

NORTH CAROLINA: DISCOVER THE #1 WORKFORCE IN THE COUNTRY

A region's economic success is dependent on its workforce, and North Carolina's workforce is consistently ranked as one of the best in the nation. In fact, North Carolina earned the coveted title of CNBC's Top State for Business in each of the last two years, receiving top marks for its workforce above all other states. The ranking comes at a critical time for economic development. As companies navigate shifts in the post-pandemic economy, which dealt a tight labor market and a significant increase in domestic manufacturing demand, states must be prepared to meet the needs of ever-evolving manufacturers, technology firms, headquarters, corporate hubs, and life sciences companies.

North Carolina is uniquely equipped to meet these needs. **Our labor force of 5.2 million is growing daily. We're one of the fastest growing states by population with more than 340 new residents moving to North Carolina each day.**² Most newcomers migrate from New York, California, New Jersey, Virginia, and Florida³, attracted to North Carolina's rich quality of life, low cost of living, and abundant career opportunities.

Today's labor market requires an agile workforce equipped with the skills needed for advances in manufacturing, life sciences, technology, and other rapidly-evolving industries. North Carolina offers 110 universities and community colleges along with numerous programs to help students and existing workers access resources to earn new credentials or find new career opportunities. A strong network of workforce development organizations statewide helps companies tap into skilled talent pools.

#1

**STATE FOR
WORKFORCE**

CNBC, 2023

#1

**WORKFORCE IN
THE SOUTHEAST**

SITE SELECTION
MAGAZINE, 2024

5.2M

**IN THE LABOR
FORCE¹**

¹Lightcast, 2022

²U.S. Census, 2023
Population Estimates

³Lightcast, 2024

NORTH CAROLINA'S LABOR FORCE BY THE NUMBERS⁴

110

UNIVERSITIES, COLLEGES,
AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES

31%

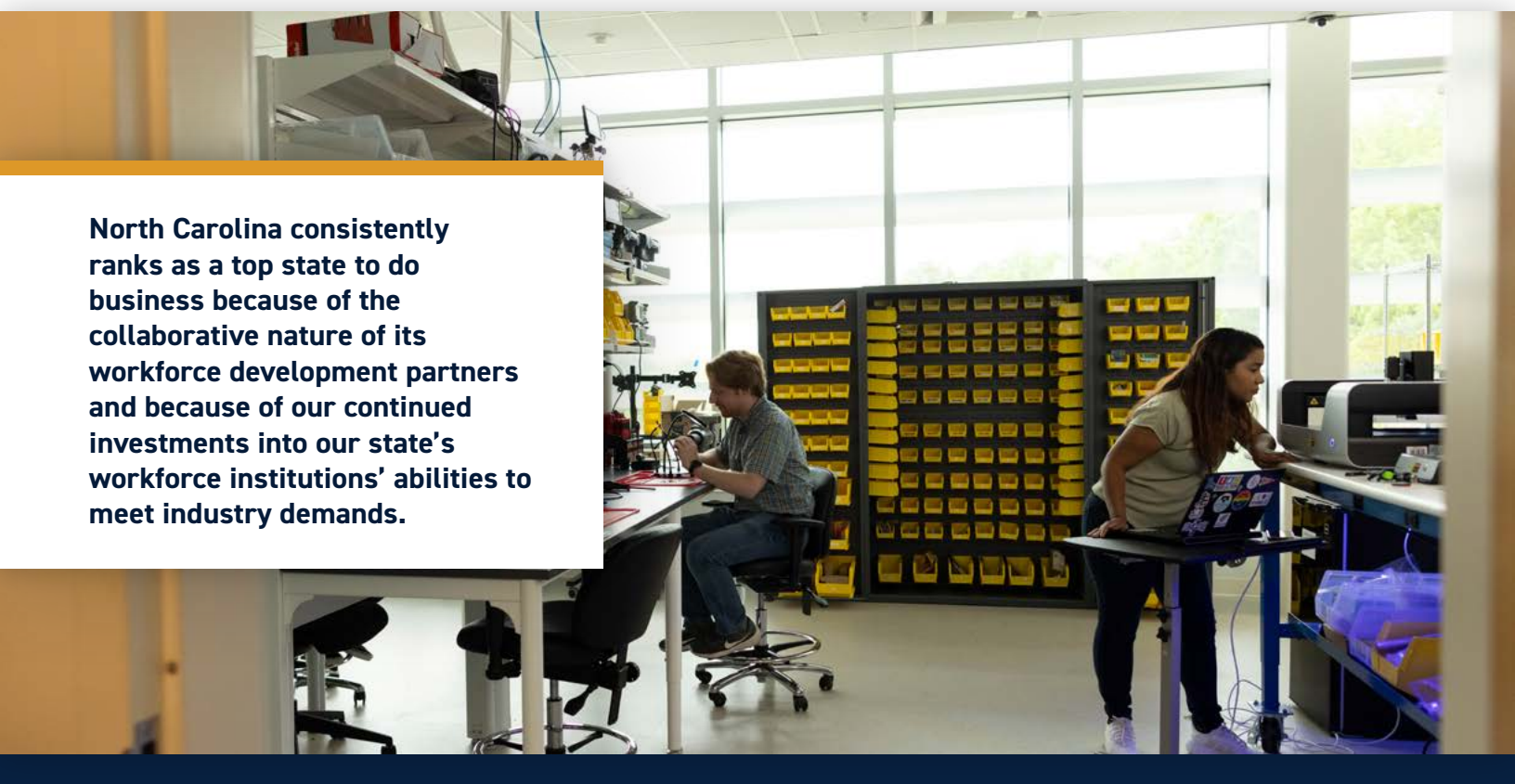
OF RESIDENTS IN OUR MAJOR METRO AREAS
HAVE A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER (10%
HIGHER THAN THE NATIONAL AVERAGE)

