



Operationalizing the *Proposed* Propel NC

Implementation Guide & Critical Conversations for College Leaders

May 2025

Resource Documents

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Key Talking Points for Operationalizing the *Proposed* Propel NC

The proposed Propel NC is a transformative funding model that incentivizes colleges to align their programs/course offerings to the evolving demands of local and regional labor markets. Below are seven key talking points about Propel NC. Propel NC is a transformative funding model that incentivizes colleges to align their programs/course offerings to the evolving demands of local and regional labor markets. Below are seven key talking points about Propel NC.

1. New Funding Model

Funding has transitioned to a labor-market-driven model, where courses will be strategically aligned with workforce sectors that were validated, ranked, and incentivized based on statewide job demand data. This model emphasizes connecting students to high-demand, high-wage career opportunities while encouraging colleges to invest in short-term training leading to credentials in key sectors: Healthcare, Engineering, Advanced Manufacturing, Trades, Transportation, and Public Safety. Colleges must understand how course prefixes are mapped to the approved workforce sectors. The model also supports enrollment growth and more funding to support the base-budget allocation to colleges to meet the operational needs of the college.

2. Alignment with Labor Market Needs

Colleges must engage with local employers and industry associations to ensure their training programs are responsive to local and regional labor market demands. The System Office will provide labor market and student outcome data through customized reports and dashboards. Colleges are encouraged to use data analytic tools like NC LEAD, NCWorks Online, JobsEQ, and Lightcast to collect and analyze local data.

3. Resource Optimization

To maximize Propel NC's impact, sufficient financial, human, and technological resources are essential to ensure colleges have financial support to cover expenditures related to instructional delivery and student support services. Colleges are faced with prioritizing investments in high-cost, high-demand programs while maintaining other workforce programs needed for local and regional economic growth. Colleges need resources for technology infrastructure to streamline operations and enhance a student's experience. Colleges must continuously review programmatic and funding policies and procedures like State Board Code, program and course approvals, state and industry credentials, registration/enrollment processes, and services to targeted populations.

4. Data-Driven Decision Making

Colleges should leverage data to measure the effectiveness of training programs and make continuous improvements. This includes evaluating program/course offerings, tracking program completions, job placement rates, wage outcomes, and employer feedback. The college should identify performance indicators, set benchmarks, and develop strategic practices to meet programmatic and funding goals. Good data metrics are essential to compiling results-driven reports to tell our story to legislators, funding entities, and community stakeholders.

5. Cross-Divisional Collaboration

Collaboration between the Curriculum, Continuing Education, College and Career Readiness, and Student Services divisions is essential. Coordinating efforts across these divisions ensures seamless and responsive processes and avoids duplicative and siloed services. The end goal is for all students to have a successful journey regardless of their starting point or educational background.

6. Student-Centered Support

Providing robust support services is vital to ensuring student success and economic mobility. Services include targeted outreach, career counseling, financial assistance, and workforce readiness programs. Colleges must remove barriers to access and provide resources for students to persist, complete their training programs, and secure employment.

7. Professional Development Matters!

Faculty and staff must receive ongoing professional development to stay current with industry trends, technological advancements, and effective teaching strategies. Ensuring staff accountability through structured evaluations, professional development, and continuous support will streamline processes and enhance the quality of instruction and student engagement.

Overview of North Carolina's Economic and Workforce Development Strategic Plans

The three strategic plans outlined below provide a foundation for operationalizing Propel NC. The goals in these plans are essential for guiding colleges as they prioritize programs, design workforce training initiatives, and track success metrics. Collectively, these plans highlight the importance of talent development, community engagement, and industry partnerships in building a resilient workforce. They offer valuable insights for community colleges to address the challenges of a rapidly evolving labor market. By leveraging these documents as a framework, colleges can align their educational programs with economic development objectives, meet industry needs, and equip North Carolina's diverse population with the skills required for greater economic opportunity and long-term growth.

North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) Strategic Plan Goals (2022-2026)

- Expand Access to Education to increase access to affordable higher education, especially for underrepresented groups.
- Promote Student Success to ensure high student completion rates, transfer, and employment outcomes.
- Enhance Workforce Development by developing and implementing workforce-aligned programs that provide students with the skills needed in high-demand workforce sectors.
- Improve Institutional Effectiveness to strengthen community colleges' capacity to provide high-quality education and services that meet the diverse needs of students and employers.

North Carolina Workforce Commission 2023-2025 Strategic Plan

- Expand workforce training programs in high-demand sectors, emphasizing industry-recognized credentials.
- Promote career pathways for underrepresented populations by promoting equitable access to career exploration, education, and employment opportunities for underserved communities.
- Strengthen employer partnerships by fostering collaboration between workforce development agencies, employers, and educational institutions to align training programs with industry needs better.
- Support economic resilience and recovery by enhancing workforce development efforts to support the state's economic recovery and future resilience, especially in high-wage industries.

