

Putting the “Applied” into Applied Economics of Education: The Potential of Government-Research Partnerships

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NC Office of Strategic Partnerships

The North Carolina Office of Strategic Partnerships (OSP) develops, launches, and enhances partnerships between state government and North Carolina's research and philanthropic sectors. This includes elevating the State's internal capacity to use and generate evidence in its policy and programmatic functions.

- Strive for partnerships that are scalable, sustainable, and develop public/open-source resources
- Multiple sectors, many partners: state agencies, colleges/universities, philanthropy, national organizations

NC Office of Strategic Partnerships

Who we are and what we do...

- Focus on
 - Leveraging expertise of research institutions (higher ed+) and philanthropy
 - Using research and evidence to guide policy and process decisions
- Work with agency to define and refine research question, describe desired deliverables, identify research partner, ensure resources for moving forward
- Unique process(es) involving government, research, and philanthropy partners
- **Opportunities for many types and levels of engagement** (e.g., short- and long-term; faculty, researchers, students; funded, pro bono, etc.)
- Team: Director, Deputy Director, Evidence Advisors, Philanthropy Liaison, Program Manager, Program Support Specialist, Advisors, Associates, Students at all levels

NC Office of Strategic Partnerships

- Agency learning/research priorities → project sourcing, development, identifying partners
 - Examples: [NC Department of Revenue](#), [NC Department of Public Instruction](#), [NC Wildlife Resources Commission](#), [NC Dept. of Insurance](#), [NC Board of Science, Technology, and Innovation \(Dept. of Commerce\)](#)
 - Multi-step, flexible process for agency-researcher connections
 - To date, interest from 350+ researchers at ~50 institutions of higher ed
- Many partners: state agencies, colleges/universities, philanthropy, student interns/associates, national organizations

If you're outside government...

- Think of issues and topics that you work on (or plan to work on) and have expertise in that have relevance to government policy and/or programs.
- Now consider -
 - Does anyone in government know that you're working on that?
 - Did you/do you talk with people in government before, during, or after doing that work?
 - Do you proactively try to learn about what people in government are focusing on and/or planning to focus on?
- If answers to any of the above are no or mostly no, consider *why that is and what would change the answers to yes*. What's missing? What do you need?

If you're inside government...

- Think of one or more issues that you or your agency, division, office, etc. work on, have worked on in the past, or are considering working on.
- Now think of
 - Questions related to that work that *you wish you had the answers to*
 - Challenges related to that work that you wish you could address successfully

These could be about a program, a policy, funding, internal operations...
- Now consider *why you don't know the answers* to those question or how to address the challenges. What's missing? What do you need?



NCDOR Taxpayer Outreach

North Carolina Department of Revenue, Center for Advanced Hindsight at Duke University, UNC School of Law, Policy Lab at Brown University, and Office of Strategic Partnerships

Focus: improving tax collection through behavioral science project communicating on inserts mailed with bills to educate taxpayers



The Taxation of Cryptocurrency

North Carolina Department of Revenue and N.C. A&T State University

White paper: *“Assessing the Feasibility of Crypto Assets Taxations and Enforcement in North Carolina”*

By Dr. Alfredo A. Romero



Increasing and Improving Government-Research Partnerships

Tips for Researchers

More of this:

- Engage early – invite input from govt. *before* finalizing design of policy-relevant research
- When sharing research findings, share the “so what?” up front
- Know at least the basics of the context (e.g., jurisdiction, elected v. appointed, key announcements and events)
- Review press releases, budgets, etc. for potential partner organizations

Less of this (all are real examples):

- Here’s a link to my journal article that I thought might interest you
- Let me know if there’s anything I can do to help (good intention, but not likely helpful)
- I don’t need to talk with anyone in govt. because all the data I use are public data
- I’d like *all* the data so I can figure out what I need



What are the current NCWorks Certified Career Pathways across the state and what is the impact of each pathway on training and certification achievement for participants?

Share this project



Project started: August 23, 2022

Department or Agency: NC Department of Commerce

TOPICS

HIGHER EDUCATION, CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT

LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Project Overview

Summary

The [NCWorks Commission](#) at the [NC Department of Commerce](#) is exploring research partnership opportunities to better understand the relevance and utility of the [NCWorks Certified Career Pathways](#) (CCP) program. The 41 CCPs, managed by 22 local workforce development boards across North Carolina, are systems of education and workforce development programs that aim to match worker training to employer need as well as encourage and incentivize employers to locate and expand in North Carolina.

The goal of this project is to collect qualitative and quantitative data from CCP administrative leaders and former participants, and answer questions including, but not limited to:

1. How many job seekers participated in each CCP?
2. How many job seekers completed at least one credential in the CCP, and what credential(s) did they receive?
3. Are any of the credentials received by job seekers non-degree and high value, and are they on the NC Workforce Credentials high value credential list?
4. Did enrolling in the Career Pathway program impact employee retention for CCP industries and if so, how?

The NC Department of Commerce and the NC Office of Strategic Partnerships (OSP) hosted a research partnership meeting on Friday, September 9 to discuss this project. Click here for the [meeting recording](#).

The project is in progress.

We plan to post results and deliverables when the project is complete. In the meantime, we welcome questions about the project.

