Career Pathways Title: Nursing and Allied Healthcare Summary

Career Pathway Sector/Occupation: Healthcare

Prosperity Zone: Region C

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OVERVIEW

1. Demand Driven and Data Informed

The Region C Workforce Development Board covers the counties of McDowell, Polk, Rutherford and Cleveland Counties. Due to its location in Western North Carolina, the Region C WDB is centrally located between four major economic sectors – the Asheville, NC metro region; the Hickory, NC metro region; the Charlotte, NC metro region, and; the Greenville-Spartanburg, SC metro region. Between Region C and these four surrounding localities, there is a great demand for nursing and allied health professionals. Among those positions that were in most demand are Registered Nurse (RN), Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), and technician positions.

2. Employer Engagement

Region C has deliberately taken an “employer centric” approach to the Nursing & Allied Health Career Pathway development. While there has been considerable effort on the part of the workforce and educational communities to engage employers on various initiatives in the past, those efforts do not always translate into results valued by employers. Many workforce challenges still persist.

The regional career pathways development team recognize that more purposeful and continuous employer engagement is needed to effectively solve and manage the talent pipeline issues. This engagement involves working with the healthcare employers in the region to identify the jobs, and competencies most in-demand. A close working relationship around career pathway design helps to ensure that skills are relevant and responsive to employers’ needs in today’s rapidly changing environment. Furthermore, this career pathway development provides an opportunity to strengthen the engagement at a deeper level in order to drive up the caliber of the people who are exiting the educational system and are coming into the workforce.

3. Collaborative

Region C Workforce Development Board have long standing relationships with the local school systems, community colleges, chambers of commerce, economic development commissions and industry partners through continual collaborations. Extensive engagement between key stakeholders was required in order to achieve the goal of developing a regional Nursing and Allied Health Career Pathway. The K-12 Local School Systems, the Community Colleges, the Universities, and other community partners are an integral part of meeting the regional workforce needs and in managing the talent pipeline.

4. Career Awareness

Making youth and adults aware of allied health and nursing career opportunities in Region C is the first step in growing our own healthcare workforce. It is an integral part of the career pathway development. An effective career awareness strategy will give participants an edge by providing up-to-date information on opportunities in the region, including employment, educational/training requirements and work-based learning opportunities. Additionally, the career awareness strategy is designed to
include participants at all levels, starting with middle school and high school students continuing through post-secondary students, adult population and dislocated workers.

5. **Articulation and Coordination**

Region C’s educational partnership is supported by a series of articulation agreements between the schools, community colleges and local universities. Unique one-to-one articulations are in place for some of the Local Education Agencies and their respective community colleges. All four LEA’s in Region C worked together to offer a regional approach to the Career & College Promise Program In Practical Nursing. Students in each county can take Practical Nursing which would allow them to seamlessly to apply in a Licensed Practical Nursing program at their nearby community college. In addition, all four counties provide an option for the students to complete a Certified Nursing Aide program, whether at their high school or by attending classes at the local community college.

There are three community colleges in Region C’s four counties, all offering a variety of ‘for credit’ & degree programs in Nursing and allied healthcare, plus diploma and certificate programs. Non-credit options are available through the continuing education programs at the local community colleges, and adult participants and vocational rehabilitation clients are frequent enrollees. Collaboration on both the Foothills Nursing Consortium as well as the Foothills Surgical Technician program have helped the community colleges pool resources while at the same time insuring a standardized way of instruction. A RIBN program, in collaboration with nearby Western Carolina University, allows Associate Degree Nursing students concurrent entry into a Bachelor of Science Nursing. Graduate level degree and certificate programs are available at Gardner Webb and Western Carolina University. Mountain AHEC (MAHEC) provides in-service professional development training to incumbent healthcare staff. When you consider all the educational healthcare programs available, and the articulation that is in place, it’s possible for a student or an adult to get their training from a Certified Nurse Aide to a Doctorate in Nursing Practice -- all within Region C.

6. **Work-Based Learning**

There is a strong collaborative partnership between the healthcare facilities and Region C’s county schools, community colleges and universities. The employers enable the students to get their required Clinical and Internship hours which are mandated for credentialing. To ensure that there are practicum sites for their students, the DPI schools, colleges and universities enter into clinical affiliations to formalize these agreements between schools and private healthcare agencies. Employers leverage these student contact hours as a way to increase their talent pool; some get offers of employment upon completion of their program. Results of an employer and educator survey show the high engagement between educators and healthcare organizations. An inventory of affiliations between schools and employers is provided.

