



**BUSINESS SERVICES
STRATEGIC PLAN for NCWorks**

PROGRAM YEAR 2022

WESTERN PIEDMONT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

The Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board (WPWDB), in partnership with state and local governments, is a local policy board responsible for the planning, oversight and coordination of workforce development initiatives in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba counties. Of the 14 metropolitan statistical areas (MSA), the Hickory MSA is currently the seventh largest Metro area in North Carolina. According to the Census of 2020, Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton MSA's population is 365,276.

Purpose Statement: The mission of the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board is to be at the center of community and regional leadership, to identify workforce challenges, to be the convener of business conversation, to be the champion for workforce development, to collaborate with key stakeholders (economic development, education, and community partners), to bring resources to bear on resolving business challenges, and to act as the accountability agent to ensure the work is completed.

Western Piedmont's Business Services Team will provide businesses with a broad range of "Business Essentials" consulting services. These services include Business Information and Support Services, Workforce Recruitment Assistance, and Work-based Learning, where funding is available. We are committed to providing excellent customer service that meets the needs of the business through a "team approach," and in collaboration with workforce and education partners.

The Business Services Team is dedicated to enhancing economic prosperity by strengthening and supporting area businesses' growth strategies. Prospective businesses can rely on our Business Services Team to:

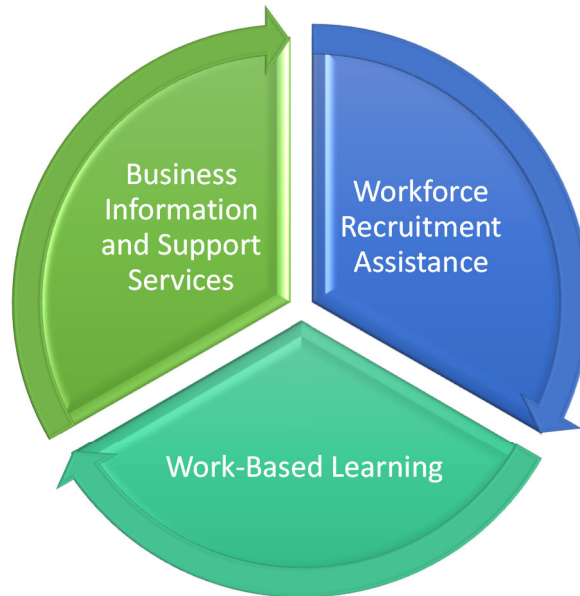
- Deliver relevant labor market information
- Assist with workforce recruitments
- Provide Work-Based learning opportunities to current and future workforce

BUSINESS FIRST PHILOSOPHY

In order to put businesses on a 'Pathway to Success', The WPWDB and its workforce development partners follow The Three Services Strategy that is driven by the "Business First Philosophy."

THE THREE SERVICES STRATEGY

WPWDB has identified the following business services areas as the framework to assist with the development of a Business Services Strategic Plan to meet the needs of businesses in the WPWDB area.



STRATEGY 1 - BUSINESS INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES

- Local Workforce Characteristics
 - Career Pathways & Career Ladders
 - Industry and Occupation Trends
 - Wage Analysis
- **Local Workforce Characteristics**
 - Provide information on the characteristics of the local workforce to businesses such as the number of available candidates in the area who fit your hiring requirements. Assist businesses in understanding vital business information about the workforce demographics in the local workforce area.
 - **Career Pathways & Career Ladders**
 - Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board, in collaboration with workforce partners, have developed career pathways to assist individuals with navigating through various industries. As of today, WPWDB has certified Career Pathways in Healthcare, Advanced Manufacturing, and Energy Line Worker. These pathways provide insights on industry occupations, pay scales, and career progression.
 - **Industry & Occupation Trend Projections**
 - Keep businesses informed of economic and workforce trends. How big is the local labor force? What are critical industry indicators or changes?
 - **Wage Analysis**
 - Provide local industry wage analysis to businesses. What are the salary ranges for entry level, median, and experienced candidates for these occupations?

STRATEGY 2 - WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT ASSISTANCE

- Targeted Hiring Events
 - Available Space for Business Uses
 - Job Orders Services
 - Diverse Talent Pool
- **Targeted Hiring Events**
 - Assist businesses to meet hiring needs by helping coordinate and hosting targeted hiring events. Hiring events can be held at the business' site, at an off-site location such as our NCWorks Career Centers, or virtually to deliver the best result. Assist businesses to promote and market the hiring event and jobs to potential job seekers.
 - **Available Space for Employer Uses**
 - The WPWDB area has four NCWorks Career Center locations to provide available space for business use at no cost.
 - **Job Orders Services**
 - Provide general information regarding NCWorks as a workforce system to connect talent to jobs using job posting and job skill matching technology. Assist businesses in writing effective job postings to ensure quality referrals. Provide on-going job order support and updates.
 - **Diverse Talent Pool**
 - Our candidate pool includes career-seekers of all skill levels and education. NCWorks registered businesses gain access to potential job applicants powered by a comprehensive search engine and the virtual recruiter tool.

STRATEGY 3 - WORK-BASED LEARNING

- Upskill Western Piedmont Training Grant
 - Skill Training Scholarships
 - Paid Internships for Youth
- **Upskill Western Piedmont Training Grant**
 - Upskill Western Piedmont offers competitive training grants to businesses in addressing employee's skill gaps, improving employee retention, helping stabilize the business, and increasing the competitiveness of the employee or business. Businesses can apply for a training grant up to \$10,000 with a \$60,000 lifetime max to train current employees on critical skills.
 - **Training Scholarships**
 - Training Scholarships are available for individuals who are unemployed or underemployed through no fault of their own, to revamp their skills in attempts to gain stable employment at a better wage. Assist eligible clients by providing funding for tuition, books,



fees, and tools as needed to complete a training course(s) at one of our local community colleges or training providers.

