

Durham Opportunity

Durham County

Collaborative Case Study

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What is Durham Opportunity Collaborative?

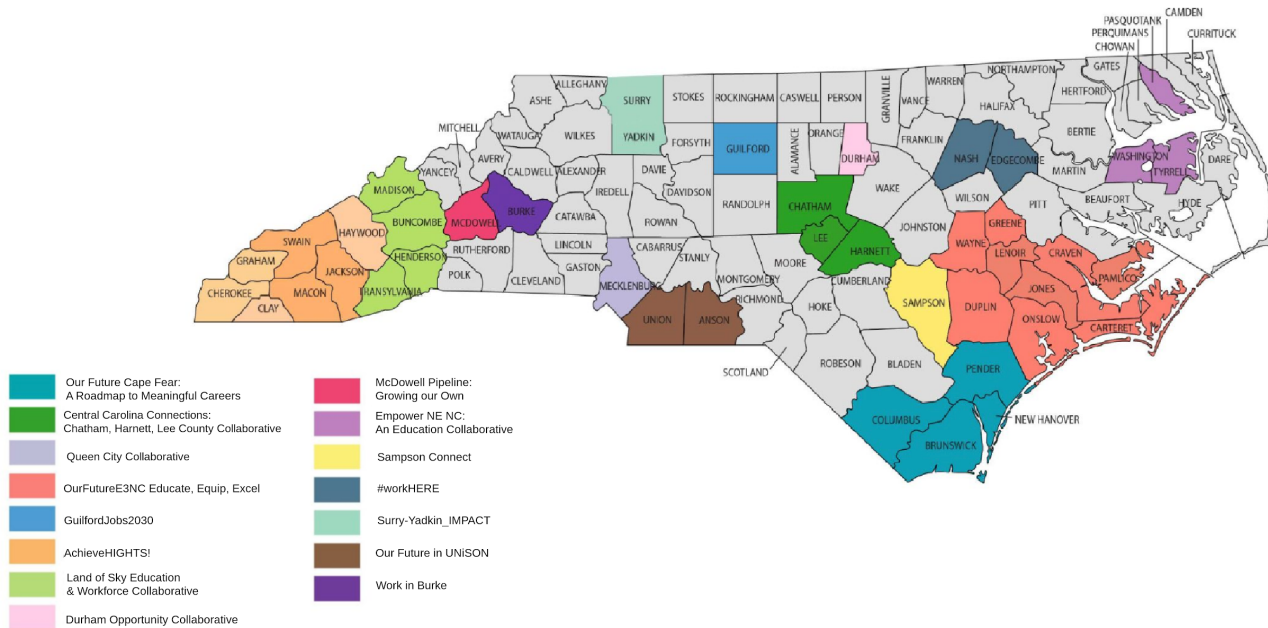
Durham Opportunity is a myFutureNC Local Educational Attainment Collaborative involving education, workforce, and community-based organizations focused on meeting economic development needs in the region with a ready workforce. The collaborative has engaged students through creative educational programs, industry with the promise of a trained workforce, and government organizations by making clear the economic development potential of investing in education and workforce efforts..





Relationships and Connections: Primary Partners

myFutureNC Local Educational Collaboratives



Durham Technical Community College offers educational pathways to students to help them find meaningful careers. Also attracts investment from industry for training programs to create a well-prepared workforce.

Durham Chamber of Commerce works with businesses located in Durham and those moving to Durham so that they find the talent they need to be successful in the region. Coordinates with K-12 schools, Durham Tech, and community-based organizations in order to promote resource-sharing.

Durham Public Schools connects students with Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and the resources offered through Durham Tech and community-based organizations.

Made In Durham mobilizes organizations and resources in Durham to help young people achieve their goals and join the workforce through meaningful career growth opportunities.