7. **Multiple On and Off Ramps for entering and exiting Healthcare Positions**

There are entry and exit ramps for nursing and allied healthcare professions regardless of age. Whether a student, youth, dislocated worker or an unemployed veteran, there are many ways to get on and off the educational ramp where you can increase your skills and knowledge base. Career ladders are provided that show educational opportunities, job options as well as salary ranges for Region C. These ladders can be used by the NCWorks Career Center staff when consulting interested clients.
8. **Evaluation**

The Region C partnership is committed to ensuring that this Career Pathway remains relevant over the long term. It will serve as a valuable tool for job seekers, job creators, students, educators and community partners. A robust evaluation plan that includes baseline data, goals, metrics and desired outcomes has been developed through partner discussions. Additionally, a mechanism for updating the pathway and associated strategies has been included, as all partners agree for the need for adaptability of the Pathway over time.
1. DEMAND DRIVEN AND DATA INFORMED

The Region C Workforce Development Board covers the counties of McDowell, Polk, Rutherford and Cleveland Counties. Due to its location in Western North Carolina, the Region C WDB is centrally located between four major economic sectors – the Asheville, NC metro region; the Hickory, NC metro region; the Charlotte, NC metro region, and; the Greenville-Spartanburg, SC metro region. Between Region C and these four surrounding localities, there is a great demand for nursing and allied health professionals.

Looking at data provided by EMSI, (Exhibit 1A) and covering Region C, there are nearly 75,000 jobs in the nursing and allied health fields, which is 16% higher than the national average. As with many places around North Carolina and the nation, this is a growing field, with expectations that demand for these positions in Region C will rise by an average of 11.2% over the next five years.

Working with regional partners, the Region C pathway development team sent out the Isothermal Healthcare Workforce Needs Assessment survey, to get a better idea from healthcare employers as to their workforce career needs (Exhibit 1B). Responses were received from across Region C, representing each county as well as the largest healthcare employers across the region. Currently, and not taking into account the above referenced growth, 50% of these employers responded that they had over 25 current health care position openings. Additionally, 70% indicated that it is getting increasingly harder to fill open positions, thus directly indicating a strong demand for qualified workers. Among those positions that were in most demand are Registered Nurse (RN), Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), and technician positions.

When asked why they were having difficulty filling open positions, 30% responded that they were not receiving enough applicants. This again relates back to the strong demand for these careers. Looking to the future, 78% anticipate continued and new hiring over the next 12 months, with 100% expecting it to be as equally difficult to fill the positions as it is currently, if not more difficult. As expected, 100% of respondents require at least some form of certification or credential for all applicants.

This regional demand is certainly echoed statewide, with healthcare occupations being well represented on the NC Star Jobs list of careers with high wages and high employment growth (Exhibit 1C). As is evidenced by the Star Jobs data, these jobs require, at a minimum, postsecondary training or an associate’s degree, with several avenues for workers to progress through their careers via additional education, including a bachelor’s degree or relevant certifications.

Utilizing the data gathered, the Region C pathway development team engaged closely with employers and education partners to further detail how this demand for nurses, CNA’s and other healthcare positions could be met through collaboration, education, work-based learning opportunities, outreach and designated career pathways.
2. EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Region C has deliberately taken an “employer centric” approach to the Nursing & Allied Health Career Pathway development. While there has been considerable effort on the part of the workforce and educational communities to engage employers on various initiatives in the past, those efforts do not always translate into results valued by employers. Many workforce challenges persist.

The regional career pathways development team recognize that more purposeful and continuous employer engagement is needed to effectively solve and manage the talent pipeline issues. This engagement involves working with the healthcare employers in the region to identify the jobs, and competencies most in-demand. A close working relationship around career pathway design helps to ensure that skills are relevant and responsive to employers’ needs in today’s rapidly changing environment. Furthermore, this career pathway development provides an opportunity to strengthen the engagement at a deeper level to drive up the caliber of the people who are exiting the educational system and are coming into the workforce.

Furthermore, cultivating and maintaining long term relationship is key to meaningful employer engagement strategy. That said, industry has been a true driving force at every stage of the career pathway development. At the outset, engaged dialogue took place at the first regional meeting with an industry panel discussion. The employers provided input on what type of skills, competencies, training and credentials are needed for the jobs that are most in demand. In addition, Workforce Needs Assessment Survey was also conducted to refine occupational demand and probe for potential gaps.

Again, strong relationships with employers are critical to the enhancement of career pathways, through the inclusion of components such as career awareness and work-based learning. Region C employers have embraced the regional career pathway for Nursing and Allied Health, and will provide opportunities for students to gain real world work experience through field trips, job shadowing and clinical when possible.

Employers were given an opportunity engaged in the education and training components of the pathway by participating and contributing to either the Sub-committee work (workgroups) or by providing their input at the employer panel discussion on January 18th. From the Employer led discussion as well as from the Workforce Needs Assessment Survey, many applicants not only lack of the technical skills or competencies they needed to qualify for the jobs in demand, they also lack the soft skills and professionalism. As a result, the employers recommended that soft skills/professionalism training should be hard-wired into the curriculum at all levels; including K-12, community colleges and at the career centers. The soft skills teaching must be imbedded into the entire career pathway system.

