

A Framework for North Carolina's Workforce Delivery System

Today's environment requires North Carolina's workforce delivery system to innovate the way it provides services to its citizens and businesses.

- *North Carolina's economy is transitioning. The high unemployment experienced in the Mountain Local Area during the pandemic has been replaced with low unemployment and with an employer environment where businesses struggle to find skilled workers.*
- *The Department of Commerce and Employment Security Commission merger has provided the opportunity to coordinate local workforce service delivery.*
- *The NCWorks Commission's Strategic Plan has the following objectives, to prepare workers to succeed in the North Carolina economy by increasing skills and educational attainment; to create a workforce system that is responsive to the needs of the economy by fostering employer leadership; to promote replication of creative solutions to challenging workforce problems by supporting local innovation; and to promote system access, alignment, integration, and modernization.*
- *To support Governor Roy Cooper's NC Work Ready initiative and his priorities for the workforce development system, that desires North Carolinians to be better educated, healthier, and have more money in their pockets so that they can live more abundant, purposeful lives.*

NCWorks Career Centers have promoted integration of workforce services. Integrated service delivery better serves the state's citizens and businesses by responding to customer needs, not just program requirements. It works to create a seamless delivery system and improve customer service. Integrated service delivery assists people to access the services they need to obtain relevant self-and family-sustaining employment, and helps businesses connect with qualified workers. The North Carolina Division of Workforce Solutions looks forward to continuing to work with local Workforce Development Boards, stakeholders, and partners to move the workforce system forward.

The following Strategic Framework for North Carolina's Career Centers has been implemented with the commitment and urgency that the economy demands, and our customers deserve. This new approach to service delivery is characterized by:

- Integrated Career Center staffing
- An integrated customer pool
- An integrated customer flow
- Integrated technology

Integrated Services to Better Serve Customers

- North Carolina's Career Centers moved beyond mere partnership and co-location and transformed to true integrated service delivery. While all Career Center partner programs are valued, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity (WIOA) Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and the Wagner-Peyser Employment Services program are the operational backbone of the Centers. Consequently, these programs provide the initial focus of a customer-focused, skill-based, integrated service strategy.

- An integrated customer flow has been developed and implemented that responds to customer need – not just to program requirements. Staff-assisted services have been emphasized and Center services are continuously promoted and provided until the customer’s goal has been achieved. This integrated flow includes three major functions that comprise the customer welcome, skill development, and employment activities.
- These customer flow functions are fulfilled by integrated, cross-trained staff with functional leadership. The integrated, functional teams include both Wagner-Peyser and WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker funded employees that focus on the assigned function – not just the requirements of a particular funding stream.
- Another very important functional team provides services to employers that assist in the alignment of Center services with the needs of employers, as well as develop employment opportunities for Center jobseeker customers. This team may operate on a regional labor market basis but is a valuable asset to each Center in the area.
- All Career Center customers (when eligibility permits) may be enrolled in the performance pool of both the WIOA Title I Adult program and Wagner-Peyser program during the first visit to a Career Center. All Trade Act customers are also be enrolled in the performance pool of the WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker Program.
- The North Carolina Division of Workforce Solutions integrates its own staff and shifts from a program silo organization to an integrated services organization. The Division expects that local Workforce Development Boards and Career Centers adopt the same approach.

Create a Career Center Service Model that Values Both Skills and Jobs

- All Career Center customers, including Unemployment Insurance claimants, will be provided with the opportunity to know their skills, improve their skills, and get the best job possible with their skills. Every jobseeker that enters the Career Center will leave as a better job candidate because of the value-added services received.
- The Career Center customer flow will include a first-visit, standardized initial skills assessment, easy access to a wide range of skill development services, and the opportunity to improve employment opportunities through skill upgrading, skill validation, and credentialing.

Increase the Number of Career Center Customers Accessing Skill Development and Training Services

- North Carolina’s Career Centers have developed and will continuously improve, and actively promote a wide range of skill development opportunities through multiple service delivery methods. All services in this robust “product box” will be available to all Center customers,

embedded in an integrated customer flow, and easily accessed by eligible customers with the support of all Center staff. Local Workforce Boards are very strongly encouraged to invest and dedicate more of their valuable resources to pre-vocational skill improvement intensive services.

Implement Lean Processes and Streamline Service Delivery by Removing Bureaucratic Barriers and Waste

- In order to better serve customers, reserve staff time for value-added service delivery, and make integrated services a reality, the North Carolina Division of Workforce Solutions has actively worked to streamline requirements and alleviate bureaucratic barriers to support the delivery of customer-focused quality service.
- The Division will focus its monitoring on quality service delivery and with “compliance” as a necessary responsibility, but not as an end in itself. Local Workforce Boards will be expected to respond to this continuous, state-level streamlining, by analyzing and streamlining their own policies, procedures, and practices.

Emphasis on Employer Services

- Services to employers must move beyond listing jobs and making referrals of job candidates. Local staff should closely align and coordinate with state and local economic development partners to ensure a system of workforce services that will help North Carolina employers reach their full potential. Local staff must be aware of the current business climate and the human resource needs of employers. Emphasis must be placed on assisting existing North Carolina employers with accessing workforce services; including matching employers with Career Center participants that have the skills they require and assisting them access available activities, such as work-based learning, pre-employment skill development, and apprenticeship programs.
- Sector strategies that target high-growth industries, such as healthcare, life sciences, emerging technology and advanced manufacturing have been developed and certified by the NCWorks Commission.

Meet New Performance Expectations: Success Defined Through New Quality Service Metrics

- North Carolina adopted the WIOA and Wagner-Peyser common measures that focus on value-added service delivery. In other words, achieving shared success metrics that value inputs and results are more than just performance standards management.