-quality, aligned programs for items such as equipment or teacher training.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Indiana – Funding Methodology
- Ohio – Innovative Workforce Incentive Program
- Texas – House Bill 3

RESOURCES

- CTE Grade Expansion Program
- Education and Workforce Innovation Fund Application
- Industry Certifications and Credentials Teacher Bonuses
- Advanced Coursework
- Microsoft Office Specialist and Microsoft Technology Associate Certification

POLICIES

- NC Code Annotated § 115C-64.17. CTE Grade Expansion Program
- NC Code Annotated § 115C-64.16. Education and Workforce Innovation Program
- NC Code Annotated § 115C-156.2. CTE Participation
KEY POLICY

Audit for Quality and Equity

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
There is no formal statute in place to address equitable access to high-quality CTE programs of study.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Once North Carolina has had time to implement the new Perkins V changes, North Carolina can conduct a thorough audit to (1) ensure that existing CTE programs of study are aligned with workforce needs, informed by labor market demand, linked to occupations that are middle- to high-wage and vertically aligned to postsecondary programs; and (2) understand student access, participation and completion data by student groups to determine potential inequities. ExcelinEd’s Auditing a State Career and Technical Education Program for Quality playbook provides a roadmap for developing and implementing an audit.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Colorado – Return on Investment Reports
- Florida – Executive Order 19-31 and House Bill 7071
  (NOTE: While promising, both could be strengthened by more focused analyses on equity and quality of offerings.)

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<th>RESOURCES</th>
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STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
North Carolina has multiple cross-agency groups that support the education to workforce continuum. Examples include the following:

1. The NC Ready for Success Steering Committee was founded in 2012. Its goal was to strengthen the alignment between sectors so that students experienced smoother transitions and were better prepared for postsecondary experiences. The committee consisted of the Department of Public Instruction, North Carolina Community College System, University of North Carolina System, and North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities. Over the course of their work, representatives were added to the Steering Committee from the Governor’s Office, North Carolina New Schools and the North Carolina Chamber. The committee drafted a definition of college and career readiness.

2. The NCWorks Commission recommends policies and strategies to help enable the state’s workforce and business to compete in the global economy. The 33 members are appointed by the governor. The NCWorks Commission is responsible for the NC Certified Career Pathways and promotes the governor’s Job Ready initiative. NC Job Ready targets three core principles: skills and education attainment, employer leadership, and local innovation throughout North Carolina.

3. myFutureNC, a nonprofit, is focused on educational attainment and is the result of cross-sector collaboration among North Carolina leaders in education, business and government. myFutureNC is responsible for the development of the statewide attainment goal.

The strongest recent example of shared priorities is the adoption by all major education and workforce development entities of the attainment goal set forth by myFutureNC. The goal also has the bipartisan support of the governor and leaders of the General Assembly.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
As of January 2021, every top state agency leader for education and workforce development is new to their role within the past six months or has yet to be appointed (superintendent of public instruction, president of the North Carolina Community College System, president of the University of North Carolina System, secretary of commerce). This offers a remarkable opportunity for the agencies to take stock and for the state to reconsider its overall approaches to the education and workforce continuum.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
• Delaware – Advisory Council on Career and Technical Education (DACCTE)
• Indiana – Governor’s Workforce Cabinet
• Washington – Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

RESOURCES
• NC Ready for Success Steering Committee
• NCWorks Commission
• myFutureNC

POLICIES
• NC Code Annotated § 115C-64.15. Education and Workforce Innovation Program
POSTSECONDARY ACCELERATION

Streamline postsecondary learning and empower high school students to earn credit to reduce the time required to earn postsecondary degrees.

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COLLEGE ACCELERATION
Provide and incentivize a range of options for learners to earn college credit while in high school. Ensure that all learners have access and financial support to accelerate their journey to a postsecondary credential.

CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING AND CREDENTIALS
Implement a consistent state policy for awarding postsecondary program or elective credit for prior learning, work experience and earned industry credentials.

COLLEGE ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS
Establish statewide articulation agreements to ensure college credits earned in K–12 or at one institution transfer and count toward a degree at another. Minimize or eliminate credit loss and misalignment for transitioning learners.