Ask a question

Project point of contact



Dr. Annie Izod
Executive Director
NCWorks Commission

In-Progress NC Project Portal Projects





What is the distribution of data literacy secondary school pathways and higher education certificate and degree programs by NC county and tier?

Share this project



Project started: May 31, 2022

Department or Agency: NC Department of Commerce

TOPICS

DATA LITERACY

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION

Project Overview

Summary

The Data Economy Committee of the [North Carolina Board of Science, Technology and Innovation](#) (BSTI) seeks to understand the distribution of data literacy pathways in Career and Technical Education (CTE) among high schools in North Carolina, as well as data-focused certificates and degree programs across community colleges, four-year colleges and universities in North Carolina. BSTI's goal is to facilitate preparation of students in North Carolina to contribute to and thrive in the Data Economy.

The Data Economy is defined as a business ecosystem predicated on the digital transformation of operations, products, and services. Data literacy is defined as competencies associated with data collection, comprehension, analysis and interpretation. Economic Modeling Specialists International (EMSI) modeling has identified data-focused certificates and degrees at institutions of higher education, and these data need to be used as inputs for a visualization tool to display as data literacy assets in the state by region and county.

The data-focused secondary school CTE pathways are not discoverable through EMSI modeling. However, the Data Economy Committee has identified CTE pathways that are available to high schools and is completing a spreadsheet with North Carolina high schools and the number of pathways offered at each high school. These data also need to be used as design inputs for a visualization tool to display data literacy assets in counties. The purpose of the tool is to understand the distribution of data literacy assets in secondary and higher education institutions across North Carolina.

The NC Department of Commerce/North Carolina Board of Science, Technology and Innovation (BSTI)

The project is in progress.

We plan to post results and deliverables when the project is complete. In the meantime, we welcome questions about the project.

Ask a question

Project point of contact



David Kaiser

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NC Department of Commerce

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In-Progress NC Project Portal Projects

NC Office of



Strategic Partnerships



What are the best practices in digital literacy and what additional research and innovation are needed because evidence isn't yet available?

Share this project



Project started: March 22, 2023

Department or Agency: NC Department of Information Technology

TOPICS

DIGITAL EQUITY

DIGITAL NAVIGATOR/NAVIGATION

DIGITAL UPSKILLING

DIGITAL SKILLS

DIGITAL LITERACY

LITERATURE REVIEW

RESEARCH SYNTHESIS

Project Overview

Summary

At least 1.1 million North Carolina households lack access to high-speed internet, cannot afford it, or do not have the skills needed to take advantage of the digital economy. In today's world, having access to affordable high-speed internet and having the devices and knowing how to use digital tools (internet adoption) are necessary for full participation in most sectors, from healthcare to education, economic development, agriculture, and beyond.

In 2021, North Carolina became the first state in the nation to create an Office of Digital Equity and Literacy (ODEL), part of the state's [Division of Broadband and Digital Equity](#). In the same year, North Carolina allocated \$971 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and state funding to address internet access and another \$50 million to advance internet affordability and adoption. With this investment, ODEL is 1) prioritizing internet affordability through Affordable Connectivity Program enrollment, 2) creating device access for low-income households, 3) increasing digital literacy training and building, and 4) building capacity for community partners. To achieve the latter two goals, ODEL expects to invest most of its ARPA dollars in digital equity solutions through a [Digital Equity Grant Program](#), which was launched in fall 2022, and will have several rounds of funding through 2023.

While government funds will go a long way towards providing sustained accessibility and at least

The project is in progress.

We plan to post results and deliverables when the project is complete. In the meantime, we welcome questions about the project.

Ask a question

Project point of contact



Maggie Woods

NC Office of Digital Equity and
Literacy
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In-Progress NC Project Portal Projects

NC Office of



Strategic Partnerships

NCDPI-NC Collaboratory partnership (20 Research Projects, 14 NC Institutes of Higher Education)



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Evaluation Fund Grants

- NC General Assembly allocated \$1 million to the Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM) for the [Evaluation Fund grant program](#). North Carolina state government agencies were eligible to apply. Applicants identified research partners for their projects.
- OSBM awarded grants to [eight government-research partnerships](#).
- [Governor Cooper's 2023 budget recommendations](#) include \$1 million in research grants to continue this effort.
- [OSP Monthly Connect Recording on the Evaluation Fund](#)

State Budgets and Agency Strategic Plans

- State budget is an important source for information about priorities (including evidence/research priorities)
 - Governor's 2023 budget recommendations
 - House budget proposal
 - Senate budget proposal
- State agencies' strategic plans were due to OSBM on May 1
 - Indicate agencies' strategic priorities
 - New this year: 3-5 Priority Questions that indicate research interest and opportunities
 - For more about the strategic planning process

OSP Resources

- [OSP Website](#)
- [NC Project Portal](#) Research partnership opportunities with government agencies
- [State agency contacts](#) for partnerships and research
- [College and university contacts](#) for partnerships and research
- [Philanthropy Liaison](#) resources focused on engagement and partnership between government and philanthropy
- [Monthly Connect](#) Panel discussions on cross-sector partnerships – view recordings of over 30 sessions to date; sign up [here](#)
- [Highlights](#) Monthly e-news and resources ; sign up [here](#)

Contact partnerships@osbm.nc.gov with questions or partnership ideas and requests.