North Carolina's "First in Talent" Strategic Economic Development Plan

- Build a competitive workforce by equipping North Carolinians with the skills needed to compete in a global economy by expanding access to quality education and training.
- Foster innovation and entrepreneurship by encouraging, supporting, and promoting high-growth sectors like advanced manufacturing, technology, and life sciences.
- Strengthen regional economic development by aligning workforce development efforts with regional economic strategies to ensure that training programs meet the specific needs of local economies.
- Expand access to higher education and workforce credentials by increasing the number of individuals with industry-recognized credentials to fill high-wage, in-demand jobs.
- Support a resilient workforce by increasing inclusive training programs and pathways that promote economic mobility for all North Carolinians, focusing on underserved and rural communities.



Propel NC – Workforce Sectors

Healthcare I

- ATC- Anesthesia Technology
- BMT- Biomedical Equipment
- BST- Breast Sonography
- CAT- Computed Tomography
- CIT- Cardiovasc/Vasc Intervnt Tec
- CTR- Clinical Trials Research
- CVS- Cardiovascular Sonography
- DEN- Dental
- DLT- Dental Laboratory Tech
- DOS- Medical Dosimetry
- HTO- Histotechnology
- ICT- Invasive Cardiovascular Tech
- ICV- Intervnt Cardiac and Vascular
- IMG- Imaging
- MAM- Mammography
- MLA- Medical Laboratory
- MRI- Magnetic Resonance Imaging
- MSK- Musculoskeletal Sonography
- MSP- Med Product Safety Pharma
- NCT- Non-Invas Cardiovasc Tech
- NDT- Neurodiagnostic Technology
- NMT- Nuclear Medicine
- NUR- Nursing
- OPH- Opticianry
- OPT- Opticianry
- OSA- Ophthalmic Surgical Assist
- OTA- Occupational Therapy Assit
- OTC- Orthopedic
- PET- Positron Emission Tomograph
- PTA- Physical Therapist Assistant
- PTC- Pharmaceutical Technology
- PTH- Physical Therapy
- RAD- Radiography
- RCP- Respiratory Care
- RTT- Radiation Therapy Technology
- SFA- Surgical First Assistant
- SON- Medical Sonography
- STP- Central Sterile Processing
- SUR- Surgical Technology

Information Technology

- BAS- Business Analytics
- CCT- Cyber Crime Technology
- CIS- Information Systems
- CSC- Computer Science
- CTI- Computer Tech Integration
- CTS- Computer Information Tech
- DBA- Database Management Tech
- HBI- Healthcare Bus Informatics
- HPC- High Performance Computing
- ITL- Intelligence Studies
- ITN- Internet Technologies
- NET- Networking Technology
- NOS- Network Operating Systems
- SEC- Information Systems Security
- SGR- Scientific Graphics
- WEB- Web Technologies

Healthcare II

- AAI- Animal Assisted Interactions
- AMC- Advanced Medical Coding
- ANS- Animal Science
- CIM- Cancer Information Mgmt
- CYT- Cytotechnology
- DDT- Developmental Disabilities
- DET- Dietetics
- DIA- Dialysis Technology
- EDT- Electro neurodiagnostic Tech
- GRO- Gerontology
- HCI- Healthcare Interpreting
- HCT- Health Care Technology
- HEA- Health
- HFS- Health and Fitness Science
- HIT- Health Information Technology
- HSC- Health Sciences
- HUC- Health Unit Coordinator
- LBT- Laboratory Technology
- MED- Medical Assisting
- MHA- Mental Health
- MHT- Mental Health
- MLT- Medical Laboratory Tech
- MTH- Massage Therapy
- NAS- Nursing Assistant
- NUT- Nutrition
- PBT- Phlebotomy
- PHM- Pharmacy
- PSF- Physical Fitness Technology
- PSG- Polysomnography
- REH- Rehabilitation
- SAB- Substance Abuse
- SIM- Healthcare Simulation Tech
- SLP- Speech-Language Pathology
- SWK- Social Work
- TRE- Therapeutic Recreation
- VET- Veterinary Medical Techn
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Public Safety/First Responders

- CJ- Criminal Justice
- EME- Emergency Management
- EMS- Emergency Medical Science
- EPT- Emergency Preparedness
- FIP- Fire Protection
- FRC- Fire Rescue Certification
- LET- Law Enforcement Training
- MSI- Military Science
- PST- Public Safety Training
- WLF- Wildfire

Engineering/Adv Manufacturing

- AER- Aerospace Flight Training
- AET- Aviation Electronics Techn
- ARC- Architecture
- ASM- Aerostructure
- ATR- Automation & Robotics
- ATR- Automation and Robotics
- BAT- Building Automation Tech
- BPM- Bioprocessing Manufact Tech
- BTC- Biotechnology
- CEG- Civil Engineering Geomatic
- CET- Computer Engineering Tech
- CIV- Civil Engineering
- CPT- Chemical Process Technology
- CTC- Chemical Technology
- DDF- Design Drafting
- DFT- Drafting
- EGR- Engineering
- EPP- Electrical Power Production
- EUS- Electrical Utility Substation
- GPT- Gas Pipeline Technician
- HYD- Hydraulics and Pneumatics
- ISC- Industrial Science
- LAR- Landscape Architecture
- LEO- Lasers and Optics
- LID- Low Impact Development
- MCO- Mission Critical Operations
- MEC- Mechanical
- MFG- Manufacturing
- MLG- Metallurgical Science
- NAN- Nanotechnology
- NDE- Nondestructive Examination
- PPA- Power Protection Automation
- TDP- Three-Dimensional Printing
- TEX- Textiles
- TNE- Telecomm Network Engineering
- UAS- Unmanned Aircraft Systems

FTE Values:

The values of each FTE sector, along with colleges' budget documents, are posted annually on the NCCCS Budget & Finance webpage here: [Budget Policies Allotment & Summaries - NCCCS](#).