- **Paid Internships for Youth**

- WPWDB offers eligible NEXTGEN youth/young adults ages 16-24, with a paid internship for 29 hours per week and a total of 400 hours. Provide opportunities for interns to gain valuable and applicable work experiences while providing the business with an opportunity to highlight their industry and engage a young person in their career path.



BUSINESS SERVICES TEAM

The Western Piedmont Workforce Development Boards and NCWorks Career Centers recognize businesses as prime customers and partners. The primary contact for planning and carrying out engagement activities with businesses is the Business Services Team. Business Services is a strategic extension of the Local Workforce Board to build strategic collaborative partnerships with critical stakeholders, including economic development and education entities, for the purpose of designing and implementing appropriate business solutions. Business Services Team is highly focused on developing sector strategies to meet a business's talent development needs.

- Business Services Team's main business contact is the business suite executive, i.e., Owner, General Manager, President, and CEO.
- Additional business contacts may include Human Resource Director, Manager, or business representatives authorized to conduct businesses on behalf of the company.
- Business Services Team listens to business' needs and develop responsive customized solutions, provide meaningful workforce information so the business can meet its talent need, and act as an agent of change to ensure service delivery meets business demands.

Principle Duties and Responsibilities

The Business Services Team is positioned to execute strategies that will add value to the business in finding and retaining talent and strengthening the business' competitiveness. Primarily, the Business Services Team will focus on these essential duties:

- Linking businesses with the NCWorks job management system through critical information exchange
- Engaging businesses in talent development activities
- Developing and implementing diverse solutions that meet a business's workforce needs

- Participating in strategic economic development activities
- Analyzing and delivering current labor market information
- Recognizing and acting on areas of improvement for business satisfaction with our local area NCWorks Career Center services
- Building long-term valuable relationships with businesses
- Collaborating with education partners to close identified skills gaps
- Coordinating business engagement with workforce partners

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Outreach

Outreach includes, but is not limited to face-to-face contacts, handouts, or electronic media. Collaborate with economic development agencies, Chambers of Commerce, SBTDC, Community Colleges, public school districts, and other community agencies to promote and market solutions that meet the business' needs. Utilize a strategic marketing mix, via multiple platforms such as but not limited to email blasts, surveys, direct mailings, postcards, newspaper advertisements, billboards, flyers and posters, press releases, and social media, public service announcements, presentation at local organizations, and other suitable venues to identify business needs and offer business services.

Our promotional materials are business-focused and business-driven with clear, concise, and professional in appearance, ensuring that promotional materials are consistent and available electronically through the WPWDB's website.

Attachment A – Conversation Guide for Business Visits



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CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

The purpose of existing industry visits is to talk with businesses to identify areas of need and then provide/connect the business with the appropriate services or resources if applicable. The questions offered in this guide are intended to provide a reference point for important topics in conversations with the business. The questions should not be a questionnaire in which a response is needed for every question. Business Services Team should prioritize the questions asked based on the direction of the conversation with the business.

Business Service Team should research the business including company name, address, activities and case notes, website, corporate headquarter, industry sector, year established, employees, annual revenue, products or services, and brief company description. It is important to identify the appropriate contact for the conversation (it may be multiple people). It is critical to have a decision-maker in the room. Other items to consider PRIOR to making the visit;

- Determine which partner may have an existing relationship (or who has the best relationship) with this employer – invite them to join – or at the least provide valuable insight.
- Balance the number of people you invite to join - do not overwhelm the business.
- Know when to speak - this is an opportunity for you to listen and share with the employer if applicable.

COMPANY OVERVIEW/BACKGROUND

- Tell me about your company and the products you manufacture/offer.
- What is the history of your company?
- What is the organizational structure of your company?
- Do you have locations/facilities/plants in other cities/states/countries?
- What are your company's goals and values?

BUSINESS INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES

- **Industry and Trends**
 - What are the key issues facing your industry?
 - Are the problems short term (i.e., recession-related) or systemic?
 - What are the current industry standards for your business sector?
 - What impact has the advancement of technology had on your company?
 - Are you interested in obtaining Labor Market Information?

- **Growth Plans**
 - Where do you see your industry growing in North Carolina and in general?
 - What are your immediate needs to improve your business?
- **Opportunities for Collaboration**
 - Do you have any retention challenges?
 - Do you have productivity challenges?
 - Do you have any skill development needs?
 - Are there any other issues/challenges that we may be able to assist you with?

WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT ASSISTANCE

- **Workforce Status**
 - How many employees do you have?
 - Do you have a contingent (Temporary) workforce?
 - What are your workforce demographics?
 - What are your current workforce needs? Future needs?
 - How do you feel your wages as compare to your competitors?
 - Do you require any certifications or special skills in order to apply for a job?
 - Do you have employee retention and/or attrition issues?
 - Do you have any issues in finding or hiring new employees?
 - What are your best sources for talent?
 - Are you familiar with employer services available through NCWorks?

WORK-BASED LEARNING

- **Skills Development**
 - What are the most important skills to your operations?
 - Do you have trouble finding skilled workforce?
 - How do you currently train your employees?
 - Are you interested in training/retraining your employees?

Once the visit is completed, summarize the notes from your business engagement. Create activities and case notes in ncworks.gov. Your summary should provide a brief overview/update on the company, its general business outlook, specific challenges and business needs as well as services/resources offered. Follow-up discussions/meetings with company should be discussed.