44%

HAVE AN ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE
OR HIGHER AND 21% HAVE A
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER

TARGET INDUSTRY	LABOR FORCE	AVERAGE SALARY	GROWTH RATE (2013-2023)
Manufacturing	474,000	\$83,500	10%
Professional Services, Technical, and Scientific Services	320,000	\$116,600	67%
Financial Services	232,000	\$138,000	54%
Technology	192,000	\$101,600	64%
Life Sciences	75,000	\$131,600	35%

⁴Lightcast, 2024



North Carolina consistently ranks as a top state to do business because of the collaborative nature of its workforce development partners and because of our continued investments into our state's workforce institutions' abilities to meet industry demands.

AN UNMATCHED HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

North Carolina ranks among the top states for postsecondary education enrollment, offering companies unmatched access to skilled talent. Nearly 700,000 students seeking certifications to postdoctoral degrees are enrolled in our state's colleges or universities, the fourth-highest postsecondary enrollment in the country⁵.



ELITE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill was founded in 1789, marking the first public university established in the country. Since then, 51 other distinguished colleges and universities have opened their doors to serve students across the state and world. Today, 16 institutions, including North Carolina State University, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and East Carolina University, make up the public University of North Carolina system. Collectively, the UNC System ranks as the third-most affordable for tuition rates in the nation⁶. North Carolina is also home to 36 private and independent universities including Duke University, Wake Forest University, and Davidson College. Notably, North Carolina has 11 historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and boasts the largest HBCU student enrollment in the country.

Over 328,600 students are enrolled in our 52 public and private universities, with approximately 89,000 students graduating annually⁷ with bachelors degrees or higher, steadily filling roles in engineering, technology, life sciences, finance, and business and management.

**FROM ASSOCIATES TO PHDS,
NC SUPPLIES A STEADY
TALENT PIPELINE⁸**

328K

**STUDENTS ENROLLED AT NORTH
CAROLINA'S UNIVERSITIES**

393K

**STUDENTS ENROLLED IN NORTH
CAROLINA'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

19,000

**BUSINESS-RELATED DEGREES
CONFERRED ANNUALLY**

5,100

**COMPUTER SCIENCE DEGREES
CONFERRED ANNUALLY**

4,700

**ENGINEERING DEGREES
CONFERRED ANNUALLY**

⁸University of North Carolina System; North Carolina Community College System; North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities; Degrees conferred refers to Associates degrees and higher.

⁵Where Student Enrollment Has Grown the Most in the Past 20 Years, By State and College (and How Tuition Has Changed), LendingTree, 2023

⁶The College Board's annual Trends in College Pricing report, 2022-2023, In-State Tuition

⁷University of North Carolina System, Fall 2023; North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities, 2022-2023



SUCCESS STORY: WOLFSPEED

Wolfspeed, a homegrown North Carolina company founded by several graduates of North Carolina State University, has grown into a global leader in silicon carbide technology used in semiconductor manufacturing. In 2022, Wolfspeed announced it will invest \$5 billion and hire 1,800 at a new semiconductor plant in Siler City.