REMEDIATION
Replace outdated developmental and remedial education with college credit bearing options paired with intensive supports. Adopt co-requisite remediation programs or offer remediation to learners before they graduate high school.
STATE CASE STUDY

KEY POLICY

College Acceleration

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

Career and College Promise (SL 2011-145/HB 200) is North Carolina’s dual enrollment program for high school students. This program allows eligible high school students to enroll in college classes at North Carolina community colleges and universities. Students who successfully complete college courses earn college credit and in many cases can also earn high school credit. Students can choose between the college transfer pathway (designed to continue on to an associate or bachelor’s degree) or CTE pathway (designed to begin a certification or diploma program in a particular technical field or career area).

In 2018 North Carolina passed HB 986, which requires that all students who score a level five (the highest level) on their end-of-year assessments in math to be automatically placed in advanced math the following year. The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) estimates that in the next year 10,000 students were given access to advanced courses who otherwise would not have had access. Previously North Carolina had implemented Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Cambridge and CTE credential bonuses, but for 2019–20 the funds were repurposed to provide bonuses for all teachers. Additionally, North Carolina was the first state to offer the Microsoft IT Academy program in high schools statewide.

North Carolina has early colleges, often located on the campus of a university or community college, where students simultaneously work toward completion of both the high school diploma and an associate degree, transferable credit or a certificate.

The University of North Carolina (UNC) System has created a policy on awarding undergraduate credit on the basis of AP exam scores. All UNC System schools accept an agreed-upon score for AP, IB, Cambridge Advanced International Certificate and A Level examination scores.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

North Carolina can continue to strengthen its data collection and reporting of outcomes for all its college acceleration options disaggregated by demographics such as race, socioeconomic status, language and region. This can help target any issues of access and equity that may exist across the state.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Florida – High School Acceleration Programs and Statewide Agreements on Credit
- Idaho – Advanced Opportunities Funding
- Louisiana – TOPS-Tech Early Start Program

RESOURCES

- DPI Career and College Promise Program
- Advanced Coursework
- North Carolina Community College System Career and College Promise Program
- Increasing Access to Advanced Math Coursework in North Carolina

POLICIES

- SL 2017-57, SB 257, Advanced Coursework
- SL 2011-145, HB 200, Career and College Promise Program
- UNC Policy 700.10.1, Awarding Undergraduate Credit on the Basis of AP Exam Scores
KEY POLICY

Credit for Prior Learning and Credentials

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

North Carolina’s Department of Public Instruction offers credit by demonstrated mastery (CDM). Through CDM a student may earn credit for a high school course through a standardized examination such as an end-of-course assessment or artifact that requires the student to apply knowledge and skills relevant to content standards.

North Carolina universities and community colleges, through SB 761, have designed and implemented a plan for uniform granting and transferring of course credits for military training. Through extensive collaboration, crosswalks have been developed for advisers to use to grant course credits. Currently, work is underway to make this effort easier through computer-aided translation of military training to civilian/North Carolina postsecondary institution credit. The initiative is known as Courage to Credits.

Individual institutions across the state have developed systems for administering prior learning assessments for items such as employee training programs, occupational credentials, registered apprenticeship programs, work experience, quick jobs training or noncredit coursework, but this work has not been standardized.

In 2021, the State Board of Community Colleges officially completed a rulemaking process for credit for prior learning. The purpose is to guarantee that all North Carolina community colleges follow consistent academic convention and to establish minimum standards. The policy applies to certifications, college-level learning, continuing education, credit for prior learning and licensure.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

North Carolina can collect and analyze data (once the credit for prior learning process has been implemented) to help ensure equity in the attainment of prior learning credit across demographics, socioeconomic status and regions.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Colorado – Prior Learning Assessment Credit Policy
- Kentucky – Prior Learning Initiative
- Ohio – Military Strategic Implementation Team

RESOURCES

- UNC Transfer Credit for Military Training
- Greenville Technical College Prior Learning Assessment
- CDM
- Courage to Credits
- North Carolina Community College System Credit for Prior Learning

POLICIES

- SL 2014-67 SB 761. Credit for Military Training
- State Board of Community Colleges Title 1 (Chapter D), Credit for Prior Learning
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

In 2014 the North Carolina Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAA) was signed between the University of North Carolina and North Carolina Community College System. Under the CAA, universities agreed to a list of Universal General Education Transfer Courses that are guaranteed to transfer for general education equivalency credit to each of the 16 constituent institutions. Also, completion of the college transfer degree guarantees completion of undergraduate general education and premajor courses and transfer of 60 semester hours of college credit, if the student is admitted into the transfer institution and major.

