

April 2026

NORTH CAROLINA
CAREER IMPACT PRO
CERTIFICATION

# Discovery Activities

For Educators who support students in their Career Journey

A Hands-On Guide to NC's Career Exploration Tool

**TOTAL ACTIVITY TIME: 2 HOURS**
**EACH ACTIVITY: ~10 MINUTES**

DREAM IT. PLAN IT. BE IT.
NCcareers.org

# North Carolina Career Impact Pro Training Overview

The North Carolina Career Impact Pro training is designed for **North Carolina educators** who support students in the career development process. The experience includes three components:

1. Pre training Discovery Activity
2. Interactive in person Workshop
3. Local implementation with students

Upon successful completion of all three phases, you are eligible to earn the North Carolina Career Impact Pro Certification.

## Discovery Guide Purpose and Expectations

The Discovery Guide walks you through the most widely used and developmentally appropriate NCcareers.org tools so you can:

- Experience them firsthand
- Understand what tools are available to students
- See how each tool functions in practice

The purpose is to strengthen your ability to lead effective career conversations by deepening your understanding of the online tools students use. This is not about preparing a lesson to deliver directly to students. Instead, it is about understanding how a student might navigate, interpret, and respond to these tools.

As you work through the guide, you will collect artifacts to bring to the Certification Workshop. If you have already spent significant time on NCcareers.org, you may move more quickly, focusing on reviewing Pro Tips and adding artifacts from work you have already completed.

# Focus of the Certification Workshop

The interactive in person workshop will focus less on the mechanics of the tools and more on how to use them effectively in conversation. You will learn strategies for:

- Building strong connection and trust
- Strengthening relationships
- Tailoring guidance to each student's unique needs
- Coaching with intention
- Determining which tools are most relevant at a particular time

The Discovery Guide creates a shared foundation so the workshop can center on meaningful dialogue, intentional coaching, and practical guidance that supports student growth.

We look forward to engaging in this important work with you!

# Discovery Activity Structure

## Each tool section includes:



**WHAT IT IS**
Brief description of the tool and what it does



**YOUR 10-MINUTE ACTIVITY**
Step-by-step instructions for hands-on exploration



**USE WITH STUDENTS**
Specific scenarios for using this tool in coaching or counseling.



**BRING BACK TO SHARE**
What to record for group discussion



**WHY IT MATTERS**
The "so what" for student outcomes

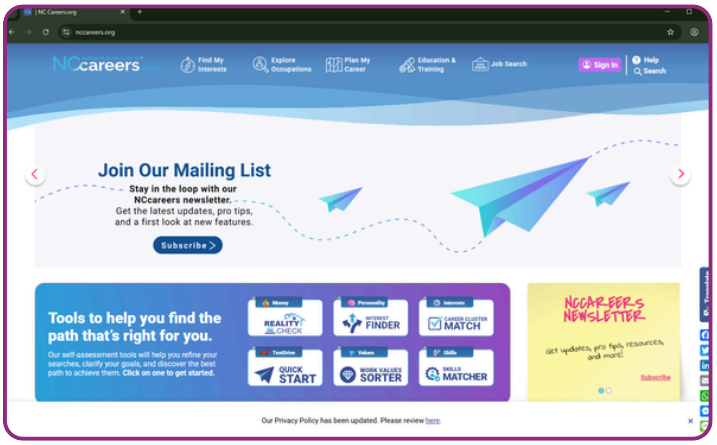
# BEFORE
# YOU START!

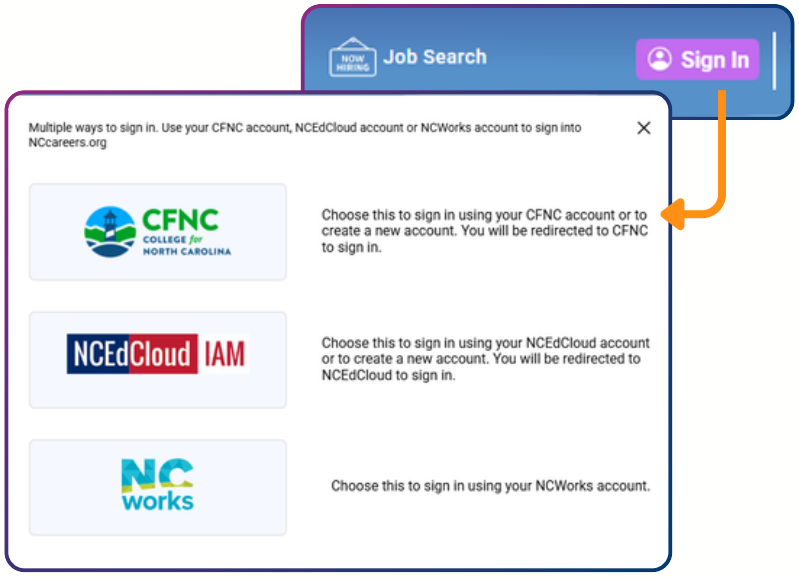
1. Go to nccareers.org in your browser.

2. Create an account using CFNC credentials (if you don't already have one) - click "Sign In" in the top right

3. Have this document open in adobe reader if you want to use it as a fillable PDF or printed so you are ready to record your "Bring Back" items

4. You don't need to complete every tool - focus on the Top Discovery Activities we will be using in our live workshop in section 1 and feel free to explore other tools most relevant to your students




## LOGIN OPTIONS EXPLAINED

- **CFNC (College Foundation of NC):** Best for most users. Data is saved and accessible after students graduate. Recommended.
- **NCEdCloud:** For current K-12 students/teachers. Expires when they leave public education.
- **NCWorks:** For adult jobseekers. Only individual accounts work with NCcareers.
- Note: Most tools work WITHOUT logging in - users just can't save their results. Students have to be logged in to use the Career Plan Builder and the Course Planner Tool.

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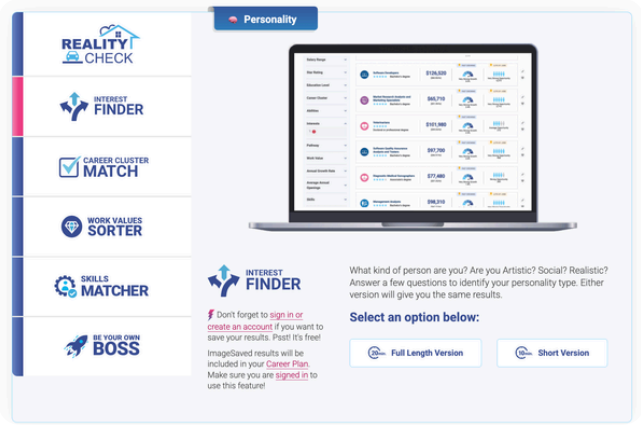
# INTEREST FINDER ASSESSMENT




## WHAT IT IS?

A 30 or 60-question survey based on Holland's RIASEC theory that measures career interests across six areas: Realistic (hands-on), Investigative (analytical), Artistic (creative), Social (helping), Enterprising (leading), and Conventional (organizing).

## USE WITH STUDENTS:

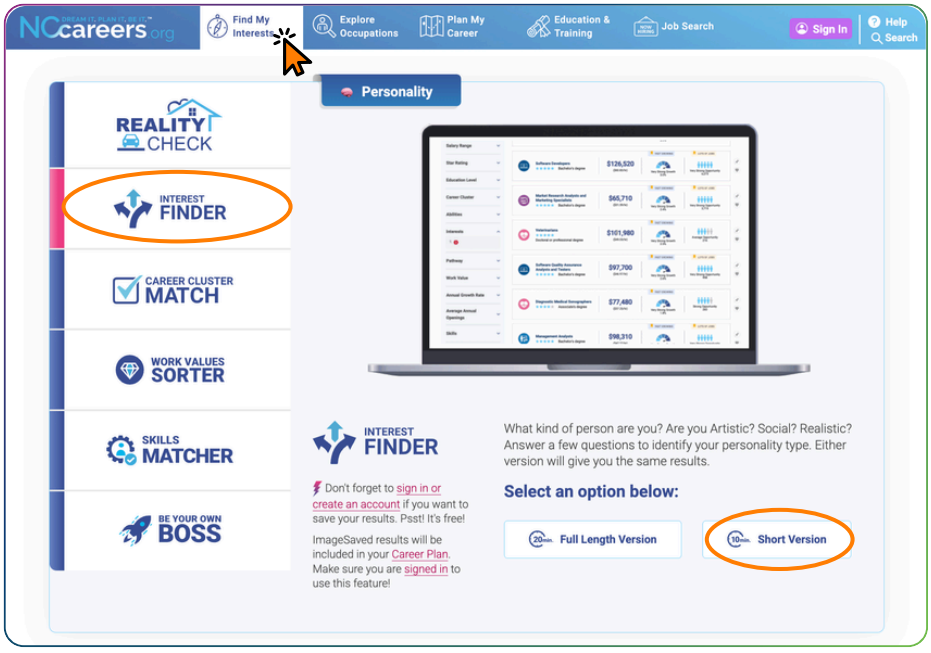
Start here with students who say "I don't know what I want to do." Have them take the 30-question version (takes about 5 minutes).

