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Issued: November 19, 2022 (based on data collected between May-July 2022)

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Acknowledgements:
Lulu Huang PhD Candidate, Marie Balance MA, Shamira N. Wright MA, and the LEAC Evaluation and Implementation Support (EIS) Working Group were instrumental in survey development, data interpretation, and editing content of the report.

FUNDERS:

John M Belk Endowment
ELEVATE THROUGH EDUCATION

DOGWOOD HEALTH TRUST

UNCRural
Executive Summary

MyFutureNC and ncIMPACT formed a partnership in 2021 to address educational challenges across North Carolina by providing capacity-building support to 15 Local Educational Attainment Collaboratives (LEACs) whose remit is to increase local postsecondary degrees, credentials, and certifications among 2 million residents by 2030. This report examines the LEACs’ intended impact areas, teaming infrastructures, productivity, and community reach as of July 2022, leading up to their launch in December 2022 to independently achieve their goals.

The most popular focus areas of collaboration across the LEACs address FAFSA completion rates and the successful transition of graduating students to postsecondary settings. Although teams began meeting in July 2021, it wasn’t until the summer of 2022 that most teams established a 3-tiered infrastructure of communication feedback loops between their leadership, working groups, and community members. Team composition includes representation from 8 groups on average from education, workforce boards, employers, government agencies, community and faith-based organizations, policy makers, foundations, and students/families. Over the past year and months, LEACs have produced media campaigns, postsecondary guidance materials, community events, and internships to raise awareness of the Initiative and to improve local educational attainment. In this work, teams have been intentional to target populations that have been historically marginalized from educational opportunities based on race/ethnicity, native origin, family or community socioeconomics, non-traditional student status, or school disconnectedness.

To assist LEACs in their collaborative efforts, teams have been trained in Strategic Doing and Collective Impact. As their expectations have shifted to address systems transformation- as opposed to quick wins, there have been observable gains over time in Collective Impact knowledge based on post-Forum feedback. These skills coupled with action-planning, networking of networks, increasing team diversity, tracking progress, and establishing sustainability will be instrumental to ensure successful launch in the months ahead.
By The Numbers

100%
of NC educational pipeline stages from Pre-Kindergarten to 4-year college degrees are targeted for transformative IMPACTS by 2030.

552
stakeholders statewide are working collaboratively on local TEAMS.

50
LEAC PRODUCTS will have been shared with local communities as events or media by December 2022.

4,075
students, parents, educators, and stakeholders have been REACHED by LEACs to-date since July 2021.

Figure 1: Accomplished Impacts, Teams, Products, and Reach
All 15 LEACs are focused on having a targeted impact to address issues related to postsecondary certification or education, with more than a quarter of LEACs poised to address the entire educational pipeline from preschool to college.

LEACs include Central Carolina Connections (CCC), Surry-Yadkin Impact (SYI), Guildford Jobs 2030 (GJ), Our Future in UNiSON (OFiU), McDowell Pipeline (MP), Durham’s Opportunity Collaborative (DOC), Work in Burke (WiB), Land of Sky (LoS), Our Future Cape Fear (OFCF), AchieveHIGHTS (AH), Sampson Connect (SC), Empower NENC (ENENC), STEP #workHERE (SWH), Queen City Collaborative (QCC), and Our Future ENC (ENC).
KEY FOCUS AREA COLLABORATIONS

LEACs have worked with local stakeholders to identify, initiate, progress, or complete collaborations across 15 key focus areas for improving educational attainment. These collaborative efforts help to address issues with pre-Kindergarten Child Care and Development, Low Performing Schools, FAFSA Completion, College and Career Readiness in Reading, College and Career Readiness in Math, College and Career Promise Programs, Advanced Placement Participation, School Counselors, Opportunity Youth, Chronic Absenteeism, High School Graduation, Transition to Postsecondary Settings, Postsecondary First-Year Persistence, Postsecondary Completion, and Adult Learners.

All teams progressed collaborations on FAFSA Completion and Transition to Postsecondary Settings. Six LEACs had active collaborations on 14-15 of the key focus areas while seven teams addressed 10-12 efforts. The remaining two LEACs had collaborations on 4 key focus areas.

Figure 4: Focus Area Collaborations
Since the LEAC initiative began in July 2021, all teams have had recurring meetings for either their leadership, working groups, or community members. In 2022, there was a concerted effort for LEACs to begin engaging all three tiers of their infrastructure with continuous communication feedback loops. As a result, meetings across the LEACs increased dramatically in 2022 from the first to the second quarter along with the scheduling of future meetings in the third quarter happening at least 2-3 months ahead of the meeting dates. LEACs were meeting as frequently with their leadership as with their working groups for strategy planning and tactical execution, respectively, while also reporting out to community members.