Finally, employer engagement is not a one-time deal; industry partners have expressed their long-term commitment to an ongoing support, as the pathway will be evaluated and modified by employers, workforce, educational, and community partners to meet changing needs of the healthcare industry. Most importantly, employers intend to hire individuals that successfully exit the pathway. A letter of support from the industry partners also shows employers commitment from the region.
3. COLLABORATIVE

Region C Workforce Development Board have long standing relationships with the local school systems, community colleges, chambers of commerce, economic development commissions and industry partners through continual collaborations. Extensive engagement between key stakeholders was required to achieve the goal of developing a regional Nursing and Allied Health Career Pathway. The K-12 Local School Systems, the Community Colleges, the Universities, and other community partners are an integral part of meeting the regional workforce needs and in managing the talent pipeline.

A total of four meetings took place between November 29th, 2016 and March 7th, 2017 as part of the Nursing and Allied Health Career Pathway development. The meetings included an asset mapping session with educational partners, a dynamic industry panel discussion, and a series of subcommittee meetings (workgroups). In order to tackle a variety of topics with engaged collaboration, the strategic planning members were divided into sub-committees, or “workgroups” that consisted of various stakeholders. Each work group comprised of Industry, Educators (K-16) plus key community partners. Consideration was taken into account as to what each participant had to offer and how their collaboration in the workgroup would contribute to the Nursing & Allied Health Career Pathway development.

The three workgroups included:

(1) Employer Engagement, Collaboration and Career Awareness

(2) Articulation & Coordination, Work-based Learning and Multiple points of Entry & Exit

(3) Demand Driven & Data Informed and Evaluation

Over the course of the meetings, additional community partners were added based on what the industry stakeholders were asking for. The engaged collaboration has helped create a consistent message to students, adults, dislocated workers, veterans among others, who seek training and employment in Region C’s healthcare industry. A list of partners by meetings attended is included.

The collaboration partnerships continues with input, leadership and commitment from the following key stakeholders: Healthcare industry leaders, Western Carolina University, Gardner Webb University, Region C’s three community colleges, the four Region C LEA’s along with their Career and Technical Education leadership, Chamber of Commerce’s, the local Workforce Development Board, NCWork Career Center managers and WIOA staff. These stakeholders participated in planning meetings as well as in the smaller workgroups. Work was passed from one workgroup to another as it was relevant to learn and share what was going on between groups.

As evidence of strong regional collaboration and employer engagement, five neighboring counties within the region came together to develop a Western North Carolina Healthcare Symposium in 2014. The event consisted of three parts; keynote speaker, panel discussion, and career fair. The Symposium provided opportunities for employers to recruit applicants and exposed the attendees/students to various career options available in the healthcare industry. As a part of the Region C's Nursing and Allied
Health Career Pathway implementation strategy, the Healthcare Symposium will become an annual event.

Another specific example of strong regional engagement has been the creation and ongoing success of the McDowell Pipeline Committee, which has brought together industry, K-12 educators and students, community colleges and workforce partners. Active since 2013 and employer driven, this Pipeline has resulted in the creation of multiple workforce training and job placement opportunities for students. Over the course of working through this Certified Career Pathway initiative, Region C partners have recognized the McDowell Pipeline Committee as a “Best Practice” model, with plans already in place to replicate it across the region.
4. CAREER AWARENESS

Making youth and adults aware of allied health and nursing career opportunities in Region C is the first step in growing our own healthcare workforce. It is an integral part of the career pathway development. An effective career awareness strategy will give participants an edge by providing up-to-date information on opportunities in the region, including employment, educational/training requirements and work-based learning opportunities. Additionally, the career awareness strategy is designed to include participants at all levels, starting with middle school and high school students continuing through post-secondary students, adult population and dislocated workers.

Career guidance services are provided to high school “Career and College Promise” students, unemployed students, incumbent workers, and veterans. Career guidance services can be accessed through the regional network of local education agencies (high school counselors), NCWorks Career Centers, and resources at the regional community colleges. Middle and high school counselors and advisors are provided information to ensure that students are receiving the career advisement that allows them to make informed decisions when selecting the allied Health or nursing career choices.

K-12 YOUTH CAREER AWARENESS

Career Awareness activities at the K-12 level provide students with a variety of experiences such as industry field trips, guest speakers, job shadowing, cooperative education, mentorship, and clinical. These programs are designed to give students the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills leading to better informed career choices. Across the region, CTE personnel and school guidance counselors educate students about future career paths. Students sit down annually with their counselors to receive guidance about their coursework in relation to their future college and career goals. Several school districts have partnered with local Community Colleges to have a Career Coach on school campus to help the high school students make an easier transition to the workplace. Students are informed of the value of a Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), and of the ways they can use NCWorks Online. Students have the opportunity to be involved in Career-Technical Student Organizations where they develop their interests, skills and abilities in relation to their occupational choices. In addition, each year the local educational agencies conduct various career awareness and career exploration events, designed to inform students and parents regarding the career opportunities in healthcare.

