

McDowell Pipeline

McDowell County

Collaborative Case Study

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“We’ve spent the past two years making our partnership stronger so that we can make the transition for credential-holders to go into the workforce or into community college seamless.”

What is McDowell Pipeline?

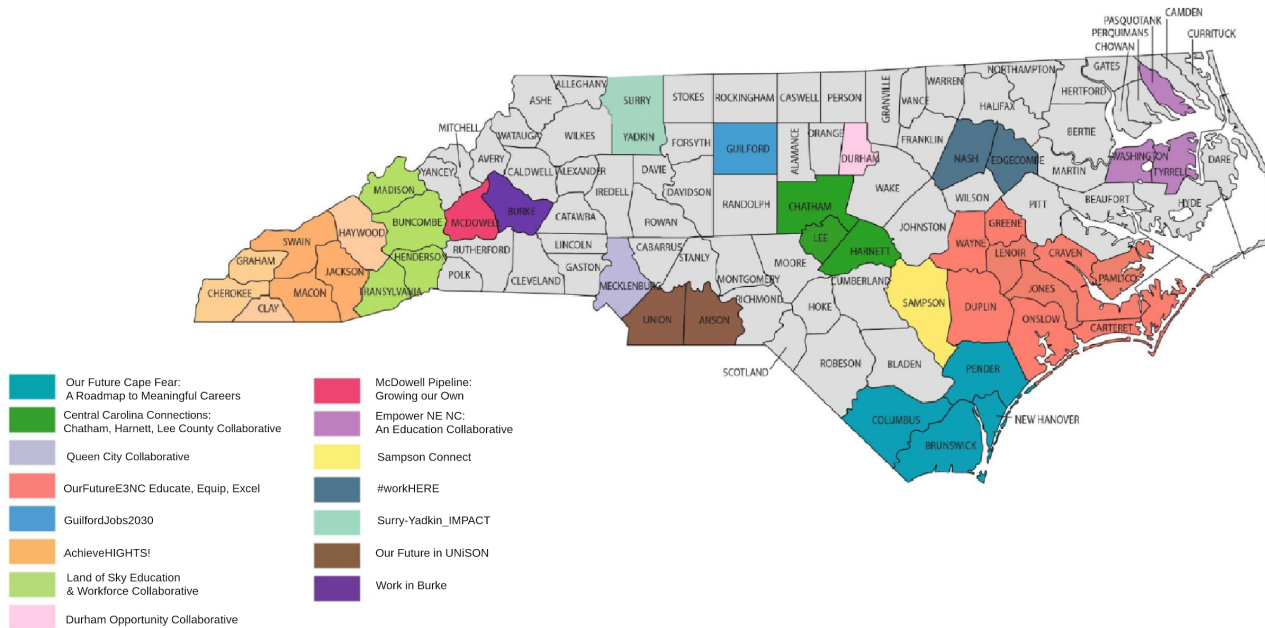
McDowell Pipeline is a myFutureNC Local Educational Attainment Collaborative, with the primary partners being between McDowell County Schools’ Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, McDowell Technical Community College and local employers. The collaboration is designed to increase student enrollment and employer participation in pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, and short-term workforce development programs. The collaborative aims to increase alignment between industry’s workforce needs and the pathways offered by the educational institutions in the region.





Relationships and Connections: Primary Partners

myFutureNC Local Educational Collaboratives



McDowell County Schools CTE

Connects students from 5th through 12th grades with dual-enrollment, pre-credential, and pre-apprenticeship opportunities to increase participation in post-secondary education and workforce opportunities.

McDowell Technical Community College

Sponsors pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, connects incoming students with appropriate career pathways, and works with CTE programs to better align students' educational goals with industry workforce needs.

Employers in the Region

Provide job shadowing, internships for students from high school through college, and mentor programs for young professionals.





