

NORTHEAST
NC Career Pathways

2024-2025
Impact Report

Connecting
Pathways.

Building
Futures.



Connecting Vision to Action.

A Message from Brandi Bragg, Workforce Connector

Our vision is ambitious: a thriving regional economy where every student, job seeker, and worker can access meaningful career pathways. This vision comes to life through the strong connections we build with partners across education, business, and community organizations. Together, we are not just creating opportunities—we are shaping futures, strengthening communities, and preparing our region for the evolving workforce. Every partnership, every collaboration, and every shared effort moves us closer to a common goal: empowering people and growing our region together.

This report highlights the collaborative efforts that continue to shape a stronger, more resilient regional economy. Thank you for your ongoing support and partnership.

Brandi Bragg



Together, we are shaping futures and strengthening our region.”



2024-2025 Impact Report

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Trainings and Capacity Building



Career Pathways Challenge: Turning Ideas into Action.

Held in two parts, the 9th Annual Career Pathways Challenge brought together educators, workforce professionals, and community leaders from across Northeastern North Carolina.

- **Part I** (Sept 30, 2024, Vernon James Conference Center in Plymouth) featured hands-on workshops on project management and the ethical use of AI in workforce development.
- **Part II** (Feb 10, 2025, Edgecombe Community College in Tarboro) showcased 10 multi-agency teams presenting projects that tackled workforce gaps using tools like shared resources and new technology.

Participants left energized, connected, and ready to implement region-specific solutions that strengthen career pathways.





Demystifying the Process.

With coordination support from NENC Career Pathways, ApprenticeshipNC's Scott Panagrosso delivered regional training across all three workforce board areas, helping frontline staff understand how and when to introduce apprenticeship opportunities to job seekers.

The training covered:

- What apprenticeships are and how they work
- When to recommend them as a career option
- Where to access reliable information and resources

This training helped create a more unified, confident approach to apprenticeship outreach throughout the region.



Outreach and Engagement Training: Interactive, Practical, Effective.

Staff from the Northeastern Workforce Development Board region gathered at College of The Albemarle for an interactive training focused on transforming passive event booths into engaging outreach tools.

Activities included:

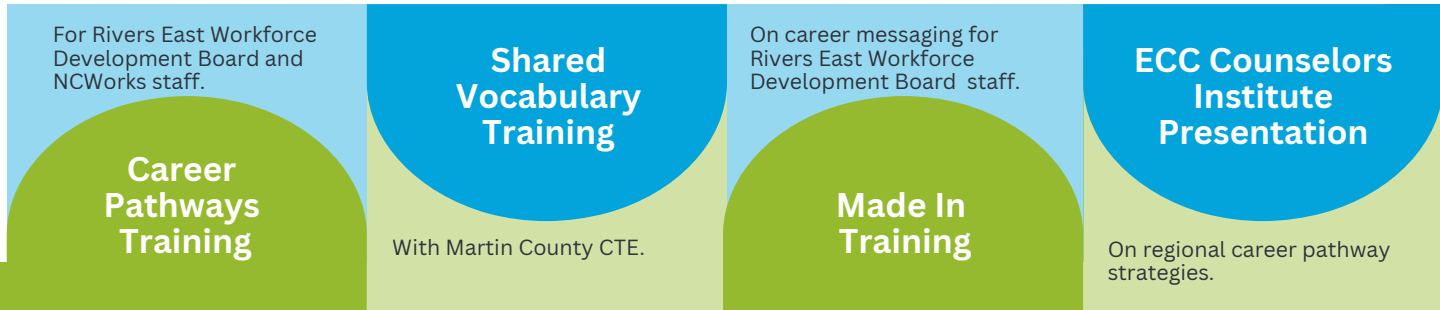
- Practicing elevator speeches
- Role-playing booth interactions (as both staff and job seekers)
- Discussions that led to the creation of customized booth engagement kits

This hands-on session sparked new ideas and strengthened confidence in employer and community engagement.



Additional Training Highlights.

Other trainings throughout the year helped align staff, educators, and partners across the region.



Special Thanks.

These training opportunities were made possible in part thanks to our regional partners. Community colleges—and at times local schools—generously offered meeting space, technology access, and support staff to help bring these sessions to life. Their ongoing collaboration reflects the deep alignment between education and workforce systems in northeastern North Carolina.

Conferences, Forums, and Statewide Engagement



NCWorks NEXTGEN YOUTH FORUM

Elevating Student Voice and Regional Tools.

At the NCWorks NextGen Youth Forum in February 2025, the NENC Career Pathways team helped plan and facilitate statewide dialogue with young leaders about the future of work.