In McDowell County Schools, career awareness activities start as early as the 5th grade; the 5th Grade Career Fair is held every April. Another annual career awareness event in McDowell County is Camp Opportunity. For a week in June, McDowell Technical Community College in partnership with McDowell County Schools offer summer camp free of charge to middle school students, those entering 6th through 8th grade. Participants are given the opportunity to explore a different career each day by learning about the job responsibilities while enjoying hands-on activities.

Project PROMSE is another specific example of hands-on career awareness experience in the region. The program is an internship experience designed for high school seniors who have a serious interest in a future career as a dentist, pharmacist, physical therapist, nurse practitioner, physician, or physician’s assistant. Twelve students will be selected for the 2017-2018 academic school year based on an application and interview process (6 in McDowell, 6 in Yancey/Mitchell).
In 2014 five counties in the region collaborated to host the first Western North Carolina Healthcare Symposium. This program was a part of the Pathways to Prosperity initiative. The event is an example of how Region C is being innovative in providing career awareness experience to the students.

Cleveland County Schools in partnership with Cleveland Community College provide a week-long ClubMed Camp; an Allied Health Summer Career Camp program. (Exhibit 4B) ClubMed was specifically designed to give the students an opportunity to explore various career options in the healthcare field. Students are exposed to many different careers and training throughout the week including field trips to local businesses and healthcare facilities. ClubMed covers the following topics: HIPPA and Privacy; Nurse Aide Careers; Medical Assisting; Phlebotomy & Labs; Allied Health Careers; Nursing School at Gardner-Webb University; Anatomy & Physiology; Surgical Tech; Paramedics; Tour of Cleveland Pines Nursing Center; Radiography; and a tour of Cleveland Regional Medical Center. Cleveland County Schools also produced an Allied Health Pathway Brochure to be distribute to students and other community partners in the region. The brochure is being used as a recruiting tool and to provide career awareness in the healthcare field. Students will gain an understanding of competencies and post-secondary options that are available regionally.

Health Science students at three Rutherford County traditional high schools: East Rutherford High School, R-S Central High School, and Chase High School participate in several field trips and job shadowing experiences prior to acquiring their CNA license. Students typically visit the following health care facilities in Rutherford County: Rutherford Regional Health System, Hospice of Rutherford County, Fair Haven Home, White Oak of Rutherfordton, and Oak Grove Health Care Center. Their clinical care portion of the Nursing Fundamentals course also takes place at these facilities as well.

Students at Polk County Schools also participate in field trips, healthcare facility visits, job shadowing experiences, and guest speaker program. The Health Care employers that provide training and career awareness opportunities for Polk County High students are White Oak of Tryon, St. Luke’s Hospital, and Hospice of Carolina Foothills.

**POST-SECONDARY – CAREER AWARENESS**

Post-secondary education agencies in Region C use a comprehensive approach to providing career awareness activities and student career support services. McDowell Technical Community College, Cleveland Community College, and Isothermal Community College all have programs in place to provide career awareness and work-based learning. Regarding K-12 students, this training is accomplished through career fairs, on-campus Career Coaches in the high schools, and related programs. For example, Cleveland Community College holds an annual Career Day every spring for Cleveland County high school juniors.

Additionally, Cleveland Community College has a special program for high school seniors each September that introduces them to community college programs and includes a session on learning “soft skills.” Academic advising services such as program and course selections, assessment analysis, and referrals to support services are reviewed with students. Colleges in the region maintain career centers and offer online resources to enable students to explore careers, determine academic career paths, and provide access to potential employers. Career coaches ensure that students have access to labor market information, can develop a résumé and prepare for interviews, and have the opportunity to participate in work-based learning opportunities.
NCWORKS CAREER CENTERS – YOUTH AND ADULTS DISLOCATED WORKERS

Region C’s network of NCWorks Career Centers are heavily involved in career awareness, engaging with everyone from students to adult and dislocated workers, utilizing multiple programs from the National Career Readiness Certificate to Human Resources Development classes. These services are available to the general public in the region, including out of school youth, and dislocated workers.

During the development of this Certified Career Pathway, it has become apparent that the training of frontline Career Center staff is vital for the success of Region C’s Nursing & Allied Healthcare Career Pathway, and therefore is an integral portion of regional Career Awareness activities. Career Center staff will be given special training on nursing and healthcare professions and local training options so the information can be efficiently and effectively transmitted to displaced workers and job-seeking clients at each county Career Centers.

