

# NCcareers.org

## Cross Boundry Collaboration

North Carolina

**Initiated:** 2014

**Completed:** 2020

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

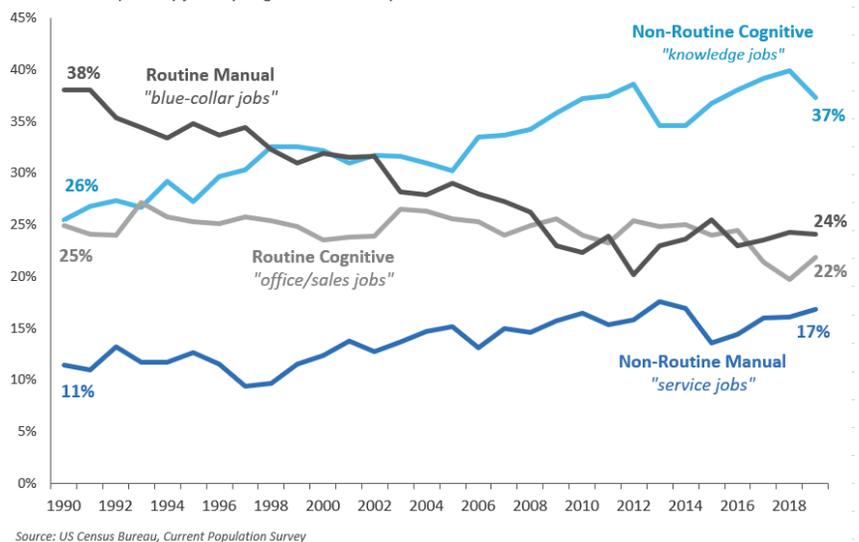
As North Carolina's economy has grown, occupations, work environments, and employers' needs have shifted. North Carolinians of all ages need an easy way of identifying current, reliable information about the needs to employers and the evolving career and educational opportunities available in their communities and across the state.

North Carolina has valuable career resources, from data on high-demand jobs and wages to information on training programs in local areas for people to get the skills they need. But these resources were not tied together in a user-friendly format, which meant that North Carolina's students, parents, teachers and job seekers weren't able to use that information to make informed education, training and career decisions.

With collaboration between the North Carolina Department of Commerce Labor & Economic Analysis Division (LEAD), the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS), the North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services Vocational Rehabilitation unit (NCDHHS VR), the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), the University of North Carolina System (UNC System), the N.C. State Education Assistance Authority (NCSEA), the North Carolina Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU), the North Carolina Department of Commerce Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS), the North Carolina Business Committee for Education (NCBCE), and the J.P. Morgan Foundation, we built NCcareers.org – a new, comprehensive career information system to help connect current and future North Carolina workers with information about available jobs and career paths.

### Routine Jobs Shrink while Non-Routine Jobs Increase in NC

Share of NC's primary jobs by degree of work requirements



The career portal offers skills and interest assessments for people in all stages of their careers, as well as the ability to explore occupations and local job openings, and the capability to identify education and training opportunities tailored to an individual's career interests.

***NCcareers.org supports my education initiatives, including reaching the goal established by myFutureNC of 2 million North Carolinians with a degree or credential by 2030. It furthers our efforts to think about education as a continuum that stretches all the way from cradle to career. And it will help recruit and retain great jobs to our state by connecting employers with a trainable workforce.***

Governor Cooper

## IDEA

North Carolina's economy has been shifting away from our roots in traditional manufacturing and agriculture towards new, high tech and medical fields for the last 30 years. As the economy has changed and grown, occupations, work environments and employers' needs have shifted. As such, we needed a better way to communicate employers' needs and career opportunities and requirements to current and future job seekers.

Many employers have had difficulty communicating the changing realities of their business and overcoming old perceptions of the nature of their work to the next generation of workers. According to a long-running survey of NC employers, large percentages, across industries, have had difficulty filling open positions. This includes 56% who had difficulty hiring in 2019, according to the NC Department of Commerce's latest survey.

Many North Carolinians are not aware of the best career opportunities or how to prepare for them. Additionally, many lack information on matching career opportunities to North Carolina's education and training options including areas such as online education, apprenticeships, certifications and entrepreneurship programs.

North Carolina has incredible career resources, from data on high-demand jobs and wages to information on training programs in local areas for people to get the skills they need. Because these resources lack a high-profile platform and were not tied together in a user-friendly format, the state's students, parents, teachers and job seekers weren't able to use that information to make informed education, training and career decisions.

