

# #Align4NCWorks

During 2014, eight months of listening to our workforce development partners – industry, K-12, workforce boards and Commerce – focused our strategic planning initiative, Align4NCWorks, on the successful elements of career pathways. At the same time, some of our partners – Commerce’s NCWorks Commission and the NC Economic Development Board, the State Board of Education and the NC Chamber – were developing and beginning to implement strategic plans. In each of those plans, many of the same elements and concepts were outlined.

While the seven career pathway elements (presented on pg. 2) provide the framework for how we build successful, comprehensive pathways, we feel that our original Align4NCWorks guiding objectives of **alignment, responsiveness, engagement and accountability** provide the building blocks for the foundation of the NCWorks Career Pathways concept and collaboration. We have used these guiding objectives as the basis for our four Align4NCWorks overarching goals that will better align North Carolina’s workforce system, respond to both citizen and business needs, engage industry and workforce partners in addressing those needs and provide the basis for accountability.

**The Ultimate Aspiration: Ensuring that North Carolina is #1 in Workforce** – The NC Chamber (NCC) may have said it best in their strategic plan, and the NC Community College System (NCCCS) supports this same goal: *North Carolina will be a global leader in the number of students leaving its community college system with a job-ready credential that can lead to becoming a successful employee or employer in a global economy and provide for better skills, better jobs, better pay and continued educational attainment (NCC).*

We recommend the adoption of each of the following overarching goals:

**Alignment** -- *Develop an integrated seamless system of education and workforce development programs, initiatives and resources. The system should be focused on the integration of business needs and worker preparation and include a comprehensive approach to career exploration, career development, education and job training that begins in middle school and continues throughout an individual’s career path (JP).*

**Responsiveness** – *Create a workforce system that is responsive to the needs of the economy (NCW) and that increases North Carolina’s competitive advantage by further developing and enhancing career pathways that provide students the skills to create, make and build things (JP) and provide the basis for desirable, thriving careers for North Carolinians.*

**Engagement** – *Develop and implement a coordinated and seamless approach to engage business and respond to business needs (NCW). Use that engagement to increase the education pipeline, competency-based credentials and work-based learning opportunities in critical career clusters (JP) and to better connect people to jobs and jobs to people (NCW).*

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***Accountability – Target statewide resources to enhance programs and enrollment in critical career cluster areas that compliment key targeted growth industries (JP); integrate economic, workforce and community development functions; develop measures of success through conducting an annual review of metrics and a benchmarking of competitors (JP); and measure and report on the effectiveness of North Carolina’s workforce development system (NCW).***

**Seven elements of NCWorks Career Pathways:**

- Increase and sustain employer engagement
- Employ both demand-driven and data-informed decisions
- Improve career awareness and mapping
- Ensure education and training address and validate skill and competency needs and attainment
- Expand work-based learning opportunities
- Address college access and affordability
- Connect students to quality careers and employers to quality employees

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