**LEACs 2022 Meeting Audience and Cadence**

*Figure 5: LEACs 2022 Team Meetings*
TEAM SIZES

Membership sizes vary for the 3-tiered LEAC teams. **Leadership groups are typically under 25 members**; the majority (60%) of which are under 10 members. Durham’s Opportunity Collaborative and McDowell Pipeline have the fewest people on their leadership team with 1-5 reported members.

Eighty percent of the LEACs’ **working groups have 15 or less members**. Here again, McDowell Pipeline has a small team with 1-5 reported members along with Our Future ENC, Sampson Connect, AchieveHIGHTS, Work in Burke, and Our Future in UNiSON.

Slightly more than half of the LEACs’ **community teams have 16 or more members**. Among these, Our Future Cape Fear, Our Future in UNiSON, and Guilford Jobs 2030 reported that they have more than 26 members. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Our Future ENC and Queen City Collaborative had yet to formally establish community teams although Our Future ENC had hosted a business roundtable and a community organization engagement event in the second quarter of 2002 to share updates with the broader local community.

*Figure 6: LEACs 3-Tiered Teaming Sizes*
TEAM COMPOSITION

There are **121 groups represented** on the 15 LEACs. A third of the LEACs (McDowell Pipeline, Empower NENC, Our Future Cape Fear, Our Future in UNiSON, and Surry-Yadkin) had a very diverse composition with 10-12 groups. The other 10 LEACs had participation from 5-8 groups on Our Future ENC, Queen City Collaborative, STEP #workHERE, Sampson Connect, AchieveHIGHTS, Land of Sky, Work in Burke, Durham’s Opportunity Collaborative, Guildford Jobs 2030, and Central Carolina Connections. Only five teams had team representation from students (Empower NENC, Our Future Cape Fear), parents (Sampson Connect), or both (AchieveHIGHTS, McDowell Pipeline).

![Team Composition](image)

*Figure 7: Team Composition*
PRODUCTIVITY

COMPLETED PRODUCTS (MEDIA, EVENTS, AND PROGRAMS)

Since July 2021, LEACs have produced numerous products and programs for their local communities to raise awareness of the Initiative and to increase postsecondary certifications and degrees. These efforts include, but are not limited to:

- LEAC Websites County Chamber of Commerce Presentations
- County Board of Education Presentations
- Influencer Videos
- TikTok Challenges
- Community Education Fairs
- Student Navigation Toolkits
- Career Exploration and Observations

- Schoolwide Assemblies with Employers
- School Field Trips (High School) to industry sites
- County-wide Career & Technical Education Nights
- Faith-based Dual Enrollment Promotion
- Connection to Workforce Internships

- Credentialing Pathways Maps (with courses and certifications listed from middle school, high school, community college, and 4-yr college that align with industry-specific jobs)
- Coordinated Community FAFSA series with Community Based Organizations

ADDITIONAL PRODUCTS PLANNED BY END OF 2022

3 OR LESS PRODUCTS

- McDowell Pipeline
- GuilfordJobs 2030
- Surry-Yadkin Impact
- OurFutureENC
- Empower NENC
- AchieveHIGHTS
- Durham’s Opportunity

4 OR MORE PRODUCTS

- Queen City Collaborative
- Sampson Connect
- Our Future Cape Fear
- Land of Sky
- Our Future in UNiSON
- Central Carolina Connect
- STEP #workHERE
- Work in Burke

Figure 8: 2022 Planned LEAC Products
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUCCESS STORIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MORE VOICES AT THE TABLE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COLLABORATIVE GRANT WRITING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXPANDED AUDIENCE REACH</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NEW FUNDING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCHOOL &amp; CAREER TRAINING</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
EQUITABLE REACH APPROACHES

LEACs have employed two distinct strategies to ensure equitable reach for their programming and products. More than half of the teams are taking an individual-level approach by targeting populations with specific cultural heritages of Black, Hispanic, and/or Native American. Central Carolina Connections, Surry-Yadkin Impact, Our Future in UNiSON, Work in Burke, Land of Sky, AchieveHIGHTS, McDowell Pipeline, and Durham’s Opportunity Collaborative are being intentional in their efforts to serve these historically marginalized populations.