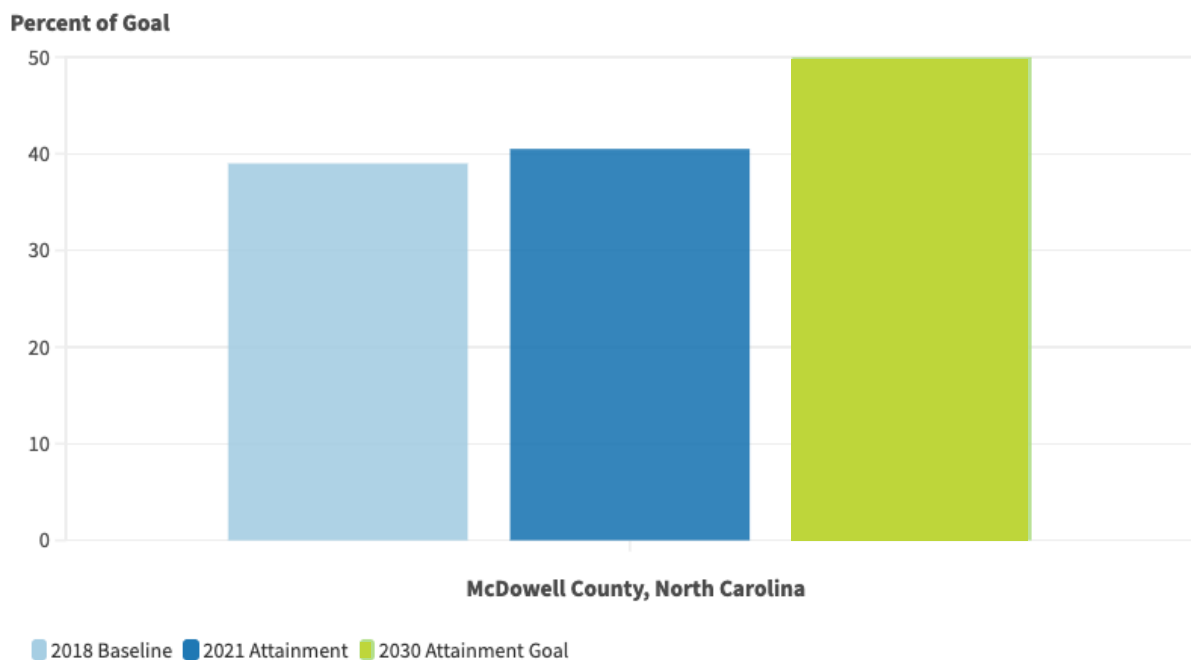
Practices and Outcomes

McDowell Pipeline works with employers to develop and deliver pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, and short-term workforce development programs so that students as young as 16 can gain exposure to careers and employment opportunities.

In its role as a key partner in the collaborative, McDowell County Schools offers programs for students as early as 5th grade. This includes summer camps, career fairs for middle school students, and opportunities for younger students to participate in career-oriented programs and discussions. These efforts allow students to be exposed to potential career pathways early in their educational journey, and the community college can collect data on the fields students are most interested in, which allows the college to adjust its offerings and inform employers about the pipeline of future workers.

As the other key partner in the collaborative, McDowell Technical Community College recently reviewed its vocational programs to ensure continuity of education for high school graduates who already have some credentials. “We looked at our vocational programs and realized that our certificates didn’t line up very well for our students to be able to accomplish their goals,” says Stacy Buff, vice president of the college. “So we rewrote our certifications and our pathways to better line up for completion so that our incoming students can be more successful.” As a result, the collaborative has seen increased completion rates as students more readily can meet their goals. The ultimate goal is to make students employable without long-term, expensive commitments.

myFutureNC Local Educational Attainment Collaboratives Measuring Progress





Policies and Other Barriers

It has been a challenge for McDowell Pipeline to recruit employers who are willing to participate in pre-apprenticeships programs by taking on 16-year-olds for short-term workforce development opportunities. Most employers in the region have corporate offices located in other states, and their commitment to making intentional investments in the region's workforce can be outweighed by the risks that come with employing high school students. Additionally, not every state that is home to these corporate headquarters allows for pre-apprenticeship programs to employ 16-year-olds in a manufacturing environment.

To address these barriers, the collaborative is building capacity on its staff at both the college and the county schools. Specifically, both educational institutions are hiring career development coordinators whose responsibilities include building relationships with employers to ensure that young people can access multiple career pathways while they're still in high school.

Additionally, McDowell Technical Community College is sponsoring pre-apprenticeship programs to reduce the paperwork responsibilities of employers, making it easier for them to participate in career development programs.



Resource Flows and Sustainability

Participation in LEAC (Local Education Attainment Collaborative) programming further solidified an existing relationship between the community college and local school system. "I don't see our two organizations ever not working together again," says Mary Finley, director of the McDowell County Schools CTE program.

"We've spent the past two years making our partnership stronger," says Buff, "so that we can make the transition for credential-holders to go into the workforce or into community college seamless."



Mental Models and Power Dynamics

By putting employers at the center and working to develop programs that meet their specific needs, McDowell Pipeline has changed the way they think about the school to work pipeline. The collaborative has also reduced the barriers to employer engagement. This has allowed the collaborative to garner the attention of a greater number of regional employers.



John M Belk
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2 million by 2030