

Our Future in UNiSON

Union and Anson Counties

Collaborative Case Study

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“In order to build capacity, we need to work with organizations that can fund pilot projects or share best practices to tackle these challenges effectively.”

What is Our Future in UNiSON?

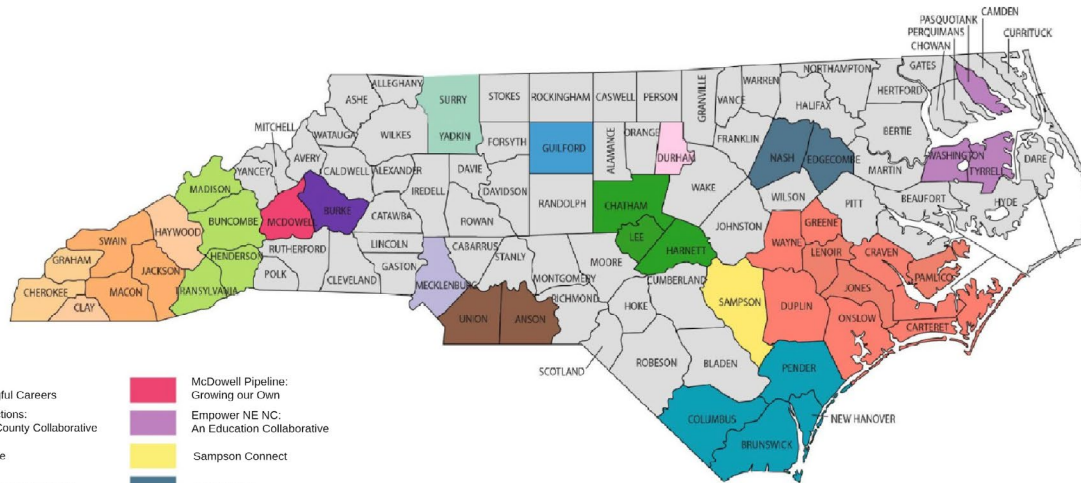
Our Future in UNiSON myFutureNC Local Educational Attainment Collaborative brings together stakeholders in Anson and Union counties to close the educational attainment gap and promote economic mobility. The collaborative engages young people in literacy programs, convenes influencers to adopt by consensus a regional educational attainment goal, and increases collaboration among the two counties’ K-12 systems, higher education institutions, and nonprofit organizations.





Relationships and Connections: Primary Partners

myFutureNC Local Educational Collaboratives



- Our Future Cape Fear: A Roadmap to Meaningful Careers
- Central Carolina Connections: Chatham, Harnett, Lee County Collaborative
- Queen City Collaborative
- OurFutureE3NC Educate, Equip, Excel
- GuilfordJobs2030
- AchieveHIGHTS!
- Land of Sky Education & Workforce Collaborative
- Durham Opportunity Collaborative
- McDowell Pipeline: Growing our Own
- Empower NE NC: An Education Collaborative
- Sampson Connect
- #workHERE
- Surry-Yadkin_IMPACT
- Our Future in UNISON
- Work in Burke

Union County Chamber of Commerce
Helps the business community meet their emerging labor needs through strategic partnerships and targeted training.

Anson County Public Schools
Operationalizes the collaborative’s goals by developing and delivering relevant programming focused on K-12 students.

Union County Public Schools
Operationalizes the collaborative’s goals by developing and delivering relevant programming focused on K-12 students.

South Piedmont Community College
Operationalizes the collaborative’s goals through developing and delivering programming to boost the number of people in Anson and Union counties who have degrees and credentials of value.

Wingate University
Operationalizes the collaborative’s goals through developing and delivering programming to boost the number of people in Anson and Union counties who have degrees.

Hampton B. Allen Library
Provides literacy services and learning opportunities for adults.





Practices and Outcomes

UNiSON seeks to engage youth and their parents in its efforts. For example, UNiSON hosted a poster competition for elementary school students, who were asked to create posters advertising the Anson County Partnership for Children's Raising a Reader play. High school students served as judges for the competition, and representatives from South Piedmont Community College (SPCC) distributed information at the play to parents about available educational programs.