To fill its growing talent needs, the company and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NC A&T), the nation's largest HBCU and top producer of black engineers, have developed a strong research and education partnership. In September 2022, the two entities shared plans to develop a comprehensive curriculum that will result in undergraduate and graduate credentials in semiconductor manufacturing. In March 2023, they announced a new R&D facility on NC A&T's campus to support the next generation of advanced compound semiconductors.

TOP-RANKED TECHNICAL WORKFORCE POWERS NC'S MANUFACTURING SECTOR

The North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS), a network of 58 colleges, is our state's strongest workforce asset, supplying our manufacturing and trade sectors with workers in engineering technology, mechatronics, information technology, health sciences, and more. **Our community colleges supply skilled labor, training, and upskilling resources for our manufacturing workforce, the largest in the Southeast, and are a key reason Site Selection Magazine named North Carolina the #1 state for workforce development in the Southeast.**

There are 58 colleges with 165 remote campuses, which means a 30-minute drive (or less) to a campus for nearly every North Carolinian. This gives companies a steady pipeline of talent no matter where they locate in the state. Each college offers programs aligned to its region's industry clusters and the opportunity for employers to develop or participate in custom apprenticeship programs.

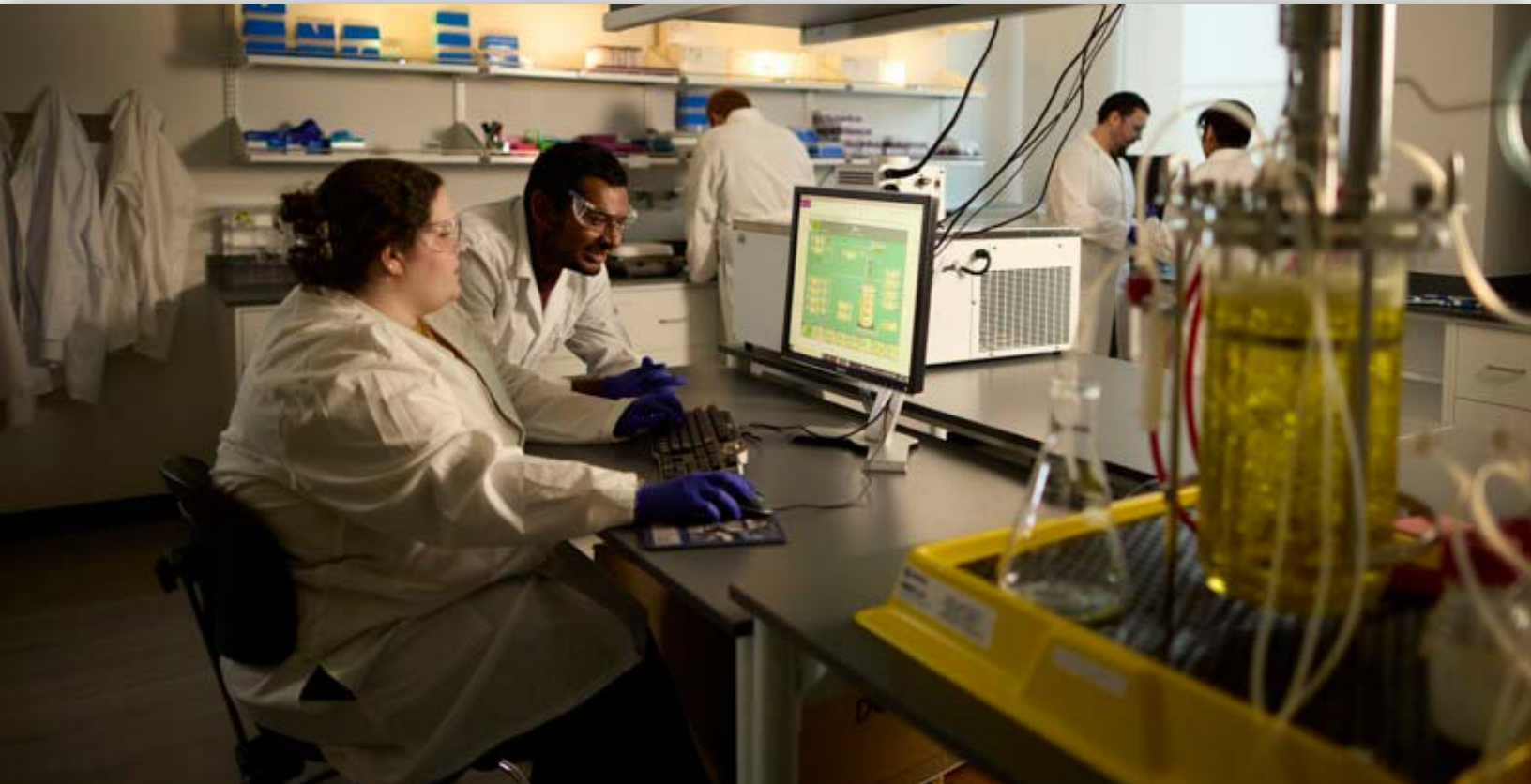
The NCCCS executes the state's workforce training incentive program, **NCEdge Customized Training, which provides tailored workforce training for companies that have recently expanded in or come to North Carolina.** A dedicated NCEdge director at each college partners with companies to build a comprehensive training strategy valid for up to three years at no cost to the company.