The other 7 LEACs are taking a community-level approach by targeting disadvantaged zip codes, low-performing or Title 1 schools, or minority-serving community-based organizations. These LEACs include Our FutureENC, Queen City Collaborative, Step #workHERE, Empower NENC, Sampson Connect, Our Future Cape Fear, and Guilford Jobs 2030.
FORUM 4 FEEDBACK

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

The response rate for Forum 4 survey was 77% with a high satisfaction score of 97% for the overall experience. Although there were continued gains by the end of Forum 4 among LEACs in learning and practicing Collective Impact (CI), the combined score for perceived SD practice competencies and application of Strategic Doing (SD) waned. A potential explanation is that LEACs began to shift to shift their attention away from SD iterative quick wins to CI’s longer-term goals requiring more intensive action-planning and infrastructure building. This rationale is supported by the fact that most of Forum 4 sessions were devoted to CI topics with two sessions on action planning, one session on futurist thinking, a session on shared measures, and a session on sustainability. Forum participants continue to perceive that their CI knowledge and practice competencies are growing, as measured by trends across Forums. The knowledge gains coincide with the developmental growth of the teams as LEACS transition from short-term “forming” and action planning to longer-term considerations of impactful and transformative programming/initiatives that require CI structured framework and backbone supports. See Appendix for Post-Forum 4 Feedback Report.

Figure 10: Forum 4 Knowledge Gain and Satisfaction
LESSONS LEARNED

ACTION PLANNING

After a review of the teams’ action plans in April, the LEAC Steering Committee realized that there was a knowledge-gap in how to document, utilize, and communicate local progress. In response, the adult learning content and presentations for Forum 4 were designed to increase LEACs’ skills related to action planning. In addition, Regional Impact Managers (RIMs) and Evaluation-Implementation Science (EIS) coaches provided LEACs with direct technical assistance in one-to-one meetings and group calls.

1. **Forum 4 activities on action planning**: Exemplar action plan provided to LEACs; Project Managers meeting scheduled to work on action plans; Peer session provided for paired review and feedback of plans

2. **Post-Forum action planning activities**: Revised action plans to be submitted in Fall 2022 for Steering Committee Feedback

LEVERAGING LOCAL INTEGRATION

Networking of Networks

Networking can be more important than team size. McDowell Pipeline is a small team but highly productive because of their fully-aligned Career and Technical Education (CTE) system and Workforce Development Board. AchieveHIGHTS is also small, however, access to integrated data systems allows the team to effectively develop targeted programming on the student/family level. Likewise, Our Future in UNiSON is a small team, but they have benefited greatly from identifying a few key stakeholders across the two counties who are influential decision-makers in moving large-scale coordinated efforts forward. Finally, STEP #workHERE is a mid-size team with an oversized impact by leveraging relationships between education and workforce team members to design various school events that can reach hundreds of students at a time, totaling over 2,500 students to-date across the two counties.
On the other hand, larger teams such as Queen City Collaborative, Durham’s Opportunity Collaborative, and Guilford Jobs 2030, which are situated in resource-rich environments that are accustomed to large collaborative initiatives, may experience challenges in productivity because of the over-saturation of competing efforts in the area. Moreover, despite these teams having high data awareness of the local educational needs, cross-data sharing may be limited due to local politics that delineate insiders (old establishment) and outsiders (newcomers). These tensions have the potential to undermine LEACs’ intentional strategies to ensure equity in programming reach.

Representativeness of ‘Voice’ on LEACs

Few teams have strategies in place to ensure the recruitment, participation, and established sense of belonging for representatives from the teams’ targeted (equity) populations. Target populations include students, parents, opportunity youth, CTE participants, non-working adults in transition, and disconnected learners and/or others that may lack access to social determinants and supports associated with educational or postsecondary credentialing systems. Teams should consider inclusive strategies such as paid attendance, accommodating meeting schedules, dual-language or translation services, cultivating inviting meeting cultures, and finding resources for supplemental supports such as child care, meals during meetings, and transportation to and from meetings and planned events.