Their top 2-3 interest areas become the starting point for exploring careers. Great for middle schoolers just beginning career exploration and high schoolers narrowing options.

## WHY IT MATTERS:

Students often pick careers based on what they've seen on TV or what their parents do. This helps them discover interests they didn't know they had. The results connect directly to occupations in the database, so there's an immediate "here's what matches YOU" payoff.

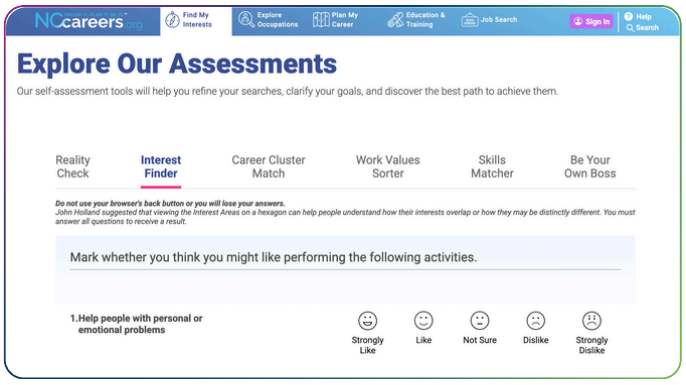
## YOUR 10-MINUTE ACTIVITY




**Step 1:** Go to [NCcareers.org](NCcareers.org) and click "Find My Interests" in the top menu

**Step 2:** Click "Interest Finder" and select the SHORT version (30 questions)

# INTEREST FINDER ASSESSMENT

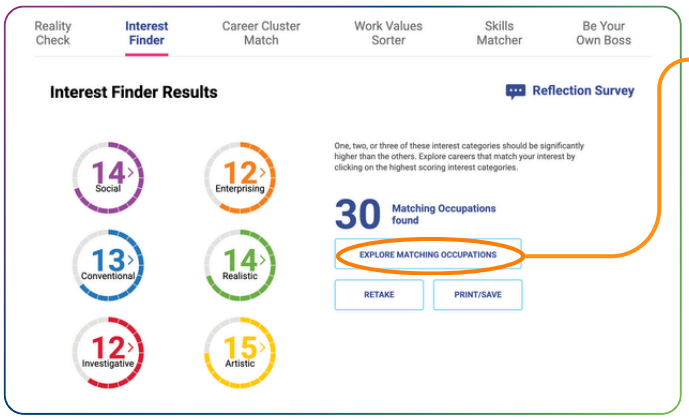


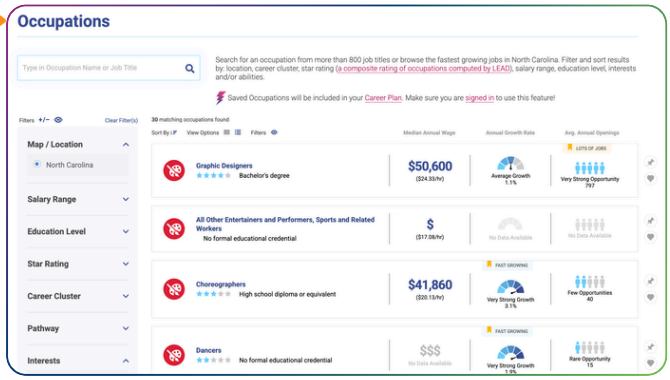

**Step 3:** Answer all 30 questions honestly (about 5 minutes)

**Step 4:** Review your results - write down your TOP 2 interest areas

**Step 5:** Click "Explore Matching Occupations" and scroll through the list

**Step 6:** Save or note 2 occupations that surprised you (ones you hadn't considered)




## BRING BACK TO SHARE:

Your top 2 interest areas AND 2 surprising occupation matches you discovered.

**PRO-TIP:**

Approach RIASEC interest areas holistically rather than linking them to a single occupation. Most careers can align with multiple interest areas depending on the work environment, the role someone plays, and how the work is carried out. The goal is not to match students to a job title, but to understand how they prefer to engage with their work.

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# INTEREST FINDER ASSESSMENT FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

## OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS TO ASK (FOR ANY RIASEC AREA):

Where does this show up for you already? How would you love to do it more right now?

## QUESTIONS TO ASK EACH RIASEC CATEGORY

### R — Realistic (DOERS)

What do you want to build, fix, operate, or make with your hands?

**Career Cluster Ideas Might Include:** Advanced Manufacturing, Digital Technology, Financial Services, Marketing & Sales

### I — Investigative (THINKERS)

What are you most curious about? What questions do you find yourself needing to answer?

**Career Cluster Ideas Might Include:** Digital Technology, Education, Energy & Natural Resources, Healthcare & Human Services

### A — Artistic (CREATORS)

What do you want to express, create, or bring to life? How do you define beauty?

**Career Cluster Ideas Might Include:** Agriculture, Arts, Entertainment, & Design, Energy & Natural Resources, Marketing & Sales

### S — Social (HELPERS)

What problems do you want to solve in the world? Who do you most want to help?

**Career Cluster Ideas Might Include:** Healthcare & Human Services, Education, Hospitality, Events & Tourism, Public Service & Safety

### E — Enterprising (PERSUADERS/LEADERS)

What do you want to be known for? How do you want to lead?

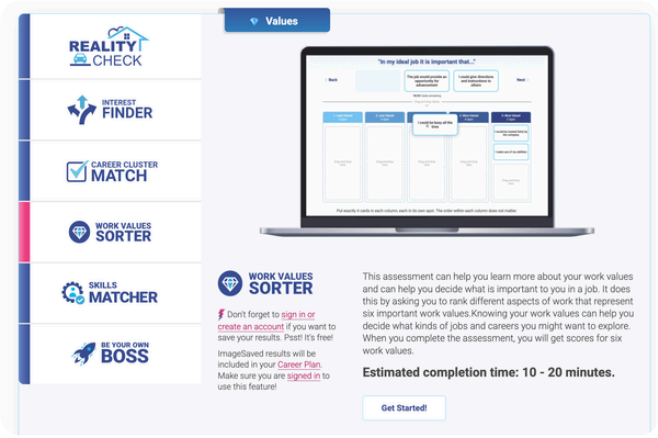
**Career Cluster Ideas Might Include:** Arts, Entertainment & Design, Construction, Management & Entrepreneurship, Marketing & Sales

### C — Conventional (ORGANIZERS)

What do you love making clearer, easier, or more organized? What systems would you improve?

**Career Cluster Ideas Might Include:** Agriculture, Construction, Supply Chain & Transportation, Public Service & Safety

# WORK VALUES SORTER




## WHAT IT IS?

An interactive card-sorting activity with 20 cards representing different work motivators. Users drag cards into categories (Most Important, Somewhat Important, Least Important) to discover what matters most to them in a career across six value areas: Achievement, Independence, Recognition, Relationships, Support, and Working Conditions.