The budget FTE amounts per workforce sector will be kept up to date annually on this webpage. To find each workforce sector's value, view the College Budget Allotment Sheets and search for your institution. *(Note: These sheets will reflect "tier" FTE values until the Propel NC proposal is approved and the updated documents are released to colleges.*

Trades and Transportation

AHR- AC, Heating, Refrigeration
 ALT- Alternative Energy
 ARS- Automotive Restoration
 ATT- Alternative Transport Tech
 AUB- Automotive Body Repair
 AUC- Automotive Customizing
 AUM- Automotive Management
 AUT- Automotive
 AVI- Aviation Maintenance
 BMS- Boat Manufacture Service
 BPR- Blueprint Reading
 BTB- Boat Building
 CAB- Cabinetmaking
 CAR- Carpentry
 CMT- Construction Management
 COD- Code Enforcement
 CST- Construction
 DIE- Diesel Mechanics
 DMV- Division of Motor Vehicles
 EGY- Energy
 ELC- Electrical
 ELC- Electricity
 ELN- Electronics
 ELS- Electric Line Safety
 ELT- Electric Lineman
 EVT- Electric Vehicle Technology
 FMW- Facilities Maint Worker
 FSD- Fire Sprinkler Design
 FUR- Furniture
 GIS- Geographic Info Systems
 GSM- Gunsmithing
 HAZ- Hazardous Materials
 HEO- Heavy Equipment Operation
 HET- Heavy Equipment Maint
 LDD- Light Duty Diesel
 LOG- Logistics Management
 MAC- Machining
 MAS- Masonry
 MCM- Motorcycle Mechanics
 MNT- Maintenance
 MPS- Marine Propulsion Systems
 MRN- Marine
 MSC- Marine Science
 MSM- Motorsports Management
 NUC- Nuclear Maintenance
 PCI- Process Control Instrument
 PFT- Pipe Fitting
 PKG- Packaging
 PLA- Plastics
 PLU- Plumbing
 PME- Power Mechanics
 POS- Postal Service
 PPM- Poultry Process Machine Tec
 RCT- Race Car Technology
 REF- Refrigeration
 RVM- Recreation Vehicle Maint
 SRV- Surveying
 SST- Sustainability
 TCT- Telecommunications Tech
 TEL- Telecomm Install Maint
 TEM- Golf Equipment
 TOM- Trucking Operations Mgmt
 TRA- Traffic
 TRN- Transportation Technology
 TRP- Truck Driver Training
 UPH- Upholstery
 WAT- Wastewater Treatment
 WLD- Weld

Business and Management

- ACC- Accounting
- AIB- American Institute of Banking
- APS- Automotive Parts Sales
- BAF- Banking and Finance
- BUS- Business
- CRT- Court Reporting
- ECM- Electronic Commerce
- ETR- Entrepreneurship
- GAM- Gaming Management
- GCM- Golf Course Management
- HMT- Healthcare Management
- HRM- Hotel Restaurant Mgmt
- IEC- Import Export Compliance
- INS- Insurance
- INT- International Business
- LDR- Leadership Studies
- LEX- Legal Education
- MKT- Marketing and Retailing
- MLS- Mgmt, Leadership, Superv
- NPO- Nonprofit Leadership Mgmt
- ODL- Outdoor Leadership
- OMT- Operations Management
- OST- Office Systems Technology
- PAD- Public Administration
- PMT- Project Management Tech
- RSM- Resort & Spa Management
- SSM- Shoot Hunt Sports Mgmt

Agriculture Natural Resources I

- BDF- Brew, Distill, Fermentation
- ENV- Environmental Science
- VEN- Viticulture/Enology

Agriculture Natural Resources II

- ACM- Animal Care Management
- AGR- Agriculture
- AQU- Aquaculture
- EHS- Environmental Health Safety
- EPD- Environmental Plan & Dev
- EQU- Equine
- FIS- Fisheries
- FOR- Forest Management
- FWL- Fish and Wildlife
- HOR- Horticulture
- IVS- Invasive Species Management
- LSG- Landscape Gardening
- TRF- Turfgrass Management
- TRL- Trails
- ZAS- Zoo Aquarium Science Tech

