

Queen City Collaborative

Mecklenburg County

Collaborative Case Study

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What is Queen City Collaborative?

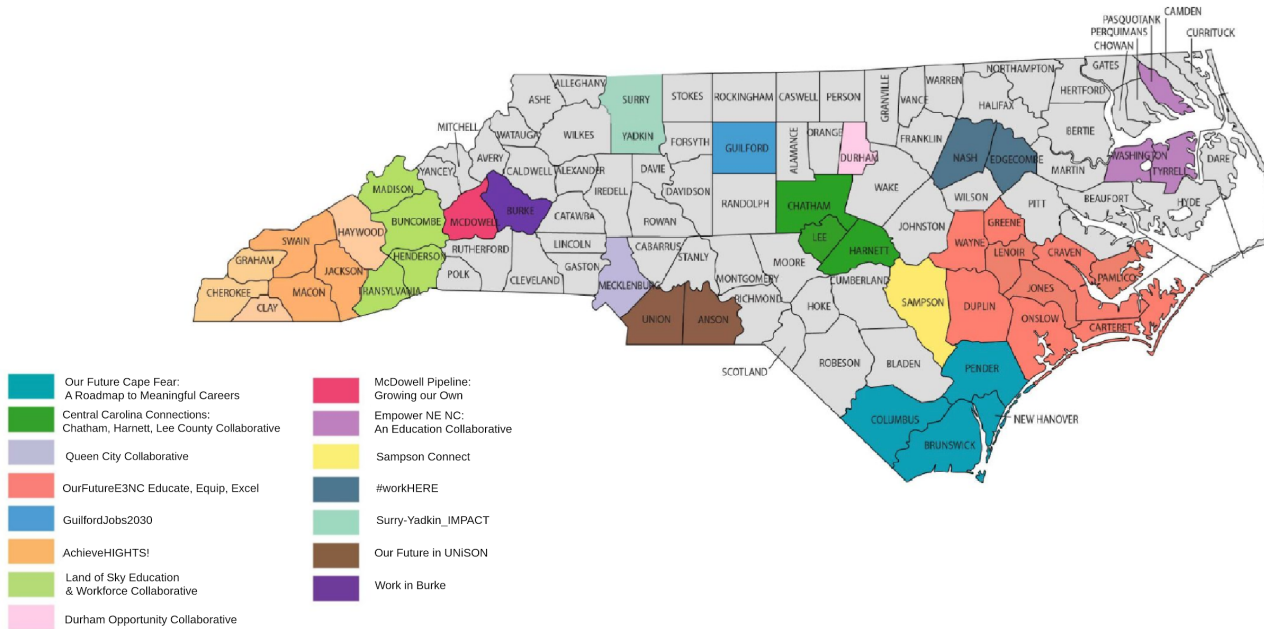
Queen City Collaborative (QCC) is a myFutureNC Local Educational Attainment Collaborative effort seeking to align the efforts of workforce and education-focused organizations in the Charlotte region. The collaborative was created to assess what various organizations are doing related to workforce development so that these efforts are intentional and not duplicative. The collaborative meets regularly to assess current programs, align those programs with overarching goals, and adjust efforts to stay on track with the region’s objectives for workforce development.





Relationships and Connections: Primary Partners

myFutureNC Local Educational Collaboratives



Charlotte Works

Creates opportunities to develop Charlotte’s workforce, align existing pathways with employers’ needs, and coordinate community organizations to ensure that stakeholders are working together effectively to meet the region’s workforce development goals.

Central Piedmont Community College

Fosters an educational environment to recruit and retain students so that they can pursue the curricula and earn the credentials they need to achieve their employment goals.

Johnson C Smith

UNC Charlotte

Leading On Opportunity

Charlotte Regional Business Alliance

Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools

Mecklenburg County Manager’s Office





Practices and Outcomes

The Queen City Collaborative coordinates the work of education and workforce agencies in Charlotte to maximize their effectiveness and reduce duplication of their efforts. This work was spurred by a 2014 study titled “Where is the Land of Opportunity?” in which Charlotte was ranked last in economic mobility among 50 peer cities. This finding prompted stakeholders in education and workforce development to think more critically about what work was being done, which groups were not being reached, and how existing efforts could evolve to have a greater impact on social and economic mobility. The Local Education Attainment Collaborative (LEAC) structure provided an opportunity for the stakeholders to align themselves using evidence-based tools. “In Charlotte, for years, we’ve had the resources and relationships we’ve needed,” says Anna London, interim president and CEO of Charlotte Works. “But, as new data comes out about social mobility in our city, we’re now constantly revisiting our alignment, looking at our initiatives, and asking ourselves if there’s duplication in our work.”

Specifically, the Queen City Collaborative facilitates data-sharing on educational resources and programs so that stakeholders such as Charlotte Works can support their constituencies with the resources they need. Tracie Clark, senior vice president for strategy and organizational excellence for Central Piedmont Community College, says, “We want to be able to match the students with the resources and employment opportunities.”

Queen City Collaborative has embarked on creating a FAFSA plan in Mecklenburg County involving several key steps to help local students access financial aid for college.

Phase One-Partnerships: Queen City has begun to establish partnerships with local schools/schools systems, colleges, and community organizations to streamline the dissemination of updated FAFSA information.