The NCWorks Career Center Nursing & Allied Healthcare brochure, will help NCWorks Career Center staff properly educate workers on the following:

- Available healthcare careers in Region C.
- Key Region C healthcare employers.
- Paid training options for dislocated workers.
- Key contacts at the regional community colleges and other workforce partners.

Finally, as part of continuous improvement strategy, additional opportunities for training and professional development will be provided to career advising staff in conjunction with the education partners as the career pathway system and the healthcare industry continue to change and evolve.
COMMUNITY COLLEGE LINKS:

Cleveland Community College
www.clevelandcc.edu
Contact: 704.568.4510
robert.johnson@ncstate.edu

Isothermal Community College
www.iso.cc.nc.us
Contact: 828.231.1100
kendall@isothermal.edu

McDowell Technical Community College
www.mc.dow.edu
Contact: 828.330.0864

With the appropriate training & education, you can start a high demand, high wage job in nursing or the allied healthcare field with any of the below local employers:

EMERGENCY SERVICES
Rural Health Services
Rutherford Regional Hospital
St. Luke’s Hospital
Charles George VA Hospital
Cleveland Coliseum

NURSING 
Carolinas Healthcare System - Cleveland
Rutherford Regional Hospital
McDowell Hospital
St. Luke’s Hospital
Charles George VA Hospital
Cleveland Coliseum

EMT’s are eligible to respond quickly to emergency situations regarding medical issues, traumatic injuries and natural disasters.

NCWORKS CAREER CENTERS & CONTACTS:

CLEVELAND COUNTY:
NCWorks Career Center
404 East Marion St.
Shelby, NC 28150
Phone: (704) 489-5414
CONTACT: Brandon Rappe or JoShayla Terry

MCDOWELL COUNTY:
NCWorks Career Center
316 Baldwin Avenue
Marion, NC 28752
Phone: (828) 659-6001
CONTACT: Shanna Gorecki

RUTHERFORD & POLK COUNTIES:
NC Works Career Center
223 Charlotte Road
Rutherfordton, NC 28139
Phone: 828-296-3042
CONTACT: Miranda Hendricks

REGION C NCWORK CAREER CENTERS

Your Nursing and Allied Healthcare Future Begins Here!

Are you a dislocated worker?
Are you under-employed due to a company layoff?
You could be eligible for paid training! Earn while you Learn!

Talk to your NCWorks Career Center Staff in your

Nursing & Allied Healthcare Training Programs

Your NCWorks Career Centers can enroll or assist you in the following Healthcare Training Programs:

Cleveland Community College:
  • Nursing & Name: Allied & II
  • CNA
  • Radiography
  • Medical Assisting & Med Tech
  • Orthopedic Tech
  • Emergency Medical Science & EMS
  • Healthcare Billing & Coding and Office Admin

Isothermal Community College:
  • Nursing & Name: Allied & II
  • Radiography
  • Medical Assisting & Med Tech
  • Orthopedic Tech
  • Emergency Medical Science & EMS
  • Healthcare Billing & Coding and Office Admin

McDowell Technical Community College:
  • Nursing & Name: Allied & II
  • CNA
  • Radiography
  • Medical Assisting & Med Tech
  • Orthopedic Tech
  • Emergency Medical Science & EMS
  • Healthcare Billing & Coding and Office Admin

Surgical Technologists, also called operating room technicians, work in surgical operating rooms. They prepare operating rooms, arrange equipment, and help doctors during surgeries.
5. Articulation & Coordination

Articulation refers to the process of linking two or more educational systems. The alignment of curricula and agreement about basic competencies that occur during the designing of an articulation agreement ensure a seamless transition in course work for students progressing from a high school to a community college, as well as from a community college to state universities and private colleges. Region C has a series of articulation agreements between its educational institutions.

Articulation agreements between the local schools and the community college system permits high school students to take a variety of healthcare classes and have their course work transfer seamlessly to local community colleges. The standard statewide agreement between North Carolina’s high schools and community colleges, is found here, and is in the final stages of being updated by the state.

In addition to the statewide articulation agreement, local articulation agreements can be developed to build strong partnerships between high schools and individual community colleges. There are unique, one-to-one local articulation agreements between Cleveland County Schools and Cleveland Community College as well as between McDowell County Schools and McDowell Technical & Community College.

An inventory of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Health Science programs offered by county is presented. A regional approach was taken and as a result, all four county schools offer Practical Nursing I and II. By taking these pathways, a completer is able to seamlessly apply for the LPN diploma program at the local community colleges. Nursing Assistant 101 is either offered at the high school or at the local community college. Completers of the Nursing Assistant program qualify to be a CNA and meet the minimum requirements to apply for a community college based nursing degree program. Courses other than nursing are available within the county school systems: McDowell County Schools offers emergency medical technology classes. Cleveland County Schools offers Medical Assisting and Radiography.