The event highlighted student voices while also showcasing regional tools developed to support youth career exploration and engagement. Topics included:

- WIOA youth program requirements
- AI in action
- Outreach, recruitment, and retention
- Mental Health Strategies and Resources
- Best practices from peers





National and State Leadership in Action.

NENC Career Pathways was represented at both the Washington Leadership Training Institute and the SkillsUSA North Carolina State Conference, supporting youth leadership, technical education, and workforce readiness.

These events elevated regional career development work on a national stage and reinforced the importance of hands-on, student-centered learning.





Military Workforce Panels: Maritime Careers and Industrial Base Readiness.

At two regional military workforce summits (October 2024 and April 2025), NENC Career Pathways shared updates on the Good Jobs Challenge grant in partnership with the Hampton Roads Workforce Council, promoting the maritime industry through the **Waves of Opportunity NC** initiative.

These events focused on how northeastern North Carolina is preparing workers and infrastructure to support the growing Maritime Industrial Base.

From left: Brandi Bragg, NENC Career Pathways; James Catteau, Operations Manager, TCOM; and Rick Evans, Business Development/Product Manager, TCOM.

Sector Partnership Academy: Connecting Employers to Career Pathways.

During the Sector Partnership Academy, NENC Career Pathways shared how career pathway initiatives can strengthen and align with sector partnership strategies.

The session emphasized the need for employer champions and highlighted successful models from across the region that build long-term talent pipelines.



Photo courtesy North Carolina Department of Commerce



The event was designed to foster collaboration across organizations, as well as across regions, around industry-led sector partnerships...It was a good mix of workforce, education, nonprofit, and economic development partners that were all working together collaboratively throughout the day.”

—Elisabeth Muehlemann, Industry and Workforce Programs Supervisor,
North Carolina Division of Workforce Solutions



Strategic Planning Institute: Strategic Planning for Career Pathways.

As guest faculty for the Smithsonian Strategic Planning Institute, hosted in partnership with NCEast Alliance, Brandi Bragg presented on the power of community connections and asset mapping to support regional career pathways.

The session included collaboration with seven county school districts, community colleges, and workforce partners across eastern North Carolina.



Smithsonian
Science Education Center



NENC Career Pathways also engaged with other key networks and forums throughout the year, including the NCWorks Partners Conference, Synergy Conference, Institute for Emerging Issues (IEI), and the NC Rural Center's Homegrown Leaders Training—continuing to elevate the region's work statewide.

CTE Engagement



Supporting Career Readiness.

Career & Technical Education (CTE) is one of the most important bridges between learning and local opportunity. Throughout the year, NENC Career Pathways has remained actively engaged with schools and colleges across the region, supporting efforts to align classroom learning with real-world career pathways.

The team regularly participates in CTE advisory board meetings, school system gatherings, and site visits. While it's not always possible to attend every meeting, strong relationships with workforce board partners ensure that schools and districts receive ongoing support. This collaborative model helps keep workforce strategies informed by those working directly with students.

In 2024–2025, team members attended advisory meetings and school-based discussions in Washington, Pitt, Halifax, Tyrrell, Hyde, and other counties across the region. In December, NENC Career Pathways was also invited to meet with Regional CTE Directors to provide updates and receive input on upcoming initiatives. These engagements helped share regional tools, gather local insight, and ensure alignment with district-level goals.

Site visits this year included Manteo High School and Roanoke Rapids High School, where staff toured CTE classrooms and labs to see firsthand how students are preparing for skilled careers. Whether participating in advisory conversations or walking through classrooms, these engagements help ensure that career pathway strategies remain grounded in the needs and strengths of local educators and learners.



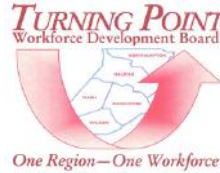
Food lab at Roanoke Rapids High School.



Boatbuilding at Manteo High School.

Workforce Development Board Partnerships





Reducing Barriers, Celebrating Leaders, and Building a Stronger Workforce.

Turning Point Workforce Development Board Business Services team is working with the **Get Off the List** Initiative of Edgecombe County. GOTL is an initiative to assist residents with barriers to employment by first assessing the causes of unemployment. The team has partnered the GOTL Career Navigator, working with clients to fill gaps to their employment aside from other resources they may have attempted to obtain. Thus far, resource sessions, a workforce readiness session, and mini job fairs were held for clients of the Career Navigator.

This initiative offered funding to agencies with an end goal of reducing the Edgecombe County employment rate—one of the highest in the State for years. Collaborations with Edgecombe County and NENC Career Pathways include K12, Workforce Development, Economic Development and more. Stay tuned for an update to this initiative as we wrap it up late Fall 2025!