## USE WITH STUDENTS:

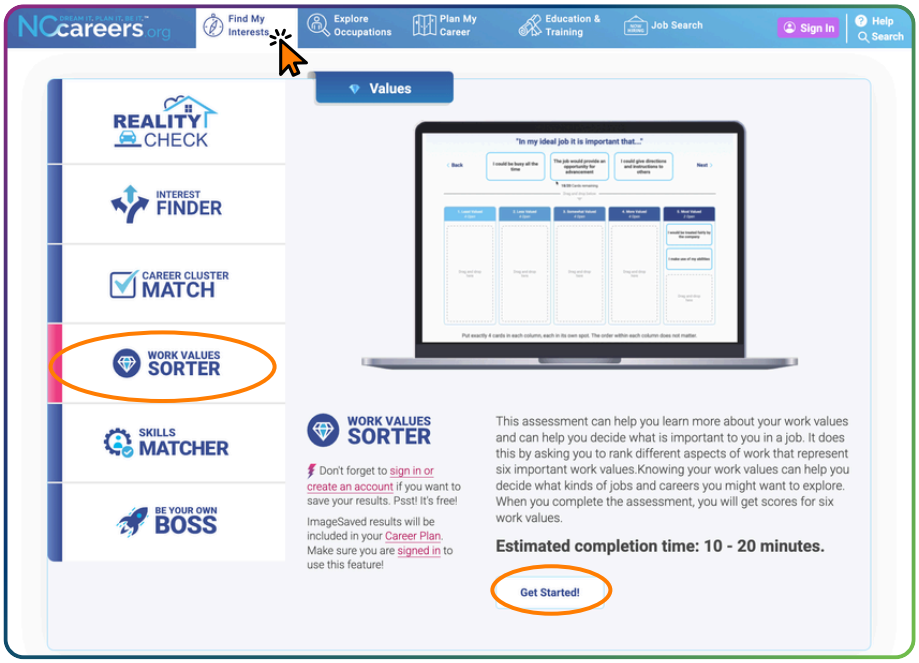
Typically used after Interest Finder to add depth, but can also be done as a stand alone clarifier.

A student might be interested in healthcare, but do they want recognition and prestige (surgeon) or relationships and support (school nurse)? This helps them understand WHY they want what they want. Especially powerful for high schoolers making decisions about college vs. work vs. training.

## WHY IT MATTERS:

Two students can have the same interests but completely different values. One wants independence and high pay; another wants teamwork and work-life balance. Understanding values prevents students from choosing careers that match their skills but make them miserable.

## YOUR 10-MINUTE ACTIVITY




**Step 1:** Go to NCcareers.org → Find My Interests → Work Values Sorter

**Step 2:** Read the instructions, then click "Get Started!"

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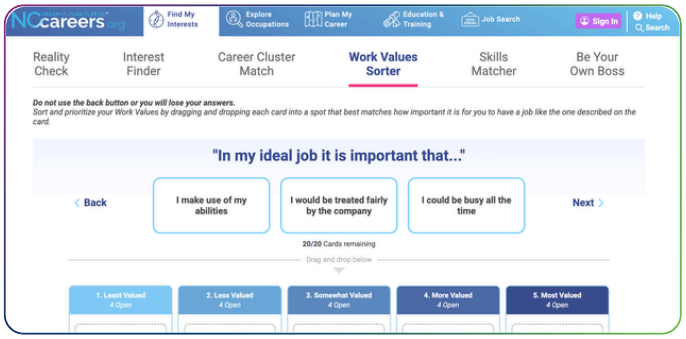
# WORK VALUES SORTER

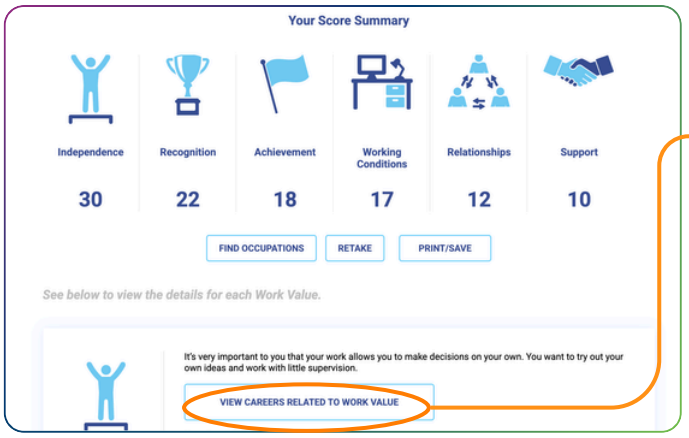


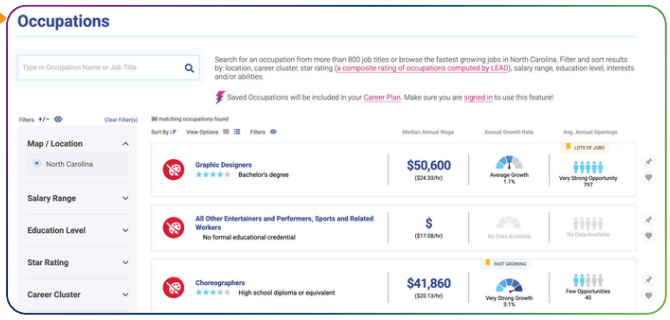

**Step 3:** Sort all 20 cards into the three categories by dragging them

**Step 4:** Review your results and write down your TOP 2 work values

**Step 5:** Click to see matching occupations based on your values

**Step 6:** Compare these results to your Interest Finder results - any overlap? You can also try filtering based on multiple assessments




## BRING BACK TO SHARE:

Your top 2 work values and your top two core values. Do they correlate? See the next page with a list of popular core values if you need ideas.

### PRO-TIP:

Use the Work Values Sorter as a bridge to Core Values. Work values help students understand *what they need from a job*, while core values point to *who they are becoming*. This shifts the conversation from choosing a job to designing a life that fits. We included a quick core values exercise on the next page (This is not all the values, just a 100 list that you can start from and feel free to make up your own).

# CORE VALUES EXERCISE

1. Start by checking the 25 values that stand out to you.
2. From there, highlight your Top 10 that are most meaningful. Try to narrow it down to your 3-6 that are most meaningful.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Accountability | Courage | Goal Setting | Leadership | Respect |
| Achievement | Creativity | Gratitude | Legacy | Responsibility |
| Adventure | Curiousity | Growth | Love | Risk-taking |
| Adversity | Decisiveness | Happiness | Loyalty | Safety |
| Aesthetics | Development | Harmony | Meaning | Security |
| Alignment | Diplomacy | Health | Mindfulness | Self-acceptance |
| Ambition | Diversity | Helping Others | Moderation | Self-awareness |
| Analysis | Education | Honesty | Morality | Self-direction |
| Authenticity | Effectiveness | Honor | Passion | Self-esteem |
| Balance | Efficiency | Humility | Peace | Service |
| Belonging | Empathy | Impact | Perfection | Success |
| Challenge | Empowerment | Improvement | Persistence | Teamwork |
| Change | Equity | Independence | Power | Tolerance |
| Character | Excellence | Individualism | Productivity | Transparency |
| Commitment | Fairness | Innovation | Purpose | Trust |
| Community | Faith | Integrity | Quality | Truth |
| Compassion | Family | Intelligence | Relationship | Urgency |
| Competence | Forgiveness | Judgment | Reliability | Wealth |
| Connection | Freedom | Justice | Reputation | Well-being |
| Cooperation | Friendship | Kindness | Resilience | Wisdom |

# WORK VALUES SORTER

## QUICK GUIDE TO WORK VALUES AND HOW THAT MIGHT RELATE TO CORE VALUES



### ACHIEVEMENT

Wanting to accomplish meaningful work and see results → core values like excellence, growth, purpose



### INDEPENDENCE

Wanting freedom, choice, and ownership in how work is done → core values like freedom, self-direction, responsibility



### RECOGNITION

Wanting influence, advancement, or to be known for contributions → core values like leadership, impact, legacy



### RELATIONSHIPS

Wanting connection, teamwork, and helping others → core values like compassion, service, community



### SUPPORT

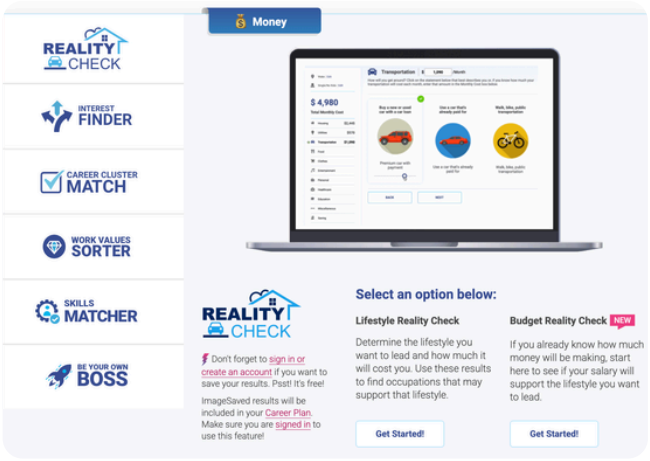
Wanting fair leadership and a healthy, encouraging environment → core values like respect, integrity, belonging



### WORKING CONDITIONS

Wanting stability, balance, and supportive work environments → core values like balance, well-being, security

# LIFESTYLE REALITY CHECKER




## WHAT IT IS?

A lifestyle budget calculator that lets users select their desired living situation across 12 expense categories (housing, transportation, food, healthcare, entertainment, etc.) to calculate the annual salary they would need. Results link directly to occupations that meet that salary requirement.