Region C is home to three Community Colleges, Gardner Webb University (private), as well as nearby Western Carolina University (state). The three Region C community colleges offer degree, as well as non-degree, course options. Non-degree classes lead to diplomas, certificates and/or valuable credentials. Incumbent workers, unemployed adults, and the dislocated, in addition to youth populations, all have the opportunity to enroll and complete credit or non-credit courses.

A collaboration between the three community colleges resulted in the Foothills Nursing Consortium. Established in 1991, it is a cooperative effort by Cleveland Community College, Isothermal Community College, and McDowell Technical Community College, to form one unit for the purpose of providing education for Associate Degree Nursing students through joint support and operations. Isothermal Community College is the administrative unit. While each community college has their own Nurse Aide and Licensed Practical Nursing programs, there is only one Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) program, via the Foothill Nursing Consortium (FNC). Students enter through their home campus and take all related courses at there. The core nursing courses, however, rotate among the three campuses throughout the program for all FNC students. Students are aware they will be taking their nursing core course wherever the course is offered.
At the same time the student applies for the ADN program, they can apply for admission into the Regionally Increasing Baccalaureate Nursing (RIBN) Program. Isothermal Community College, which houses and coordinates the FNC, has entered into a partnership with Western Carolina University to create a seamless transition from an associate degree to a Bachelor of Science in Nursing within four years.

A non-RIBN associate degree nurse who graduates from a North Carolina community college and wishes to transfer to a state university benefits from the state’s Uniform Articulation Agreement between the University of North Carolina RN to BSN Programs and the North Carolina Community College System Associate Degree Nursing Program.

In addition to the Foothills Nursing Consortium, the collaborative Foothills Surgical Technology Consortium, consisting of the same three regional community colleges, provides a one-year diploma option for students. It is administered out of, and all classes are taken at the Cleveland Community College campus.

Allied healthcare students have the ability to transfer from the community college to state universities with the Standard State-wide Articulation Agreement between NC Universities and Community Colleges which allows students to seamlessly transfer credit courses between the three Region C Community Colleges and nearby Western Carolina University, as well as other state universities.

In addition to the RIBN program, Western Carolina University, while not located in Region C, offers distance education options such as an online RN – BSN program.

Dr. Jeff Heck, the President and CEO from Mountain AHEC attended Region C’s strategic planning committee meeting on January 18th. MAHEC covers three of the four counties in Region C: Polk, Rutherford and McDowell. Cleveland County is represented by Charlotte AHEC. This non-profit, regional office is charged with creating career awareness opportunities for youth, as well as continuous education training for healthcare professionals in Western North Carolina. In addition, MAHEC provides a self-paced RN Refresher program for nurses that have inactive licenses but wish to return to nursing.
6. WORK-BASED LEARNING

Work-Based Learning is both an educational as well as training strategy that provides pathway enrollees with real-life work experiences where they can apply academic theory with on-the-job training. It’s a concept that has been in practice for many years and is an integral part of workforce development by creating a healthy employee pipeline. The Region C Workforce Development Board encourages and emphasizes On-the-Job Training Programs as a work-based learning training strategy for students and WIOA eligible adults, dislocated workers, and youth alike.

Healthcare employers collaborate with the region’s four LEAS, as well as with the community colleges and universities in coordinating Work-Based Learning opportunities. Survey results of employers in the region show that most healthcare organizations participate in one form or another of allowing students onsite. Their participation in allowing student access is critical: clinical hours or internships are mandated by state law for licensure and certifications in various nursing and allied healthcare professions. As a result, LEA’s and post-secondary institutions have contract agreements or informal affiliations with public and private healthcare agencies to ensure students fulfill the required number of hours needed per profession.

Region C’s NCWorks Career Centers support healthcare professions by promoting CNA training programs offered at the three community colleges in the region. Career Center WIOA staff disseminate information and enroll clients in the colleges’ respective Nursing Aid certificate programs. Funding is provided if they are eligible for WIOA monies.

At Region C’s third healthcare planning meeting in March, educators mentioned how students are being required to travel far and wide to get their clinical hours. Travel requirements of over one-hour commute time are not unusual. There has been student resistance to traveling long distance to clinical sites. Part of the reason for needing students to be flexible is that nearby internship sites are at their maximum capacity, requiring the colleges and universities to use sites further out. Employers can only have a certain amount of students due to their own limitations. It was mentioned that it is hard to find qualified preceptors that are willing to take students under the wing. There are few incentives to be a preceptor. It was suggested that the advisors and admissions staff need to be realistic with incoming students and let them know about possible long-distance travel to get their internship and clinical hours in.