With collaboration between the North Carolina Department of Commerce Labor & Economic Analysis Division (LEAD), the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS), the North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services Vocational Rehabilitation unit (NCDHHS VR), the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), the University of North Carolina System (UNC System), the N.C. State Education Assistance Authority (NCSEA), the North Carolina Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU), the North Carolina Department of Commerce Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS), the North Carolina Business Committee for Education (NCBCE) and the J.P. Morgan Foundation, we built NCcareers.org - a new, comprehensive career information system to help connect current and future North Carolina workers with information about available jobs and career paths. NCcareers.org is a cost-effective, high-quality, unified Career Information System that is accessible to all career planners - middle school students through adult job seekers - in North Carolina. This system of interactive, static and interpersonal resources helps students, parents, career advisors and job seekers:

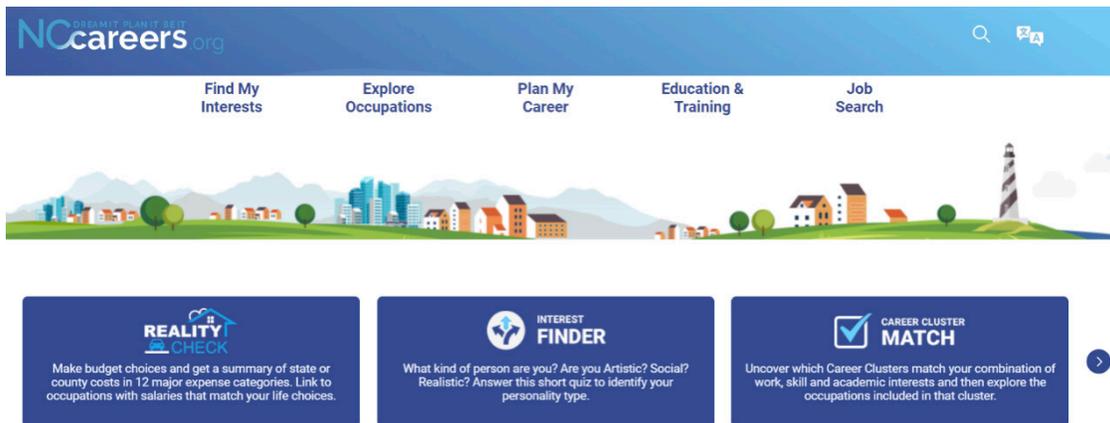
- Access the best career information tools available
- See the wages needed to support desired lifestyles
- Match interests, work values, and abilities to jobs
- Understand exactly what certain occupations do
- Identify jobs that are projected to grow
- Find educational options to match career goals and connect to institutions of higher learning
- Know how much occupations pay
- Discover sustainable career pathways
- Find apprenticeship and internship opportunities
- Learn basic job searching skills
- Engage all employers (hiring or not)
- Connect to financial aid and loan information

The interactive, mobile-friendly web portal serves as the central access point for education, career and job market information. The portal allows individuals to enter at any stage of life and carry their portfolio of assessments, job interests and career resources with them.

## IMPLEMENTATION

### Functionality

Key to this portal is its ability to integrate with existing administrative systems such as NCWorks (DWS's system), CFNC, and PowerSchool (DPI's system). The first phase of the portal, rolled out in July 2020, was made accessible to the public without requiring registration or login credentials. Under this phase, individuals were able to take assessments and do some career planning, but were not able to save those results.



### Project details

NCcareers.org relies on the dedicated partnership of state leaders and organizations. The core group of partners was organized and led during the planning stage by LEAD. A governing board, consisting of LEAD, DWS, CFNC, DPI, the UNC System, NCCCS, NCDHHS, NCICU and the NCBCE, was established to direct the implementation and maintenance of the Career Information System. The N.C. Association of Workforce Development Boards, myFutureNC, and the NCWorks Commission serve as an advisory board. LEAD administers the system and manages board functions.

After conducting market research that included conversations with other states and vendors, the project team determined that it would be more cost-effective to build a North Carolina-specific system than to try to customize something off the shelf. The request for proposals for the development of the system had four major requirements:

1. A Drupal-based system so the team could leverage the state's existing investment and expertise in the Drupal platform
2. Cloud-hosted for scalability during peak times
3. Seamless integration of tools, including incorporation some of the state's existing tools into the new system (converting and making them easier to use)
4. Firm understanding and ability to manage the security needs of a system that deals with FERPA data

Based on bid responses, the state chose to partner with Vanguard to build the integrated portal, which was built for the NCcareers.org domain (an address already owned by the Department of Commerce), with a total cost for the first phase of approximately \$1.1 million.

## Impact

NCcareers.org was designed to provide students and job seekers with the necessary tools to make informed career decisions while making it easier for employers to communicate the changing realities of their business and overcome old perceptions of the nature of their work to the next generation of workers.

- North Carolina has collected and provided the information available in the portal for many years, but there was:
- No central resource for all career planners to turn
- Inconsistent quality of available data and information
- No access to similar, high-quality resources for all who need it
- Wasteful duplication of efforts where multiple groups were paying individually for the same data and resources rather than sharing the financial burden

NCcareers.org is North Carolina's one-stop career planning solution for North Carolinians at every stage in the education to employment continuum. Establishing this portal allowed us to make source data from multiple entities, including educational organizations and DWS, centrally accessible for users rather than redirecting to multiple organizations. This, coupled with the analytics embedded in the system, removes the burden of cobbling together the analysis from the end user. The portal also reduces duplication of cost and effort among partner organizations who previously provided access to similar information.