In 2015 the Community College System signed the Independent Comprehensive Articulation Agreement with the North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities. A transfer course list outlines the courses accepted for transfer, and transfer pathways have been created for associate in arts and associate in science to four-year degree programs.

The State Board of Community Colleges and other higher education governing boards have pursued articulation agreements for specific pathways as well, including nursing (registered nurse to bachelor of science in nursing), early childhood education, engineering, fine arts and teacher preparation.

The North Carolina High School to Community College Articulation Agreement is an agreement between the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and the North Carolina Community College System that provides a process that joins secondary and postsecondary CTE programs of study. The articulation agreement ensures that if a student is proficient in one of the 50 approved CTE courses, the student can receive college credit for that course at any North Carolina community college. Additionally, local articulation agreements can be developed.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

North Carolina can consider a mechanism, such as automation, to seamlessly transfer the approved CTE credits for students who meet the articulation criteria from secondary to postsecondary. Currently, the student must initiate this transfer, which often results in lost credits for learners. North Carolina can also expand the statewide high school to community college articulation agreement to include non-CTE courses.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Florida – Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreements
- Indiana – Core Transfer Library
- Kentucky – Transfer Articulation Agreements

RESOURCES

- CAA
- Independent Comprehensive Articulation Agreement
- NC Community College System Career and College Promise
- High School to Community College Articulation Agreement (CTE)

POLICIES

- SL 2013-72, HB 903, CAA

• Florida – Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreements
• Indiana – Core Transfer Library
• Kentucky – Transfer Articulation Agreements

RESOURCES

- CAA
- Independent Comprehensive Articulation Agreement
- NC Community College System Career and College Promise
- High School to Community College Articulation Agreement (CTE)

POLICIES

- SL 2013-72, HB 903, CAA
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

In 2013 the North Carolina Legislature adopted the Multiple Measures of Placement policy. The Multiple Measures policy establishes a hierarchy of measures that colleges will use to determine second-semester seniors’ and recent high school graduates’ readiness for college-level courses. The first measure is an unweighted high school grade point average (originally set at 2.6), the second measure is ACT or SAT scores, and the third is placement testing.

Additionally, in 2015 the Legislature required in SB 761 that college developmental mathematics and developmental reading and English be offered to students in high school in cooperation with community college partners. The courses went into effect in 2018–19 in a pilot phase. Full statewide rollout of the CCRG courses went into effect in Spring 2021.

North Carolina has also implemented RISE: Reinforced Instruction for Student Excellence, a co-requisite remediation system, but not statewide. Currently, under RISE operations, the unweighted high school GPA for placement has been modified to 2.8.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

North Carolina can expand RISE statewide to the remaining three community colleges (it is currently in 55 of 58 community colleges). North Carolina also can set the grade point average standards and cutoffs at the state level to ensure equity between colleges.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

• Georgia – Complete College Georgia
• Tennessee – Co-Requisite Remediation and Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support (SAILS)

RESOURCES

• Multiple Measures
• Career and College Ready Graduates (CCRG)
• North Carolina Community College System Strategic Plan 2018–22
• Report to the North Carolina General Assembly: Progress of CCRG Programs

POLICIES

• SL 2015-241, HB 97 10.13.(a), CCRG
• SL 2016-97 and SL 2018-5, Amendments to CCRG
POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT

Reduce barriers—such as funding, lack of alignment and missed opportunities—to help more students attain postsecondary credentials.

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**REVERSE TRANSFER CREDENTIALS**
Establish a statewide policy to allow students to earn an associate degree while continuing to work toward a bachelor’s degree. Ensure two-year and four-year college credits can be combined toward the credential.

**LAST DOLLAR/LAST MILE FINANCIAL AID**
Provide dedicated state financial aid to qualifying learners that fills in gaps in federal assistance (last dollar) and promotes attainment for learners just shy of completing a degree (last mile).

**OUTCOMES-BASED FUNDING**
Transition postsecondary funding models from those based on learner enrollment to ones based on learner outcomes. Dedicate more funding to programs and institutions that show demonstrated success in meeting success metrics such as job placement and long-term wage earnings.