Another concern of employers and educators was that some students apply and get accepted into healthcare programs and yet don’t know the job requirements. More than one student has dropped out of a CNA program after realizing in the first few days that they are required to touch patients. Again, advisors and admission staff need to heavily emphasize the actual job requirements so that students make informed decisions when applying to healthcare programs. Mandatory job shadowing hours as part of the application process could be one-way to ensure that students are fully aware of the job expectations and the work environment. A required healthcare career orientation session could address this by having program advisors fully go over the program, the job realities as well as clinical hour requirements.
7. MULTIPLE POINTS OF ENTRY AND EXIT

The Region C Nursing and Related Healthcare partnership has developed a pathway which allows entrance from many points: whether a high school student, a high school graduate, some experience, from zero to several credentials, with a diploma, certificate, associates or bachelor’s degree and/or with many years of experience. As highlighted in Exhibit 7A, the healthcare career pathway has entry and exit ramps for a wide variety of occupations from youth to the unemployed, dislocated, as well as active duty or transitioning military service members.

Colleges and training programs within Region C prepare healthcare enrollees for some of the following occupations:

- Registered Nurse
- Licensed Practical Nurse
- Certified Nurse Assistant
- Medical Assistant
- Phlebotomist
- Surgical Technologist
- Billing and Coding Specialist
- Respiratory Therapist
- Radiologic Technician
- MRI Technologist
- Medical Lab Technologist
- Emergency Medical Science/EMT
- Pharmacy Technician

It’s possible for an adult enrollee to become a Certified Nurse Assistant in six weeks by enrolling in a Nursing Aide program at a local community college. NCWork Career Centers frequently discuss this option with unemployed clients and can even pay for the program if the enrollee is eligible for WIOA funds. Should the CNA completer decide to return to school years later, their CNA program seamlessly is accepted by the Community College system, thus allowing the enrollee to apply for the nursing program. High school students that participate in the Nursing Aide program CNA to RN in as little as two years if they complete the Nursing Aide class by the end of their senior year.

At our third Articulation, WBL & On-Off Ramp workgroup meeting members discussed how feasible it was for CNA’s to realistically go from CNA to nurse. It is the same discussion everywhere: a fulltime working adult, with a family, is overwhelmed with the idea of taking on the double duty of fulltime student in a demanding nursing program. Some have tried and they simply wash out. They typically focus on work and home, and studies suffer. Usually it’s an attendance issue, and they end up getting dropped from the program. Discussion of a more comprehensive orientation program prior to entry to fully explain the workload might help. No one wants a CNA to feel like they are in a low-wage, dead-end job, but the obstacles are high to get out of the CNA field. More discussion is needed on this, because a low morale CNA, combined with patient contact, isn’t a good recipe for model patient care.
EXHIBIT 7 A

REGION C NURSING
CAREER PATHWAY LADDER

LOCAL SCHOOLS: GARDER WEBB UNIV., WESTERN CAROLINA UNIV.

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LOCAL COMMUNITY COLLEGES:
CLEVELAND, ISOTHERMAL & MCDOWELL TECH

LOCAL SCHOOLS:
LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLS & COMMUNITY COLLEGE

MASTERS/DOCTORAL
• NURSE PRACTITIONER
• NURSE ANESTHETIST
• NURSE EDUCATOR

SALARY RANGE:
$31,000 — $120,000

BACHELORS DEGREE
• NURSE MANAGER
• CLINICAL LEAD, RN
• NURSE CLINICIAN
• CLINICAL NURSE

SALARY RANGE:
$54,000 — $68,000

ASSOCIATES DEGREE
• REGISTERED NURSE

SALARY RANGE:
$42,000 — $60,500

LICENSED PROGRAM COMPLETER
• LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSE

SALARY RANGE:
$33,000 — $39,000

HIGH SCHOOL/GED/CERTIFICATE
• HOME HEALTH AIDES
• CERTIFIED NURSING ASSISTANTS

SALARY RANGE:
$16,000 — $23,500

Salary Ranges are averages and are provided by Region C NCWorks Career Center
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8. EVALUATION

The Region C partnership is committed to ensuring that the Career Pathway for nursing and allied health remains relevant and is a valuable tool for training, career and job seekers to acquire the information regarding the opportunities and skills necessary to be successful in the medical and long-term care workplace. Additionally, the pathway must facilitate industry’s ability to recruit and hire qualified workers for the ever-evolving workplace that contribute to the region’s economic strength and long-term prosperity.

The evaluation plan will measure progress and identify components and activities that need to be addressed through a continuous improvement process through the initial collection of baseline data and annual evaluation and measurement of improvement or increasing participation in training and career development activities.

Evaluation Work Group Goals

Develop an evaluation and performance measurement system for the nursing and allied health career pathway. The plan includes:

- Definition of success including goals and timelines
- Baseline data
- Regular assessments
- Mechanism for updating the pathway and associated strategies

Definition of Success

- Meeting the need of the nursing and allied Health industry in Region C by providing/increasing the pipeline of highly a qualified skilled workforce
- Meeting the needs of students, jobseekers and workers by providing relevant training and employment as they progress along the pathway’s on & off-ramps
- Goal/Timeline—implement evaluation process is in place and will collect additional data for an on-going annual review. Three-year goals are established for each data element collected with the baseline data.