Codependence, Interdependence, and Independence for Sustainability

As teams develop sustainability plans beyond the current funding cycle, many have begun cultivating relationships with other local organizations with varying levels of codependence, interdependence, and independence. Codependence is a good option for teams that are well-established or are already integrated into the local education or workforce development systems. Interdependence is an attractive option for teams that are looking to merge or to be acquisitioned in the near term. Independence is a viable option, and starting point, for all teams with an understanding that a clear plan for local systems integration is needed for longer term success. See the table below for candidate LEACs, strengths, and cautions aligned to each of the sustainability options.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>CODEPENDENCE CANDIDATES:</strong></th>
<th><strong>PROS</strong></th>
<th><strong>CONS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McDowell Pipeline, Work in Burke, Land of Sky, Empower NENC, Central Carolina Connections, Our Future ENC, AchieveHIGHTS, Surry-Yadkin Impact*</td>
<td>Backbone support and broader community buy-in exists.</td>
<td>LEAC’s work and branding could become indistinctive from the aims of the broader organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Revisit placement once interim Project Manager is fully oriented</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>INTERDEPENDENCE CANDIDATES:</strong></th>
<th><strong>PROS</strong></th>
<th><strong>CONS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Queen City Collaborative, Guildford Jobs 2030</td>
<td>Leveraging the high profile, state-level visibility of the LEAC initiative could be attractive to local organization to elevate their own brand’s value while allowing LEAC work and team to remain intact.</td>
<td>For multi-county or distinctively different communities, equity in regional identity could be lost.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>INDEPENDENCE CANDIDATES:</strong></th>
<th><strong>PROS</strong></th>
<th><strong>CONS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our Future Cape Fear, Durham’s Opportunity Collaborative, STEP #workHERE, Sampson Connect, Our Future in UNiSON</td>
<td>Team has complete autonomy to seek independent grant funding with a clarity of mission specific to LEAC goals with their existing thought-leaders and working groups.</td>
<td>There is limited upfront funding for team staffing and an urgent need to quickly build competency in systems transformation and systems integration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Sustainability Options and Candidates*
APPENDIX

A. POST-FORUM 4 FEEDBACK REPORT
APPENDIX A: POST-FORUM 4 FEEDBACK REPORT
Post-Forum 4 Reporting

UNC School of Government

myFUTURENC
Overall Strategic Doing and Overall Collective Impact represents percent of participants who perceive SD & CI to be useful in their collaboratives’ work.

Satisfaction represents average scores of satisfaction with 1) content, 2) guest speakers, 3) organization, and 4) in-person/virtual experience.
### Participation & Post-Forum Survey Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendees</th>
<th>Avg. Respondent Attendees per Session</th>
<th>Survey Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Day 1: 73% of respondents, Day 2: 74% of respondents</td>
<td>77% 39 avg. responses per Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Seeing Myself and One Another in this Work
2. The Future Demands that We Dig Deeper
3. Refining Action Plans with Peer Collaboration

Participant Information

Total Responses: 47

Participant Role

Session Attendance
Overall Forum Satisfaction

**Content for Collaborative Learning**
- Great: 56.5%
- Adequate: 39.1%
- Completely Missed The Mark: 4.3%

**Organization & Time Management**
- Great: 65.2%
- Adequate: 30.4%
- Completely Missed The Mark: 4.3%

**Selection of Guest Speakers & Facilitators**
- Great: 56.5%
- Adequate: 43.5%
- Completely Missed The Mark: 4.3%

**In-person Experience**
- Great: 82.6%
- Adequate: 15.2%
- Completely Missed The Mark: 2.2%
Strategic Doing Learning Objectives

Understanding the Power of Networks
- Great: 69.8%
- Adequate: 25.6%
- Completely Missed The Mark: 4.7%

Understanding the Value of Developing Measurable Strategic Outcomes
- Great: 76.7%
- Adequate: 20.9%
- Completely Missed The Mark: 2.3%

Using Pathfinder Projects to Get Collaborations Started
- No Training on This Yet: 16.3%
- Completely Missed The Mark: 7%
- Adequate: 25.6%

Using Short 30-day Action Plans
- Great: 51.2%
- Adequate: 25.6%
- No Training on This Yet: 11.6%

Participants seem to struggle the most with using Pathfinder Projects.
Confidence in Applying the Strategic Doing 10-step Guide

- Est. Safe Space
- Framing Question
- ID Hidden Assets
- Link/Leverage Opportunity
- ID Big Easy
- Set Strategic Outcomes
- Define Pathfinder Project
- Develop Action Plan
- 30/30
- Create Strategic Map

Total Responses: 37
Has your team applied Strategic Doing in their work? 

- Yes: 58.5%
- Maybe: 41.5%

Has your team's application of Strategic Doing been successful? 

- Yes: 75%
- Maybe: 25%
Do you think the Strategic Doing information and tools will have an impact on achieving your team's overall goals?

Yes: 58.5%

Maybe: 41.5%

Please explain.