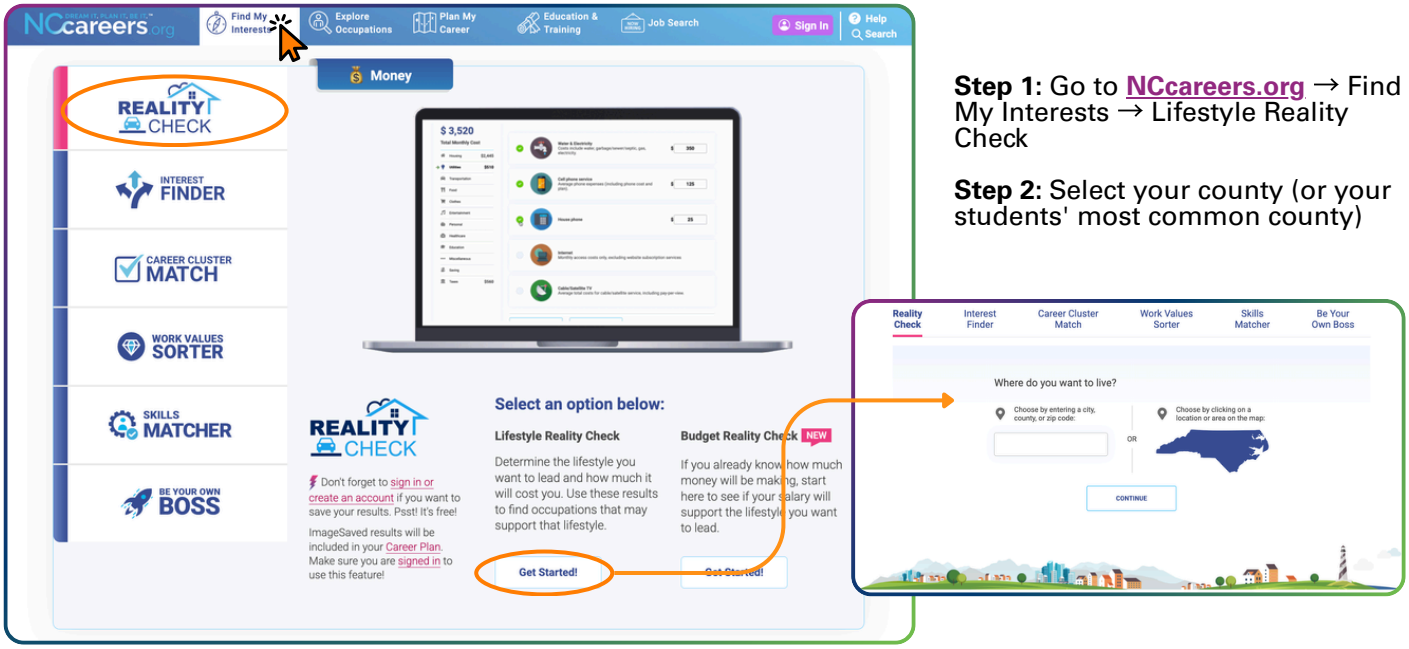
## USE WITH STUDENTS:

This is the "wake-up call" tool. When a student says they want to live in a nice apartment, drive a new car, eat out, and travel - but they're choosing a career paying $30K - Reality Check shows the math doesn't work. Use it to start real conversations about trade-offs. Great for juniors and seniors making post-graduation plans.

## WHY IT MATTERS:

Students often have no concept of what things cost or what salaries can actually buy. This tool makes abstract "you need a good job" advice concrete. It's also eye-opening for students from higher-income families who don't realize their current lifestyle requires a high salary to maintain.

## YOUR 10-MINUTE ACTIVITY




**Step 1:** Go to NCcareers.org → Find My Interests → Lifestyle Reality Check

**Step 2:** Select your county (or your students' most common county)

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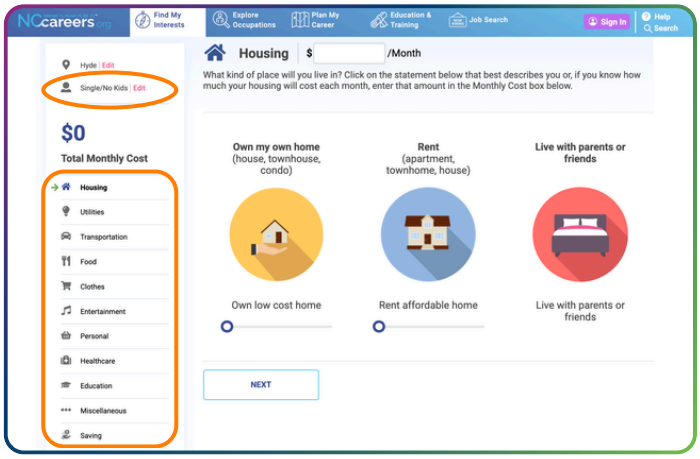
# LIFESTYLE REALITY CHECKER



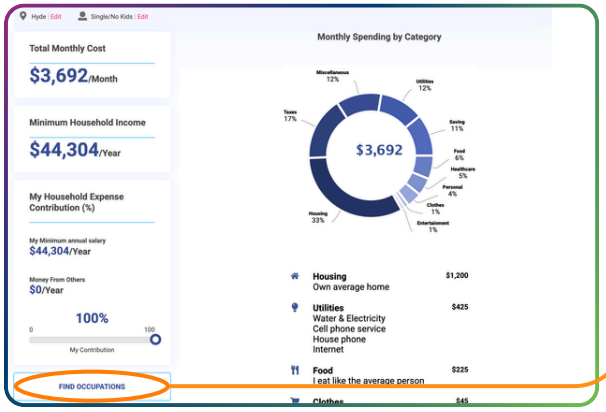

**Step 3:** Select household size (consider using the default "Single/No Kids" first)

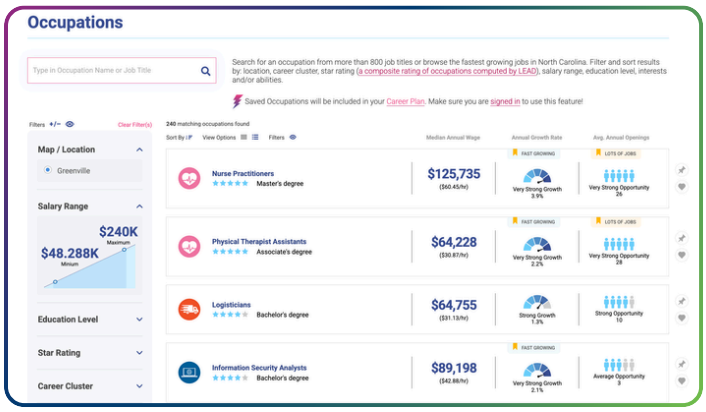
**Step 4:** Go through ALL 12 expense categories using the sliders