Personal Services I

- BPA- Baking and Pastry Arts
- CUL- Culinary

Personal Services II

- APR- Appraisal
- ASL- American Sign Language
- BAR- Barbering
- CAS- Child Advocacy Studies
- COS- Cosmetology
- CSV- Customer Service
- EDU- Education
- FSE- Funeral Service
- FST- Food Service Technology
- HEC- Home Economics
- HOS- Hospitality, Travel & Tourism
- HPT- Historic Preservation
- HSE- Human Services
- IPP- Interpreter Prep Program
- LIB- Library Resources
- MPT- Meat Processing Technology
- REA- Real Estate Appraisal
- REA - Real Estate Appraisal
- REC- Recreation
- RLS- Real Estate
- SPI- Spanish Interpreter

Digital and Visual Media I

- DEA- Digital Effects and Animation
- DME- Digital Media
- SGD- Simulation Game Develop

Digital and Visual Media II

- BPT- Broadcast Production
- DES- Design: Creative
- ENT- Entertainment Technologies
- FVP- Film and Video Production
- GRA- Graphic Arts
- GRD- Graphic Design
- MEG- Metal Engraving
- MIT- Media Integration
- PCC- Professional Crafts: Clay
- PCD- Professional Crafts: Design
- PCF- Professional Crafts: Fiber
- PCJ- Professional Crafts: Jewelry
- PCR- Professional Crafts
- PCS- Professional Crafts: Sculpture
- PCW- Professional Crafts: Wood
- PHO- Photography
- PRC- Production Crafts
- PRN- Printing
- SMT- Radio TV Broadcast Tech
- TXY- Taxidermy
- WWK- Woodworking
- WPP- Wood Products

Professional Development I

- PTE- Pathway to Employment
- SEL- Selected Topics
- SEM- Seminar
- WBL- Work-Based Learning
- WOL- Wheels of Learning

Professional Development II

- HRD- Human Resources Development
- OSH- OSHA, EPA, HAZMAT Gov
- SAF- Safety
- SBC- Small Business Center

Math and Science I

- BIO- Biology
- CHM- Chemistry
- IMS- Integrated Math/Science
- MAT >= 100 (L3)- Mathematics
- PHY- Physics

Math and Science II

- AST- Astronomy
- ECO- Economics
- GEL- Geology
- GEO- Geography
- PHS- Physical Science
- SCI- Science

Developmental

- ACA- Academic Related
- DMA- Developmental Math
- DMS- Developmental Math Shell
- DRE- Develop Reading/English
- ENG < 100 (L3)- English
- MAT < 100 (L3)- Mathematics
- OTHER < 100- Other
- SKL- Skills Lab

Customized Ind Training Prog

- CTP- Customized Ind Training Prog

Apprenticeship

- APP- Apprenticeship

Arts, Humanities, and Languages

- ANT- Anthropology
- ARA- Arabic
- ART- Art
- CHI- Chinese
- COM- Communication
- DAN- Dance
- DRA- Drama/Theatre
- EFL- English As A Foreign Lang
- ENG- English
- FLI- Foreign Languages
- FRE- French
- GER- German
- HIS- History
- HUM- Humanities
- IRI- Irish
- ITA- Italian
- JOU- Journalism
- JPN- Japanese
- LAT- Latin
- MUS- Music
- PED- Physical Education
- PHI- Philosophy
- POL- Political Science
- POR- Portuguese
- PSY- Psychology
- RED- Reading
- REL- Religion
- RUS- Russian
- SOC- Sociology
- SPA- Spanish

Non-Budget FTE Training Programs

- CSP- Community Service Program
- SEF- Self-Supporting Occupational

Basic Skills

- AHS- Adult High School
- BSP- Basic Skills
- LLB- Learning Lab

Current Tier Values:

Tier 1A:	\$5215.16
Tier 1B:	\$4613.41
Tier 2:	\$4011.66
Tier 3:	\$2539.38

Proposed Sector Values:

Healthcare I:	<i>Proposed increase</i>
Eng. & Adv. Man.	<i>Proposed increase</i>
Trades & Tran.	<i>Proposed increase</i>
Info. Tech.	<i>Proposed increase</i>
First Respond.	<i>Proposed increase</i>
Healthcare II	<i>Proposed increase</i>
Other Tech I	Level funding
Math Science I	Level funding
Other Tech II	Level funding
Math Science II	Level funding
Arts, Hum., Lang.	Level funding
Dev-Ed	Level funding
Basic Skills	Level funding
Cust. Training	<i>Proposed for FTE</i>
Small Business	<i>Proposed for FTE</i>

NCCCS Budget Documents & Information located here: [Budget Policies Allotment & Summaries - NCCCS](#)

Critical Conversations to Operationalize Propel NC

This section guides the strategic action steps colleges can take to effectively operationalize Propel NC. This section provides resources to help senior teams engage in critical conversations with college staff (e.g. department chairs, program leads, faculty, and institutional planners) to ensure strategic operations for instructional delivery and student support services that align with the purpose of Propel NC. Below are four core topics that outline these key discussions and action steps.