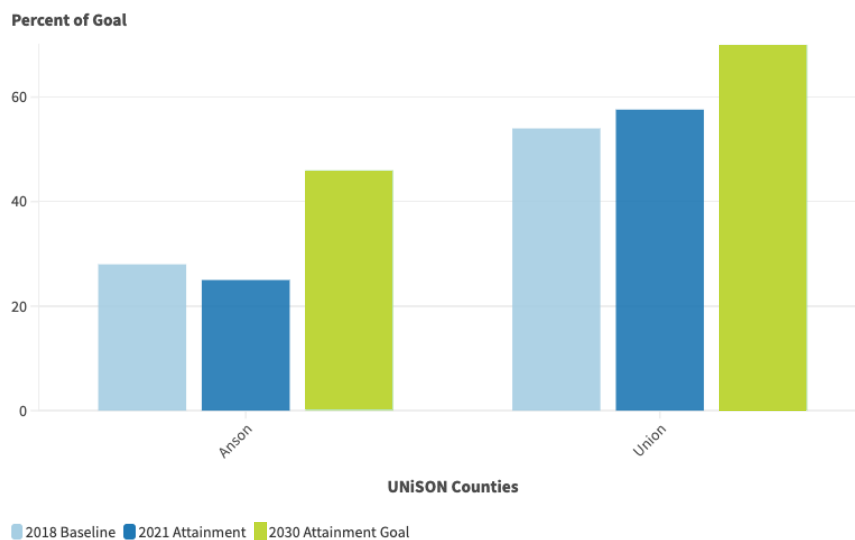
Another project engaged fifth graders in Anson County in drawing costumes for a comic book titled College Misconceptions. The comic's main character, Captain UNiSON, faces multiple challenges while pursuing his career, and the book includes resources related to post-secondary educational attainment. The comic book was sent home to fifth-grade parents so that they could learn more about available resources to successfully complete post-secondary credentialing and/or courses.

In addition, the collaborative aids high school students in completing FAFSA applications, which are required to obtain financial aid for higher education.

The collaborative is structured as a membership model, where partner organizations that join UNiSON have access to an online community calendar, which lists events and programs across all non-profits in the region. Besides being a valuable resource, the calendar helps to avoid duplication of efforts among local nonprofits.

Pat Kahle, president of the Union County Chamber of Commerce, says, "UNiSON wouldn't exist without the support of LEAC (Local Education Attainment Collaborative). It was helpful because it gave us a more global perspective on the work being done across our state. As we continue to get the word out about what we are doing, we are increasing levels of support in the community and increasing membership in our organization."

myFutureNC Local Educational Attainment Collaboratives
Measuring Progress





Policies and Other Barriers

Our Future in UNiSON recognizes the need to boost its name recognition and secure buy-in from leaders in the county governments, private industry, and the state legislature. “We’re addressing these challenges by being steadfast in our efforts to provide value to our community,” Pat says, “through our community calendar, new website, and programs that ensure that existing pathways for career success are matched to the needs of employers in our region.”



Resource Flows and Sustainability

One key ingredient for UNiSON’s continued success is the collaborative’s strong project manager, who has community college experience, is bilingual, and is skilled at engaging diverse communities.

The team recently launched a website at ourfutureinunison.org to bolster name recognition and recruitment efforts. In addition, UNiSON hosted a breakfast with leaders from South Piedmont Community College, Wingate University, and both K-12 school districts as well as state legislators and local government officials to discuss how to achieve the myFutureNC goals for their region.

Looking forward, the UNiSON team needs to adapt their programs to address region-specific challenges such as childcare, transportation, and language barriers. “In order to build capacity, we need to work with organizations that can fund pilot projects or share best practices to tackle these challenges effectively,” says Pat Kahle.





Mental Models and Power Dynamics

Because Our Future in UNiSON was conceived through LEAC participation, its members have adopted the mental model that celebrates small wins and they are eager to spread the word about UNiSON. Specifically, UNiSON will grow the supports available for organizations working on educational attainment through these working groups: Community Outreach (building relationships with nonprofits), Labor Market Alignment (ensuring educational pathways match the needs of employers), Recruitment: Career College Readiness, and Adult Literacy. These working groups meet regularly to share their challenges and draw from each other's successes to kickstart new programs for target populations. Current members strive to recruit new members from their own personal and professional networks to bring them into UNiSON's work.



John M Belk
Endowment
ELEVATE THROUGH EDUCATION



SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT
ncIMPACT Initiative



myFUTURENC
2 million by 2030