**Step 5:** Be realistic about what you'd actually want, not the minimum

**Step 6:** Note the TOTAL SALARY NEEDED at the bottom

**Step 7:** Click "Find Occupations" to see what jobs pay enough



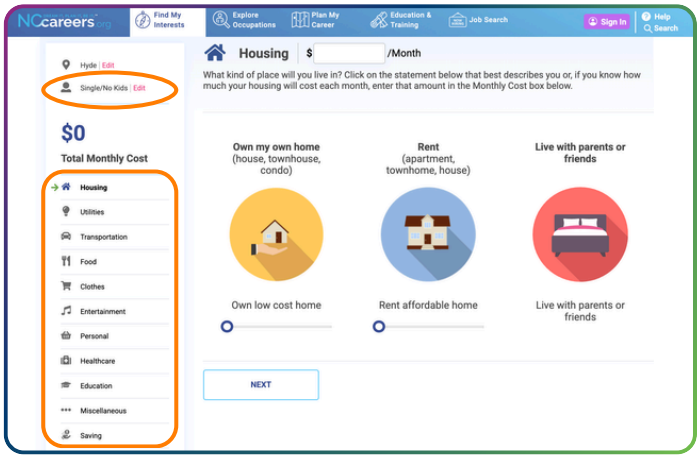

## BRING BACK TO SHARE:

The salary you would need for your desired lifestyle AND one occupation that surprised you by meeting (or not meeting) that salary.

### PRO-TIP:

Use Reality Check to build clarity without taking away hope. The goal is not to limit options, but to help students understand how lifestyle, income, and career choices connect right now. Emphasize that there are many ways people make a living doing work they care about—and that priorities, income, and paths often change over time. This tool helps students make informed choices today while staying open to growth, flexibility, and possibility.

# LIFESTYLE REALITY CHECKER

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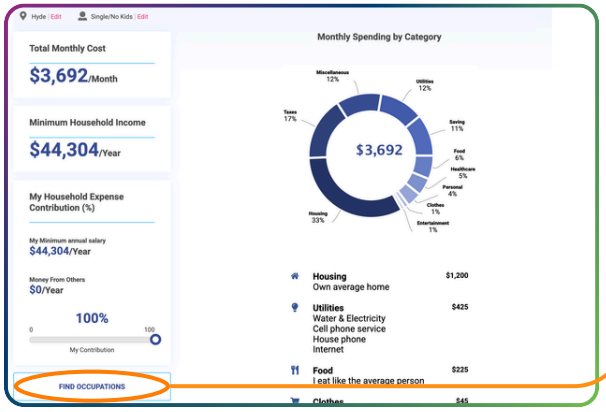


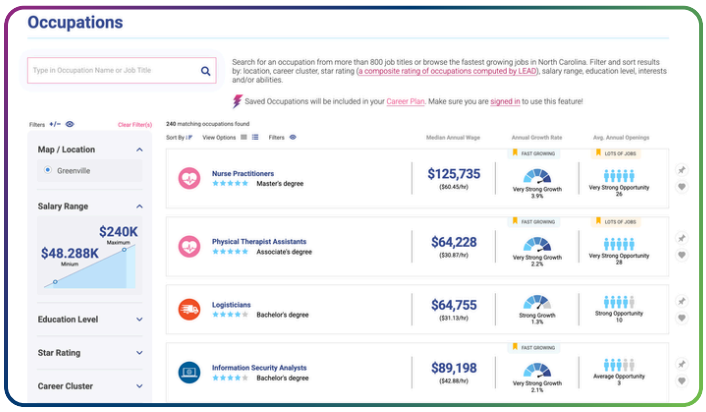


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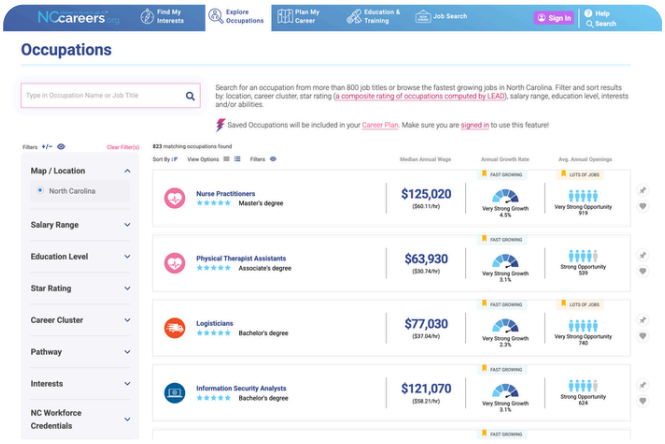
# EXPLORE OCCUPATIONS DATABASE




## WHAT IT IS?

A searchable database of over 800 occupations with powerful filters (career cluster, star rating, salary, education level, location, interests, and more). Each occupation includes a detailed profile with videos, NC-specific wage data, job outlook, required skills, education pathways, and current job listings.

## USE WITH STUDENTS:

This is the "deep dive" tool to explore specific occupations. Use the filters to narrow from hundreds of options to a manageable list.

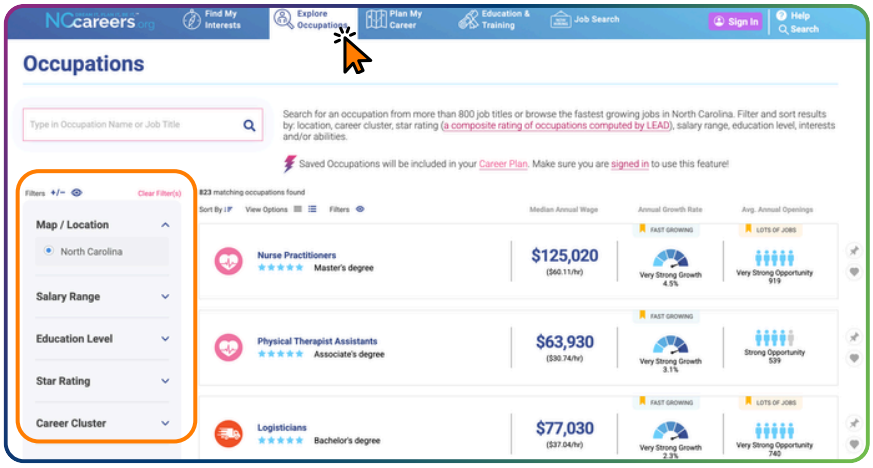
The Star Rating system (unique to NC) shows which careers have the best combination of pay, growth, and job openings in your region. Students can save occupations by clicking the heart icon and compare favorites later.

## WHY IT MATTERS:

Students need to see real data about careers, not just descriptions. The occupation profiles show actual NC wages (not national averages), actual NC job openings, and actual NC training programs. The Star Rating system gives an objective measure of "good" careers without having to make subjective recommendations.

At the same time, it's important to keep in mind that many future jobs don't exist yet, and more people are designing their own roles or combining skills in new ways. If a student's interest doesn't neatly fit into a government database, that's okay. Use this tool to explore related occupations, build awareness of skills and pathways, and find roles that are similar while they continue shaping what their future work might look like.

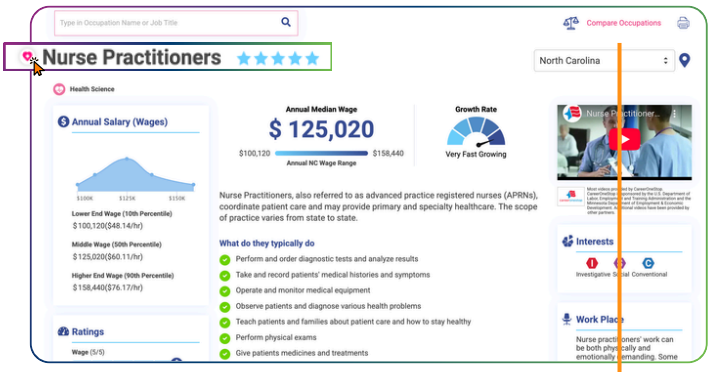
## YOUR 10-MINUTE ACTIVITY




**Step 1**: Go to NCcareers.org → Explore Occupations

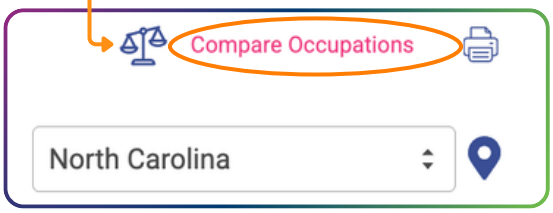
**Step 2:** Try as many filters as you can: for example, 4 or 5-star occupations, jobs in a career cluster you are interested in exploring, Click a degree filter, and make the pay more than your calculation on the reality check activity, add an education level, click map/location and find your region, choose a career cluster

# EXPLORE OCCUPATIONS DATABASE










**Step 3:** Notice how the occupations change after filtering.

**Step 4:** Click on 1-3 occupations and explore their full profile. Save those occupations to your favorites by selecting the heart.