Reducing Barriers, Celebrating Leaders, and Building a Stronger Workforce.

Turning Point Workforce Development Board hosted a **Board Appreciation** event at Smith's Pavilion, bringing together board members, county managers, commissioners, and regional partners to celebrate service and collaboration across its five-county region. The evening included recognition of longtime member Charles McElheney, with special remarks from Edgecombe County Manager Mr. Evans, and highlighted the invaluable support of local leaders in advancing workforce development.

Turning Point Workforce Development Board Special Projects Coordinator Duna Long partnered with NENC Career Pathways to support Northampton County Schools in planning their **What's Next** event. Duna engaged directly with students, sharing information about local businesses and potential careers, and helping them explore opportunities available in their own community.





Preparing Students, Supporting Jobseekers, and Empowering Veterans.

Northeastern Workforce Development Board once again hosted its annual **Northeastern Real World** event, this year at Camp Cale in Perquimans County. Students from area high schools, private schools, and community colleges experienced hands-on lessons in budgeting, insurance, and navigating real-life situations – from managing unexpected expenses to handling a traffic ticket.

The event brought together numerous participants, donors, and volunteers, all committed to helping young people prepare for the financial and lifestyle decisions they'll face in adulthood.





Preparing Students, Supporting Jobseekers, and Empowering Veterans.

In April, the Northeastern Workforce Development Board partnered with Legal Aid of North Carolina, the United Way of the Albemarle, and other community resource partners to host the **Community Comeback Fair** at the K.E. White Center in Elizabeth City. The event provided jobseekers—particularly those impacted by criminal records—with access to employment opportunities, expunction resources, and supportive services.

Employers, legal experts, and workforce professionals were onsite to connect attendees with the tools they need for a fresh start.



The NCWorks Career Center in Elizabeth City hosted **Off-Base Transition Training** for veterans, transitioning active-duty service members, military spouses, and caregivers. This program equips participants with essential tools for successfully moving from military to civilian life, including job search strategies, LinkedIn profile development, and networking skills.

Through partnerships and targeted instruction, OBTT helps connect participants with meaningful employment opportunities and community resources to support their next chapter.





Connecting with Workforce Needs, Engaging Employers, and Investing in Skills.

Rivers East Workforce Development Board has their **Board Meetings on the Move**, hosting at differing locations across the region, giving members the chance to tour facilities and connect directly with local employers and programs. Recent meetings have been hosted by Martin Community College, Roanoke Chowan Community Health Center, Nutrien, the Division of Employment and Independence for People with Disabilities, and the Lewiston-Woodville Educational Vitality Center.

These site visits help board members see workforce challenges and opportunities firsthand.





Connecting with Workforce Needs, Engaging Employers, and Investing in Skills.

In September, Rivers East Workforce Development Board hosted its Second Annual **Employer Engagement Forum** at the Hilton in Greenville. Employers of all sizes heard from presenters sharing resources and strategies to help strengthen and grow their businesses.

By creating space for collaboration and resource-sharing, the Forum continues to build momentum toward a more resilient business community in eastern North Carolina.

Throughout the year, Rivers East Workforce Development Board awarded training funds to multiple local businesses to **Invest in Local Workforce Skills**. One example includes presenting SPM Machine Works, Inc. with \$46,500 to support training in CNC metal fabrication, quality management systems, and machine setup.

These investments not only upskill employers' talent base, but also strengthen the regional workforce and the businesses they serve.



Community Partnerships



This section showcases successes submitted by our **regional partners**. Throughout the year, we invited boards, schools, and organizations to share stories they want amplified.

By including their highlights here, we're celebrating the collective progress of our region and ensuring that local accomplishments receive wider recognition.

AREA L AHEC
PART OF NC AHEC

RECRUIT
TRAIN
RETAIN

Area L AHEC graduated nine Cohort 6 Scholars from the **NC AHEC Scholars Program**, while 10 Cohort 7 Scholars return this fall for year two. The two-year program recruits and trains college students to serve communities and transform healthcare in North Carolina.

Area L Scholars completed clinicals, didactics, a regional retreat, and statewide conferences, gaining hands-on experience, exploring social determinants of health, and connecting with peers and professionals across the state and nation.



The AHEC program has allowed me to meet new people, learn more about different healthcare careers, and has taught me ways to ensure patients are receiving quality health care.... This will impact my future career as a nurse as I will be able to better understand and help my patients."

—Cohort 7 Scholar



Currituck County High School

Currituck County High School connected students to future opportunities through two signature events this spring. The **Annual Career/Job Fair** on April 15 brought businesses and military recruiters to campus to share career pathways and options.