PARTNERSHIPS DRIVE INNOVATION

The collaboration between technical training, academia, and industry runs deep in North Carolina as our colleges and universities consistently partner with each other and local companies to supply talent, develop curricula, lead groundbreaking research, and develop new patents and technology.

Propel NC is a bold new initiative the NCCCS is asking the legislature to fund that would create even greater alignment between the NCCCS and business and industry partners by increasing the funding level for courses leading to employment in high-demand, high-wage jobs.





SUCCESS STORY: ACCELERATE NC – LIFE SCIENCES MANUFACTURING COALITION

Officially launched in 2023 and led by the North Carolina Biotechnology Center (NCBiotech), Accelerate NC is a statewide coalition of public, private, and workforce institutions that will expand career training capacity in the life sciences sector at 10 community colleges and establish six training hubs throughout North Carolina’s HBCUs. Backed by a \$25 million Build Back Better grant, workforce initiatives offered within the grant include:

- **North Carolina Life Sciences Apprenticeship Consortium**, providing funding for apprenticeships at participating employers like Amgen, Eli Lilly, and Merck.
- **BioWork Certification, offered at 13 community colleges**, the certification teaches foundational skills in pharmaceutical and chemical manufacturing.
- **NCGrads2Work**, provides funding for high school graduates in Greenville with two-day training at the Pharmaceutical Services Network Training Center. Following training, students have the opportunity to interview with local pharmaceutical manufacturers.
- **Life Sciences Manufacturing Ambassador Program**, training ambassadors in 79 of North Carolina’s 100 counties to share training and job opportunities in their local communities.

A STREAMLINED SYSTEM TO CONNECT WITH NORTH CAROLINA TALENT

A ROBUST STATEWIDE JOBSEEKER NETWORK

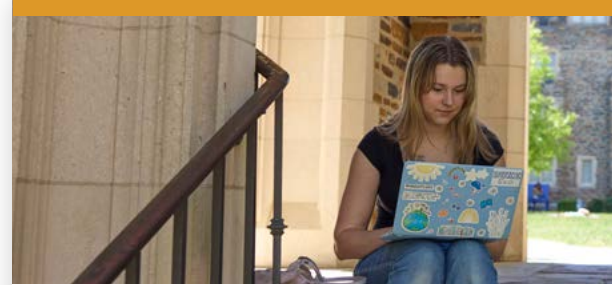
North Carolina's streamlined workforce development network helps companies tap into existing talent pools as they establish or expand operations. **Known as the NCWorks Career Centers, expert business liaisons at 80+ career centers statewide partner with local companies, connecting them with jobseekers in the NCWorks talent system.** A one-stop shop for companies, services include job applicant screening and candidate referrals, information on tax credits and federal bonding program, customized career fairs, and on-the-job training programs.

The career centers also work to prepare jobseekers for new careers through a range of comprehensive services, including career assessments, resume, cover letter, and interview preparation, computer and internet access, and training and education programs. Specialized programs to serve veterans, formerly incarcerated individuals, limited English speakers, and agriculture workers ensure that our most vulnerable populations gain access to great careers.

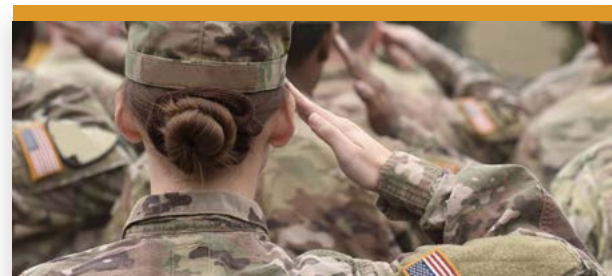
RESOURCES TO HIRE TRANSITIONING MILITARY

North Carolina houses the nation's fourth-largest military population⁹, home to eight military installations including the United States Army headquarters and Fort Liberty, the largest military base in the world. **Every year, approximately 20,000 servicemembers transition into the civilian workforce, providing employers an experienced talent pool with vocational and technical skills¹⁰.** Organizations like the North Carolina Military Business Center connect companies with exiting servicemembers with a tailored candidate search based on skillsets and experience.