**Step 5:** Find and note: median salary, education needed, 1 related NC program

**Step 6:** From one of your occupations full profile, click "Compare Occupations" and select two other related occupations to see how they compare with each other. This is a great feature to try with students.

## BRING BACK TO SHARE:

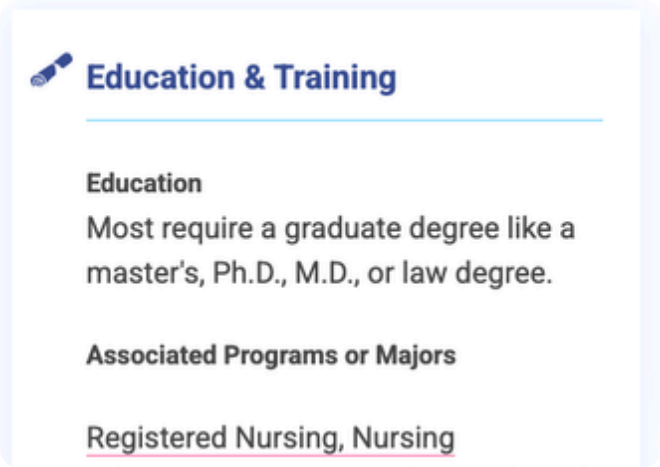
Which filter options helped you most AND one interesting fact from the occupation profile you explored.

### PRO-TIP:

1. Use this tool after a meaningful conversation, when a student has connected with you on a deeper level and identified roles they're curious about and is ready to look at real data. The goal is not just to research jobs, but to decide what to explore next. Pair this step with Work-based Learning whenever possible—job shadowing, internships, volunteering, or part-time work—so students can test whether they actually enjoy the work. Data builds awareness; experience builds clarity, exposure, and excitement.

2. If the database feels overwhelming, start with a printout of your regional Star Jobs brochure: www.commerce.nc.gov/star-jobs-region. These highlight high-demand, living-wage jobs in each region and can spark interest before students dive deeper into the database.

# EXPLORE EDUCATION & TRAINING




## WHAT IT IS?

The Education & Training section within Find Occupations shows the real education, training, licensing, and credential options connected to a specific career. This includes required education, associated programs or majors, licenses, NC Workforce Credentials (when available), and private training programs so learners can explore multiple pathways into an occupation.

## USE WITH STUDENTS:

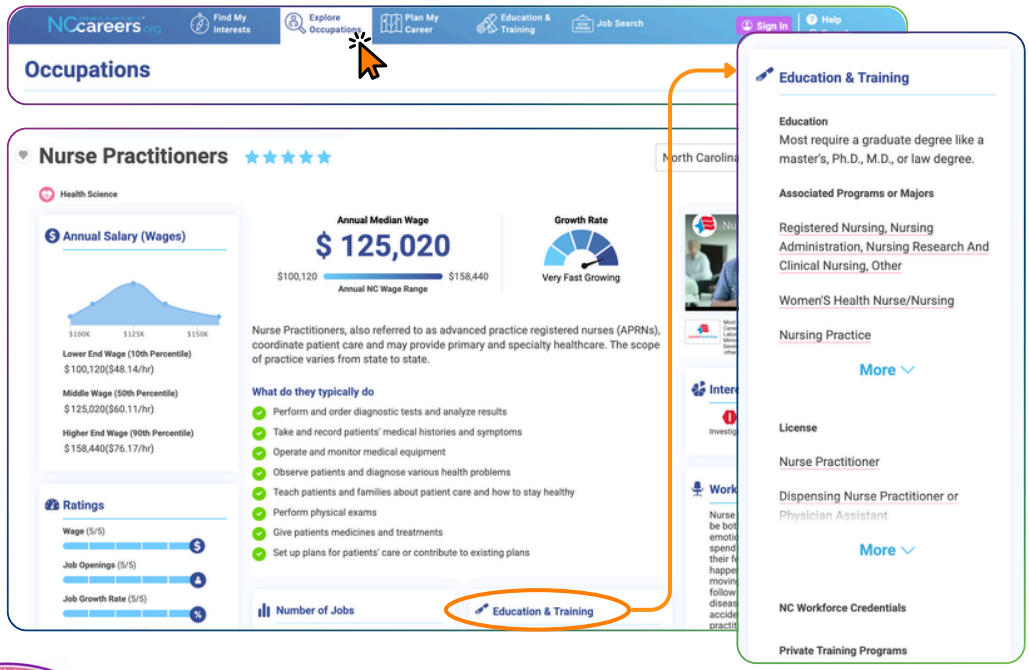
Have students select an occupation and scroll to the Education & Training section.

Ask them to click through the available options and favorite at least two programs, credentials, or training pathways they want to learn more about. This helps students see that careers can be reached through college, certifications, licenses, or short-term training—not just one route.

## WHY IT MATTERS:

Students often don't realize that there are multiple pathways into the same career. This section helps them understand what preparation is actually required, which education or licenses are mandatory, and where those programs are offered in NC. It turns career interest into clear, actionable next steps and shows how education and training choices align with real workforce opportunities.

## YOUR 10-MINUTE ACTIVITY

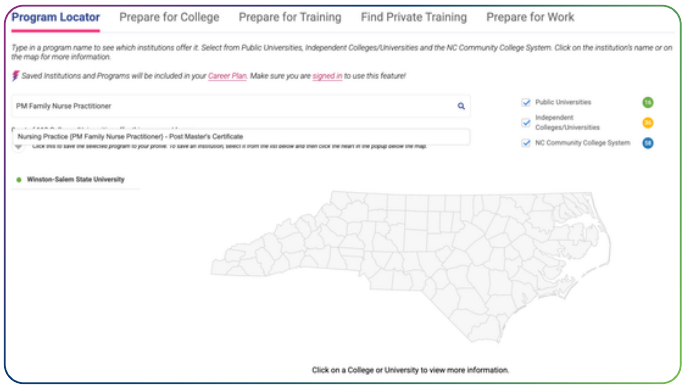


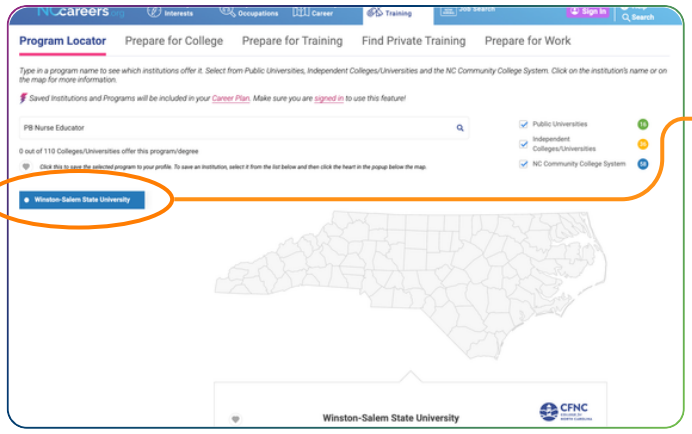

**Step 1:** Choose an occupation in Explore Occupations

**Step 2:** Explore the Education & Training section

NORTH CAROLINA CAREER IMPACT PRO CERTIFICATION

# EXPLORE EDUCATION & TRAINING

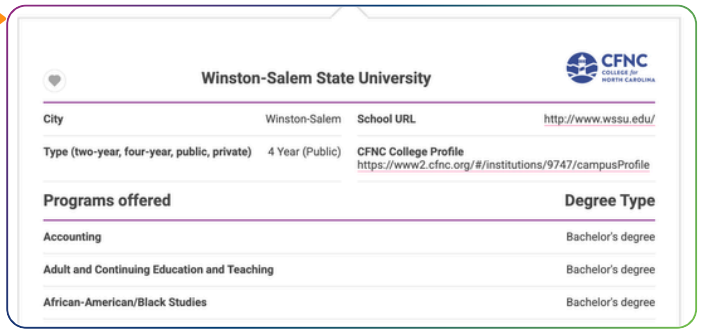



**Step 3:** Click into different options such as programs, licenses, or training, and favorite two pathways that stand out. This will take you to the Program Locator section of the site.