On May 1, **Career Signing Day**, Currituck County Schools and the Chamber of Commerce celebrated seniors who made their commitments to Enroll, Enlist, or Employ—highlighting the many ways students are preparing for success after graduation.



Grow Local, launched in 2018 by the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber, connects students with local businesses to explore careers and strengthen the future workforce. Each spring, during **Grow Local Week**, employers host middle and high school students for hands-on experiences, tours, and conversations with professionals.

This collaboration among educators, employers, and community leaders sparks student interest, expands career awareness, and builds a stronger regional talent pipeline.





Halifax Community College established the **Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship Program**, an initiative designed to provide aspiring educators with hands-on experience and training in early childhood education.

This registered apprenticeship aims to prepare the next generation of early childhood educators in North Carolina and is recognized by ApprenticeshipNC.



Tyrrell County Schools saw major progress in 2023–24, with two of their three schools exceeding growth expectations and consistent improvements in reading, math, and science.

This **academic momentum is especially important as students prepare to enter regional career pathways**. Strong foundational skills in literacy, math, and science are the building blocks for success in CTE programs, industry-recognized credentials, and local workforce opportunities.

Tyrrell County Schools Celebrating Academic Success

Growth

Achievement

Success

Regional Coordination and Communications



One of the greatest strengths of the NENC Career Pathways initiative is its ability to operate as a cohesive regional effort while maintaining deep connections with local communities.

Through consistent communication, shared messaging, and collaborative planning, partners across the region have worked together to ensure alignment, efficiency, and clarity in career readiness efforts.



Regional workforce development builds capacity and shapes practices to help more people and communities succeed.”

—Jobs for the Future (JFF)

Regional Alignment and Meetings.

Every other month, NENC Career Pathways joins leadership from all three workforce board areas for a Regional WDB Directors Meeting, where updates are shared, input is gathered, and regional strategy is refined. On alternating months, meetings are held with employer-facing staff from across the region to coordinate business engagement, outreach events, and communication tools.

One of these meetings was hosted onsite at Timbermill Wind Farm, offering staff a firsthand look at one of the region’s emerging industries.



Grant-Funded Collaboration.

Two major Good Jobs Challenge grants shaped career pathway work this year.

First, the **Steps4Growth** initiative, led by North Carolina A&T State University, focuses on building talent pipelines for careers in renewable energy. In our region, efforts have supported partners in Martin, Roanoke-Chowan, Edgecombe, Nash, and Wilson Community Colleges, with activities ranging from employer engagement to work-based learning support.

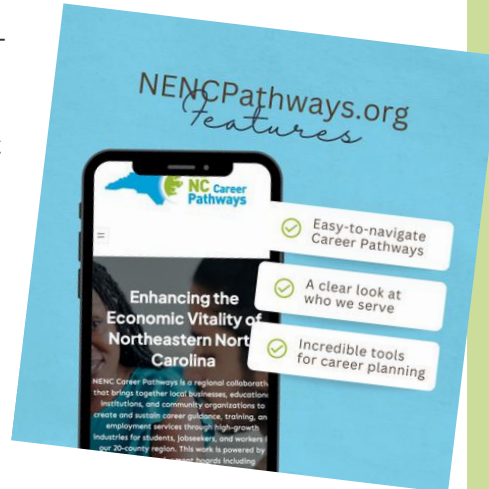
The Maritime Workforce Grant, in partnership with the Hampton Roads Workforce Council, supports talent development across the Military Industrial Base. As part of the **Waves of Opportunity NC** campaign, NENC Career Pathways contributed to coordination, outreach, and the creation of employer-specific videos showcasing maritime careers in eastern North Carolina.



Regional Messaging and Outreach.

Clear and consistent communication remains a cornerstone of this work. NENC Career Pathways continued to share updates, opportunities, and tools through its **monthly update newsletter**, **bi-monthly educator newsletter**, and active presence on **Facebook**, **Instagram**, and **LinkedIn**. The **website** was also refreshed throughout the year, including new employer videos, updated partner tools, and a more streamlined experience for both professionals and the public.

Whether aligning high-level strategy or promoting frontline success stories, NENC Career Pathways continues to serve as a bridge connecting education, business, and workforce partners across the region.



By the Numbers.

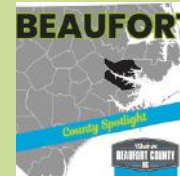
12 monthly newsletters published

1 new, targeted newsletters started (to teachers)

4 social media series underway



Shared Vocabulary



County Spotlight



Featured Resources



Pathways Perspectives

359 touchpoints created with followers through social posts on **Facebook**, **Instagram**, and **LinkedIn**

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facebook.com/nencpathways



instagram.com/nenccareerpathways



linkedin.com/company/nenc-career-pathways



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