- Unsure how effective our little groups will be at addressing such
- Some of this doesn't seem relevant now
- All of the terms are too jargon-laden to provide any practical value
- Now clear how the foundational work was beneficial
- Feels like we are headed towards measurable outcomes
At this point in the project (including additional learning gained by attending the Forum), how well do you understand the components of the Collective Impact Model?
Confidence in Applying the Collective Impact Model

- Understand Problem
- Share Vision for Change
- Agree on Plan of Action
- Team Values & Principles for Comm.
- Est. Decision-Making Rules
- Understand Privilege, Power, Preferences
- Feedback Loops w/ Project Team
- Feedback Loops w/ Stakeholders
- Est. Inclusive Governance
- Develop & Use Data

Total Responses: 35
Collective Impact | Application

Has your team applied Collective Impact in their work?

- Yes: 65.8%
- Maybe: 31.6%
- No: 2.6%

Has your team's application of Collective Impact been successful?

- Yes: 68%
- Maybe: 32%
Do you think the Collective Impact information and tools will have an impact on achieving your team's overall goals?

- Yes: 76.3%
- Maybe: 18.4%
- No: 5.3%

Please explain.

- This training is too much, too late. We have been focusing on these problems for decades and these forums give us hopeless concepts.
- We discussed Collective Impact differently in training than in this Forum.
- Necessary for sustainability
- Understandings the mechanisms of how this work becomes far-reaching is eye-opening
- Helps keep us focused on reasonable goals and expectations
Our collaborative has a diverse representation from our community according to:

- Work Sectors
- Work Status
- Educational Institutions
- Community Organizations
- Policymakers
- Socioeconomic Levels
- Race/Ethnicity
- Sex or Gender
- Age groups
- K-12
- Dual/Non-English Language Speakers
- Other

Collaboratives lack representation with respect to work status and K-12.
Did the session "Refining Action Plans with Peer Collaboration" help you to refine your Action Plan?

- Yes: 52.6%
- Somewhat: 31.6%
- No: 7.9%
- Did not attend: 7.9%

Please explain.

- Could have dedicated more time to this event
- Helpful and illuminating to share insights
Did the session "Using Your Progress Tracker to Capture Shared Measures" help you understand how to measure your progress?

- Yes: 54.1%
- Somewhat: 32.4%
- No: 10.8%
- Did not attend: 2.7%

Please explain.

- Struggled to relate what speaker was discussing to our collaborative's work; a hands-on approach would have been more impactful
- Hard to digest data talk first thing in the morning
Did the session "Ensuring the Sustainability of Your Collaborative for Success" help you better understand how to ensure both short and long-term sustainability?  

**Total Responses: 38**

- **Somewhat** 39.5%
- **Yes** 28.9%
- **No** 26.3%
- **Did not attend** 5.3%

---

Please explain.

- Speaker was not every engaging  
- Seemed to focus more on how to get where we already are than on sustainability

*Participants found this session to be the least helpful*
Did the session "How Can You Attract Place-Based Funders to Invest in Your Collaborative's Work?" help you consider how to secure additional funding sources?

- **Yes** 40.5%
- **Somewhat** 21.6%
- **No** 13.5%
- **Did not attend** 24.3%

**Please explain.**

- We were hoping to dig deeper
- Did not have representation from a funder who would serve my area/population
- Great range of information
How helpful did you find the sessions?

(1 = Completely unhelpful, 5 = Very helpful)

- Seeing Myself and One Another in this Work: 4.0
- The Future Demands that We Dig Deeper: 4.3
- Refining Action Plans with Peer Collaboration: 4.2
- Using Your Progress Tracker to Capture Shared Measures: 4.0
- Ensuring the Sustainability of Your Collaborative: 3.2
- Adult Learner Strategies: 4.8
- Engaging Faith-Based Organizations: 3.5
- Youth Engagement: 4.3
- How Can You Attract Place-Based Funders?: 3.8

Total Responses: 38
Please explain if you did NOT find one of the above sections mostly/very helpful.

- The session on sustainability would have been more useful 6-8 months ago & the speaker was not engaging
- Unsure how to apply this information to motivate those with short-term needs
- The ending felt rushed
- Would have been more helpful for each team to present best practices
- Unsure how to relate this to our collaborative's work
Overall, how helpful was it to meet in person? 8.7

Overall, how helpful was it to engage with other collaboratives? 8.5
Is there anything you would like to share about Forum 4 or about your collaborative work to date?

What People Liked:
- Reception was amazing
- Most sessions were engaging and informational
- Well-organized
- Great to be surrounded by people doing the same kind of work

What People Didn't Like:
- The presenter on Collective Impact was unhelpful, dismissive, and offensive
- Not enough small group time

Suggestions:
- We should be able to register for either or both days instead of simply for the entire event
- More time with work on our plans with feedback/assistance would have been useful
- Would be helpful to hear from state leaders on their vision/hope for MFNC's work