**STACKABLE CREDENTIALS**
Define and promote a combination of industry and academic credentials that reflect articulated pathways to advanced learning and employment. Ensure that postsecondary credential programs are widely accessible to all learners and reflect value in the labor market.
Reverse Transfer Credentials

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
In 2012, the University of North Carolina (UNC) General Administration and North Carolina Community College System received a grant from USA Funds as a part of the Credit When It’s Due grant to develop technology tools, policies and procedures to support the reverse transfer of credit for students who transfer before completing a credential at the community college. Initially, this was piloted at a subset of community colleges and universities. Currently, all 58 community colleges and all 16 public universities are participating. Students who transfer to a UNC System institution from one of the 58 North Carolina community colleges are given the opportunity to combine the credits earned at the university with credit already earned at the community college. Likewise, students who begin at a university can apply university credit toward a community college credential.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
North Carolina can study the data for student participation by factors such as race, disability and socioeconomic status to help ensure that there is equitable access to the process.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Colorado – Reverse Transfer Process
- Florida – Reverse Transfer Statewide Articulation Agreements
- Texas – Reverse Transfer Process

RESOURCES
- Comprehensive Articulation Agreement
- Reverse Transfer
- 2016 Reverse Transfer User Guide

POLICIES
N/A
STATE CASE STUDY

POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT

North Carolina

KEY POLICY

Last Dollar/Last Mile Financial Aid

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

There is no formal statute in place to address last dollar or last mile scholarships. However, in 2018 Governor Cooper launched a form of last mile grants known as the Finish Line grants as part of the NC Job Ready initiative. The workforce development boards partnered with the community colleges to leverage Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds to pay for emergency expenses such as child care, medical costs, car repairs or alternative transportation. To be eligible students must be in good academic standing and at least 50 percent through the training program.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

To reduce financial barriers and increase postsecondary completion for its citizens, North Carolina can implement a last dollar or last mile program for students attending public postsecondary institutions.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Florida – Last Mile College Completion Program
- Rhode Island – Rhode Island Promise
- Tennessee – Tennessee Promise and Tennessee Reconnect

RESOURCES

- Finish Line Grants

POLICIES

N/A
Outcomes-Based Funding

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
The North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) has performance funding that rewards community colleges for meeting student success outcomes. Roughly 2 percent of the NCCCS budget is dedicated to performance funding for individual community colleges based on success measures captured in the performance measures report such as basic skill student progress, success rate in college-level math and English courses, first-year progression, licensure and certification passing rate, and college transfer performance.

NCCCS sponsors conferences and professional development aimed at improving student outcomes aligned with state performance measures. Performance measures reports and dashboards are used by community college administrators, faculty, staff and trustees to understand where improvements need to be made at each institution and for the system as a whole.

Statewide performance measures are reviewed every three years to ensure the measures and methods are current and focused on improving student success. These measures are components of key performance indicators for the NCCCS Strategic Plan.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
North Carolina can add metrics such as job placement, long-term wage earnings and success of underrepresented student populations.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
• Missouri – Performance Funding
• Tennessee – Outcomes-Based Funding Formula
• Texas – State Technical College Funding Model

RESOURCES
• NCCCS 2020 Performance Measures Report
• State Performance Dashboard

POLICIES
• G.S. 115D-31.3. Institutional Performance Accountability
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
There is no formal statute in place to address stackable credentials. A criterion for an NCWorks Certified Career Pathway “encourages” the obtainment of stackable credentials. Some specific programs of study (e.g., in CTE and registered apprenticeships) build in stackable credentials, but it is not through a systematized process.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
NCWorks can require the inclusion of stackable credentials as part of the NCWorks Certified Career Pathway and work to build out a statewide system of stackable credentials. North Carolina can consider articulating noncredit courses to credit courses where possible.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Colorado – Stackable Credential Legislation
- Idaho – SkillStack
- Indiana – Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready Grant

RESOURCES
- NCWorks Certified Career Pathway

POLICIES
N/A
WORKFORCE READINESS

Ensure the skills, credentials and apprenticeships students pursue help to prepare a strong workforce within the state.

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WORK-BASED LEARNING
Establish a statewide K–12 and postsecondary work-based learning program that promotes learning through a series of progressive learner experiences both in the classroom and in a work setting. Provide guidance and support for how education and business and industry collaborate to achieve mutual priorities.

REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP
Establish clearly defined program guidance for state-promoted registered apprenticeships and apprentice programs outlining prerequisites, requirements, funding, stakeholder incentives and participant outcomes.