Core Topic #1

Propel NC – A Labor Market-Driven Funding Model

- Propel NC – An Overview
- Collecting and Analyzing Baseline Data
- Access to Education – A Demographic Perspective

Core Topic #2

Developing Workforce-Driven Programs

- Mapping Courses to Workforce Sectors
- Creating Industry-Aligned Course Content
- Workforce Training Trends
- Professional Development

Core Topic #3

Streamlining Process and Optimizing Resources

- Cross-Divisional Collaborations
- Streamlining Programmatic Operations
- Closing the Gap: Actual Cost vs Funding Allocation
- Collaborative Partnerships with External Stakeholders

Core Topic #4

Student Economic Mobility

- Maximizing Student Expectations
- Career Counseling and Support Services
- Essential Employability Skills
- Employer Networking and Job Placement

Core Topic #1

Propel NC – A Labor Market-Driven Funding Model

Subtopic 1: Propel NC – An Overview

This subtopic focuses on an overview of **Propel NC**, including the rationale behind the model, the sectors prioritized by the state, and how the model aligns with three key state-level strategic plans: the North Carolina Workforce Development Plan, the North Carolina Economic Development Plan, and the North Carolina Community College System Strategic Plan.

Critical Conversations/Questions at the Local Level:

1. How does the new labor-market-driven funding model change our approach to funding, program prioritization, cross-divisional collaborations, and student support services?
2. How do we communicate Propel NC's goals to faculty, staff, students, and external stakeholders to ensure buy-in and participation? What type of documents do we need to develop?
3. Now that Workforce Continuing Education courses were elevated to full parity funding, it included the removal of the 96-hour and mapped-to-credential rule. How do we ensure accountability regarding the following topics: course mapping to prefixes, scheduled hours, rigor/relevance of course content, course completion, grading, and credit for prior learning, to name a few? What will be the success metric?
4. What are our success metrics for Propel NC?

Subtopic 2: Collecting and Analyzing Baseline Data

The collection and analysis of baseline data are crucial for assessing the effectiveness of existing programs and driving continuous improvement within the **Propel NC** framework. This subtopic emphasizes the importance of gathering comprehensive data on FTE earned, program enrollment, completion rates, and post-graduation outcomes to make data-driven decisions about program design, resource allocation, and student support services. By incorporating this baseline data into the strategic planning process, colleges will have the necessary information to generate results-driven reports that justify the investments made in Propel NC.

Critical Conversations/Questions at the Local Level:

1. Using the [NCCCS Data Dashboards](#) deployed by the System Office and data collected from local resource tools, what baseline data are we compiling to track and report our program's success with the key talking points of Propel NC?
2. What are our responses to the following questions, especially about your FTE/Enrollment data?
 - What are the college's FTE and enrollment goals?
 - Do our current 3-year FTE/Enrollment figures meet our benchmarks? If yes, what steps will you take to maintain/increase growth? If not, what steps will you take to change the situation?
 - What courses earned the highest & lowest FTE/Enrollment? What factors impacted the changes?
 - Did you add/delete course offerings? If yes, what and how did they perform?
 - What is the distribution of FTE across workforce sectors?
 - Are there missed opportunities at higher funding levels?
3. How do we use labor market data to inform our program development and course offerings?
4. What tools and resources are available at the local and state level to track labor market trends and the demand for specific skills relevant to our local and regional areas?

Subtopic 3: Access to Education – A Demographic Perspective

This subtopic emphasizes the need to analyze a broader spectrum of demographics when evaluating access to education under **Propel NC**. While race, gender, and ethnicity are essential, colleges must also consider factors such as socioeconomic status, employment status, first-generation student status, disability, and geographic location, to name a few. By understanding these additional demographic factors, colleges can design targeted outreach and recruitment strategies to ensure access to educational opportunities for all students. This also addresses the state’s goal to increase educational opportunities to underserved students and rural communities. Aligning educational programs with labor market trends to foster student success and drive broader economic development in North Carolina. Operationalizing **Propel NC** involves leveraging labor market data to inform program offerings, course design, and resource allocation decisions.

Critical Conversations/Questions at the Local Level:

1. What additional demographic data should we collect to serve all student populations effectively?
2. How do we identify and engage underserved or underrepresented students?
3. What targeted outreach strategies can we implement to ensure diverse groups have access?
4. How do we ensure that support services are accessible to students from all demographic backgrounds, including those with disabilities or other barriers?
5. How can we measure the success of our outreach and recruitment efforts in terms of enrollment, retention, and completion?

Core Topic #2

Developing Workforce-Driven Programs**Subtopic 1: Mapping Courses to Workforce Sectors**

Mapping courses to workforce sectors is foundational in aligning educational offerings with labor market demands. This process ensures that programs are linked to high-demand sectors that provide high-wage opportunities and essential jobs within the community. Colleges must balance and prioritize programs in all sectors that are critical to the local economy, even if they are not necessarily high-wage jobs.

Critical Conversations/Questions at the Local Level:

1. What processes can we implement to map current and future courses to workforce sectors and align them with Propel NC funding priorities?
2. How can we balance program offerings in high-wage sectors with those in essential but lower-wage sectors vital to our community?
3. How can we incorporate stakeholder feedback into our course mapping and sector prioritization decisions?
4. How should we track the success of workforce sector alignment in terms of funding outcomes, student outcomes, and employer satisfaction?
5. What are our course offerings in continuing education training that lead to credentials in these key sectors: healthcare, engineering, advanced manufacturing, trades, transportation, and public safety?

