

Purpose. The Centralina Partnership for Attainment and Career Pathways (“CPACP”) is a community collaboration of the 9-county Centralina region around Charlotte, NC committed to increasing overall postsecondary attainment in the region and to increasing postsecondary attainment for occupations in the region’s high-demand, high-growth industry sectors that require a variety of postsecondary credentials. These sectors – Aerospace, Automotive, Energy, Finance, Health/Biomedical Sciences, and Logistics – depend heavily on core workforce competencies of our region in advanced manufacturing, information technology and engineering.

CPACP’s overarching goals are twofold:

- increase the percent of the population aged 18-55 with post-secondary credentials in skill areas required by the region’s target industry cluster employers, by 25% (2015 to 2020);
- raise overall postsecondary attainment among 25-64 year olds to 60% by 2025.



The region has successfully built many best-in-class systems and programmatic infrastructure, all aimed at aligning educational systems with the talent pipeline for projected in-demand occupations in our targeted industry growth sectors. In fact, the NADO award-winning “Prosperity for Greater Charlotte Report” (2012) included a ground-breaking *Jobs, Workforce and Education Alignment Strategy* that identified improved post-secondary attainment in the region’s target industry clusters as a critical need to support industry growth

and economic development. Our challenge now is to more aggressively promote those careers and pathways. CPACP will help fill this critical need.

Strategies. CPACP’s primary strategy for reaching these goals is to address the “Interest Gap” resulting from a lack of societal and cultural awareness of 21st century career opportunities and educational pathways for occupations in our high-demand, high-growth industry sectors – sectors and occupations that offer upward mobility and economic ladders with solid career futures. By “Interest Gap”, we mean that students, their parents, and career-changing adult workers do not recognize the many new career pathways in our region’s high-growth sectors as being of interest to them. These career pathways may not fit the traditional models of “blue collar work with a high school diploma” or “white collar work with a 4-year liberal arts or pre-professional degree.”

CPACP aims to reduce the interest gap by re-engineering the communications vehicles and messaging avenues used in our educational, workforce development, economic development, and business engagement systems and programmatic infrastructure.

Proposed Target populations. CPACP will address both students (from middle school through college-age, and their parents) and adult returning workers (career-changers); neither by itself will be enough to meet the projected demand over the next decade. The Centralina region is experiencing a widening income inequality and decreased upward mobility for its lowest income residents, as documented by a recent Harvard University study. The region also has a high incidence of Veterans, with Mecklenburg County alone having approximately 54, 300 veterans residing there; the third largest number of Veterans in North Carolina. Nearly 11% served post 9/11 and are

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returning to the region with skills that need to be transferred to local career pathways. CPACP will therefore also explore providing focused attention on sub-groups within these two populations:

- students/families in high-poverty schools, and
- veterans.

Partners. CPACP is a broadly inclusive body open to all organizations committed to improving post-secondary attainment. CPACP partners include Centralina Council of Governments, Centralina Economic Development Commission, Foundation for the Carolinas, Charlotte Works, Centralina Workforce Development Board, UNC Charlotte’s Ventureprise, the region’s community colleges, school systems, local governments, and a host of private sector and non-profit firms. The CPACP Steering Committee, a smaller group of core partners, will guide the CPACP Awareness Initiative. The initial nucleus of the CPACP Steering Committee is the Centralina Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Advisory Council, which has served as the foundational group for regional efforts linking postsecondary attainment and economic strategies.

The Centralina community collaboration has been coming together in a strategic fashion since 2010 in order to identify problems affecting and to develop strategies to improve the health, welfare, education, and economic conditions of our region’s residents. Many of these initiatives have focused on improving post-secondary attainment while others have laid the groundwork for it or complement it:

- “Prosperity for Greater Charlotte” report
- Centralina Career Headlight
- Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership
- CONNECT Our Future (Economic Development Work Group)
- Partnership for Post-Secondary Success

Lumina Support. CPACP is supported by the Lumina Communities Partnership for Attainment, with technical assistance and a \$115,000 two-year grant. Approximately 75 major metropolitan regions from across the country have been invited to participate in this grant program. The goal of the Lumina Foundation is to increase the proportion of Americans with postsecondary degrees to 60% by the year 2025.

Contact us. For more information about CPACP, contact Centralina Council of Governments: Victoria Rittenhouse (at 704-688-6502 or vrittenhouse@centralina.org) or Mike Manis (at 704-348-2720 or mmanis@centralina.org), 525 North Tryon St, 12th Floor, Charlotte, NC 28202.