INDUSTRY CREDENTIALS
Ensure all industry credentials earned in K–12 or postsecondary are aligned with high-demand, high-skill, high-wage occupations and valued by state and regional employers.

SKILLS RETRAINING/ CREDENTIALING
Identify and promote non-degree programs and credentials that support new, transitioning and displaced learners in career change and advancement. Ensure that supports include funding supports for learners and incentives for participating employers who train or retrain them.
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
The Future Ready Act of 2017 instituted the requirement that each local board of education should offer at least two work-based learning opportunities. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has launched a navigator tool, which is a first-of-its-kind online tool, to bring together members of the business, education and workforce development communities to post, search for and measure work-based learning opportunities.

Work-based learning in North Carolina begins in middle school with career awareness and progresses through to career exploration and then to career preparation. In addition, legislation provides a tuition waiver to high school students who were in a registered apprenticeship program and continue their job-related education at a North Carolina community college. DPI has recently initiated a revision of the work-based learning toolkit to help local stakeholders execute quality programs in schools.

The NCWorks Certified Career Pathway criteria include the requirement that pathways must include work-based learning as a strategy for career exploration and workforce engagement.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
North Carolina can analyze the types of jobs that are being undertaken in the work-based learning courses with an equity lens to ensure students are gaining access to meaningful experiences. As part of the work-based learning toolkit revision North Carolina can assess the current tools being used to ascertain the quality of experience from a student perspective and an employer perspective to further determine quality of experience and placements and develop comprehensive guardrails on the quality of the experiences across the state. Guardrails could include standards, work-based learning licensure training requirements, etc. This could help rectify that certain experiences (such as the entrepreneurial experience) do not result in school credit. ExcelinEd’s Developing High-Quality State Work-Based Learning Programs provides a comprehensive structure and examples for developing a strong program.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
• Delaware — Work-Based Learning Practicum
• Georgia — Work-Based Learning Framework
• Rhode Island — PrepareRI Work-Based Learning Navigator

RESOURCES
• Work-Based Learning
• NC Work-Based Learning Association
• ExperienceMoreNC

POLICIES
• HB 450. Future Ready Act
Registered Apprenticeship

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
ApprenticeshipNC is a program managed by the community colleges (§ 115D-11.5). ApprenticeshipNC is advised by the ApprenticeshipNC Council, which is composed of four representatives each from employer and employee organizations respectively and three representatives from the public at large. One state official designated by the Department of Public Instruction and one state official designated by the Department of Commerce shall be members *ex officio* of the council, without vote. The responsibilities of the council are to support in the development of policies and standards related to apprenticeships for the community college system.

ApprenticeshipNC is an employer-driven training model that combines on-the-job learning with related classroom instruction. This allows apprentices to learn practical skills while earning both state and national credentials. The goal is to expand registered apprenticeship in North Carolina by helping employers establish and grow their apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs. North Carolina’s apprenticeship program is coordinated with the U.S. Department of Labor and is supported by industries, businesses, labor unions, community colleges and public schools.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
North Carolina can incentivize and/or financially support public-private partnerships to develop high-quality apprenticeship programs that leverage state and federal funds for CTE or workforce development.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Iowa – [Earn and Learn](#)
- Kentucky – [Tech Ready Apprentices for Careers in Kentucky](#) and [Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship](#)
- New Jersey – [Apprenticeship Network](#)
- South Carolina – [Apprenticeship Carolina](#)

RESOURCES
- ApprenticeshipNC
- Apprenticeship Council

POLICIES
- [NC Code Annotated § 115D-11.5.](#) ApprenticeshipNC Purpose
- [NC Code Annotated § 115D-11.6.](#) Apprenticeship Council
- [NC Code Annotated § 115D-11.7.](#) ApprenticeshipNC
KEY POLICY

Industry Credentials

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

In 2017 the Future Ready Act provided funds to pay fees for industry certifications and credentials approved by the State Board of Education. The Department of Commerce is annually required to provide the State Board of Education a list of occupations in high need of additional skilled employees. North Carolina CTE partners with the Department of Commerce to assign a three-tier ranking to each industry credential. Local business advisory councils are responsible for selecting the industry credentials that “best meet State and local workforce needs.” Additionally, North Carolina has organized a statewide license with Microsoft to offer the Microsoft IT Academy program in all public high schools.