Subtopic 2: Creating Industry-Aligned Course Content

Creating industry-aligned course content ensures that students gain the knowledge and skills employers seek. This subtopic focuses on how colleges can collaborate with industry partners to develop and update curriculum that meets current workforce needs. By ensuring courses are aligned with industry standards and include work-based learning experiences, colleges can increase the employability of their graduates/completers and close the skills gap in local industries.

Critical Conversations/Questions at the Local Level:

1. How do we ensure our curriculum is aligned with the needs of local employers?
2. What industry credentials should be integrated into our programs to ensure students are workforce-ready?
3. How can we embed work-based learning opportunities into the curriculum?
4. How often should we review and update course content to ensure it stays relevant to industry standards?
5. What methods can we use to assess the effectiveness of industry-aligned course content?
6. How do we engage faculty in developing industry-relevant curricula?
7. How do we ensure that students who complete short-term credentials are competitive in the workforce?
8. What steps can we take to offer more flexible learning options that cater to working adults or nontraditional students?

Subtopic 3: Trends in Workforce Training

Propel NC seeks to align community colleges' educational offerings with the evolving needs of both regional and statewide labor markets. Balancing long-term academic degrees with short-term workforce training programs is a key component of this alignment. To achieve this, colleges must stay informed about current trends in workforce training. By adopting strategies such as Workforce Continuing Education, Competency-Based Education (CBE), stackable credentials, industry-recognized certifications, and Integrated Education and Training (IET), colleges can create flexible and accessible pathways that allow students to progress from education directly into meaningful employment.

As technology and artificial intelligence (AI) increasingly transform industries worldwide, colleges must adapt to these changes by incorporating technology and AI into their workforce training programs. To ensure that students are prepared for the future of work, colleges must teach up-to-date skills, including digital literacy and AI proficiency, while also fostering an understanding of how technology is reshaping different sectors. This approach will equip students with the necessary tools to succeed in a rapidly changing job market.

Critical Conversations/Questions at the Local Level:

1. How do we balance the need for long-term academic degrees with the immediate demands for short-term workforce continuing education training leading to industry-recognized credentials?
2. What strategies can we use to ensure that Competency-Based Education (CBE) and Integrated Education and Training (IET) are effectively integrated into both long-term degree programs and short-term workforce training?
3. What processes can we establish to ensure that industry-recognized certifications align with employer needs and that these credentials are meaningful to both students and employers?
4. How can we integrate AI and technology trends into current and existing programs to prepare students for the future of work?
5. How do we ensure faculty are trained in the latest technologies to teach students effectively?

Subtopic 4: Professional Development Matters

Professional development for faculty and staff is vital to maintaining the effectiveness of workforce-driven programs and meeting the broad goals of **Propel NC**. This subtopic focuses on how colleges can set clear expectations for faculty and staff, provide ongoing professional development, and ensure that they are held accountable for the outcomes of their programs. This should involve regular assessments of teaching practices, curriculum delivery, and student success, ensuring that instructors are meeting the needs of students and employers.

Critical Conversations/Questions at the Local Level:

1. How do we provide faculty and staff with the resources and professional development needed to stay current with industry trends and best practices in workforce training trends?
2. How do we create a culture of accountability in which faculty and staff are responsible for programmatic and student outcomes, provided they receive the support they need to improve?
3. How can we encourage faculty and staff collaboration across divisions to ensure that teaching practices align with academic rigor and workforce expectations?
4. What resources should be provided to help faculty develop innovative teaching methods that are aligned with Propel NC's goals?

Core Topic #3

Streamlining Processes and Optimizing Resources**Subtopic 1: Cross-Division Collaboration**

Cross-divisional collaboration is essential to streamline operations and ensure workforce development programs align with student needs and workforce requirements. In the context of **Propel NC**, collaboration between Curriculum, Continuing Education, College and Career Readiness, and Student Services ensures that all academic or workforce-focused pathways are seamless. By aligning goals, streamlining processes, and leveraging resources across divisions, colleges can enhance program efficiency, reduce redundancies, and better meet the evolving needs of employers. This subtopic will explore strategies for fostering collaboration and creating a unified approach to student success, workforce development, and resource optimization.

Critical Conversations/Questions at the Local Level:

1. What structures and processes can we implement to ensure that programs from all divisions are aligned with the workforce sectors identified by Propel NC?
2. How do we ensure faculty and staff are aware of economic and workforce development initiatives in other divisions and vice versa?
3. How do we build a culture of teamwork and shared responsibility for student success across divisions, including streamlined career pathways, career services, financial aid, and other student support functions to ensure they are seamlessly integrated into workforce programs?
4. How should we leverage resources for shared responsibilities and avoid duplication of services?