Baseline Data

The following data elements in addition to information obtained through the industry survey will be utilized to develop the basis of a plan for long-term evaluation:
### Secondary Education
#### 2015/2016 Academic Year
##### Baseline Data and 3-year goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students participating in the health related occupational work-based learning opportunities</th>
<th>Baseline2015/16</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>139</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of employers providing health occupational work-based learning opportunities</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>25</th>
<th>30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students enrolled in health-related programs</th>
<th>1008</th>
<th>1050</th>
<th>1100</th>
<th>1200</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students completing health-related occupational training programs</th>
<th>105</th>
<th>120</th>
<th>135</th>
<th>150</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students who earned certificates, diplomas, and/or associate degrees relating to health occupations</th>
<th>80</th>
<th>100</th>
<th>120</th>
<th>130</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students earning state or nationally awarded board certifications (nursing/CNA/Radiography, etc.)</th>
<th>80</th>
<th>100</th>
<th>120</th>
<th>130</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Includes data from:
Cleveland County Schools
Rutherford County Schools
McDowell County Schools
Polk County Schools
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post Secondary Ed.</th>
<th>2015/2016 Academic Year</th>
<th>Baseline data and 3-year goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baseline 2015/16</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students participating in the health related occupational work-based learning opportunities</td>
<td>3834</td>
<td>3960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of employers providing health occupational work-based learning opportunities</td>
<td>2282</td>
<td>2300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students enrolled in health-related programs</td>
<td>5252</td>
<td>5400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students completing health-related occupational training programs</td>
<td>2949</td>
<td>3100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students who earned certificates, diplomas, and/or associate degrees relating to health occupations</td>
<td>1036</td>
<td>1060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students earning state or nationally awarded board certifications (nursing/CNA/Radiography, etc.)</td>
<td>1363</td>
<td>1420</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Includes data from:

- Cleveland Community College
- McDowell Technical Community College
- Isothermal Community College
- Gardner Webb University
- Western Carolina University
WIOA  
Region C Workforce Development Board  
Program Year 2015/2016  
Baseline Data and 3-year goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>WIOA</strong></th>
<th><strong>Dependent on funding</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region C Workforce Development Board</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Year 2015/2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline Data and 3-year goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baseline 2015/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants enrolled in health occupational training at a community college or other institution of higher learning funded by WIOA</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants earned health occupation related credentials</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of pathway completers entered employment</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants involved in health occupational work-based learning activities.</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Includes data from:
Region C Workforce Development Board programs

Additional Goals for Evaluation/Improvement

As determined through the industry survey and interaction with the Health Industry process during the development of this pathway it has been revealed that the hospitals are experiencing high demand for registered nurses (BSN), and medical lab technicians (MLT) with extreme difficulty in filling open positions. Long-term care facilities experience difficulty in filling certified nursing assistant (CNA) positions. Additionally, industry has indicated that there has been an increased lack of professionalism exhibited by applicants during the application and interview process.

Educational programs for registered nursing (both AS and BSN) are near capacity within the region. Strategies for expanding opportunities will be evaluated as part of the on-going evaluation of the Certified Career Pathway. Career development activities will be enhanced to facilitate interest in all allied health occupations for potential new students.

Unlike many other occupations, work-based learning is a requirement for most, if not all, certifications in the nursing and allied health field. Capacity for practical experience during training programs is currently at or near capacity within the region and expanding those opportunities will be a challenge. Practicum sites are at a premium with many hospitals, care facilities, and practices now charging fees for their participation.
**Mechanism for updating the pathway and associated strategies**

Data collection will be conducted annually. Analysis of the data will be the responsibility of the career pathway evaluation work group and shared with the larger advisory group including industry representatives, educators, and regional NCWorks/WDB staff. Additional industries will be included in order to craft modifications necessary to achieve the success and goals of the pathway. Goals may be modified, up or down, as the process progresses through the annual evaluation periods. New sets of goals will be established at the end each three-year period. The industry survey will be replicated annually in order to evaluate the issues regarding the availability of qualified and professional applicants sited as additional goals for evaluation/Improvement section.

Additionally, as the system for tracking employment for community college programs rates is developed, a random sampling of industries that have been identified as hiring graduates will be selected to evaluate the quality of the training received through the pathway. A survey will be conducted to collect specific details of the quality and skills of graduates received though the programs that are included in the project. Information regarding new registered apprenticeship and/or pre-apprenticeship programs will also be collected and recorded. Specific industries interest in developing apprenticeships will be evaluated and the appropriate connections made to facilitated the process.