North Carolina is in the process of developing a framework to identify high-quality credentials. A cross-sector working group, including the North Carolina Community College System, Department of Public Instruction, NCWorks Commission/Department of Commerce, NC Workforce Development Board Directors Council and myFutureNC has been formed, building off the work started through Education Strategy Group’s Credentials of Value Institute. This group has engaged employers and is working to develop criteria to identify high-quality credentials to be branded as NC Workforce Credentials. The goal is for the NC Workforce Credentials to be valued by North Carolina employers and support in-demand living-wage jobs. myFutureNC has played a large role in moving the work forward as a major strategy for the state to achieve its statewide postsecondary educational attainment goal.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

According to ExcelinEd’s research with Burning Glass for CredentialsMatter.org, in 2017–18, just 12 percent of industry credentials earned by North Carolina K–12 students were asked for by employers and were associated with occupations that pay at least $15 per hour. NC Workforce Credentials is a great first step in aligning clear definitions and criteria for credentials of value across K–12 and postsecondary systems. Since this work is early in implementation, it will be important for the state to collect and report on data examining the effectiveness in terms of student outcomes. This includes understanding which students have access and successfully obtain the credentials aligned to high-demand, high-skill, high-wage occupations. To support this work, North Carolina can develop a central repository system to collect credential attainment for K–12 and postsecondary institutions so that regular review and updating can occur.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Indiana – Promoted Industry Certifications
- Kentucky – Valid Industry Certifications
- Louisiana – Industry-Based Certification State Focus List

RESOURCES

- 2019–20 Credentialing Data
- myFutureNC Credentials of Value Institute
- Microsoft Office Specialist and Microsoft Technology Associate Certification

POLICIES

- HB 450 § 115C-156.2. Future Ready Act
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

In 2010 the North Carolina Legislature approved the Basic Skills Plus program. Basic Skills Plus offers transitions and career pathway support to students preparing for entry into employment and postsecondary education programs. The Basic Skills Plus program was developed to provide employability skills, job-specific occupational and technical skills, and developmental education instruction to students concurrently enrolled in a community college course leading to a high school diploma or equivalent certificate. Students work to earn entry-level employment and occupational credentials.

Additionally, the North Carolina Community College System has a set of workforce continuing education programs. These programs are stand-alone classes designed for a specific skill. This aspect of instruction has been supported by the North Carolina General Assembly in its action to support funding parity for high-quality nondegree training and its funding distinctions for different tiers of instruction.

NCWorks Career Centers help to provide resources and information to individuals interested in finding a job or retraining.

The North Carolina Department of Commerce provides the Incumbent Worker Training Program. Incumbent worker training helps offset the cost of training employees who have worked for a business consistently for six months or more. Training should lead to an increased skill level so that employees can be promoted and the employer can backfill opportunities for less-skilled or less-experienced employees.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

North Carolina can consider how to continue strengthening skills retraining to improve alignment to high-wage, high-skill, in-demand fields. North Carolina can consider providing a grant that provides employers or individuals reimbursement for skills retraining upon completion of a qualifying degree within an in-demand, high-skill field.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Indiana – Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready Grant
- Ohio – TechCred
- Washington – Worker Retraining Program

RESOURCES

- Basic Skills Plus
- NCWorks
- Incumbent Worker Training Program
- Tiered Funding Classifications

POLICIES

- H97 Sec. 10.2. Basic Skills Plus
EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Incentivize workforce engagement in student pathways and reduce the barriers that keep employers from participating.

INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT INCENTIVES
Establish, sustain and promote a comprehensive set of industry and employer engagement incentives for supporting education to workforce pathways. Incentives may include grant funds, tax credits, or local and regional support services.

LEGAL BARRIERS
Remove or lessen legal barriers such as liability insurance, workers’ compensation and worksite age restrictions to provide more learners with work-based learning opportunities.
Industry Engagement Incentives

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
The North Carolina Department of Commerce offers a wage reimbursement incentive to help offset the cost of training a new employee with limited skills. Wage reimbursement ranges from 50 percent to 75 percent, depending upon the size of the business, with the higher percentage for businesses with up to 250 employees.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
North Carolina can provide financial incentives or tax credits for employers that hire students participating in a formal work-based learning program or fund reimbursement for employers who train, hire and retain new or incumbent workers to fill in-demand positions within recognized job fields.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
• Georgia – Work-Based Learning Premium Credit
• Indiana – Next Level Jobs Employer Training Grant
• Iowa – Tax Credit