Subtopic 2: Streamlining Programmatic Operations

Streamlining programmatic operations is key to optimizing resources and ensuring colleges can deliver programs effectively. This subtopic focuses on improving processes such as enrollment management, career services, and financial aid, which often become bottlenecks in program delivery. By reducing administrative burdens, improving student support services, and enhancing coordination between departments, colleges can ensure that students can access their desired training programs and complete them in a timely manner. This subtopic will also explore state and local policies that impact **Propel NC**.

Critical Conversations/Questions at the Local Level:

1. How can we streamline the program/course approval process at the state and local levels?
2. How can we simplify and integrate the registration/enrollment process across divisions to ensure students can quickly access programs, course offerings, and services?
3. What strategies can we use to integrate career services into the student's journey from enrollment to completion to ensure students receive timely guidance where applicable?
4. Besides course approval and registration processes, what operational processes impact the implementation of Propel NC?
5. What technology platforms can we leverage to simplify administrative processes and improve department communication?
6. How can we ensure that staff are trained to use streamlined systems for instructional delivery and student support services?
7. What NCCCS State Board Code policies impact a college's ability to design and implement workforce-driven programs?

Subtopic 3: Closing the Gap: Actual Cost versus Funding Allocation _____

The gap between the actual cost of delivering educational programs and the available funding allocation is a critical issue for many community colleges. This subtopic will focus on how colleges can identify and address this gap, particularly in the context of **Propel NC**. By evaluating program costs—including faculty salaries, resources, and technology—colleges can better allocate funding to maximize program impact. This subtopic will explore strategies for securing additional funding, reducing inefficiencies, and managing costs effectively while still delivering high-quality programs that align with workforce sector needs.

Critical Conversations/Questions at the Local Level:

1. What strategies can we implement to close the gap between the actual costs of delivering instruction and funding allocations at the state and local level?
2. How do we track and allocate resources efficiently to maximize impact?
3. What external funding sources (grants, donations, industry partnerships) can we leverage to close financial gaps?
4. How can we prioritize programs with high labor market demand and ensure they are financially sustainable?
5. What steps should we take to manage faculty and administrative costs without compromising on the quality of instruction?
6. How can we create a system for tracking the financial performance of our programs to make data-driven decisions?
7. Below is a list of FTE questions/considerations that impact Propel NC?
 - How do your staffing and resource expenditures compare to the FTE generated?
 - Do you leverage resources from other sources to support FTE generation?
 - What is your Plan B for loss of critical programming?
 - What grants/workforce initiatives do you currently operate and/or partner?
 - What source of funding do you receive other than State Funds generated from FTE?

Subtopic 4: Collaborative Partnerships with External Stakeholders _____

Collaborative partnerships with external stakeholders ensure colleges align their programs with workforce needs, optimize resources, and improve student outcomes. By working with state agencies such as the NC Division of Workforce Solutions, NC Workforce Development Boards/NC Career Centers, and the NC Labor and Economic Analysis Division, colleges can gain insights into regional labor market trends, connect students with job opportunities, and leverage external funding sources. This subtopic will explore how colleges can strengthen relationships with these and other external stakeholders to enhance workforce training programs and ensure that they meet the needs of both students and employers.

Critical Conversations/Questions at the Local Level:

1. How can we identify and engage key external workforce and economic development stakeholders?
2. What role could stakeholders play in relation to curriculum development, outreach/enrollment, and work-based learning opportunities?
3. How do we involve external stakeholders in evaluating the success of our programs, and how can we use their feedback to improve future training offerings?
4. How can we identify and maintain a list of federal, state, regional, and local workforce development initiatives and funding opportunities to support current and future training programs?
5. What strategies can be implemented to collect success stories and promising practices to highlight the impact of engagement with key external workforce and economic development stakeholders?

Core Topic #4

Student Economic Mobility**Subtopic 1: Maximizing Student Expectations**

Maximizing student expectations goes beyond setting academic goals—it's about ensuring students understand the journey from enrollment to employment. This subtopic emphasizes how colleges can provide clear, achievable pathways to success, ensuring that students are well-informed about the realities of their educational journey and how it relates to career outcomes. By setting realistic expectations, engaging students early, and offering guidance throughout their academic experience, colleges can help students remain motivated, overcome challenges, and achieve their career goals. Aligning these expectations with **Propel NC** ensures students are prepared for both the academic rigor and the workforce demands they will face.

Critical Conversations/Questions at the Local Level:

1. How can we set clear, realistic academic and career goals for students from the moment they enroll?
2. What tools can we use to help students understand the connection between their education and career outcomes?
3. How do we ensure students are well-prepared for the academic challenges they will face in their programs?
4. How can faculty and staff help set students up for success by managing their expectations?
5. How can we foster a culture of support and accountability throughout the student's academic journey?

Subtopic 2: Career Counseling and Support Services

Comprehensive career services are vital in helping students navigate the job market and transition into successful careers. This subtopic focuses on how colleges can integrate career counseling, job search support, work-based learning, and other services to support student success. Leveraging state resources such as NCWorks Career Center, NCWorks Online, and nccareers.org is also essential to supporting students' transition from education to employment. These services should be tailored to students' needs, helping them explore career options, gain practical experience, and develop the employability skills needed for high-demand industries. By aligning career services with **Propel NC's** focus on workforce alignment, colleges can ensure that students receive the guidance and resources they need to succeed in the job market.