**Step 4:** Spend some time looking at the Program Locator filters and program options. Favorite/save at least two programs with the "heart" button.

**Step 5:** Reflect on which options could be started in high school (perhaps through CTE) and which may require additional education or credentials.




## BRING BACK TO SHARE:

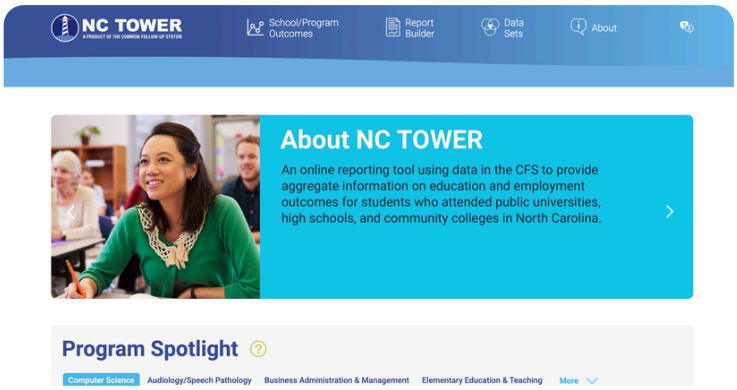
The occupation explored, two education or training options favorited, and one new insight about how to prepare for this career.

### PRO-TIP:

From the same occupation page, you can open Job Listings on NCWorks and Indeed to view real job openings in your area and see what credentials employers are actually asking for. You can also explore apprenticeships, which allow students to earn money while gaining training and experience in the field. For more information on apprenticeships visit [nccareers.org/apprenticeshipnc](nccareers.org/apprenticeshipnc). Reviewing job postings and apprenticeship options together helps students understand how education, training, and licenses connect directly to real workforce opportunities.

NORTH CAROLINA CAREER IMPACT PRO CERTIFICATION

# NC TOWER (GRADUATE OUTCOMES)




## WHAT IT IS?

A separate tool (tower.nc.gov) that tracks employment and wage outcomes for NC community college and UNC system graduates. Shows employment rates, median wages up to 10 years post-graduation, enrollment in further education, and industry sector employment - all filterable by program, institution, and degree type.

## USE WITH STUDENTS:

Use this to show students real outcomes for programs they're considering in the state of North Carolina. "If you get an associate degree in welding from this community college, here's what graduates actually earned." This is real data from NC tax records - not surveys or estimates. Powerful for comparing programs.

## WHY IT MATTERS:

When students ask "will this degree get me a good job?" you can now answer with actual data. NC TOWER shows what graduates actually earn, not what websites promise. It helps students make data-driven decisions about education investments.

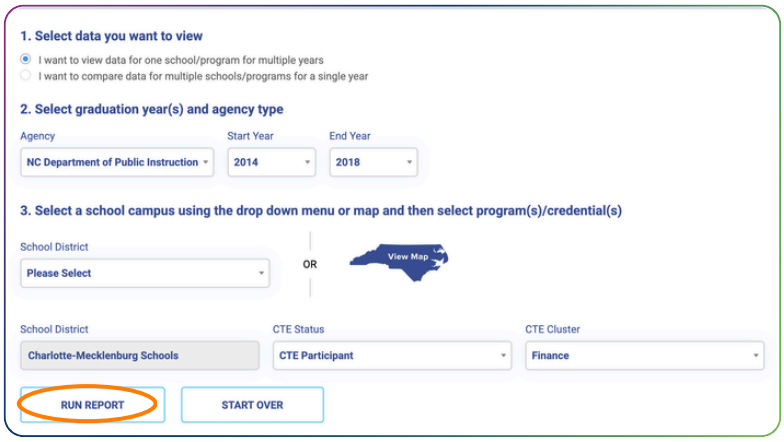
## YOUR 10-MINUTE ACTIVITY




**Step 1:** Open a new tab and go to tower.nc.gov

**Step 2:** Explore the interface - select School/Program Outcomes - select data from multiple years - select one of the options under Agency and years (suggest the most recent 5-10 years)

# NC TOWER (GRADUATE OUTCOMES)







**Step 3:** Pick an institution near you

**Step 4:** Select a program/major that your students commonly pursue

**Step 5:** Review the outcomes and wage data for graduates of that program

**Step 6:** Look at the 1-year, 5-year or 10-year wage data by industry. Which industries would you recommend someone getting this degree to pursue jobs in?

**Step 7:** Compare TWO programs at the same institution - which has better outcomes?

## BRING BACK TO SHARE:

The median wage for one program's graduates AND how you could use NC TOWER data with students.

### PRO-TIP:

Use this data when looking at degree options. Also note that these are averages and important data points, and if a student really wants to do something, don't let this stop them, especially since the world of work is evolving rapidly and you have no idea how starting down this path may lead to meaningful connections and pivots in the future.

# CAREER PLAN BUILDER




## WHAT IT IS?

An internal Career Development Plan (CDP) builder with 9 sections: About You, Goals, Education, Courses, Work-Based Learning, Achievements, Accommodations, Resume, and Notes. Plans can be exported as PDF or shared via URL.

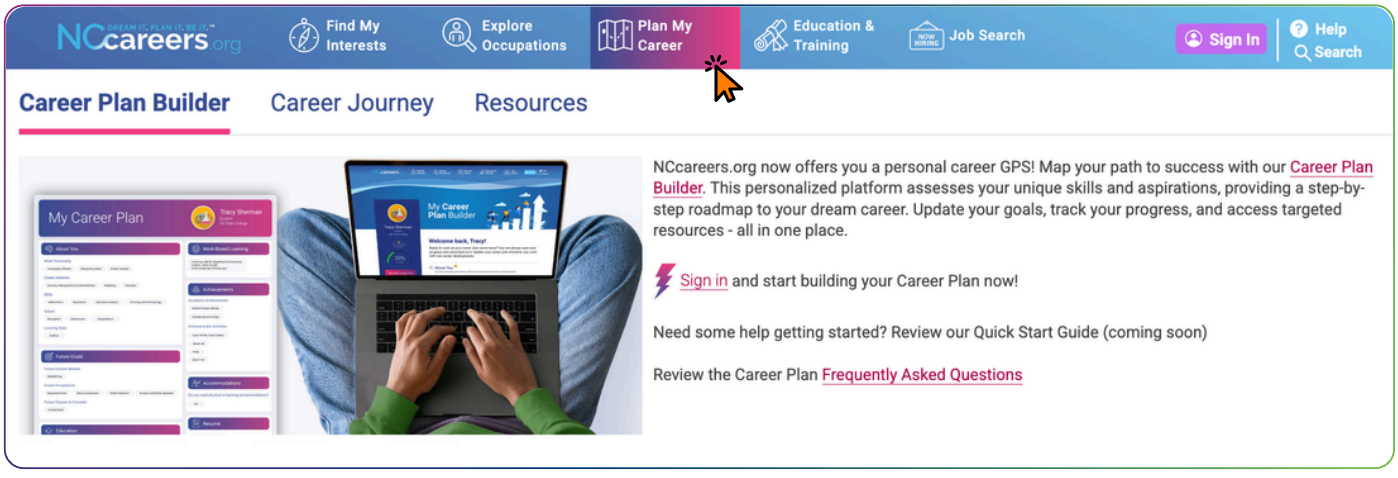
## USE WITH STUDENTS:

This is where all the exploration comes together into a documented plan. For 8th graders, it's about initial direction-setting. For 10th graders, it's about refining based on high school experiences. The plan travels with students through CFNC credentials, so it persists after they leave your school.