Phase Two-Training and Assistance: Queen City has hosted a Mecklenburg County FAFSA workshop to train counselors, educators, community organizations and volunteers to assist students and parents in completing the FAFSA form accurately and ensure that they are up to date with the latest FAFSA requirements and deadlines. The workshop brought over 100 people together to discuss school action plans to increase FAFSA completion in Mecklenburg County. The training session also served as a networking opportunity among schools, community organizations, and higher education partners to better serve all students in completing FAFSA.

The collaborative partners also work closely with businesses to connect them to the untapped workforce in the city to meet their growing needs. “We’re mapping the ecosystem in Charlotte so that we can work together more intentionally,” says London. We want to reach folks who haven’t been traditionally reached—veterans, immigrants, those who are justice-involved, and those with disabilities.” The goal is to match workers with stable, family-sustaining jobs in the region.

Queen City Collaborative has developed partnerships in the Workforce Development ecosystem in Mecklenburg County. These partners have identified specific workforce needs of the county, considering current industries, job trends, and economic goals. QCC has been an integral partner in stakeholder engagement to gather input and support for the plan. QCC has primarily focused on education and training for job seekers. Determining the educational and training programs needed to fill skill gaps and prepare individuals for in demand jobs.

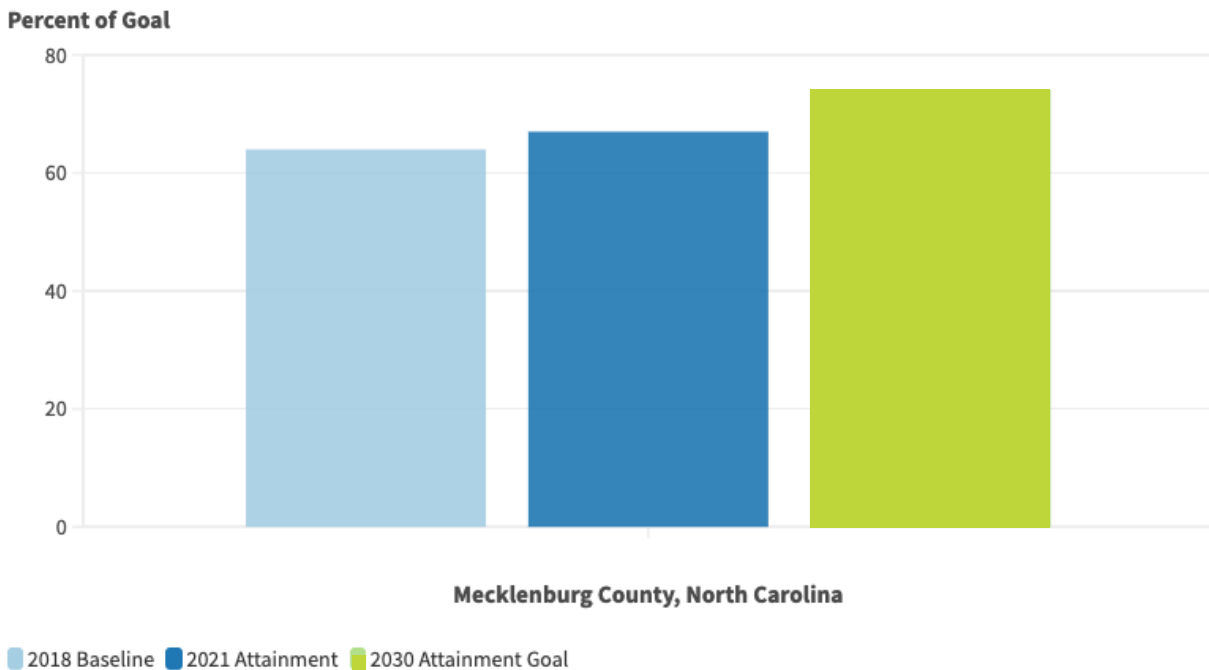


Policies and Other Barriers

QCC leads the goal setting and performance evaluation work for the joint workforce collaborative in Mecklenburg County. The biggest barriers for the collaborative are lack of time and capacity. “We’re all busy,” London says. “The work is important and it’s worth putting our heads together to ensure that we’re all working toward our north star. But, dedicating our resources fully to the collaborative nature of the work can be draining.” Queen City Collaborative is one of many collaborative efforts in the Charlotte area. Adding one more collaborative layer sometimes wears on existing groups and efforts.

“Balancing everything that is coming from the local and state levels can be a barrier too,” London says. However, Queen City Collaborative continues to be steadfast in its efforts by hosting regular meetings and reminding stakeholders of their important goal, which is to increase economic mobility in the region by making family-sustaining incomes more attainable in Charlotte.

myFutureNC Local Educational Attainment Collaboratives Measuring Progress





Resource Flows and Sustainability

Looking toward the future, London says that the Queen City Collaborative members are excited about continuing to align the relationships between industry and talent-serving organizations. “Growing relationships and fostering alignment will result in tangible efforts to increase Charlotte’s workforce pipeline and private sector engagement.”

Central Piedmont Community College is also looking toward future success as it refines its organizational goals and builds even more partnerships with businesses and community-based groups. “The fact that these collaborations are being baked into the college’s strategic plan is very exciting,” says Clark.



Mental Models and Power Dynamics

Perhaps the biggest mental shift for the Queen City Collaborative comes from their commitment to not start any new programs before assessing what is working and why. The group readily admits that, with all its resources, Mecklenberg County has a plethora of educational attainment programs. However, some of them are duplicative of others and some are not as effective as they could be for the populations that need them most.



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