Critical Conversations/Questions at the Local Level:

1. How do we ensure that career counseling services are well-integrated into students' academic experiences?
2. How can we connect students with real-world work-based learning opportunities?
3. How can we improve collaboration between career services and academic departments to ensure career readiness is embedded in every program?
4. How can we ensure students are aware of and actively using nccareers.org and other state career resources throughout their education?
5. What partnerships can we develop with NCWorks Career Centers to ensure seamless transitions from education to employment?
6. How can we integrate NCWorks Online and other tools into career counseling services to maximize student access to job opportunities?
7. What resources can we provide to students to enhance their job search and networking skills?

Subtopic 3: Building Essential Employability Skills _____

To ensure that students are competitive in the job market, it is essential to focus on both technical and soft skills development. This subtopic emphasizes the importance of equipping students with the skills employers seek, from communication and teamwork to specific industry-related competencies. By integrating skill-building activities into programs, including workshops, professional development, and credentialing opportunities, colleges can help students enhance their employability. This subtopic ensures that **Propel NC**'s workforce development objectives are met by fostering a workforce that is not only technically proficient but also equipped with the interpersonal skills required for success in any field.

Critical Conversations/Questions at the Local Level:

1. How can we better integrate soft skills training into our curriculum to meet employers' needs for communication, leadership, and problem-solving skills?
2. How can colleges better use the Human Resources Development (HRD) program?
3. What industry certifications should we prioritize to enhance students' job-readiness and align with local workforce needs?
4. How can we partner with employers to ensure that our students are gaining the exact skills they need to succeed in the workforce?
5. What strategies can we use to ensure that all students have access to professional development opportunities, regardless of their field of study?
6. How do we assess the effectiveness of our employability skills training programs and adjust them to meet evolving workforce requirements?

Subtopic 4: Employer Networking and Job Placement _____

Employer networking is critical to a student's economic mobility as it bridges the gap between education and employment. This subtopic emphasizes strategies for colleges to build and strengthen connections with local employers through job fairs, structured interviews, mock interviews, job shadowing, site visits, and other networking events. These activities not only help students understand employer expectations but also provide opportunities to practice job-search skills, make direct connections, and secure employment in high-wage, high-demand sectors. By operationalizing **Propel NC**, colleges can ensure that workforce training programs are closely aligned with employer needs, facilitating smoother transitions from education to employment. Strong employer partnerships are integral to fostering long-term career success for students.

Critical Conversations/Questions at the Local Level:

1. What strategies can we use to attract employers to participate in job fairs, structured interviews, and other networking events?
2. How do we ensure that networking events provide real value to both students and employers, facilitating meaningful connections?
3. What role do alumni play in helping to build employer networks and connect students with career opportunities?
4. How can we measure the effectiveness of our employer networking events in terms of curriculum design, credential attainment, job placement rates, and student satisfaction?

List of Resources by Divisions and Departments

Research and Performance Management Division

As part of the NCCCS System Effectiveness team's efforts to develop data tools aligned with PropelINC, the Research and Performance Management Division created 2025 regional labor market analysis reports focused on the state's sixteen prosperity subzones. These reports expand upon the beta reports shared in the fall and are designed to provide colleges with an additional tool in their efforts to scan local workforce needs. Specifically, these reports provide regional insights into:

- Recent trends associated with overall employment at the region and county levels
- Current regional diversity of industry sectors and occupational groups
- Projected regional changes across industry sectors and occupational groups
- Regional projections for annual openings in occupations requiring or preferring a community college education and their associated earnings
- Annual count of regional community college completers by program and their associated earnings
- Comparison of occupational openings and community college completers by PropelINC Workforce Sector
- Recent economic development activity

Below are links to the NCCCS Data Dashboards:

<https://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/students/labor-market-analysis-data/>

<https://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/about-us/data-reporting/data-dashboards-page/>

[Median Quarterly Earnings of CTE Exiters by Student Prosperity Zone Sub-Region \(new dashboard\)](#)

[Median Quarterly Earnings of CTE Exiters by College \(link provided previously, dashboard has been updated\)](#)

System Office Support

Programs & Student Services

Dr. Brian S. Merritt, SVP & Chief Academic Officer, merrittb@nccommunitycolleges.edu

Dr. Lisa Eads, AVP, Programs, eadsl@nccommunitycolleges.edu

Dr. Andrew Gardner, AVP of Workforce Strategies, gardnera@nccommunitycolleges.edu

Dr. Torry Reynolds, AVP of Student Services, reynoldst@nccommunitycolleges.edu

Sandra Thompson, AVP of College & Career Readiness, thompsons@nccommunitycolleges.edu

System Effectiveness

Dr. Bill Schneider, VP of System Effectiveness, schneiderb@nccommunitycolleges.edu

NC Student Success Center

Dr. Andrea Crowley, Executive Director, NC Student Success Center, crowleya@nccommunitycolleges.edu