RESOURCES
• NC Commerce On-the-Job Training

POLICIES
N/A
Legal Barriers

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
There is no formal statute in place to address legal barriers.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
North Carolina can implement policies to reduce legal barriers for employers engaging in K–12 and postsecondary worksite-based learning. North Carolina can consider a partnership with an external company to employ work-based learning students who are then placed at businesses. This helps to reduce many of the burdens such as workers’ compensation liability and other restrictions. North Carolina can also allow public schools to purchase certain insurance coverage for the benefit of businesses and students participating in CTE programs and provide for some immunity from liability of certain public school students participating in these programs.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Kentucky – Apprenticeship Programs & Partnerships
- Rhode Island – Work Immersion Training Grant
- Texas – Insurance Coverage

RESOURCES
N/A

POLICIES
N/A
To ensure the strength of all the other policies, there must be cross-sector agreement on outcomes, strategies to get there and data to track progress.

**SHARED PROGRAM QUALITY DEFINITIONS AND INDICATORS**
Establish shared statewide definitions and indicators for quality of and success in education to workforce pathways. Ensure these shared priorities extend across agencies and systems and inform decisions about program offerings, funding and outcomes.

**STATE LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEM**
Ensure the state’s cross-agency data system collects and reports on data needed to evaluate education workforce programs against shared metrics for quality and success. Data should span agencies and education systems and into the workforce to inform decision-making and drive outcomes.
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

Representatives of North Carolina’s public and private sectors, including the governor, the General Assembly (leaders of both chambers), and education and workforce governing boards/executive leadership adopted a shared postsecondary educational attainment goal in 2019: “Ensure that by 2030, 2 million North Carolinians (age 25–44) have a high-quality postsecondary degree or credential.” This goal was set by the myFutureNC Commission, which includes the superintendent of public instruction; the president of the North Carolina Community College System (co-chair); and a variety of leaders from education, business and workforce development. This goal has been embraced by the General Assembly, the governor, and all statewide education and workforce entities.

Individual institutions across North Carolina have developed metrics, many often with input from additional agencies. For example, the Perkins V state contains performance metrics, and the Perkins V postsecondary state plan maintains a data portal for key quality indicators such as placement, technical attainment, retention, completion and participation in non-traditional programs for postsecondary CTE concentrators. Both were developed with cross-agency input. myFutureNC includes a dashboard that tracks metrics in alignment with the postsecondary attainment goal spanning K–12, postsecondary and labor market outcomes.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

It is unclear from research if/which metrics are uniform across agencies. North Carolina can build on its work by convening agencies to agree on shared definitions and metrics that are student focused and uniform and that can be utilized in decision-making or in driving cross-agency shared goals, policies and programs.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Colorado – Talent Pipeline Report
- Indiana – Governor’s Workforce Cabinet
- Rhode Island – PrepareRI

RESOURCES

- myFutureNC
- myFuture NC Dashboard
- Perkins Data Portal

POLICIES

N/A
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
There are two major state longitudinal data systems that span the education and workforce system continuum in North Carolina: NC SchoolWorks and the Common Follow-Up System (CFS). Both include all statewide public education and workforce agencies for K–16 and beyond. NC SchoolWorks also includes data from North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities. The CFS is focused on the public entities but also includes data from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Public Safety.

The CFS powers NC TOWER, a web-based delivery system providing aggregate information on students who attended public universities and community colleges in North Carolina. These data include programs of study, degrees attained, further enrollment, and wage and employment information. Data are also shared through NCCareers.org—a statewide online career portal that enables the public (students, job seekers, etc.) to explore and learn about careers, occupational projections, and where to obtain education and training to enter or progress in careers of interest.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Although the ability to track outcomes for individual students across outcomes such as postsecondary attainment and workforce salary exists, it can be a time-intensive process. North Carolina can analyze the governance system and data infrastructure to determine how to best strengthen the longitudinal data systems. Additionally, North Carolina can consider how to improve communications systems to better share this information with stakeholders such as students, parents, school counselors and teachers.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Colorado – Talent Pipeline Report
- Florida – Talent Development Council
- Kentucky – KYStats

RESOURCES
- CFS
- NC TOWER
- NC SchoolWorks

POLICIES
- NC Code § 116E-2. Longitudinal Data System
- NC Code § 116E-5. Longitudinal Data System