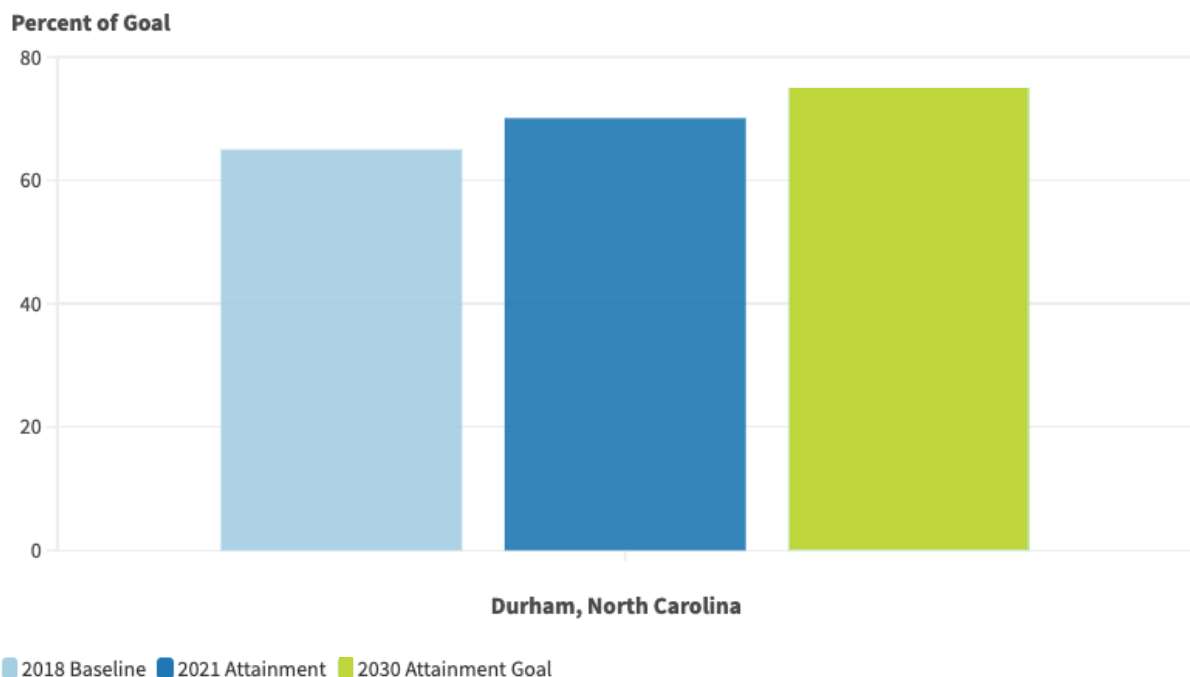
Practices and Outcomes

Durham Opportunity organizes resources in the city and county to develop a ready workforce for the biotechnology sector, which is rapidly expanding.

Specifically, the primary partners of this collaborative are executing a memorandum of understanding to put in place key data-sharing agreements that will help all stakeholders assess an individual student's interests, records, and needs. The benefit to sharing non-confidential student information with all stakeholders in the education attainment pipeline is that "the student doesn't need to tell their story over and over again, and the organizations can easily access their records, understand what that student needs, and come to a solution much faster," says Kara Battle, chief academic officer for Durham Technical Community College.

The MOU is vital to ensuring that students get the help they need in a fast and easy manner from any organization that they trust. "A student oftentimes only trusts one organization," Battle says. "If that organization is able to access the student's school records, credential progress, and career interests, that's an important step toward guaranteeing success for that student." The MOU also provides a more streamlined way for the education and workforce organizations in Durham to stay focused on local students and their pathways to finding meaningful post-secondary careers.

myFutureNC Local Educational Attainment Collaboratives Measuring Progress





Policies and Other Barriers

“Funding is always a hurdle,” Battle says, “and the explosive growth of the biotechnology industry has forced us to move fast with few resources in order to meet the student demands for stable careers and the industry demands for trained labor.” The team needs to build capacity to serve more students, including hiring faculty and success coaches and building stronger relationships among stakeholders to keep up with the rapid change and growth.

A collaborative model helps to build capacity because it allows all players to share data on incoming companies and student completion rates in order to identify gaps and provide programming accordingly. “When we get data from the county on companies moving here,” Battle said, “we’re able to make decisions with our industry partners about which programs to expand and which to close so that we use our resources effectively.”

Durham Opportunity addresses those hurdles by strengthening data-sharing practices and tracking industry trends so that appropriate programs and supports can be built across sectors to accommodate economic growth.



Resource Flows and Sustainability

The collaborative members meet regularly to track program progress, including the needs that are being met and the gaps that still need to be addressed. Looking toward the future, Battle says that “replicating the success and engagement that we’ve had in this collaborative for biotechnology is important as we grow into other sectors.”

The collaborative will continue to be intentional about engaging new partners, including more community-based organizations to expand its reach. For example, Battle says, “The collaborative must push industry partners to designate full-time staff to engage with student pathways and help to design programs.” Durham Opportunity will continue to secure buy-in from the private sector so that its work is closely aligned with the specific needs of an industry.

The Durham County Board of Commissioners has taken note of the successful model and is funding educational opportunities in biopharma manufacturing, a industry sector with high-paying jobs available after completion of certificate training at Durham Tech.



Mental Models and Power Dynamics

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John M Belk
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