The education, career and job market information in the system can be tailored to each individual. Users can customize their experience by using a variety of assessment tools and quizzes that identify career interests, education requirements, job prospects, including a "reality check" cost/budgeting tool that uses labor market data to determine the salary they would need to make to maintain their desired lifestyle in a particular location.

The screenshot displays the NCcareers.org website interface. At the top, there is a blue header with the logo "NCcareers.org" and the tagline "DREAM IT. PLAN IT. REIT." on the left, and search and user icons on the right. Below the header is a navigation bar with five tabs: "EXPLORE", "Further Education" (which is underlined), "Change Careers", "Remove Barriers", and "Prepare for Work". The main content area features three light blue cards. The first card is titled "Career And College Promise" and "Two Schools For The Price Of None", with a sub-headline "Want to get a jumpstart on earning college credit, tuition free while still in High School? Learn more about NC Career and College Promise." and a "LEARN MORE" button. The second card is titled "NC 4-Year Colleges" and "Making College Affordable in NC", with a sub-headline "Check out the numerous programs and opportunities to lower your education costs at NC's public and independent four-year colleges and universities." and a "LEARN MORE" button. The third card is titled "Department of Public Instruction" and "Exploring Careers for Students (K-12th)", with a sub-headline "Career Development Coordinators (CDCs) in Career and Technical Education (CTE) and School Counselors in Student Services can help Middle and High School students explore careers." and a "LEARN MORE" button.

NC Community Colleges

### 58 Ways To Grow Skills & Train For A New Job

NC's 58 Community Colleges do more than just offer dozens of different 2-year degrees. A short-term skill and job training certificate can help you advance your career.

[LEARN MORE](#)

CFNC

### College Options For Adults

Thinking of going back to school - or for the 1st time? Want a degree - or just some new skills? Learn about all the opportunities in NC for Adult Learners.

[LEARN MORE](#)

NCWorks

### Get Local, Personal Assistance

You don't have to be in school to receive help from a professional career adviser. Coaches in the state's NCWorks Career Centers are here to help adults & youth find jobs & education / training options.

[LEARN MORE](#)

NCWorks NextGen

### No Diploma? You Can Work It Out.

NextGen is a comprehensive education, training, & employment program for young adults ages 16-24 facing barriers to employment. The program can help you plan, prepare, & launch a career in a high demand field.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Health & Human Services

### It Is Not A Disability, It Is A Different Ability

North Carolina's Vocational Rehabilitation programs help people with disabilities achieve their goals for employment and independence by connecting to services and resources.

[LEARN MORE](#)

NCWorks

### A Second Chance At Employment & Career Success

Finding a job with a criminal record can be difficult. NCWorks Career Center counselors specialize in helping individuals with criminal records find employment.

[LEARN MORE](#)

NC Navigator

### Try A Career On For Size With Work-Based Learning

Find opportunities to connect with businesses while you're still in high school - internships, apprenticeships, job shadowing, interviews. Navigate real world learning for real life success.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Apprenticeship NC

### Start Earning While You're Learning

Apprenticeships allow you to get paid an increasing wage as you gain classroom credit. Graduate with a professional certification or two-year college degree debt free.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Job & Career Tips

### How Do I Get A Job I Really Want?

From your job search to your resume to your interview, a lot of preparation is needed to stand out & get hired. Know what to do - & what not to do - to land your dream job.

[LEARN MORE](#)

This portal is unique in that it is centered on state and regional labor market data and information. Most other systems focus on matching people’s interests, education or skills with national definitions of the job and their requirements. NCCareers builds on this capability by including localized information such as salary potential, job growth rates and projected job openings so users can assess whether the occupation is “in-demand” and suitable to achieve their lifestyle goals.

Combining this labor market analysis with the planning tools available from the education partners involved in the portal allows for better career planning.



Between September 1, 2020 and March 1, 2021, NCCareers.org had nearly 100,000 new users and more than 33,000 returning users. In April 2021, a federated login system was added allowing users to sign into the portal and maintain an account/portfolio using their logins from partner, CFNC, to minimize privacy risks for users. This portfolio feature stores saved assessment results, liked jobs, colleges, training provider, education programs and job searches; potential career paths; and favorited informational pages. In addition, career advisors with CFNC credentials (in school, workforce development, vocational rehabilitation) will soon be able to access accounts (with permission) in order to provide appropriate referrals and guidance. Additional resources will be made for professional career advisors to help connect them to a statewide network; learn of new resources and trends; and share best practices.

This career information system could not have happened without collaboration across state government entities, educational institutions and non-profit partners. The core group of partners (LEAD, DWS, CFNC, DPI, the UNC System, NCCCS, NCDHHS, NCICU and the NCBCE) recognized the importance of marrying education, workforce and labor market data and worked together to share that information consistently through a centralized portal.