Several organizations can match employers directly to exiting military and veterans across the state. North Carolina For Military Employment (NC4ME) assists companies with hiring military talent and provides expert human resources training on how to recruit and retain military talent. NC Works Veterans Affairs and Veterans Bridge Home also provide many workforce services to companies interested in hiring veterans and military talent.



On-the-Job Training grants (OJTs) help offset the cost of creating new job opportunities, companies may qualify for an OJT grant and receive a reimbursement for 50-75% of wages paid while employees learn requirements and skills for the position. Companies partner with their local workforce development board to develop a customized training plan.



North Carolina's exiting servicemembers offer companies a wide variety of competitive skillsets: annually, ~4,500 servicemembers exit with skills in vehicles and maintenance, 1,400 in operations, 1,300 in aerospace and aircraft maintenance, 1,200 in engineering, and 1,000 in technology.

⁹United States Department of Defense, 2023

¹⁰North Carolina for Military Employment, 2023



PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE NEEDS OF INDUSTRY

A state's economy is only as strong as its workforce, and North Carolina refuses to rest on its laurels. **Our state is implementing an innovative and comprehensive strategic economic development plan to ensure we uphold our status as the top workforce in the country.** The plan differentiates North Carolina from its peers through its holistic approach to capacity building and access to education and training. Some key strategies include:

- **Investing in key production sectors that provide critical technologies and supply chains**
- **Increase attainment of high-quality, postsecondary credentials**
- **Improve regional access to quality, affordable housing, transportation, and childcare**
- **Increase labor force participation by better supporting populations with barriers to employment**

Several organizations have been created to help achieve these aspirational goals. The state granted a \$97 million appropriation to establish Project Kitty Hawk, a nonprofit ed-tech startup partnering with the UNC System, the state's public university system, to help adult learners earn new credentials. Universities may partner with Project Kitty Hawk to develop customized training programs based on regional market demand. Adults enrolled in the program receive admissions and technology assistance and an academic coach to ensure support throughout the program.

MyFutureNC is a statewide nonprofit with a goal to help two million North Carolinians earn a postsecondary credential by 2030. With cross-sector collaboration between leaders in education, business, and government, **75% of North Carolina counties have already shown gains in educational attainment since 2018.**

North Carolina invests billions of dollars annually into its public university and community college systems. The state's 2024-2025 budget allocates funding for short-term workforce development grants, improved broadband access, and \$150 million towards building new workforce and research centers at various community colleges. North Carolina is also investing over \$126 million to grow its STEM talent pool. Funds will go towards increasing enrollment capacity at our three largest engineering universities, upgrading and building new facilities, and developing new curriculums to train students in emerging technologies.



SUMMARY

Decades worth of investments into building out a strong workforce development system that is responsive to industry needs has **attracted investment from renowned global manufacturers like Toyota, Siemens, and Honda Aircraft, Fortune 500 headquarters like Honeywell and Lowe’s, and leading technology firms like Apple and Google.** Our colleges, universities, nonprofits, and statewide workforce system are designed to collaborate with industry and are nimble enough to create customized solutions to address workforce challenges.

Our state’s commitment to growing its workforce and training institutions is evident through the First in Talent Strategic Plan and investments in the public education system and nonprofits that are training residents and newcomers alike for lifelong careers. These investments will ensure your company’s longevity and success in North Carolina.

CONTACT

**Ready to tap into the #1 workforce in the country?
Contact our team:**

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WE CHOSE NORTH CAROLINA FOR SEVERAL REASONS, INCLUDING ITS EXTENSIVE AND WELL-MAINTAINED INFRASTRUCTURE, FOUR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS AND TWO SEAPORTS, ITS CONSISTENT RANKING AS ONE OF THE TOP STATES TO DO BUSINESS, ITS WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION SYSTEM AND, IMPORTANTLY, ITS OUTSTANDING AND DIVERSE WORKFORCE.

Christopher P. Reynolds,
*Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer,
Toyota Motor North America*