## WHY IT MATTERS:

NC law (N.C. Gen. Stat. § 115C-158.10) requires an initial plan for 8th graders and a revised plan for 10th graders. But beyond compliance, it gives students a document to reference and update. It also gives you documentation of the career counseling services you've provided. The plan becomes a portfolio of their career exploration journey.

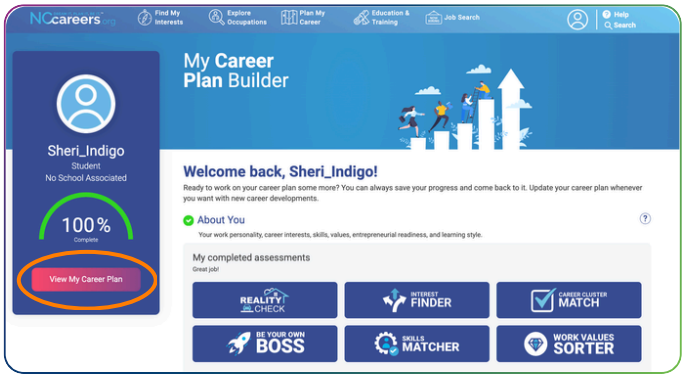
## YOUR 10-MINUTE ACTIVITY

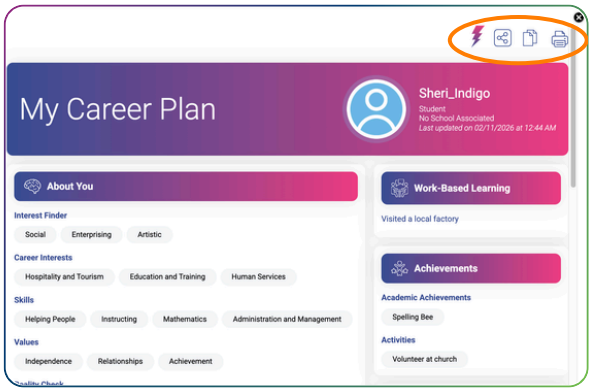



**Step 1:** Log in to NCcareers.org (you need an account for this tool)

**Step 2:** Navigate to Plan My Career → Career Plan Builder

# CAREER PLAN BUILDER




**Step 3:** Explore each of the 9 sections - click through to see what's in each

**Step 4:** Note which sections auto-populate from assessments you've taken

**Step 5:** Add at least ONE career goal and ONE education goal

**Step 6:** Find the Export/Share options - how can you save or send the plan?

**Step 7:** Consider: At what grade levels would you introduce each section?

See here for DPI Career Development Plan Guidance - NCDPI CDP - Career Development Plan (CDP) | NC DPI – possibly on the CDP plan activity page or resource page if it fits better there.

## BRING BACK TO SHARE:

The URL for your Career Plan. Write down at least one other creative way your students could demonstrate their CDP in their own way?

### PRO-TIP:

Download this step-by-step guide to building a Career Development Plan (CDP) on NCcareers.org.
A Career Development Plan is a personalized, living roadmap that reflects who a student is, who they are becoming, and the paths they want to explore. While the embedded CDP on NCcareers.org offers a strong, structured way to document a CDP, students should also be encouraged to express their plans in creative, meaningful ways that feel most authentic to them—whether through visuals, storytelling, projects, or other formats. What matters most is that the CDP captures their thinking, growth, and evolving goals across education pathways, career options, and work-based learning experiences.

# OTHER RESOURCES

- Portrait of a Graduate and Durable Skills | NC DPI
- CTE Career Development and Work-based Learning | NC DPI
- Work-based Learning Resource Manual

# QUICK REFERENCE: WHEN TO USE EACH TOOL

| Students Says... | Start With... | Then Try... |
|---|---|---|
| "I have no idea what I want to do" | **Interest Finder** | Work Values → Occupation Database |
| "I want to make a lot of money" | **Reality Check** | Star Jobs → Occupation Database |
| "I can't afford college" | **ApprenticeshipNC** | NC Workforce Credentials → Training Finder |
| "I need to start working now" | **Plan My Career (Career Journey)** | Job Search → Resume Resources |
| "I have a criminal record" | **Second Chances Resources** | Resume Resources → Job Search |
| “I want to plan my highschool classes” | **Course Planner** | Training & Education Finder → CDP Step-by-Step Guide |
| "Which program should I choose?" | **NC TOWER** | Training & Education Finder |
| 8th grade CDP requirement | **Interest Finder** | Career Plan Builder |

# Wrap Up Items



**DOWNLOAD A RESOURCE FROM THE EDUCATOR RESOURCES SECTION:**
nccareers.org/educator-resources. Plan how you might use/modify this resource in your work this month!



**SIGN-UP FOR THE NCCAREERS NEWSLETTER:**
NCcareers Mailing List



**GIVE FEEDBACK:**
The NCcareers Team loves feedback and is constantly making updates to meet your need, please provide feedback here.

**WE'D LOVE TO GET MORE PEOPLE CONNECTED TO NC CAREERS UPDATES.**
If you have Instagram - take a moment to follow @CareersInNC now:
www.instagram.com/careersinnc/




Check out our other social media accounts too!

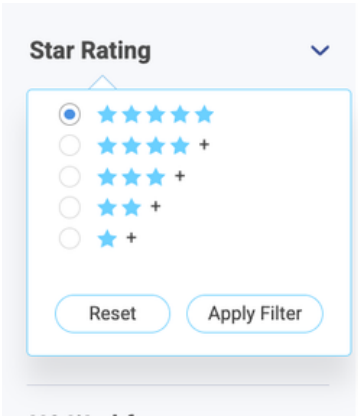


NORTH CAROLINA
CAREER IMPACT PRO
CERTIFICATION

# OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

DREAM IT. PLAN IT. BE IT.
NCcareers.org

# STAR JOBS RATING SYSTEM




## WHAT IT IS?

NC's unique 1-5 star rating system applied to most occupations based on three factors: median wages, projected growth rate, and projected annual job openings. Five-star occupations have the best combination of all three factors. Ratings vary by region because labor markets differ across NC.

## USE WITH STUDENTS:

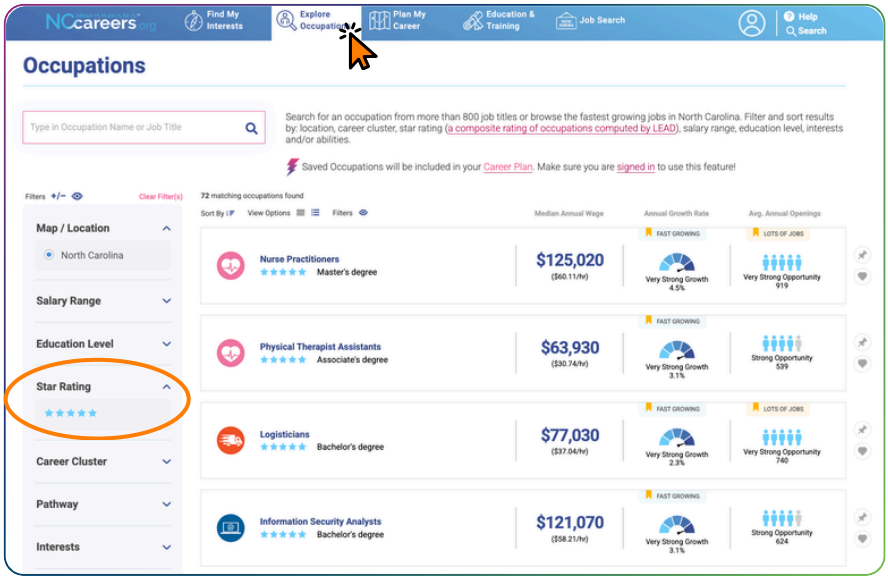
Use this to help students understand that "good career" means more than just high pay.

A 5-star job in Asheville might be 3-star in Charlotte because the labor market is different. Download the regional Star Jobs brochures as handouts - they're great for career fairs and classroom displays.

## WHY IT MATTERS:

Students (and parents) often focus only on salary. Star Jobs shows that a lower-paying job with tons of openings and growth might be a better bet than a high-paying job in a shrinking field. It also teaches students to think regionally - where they live affects their options.

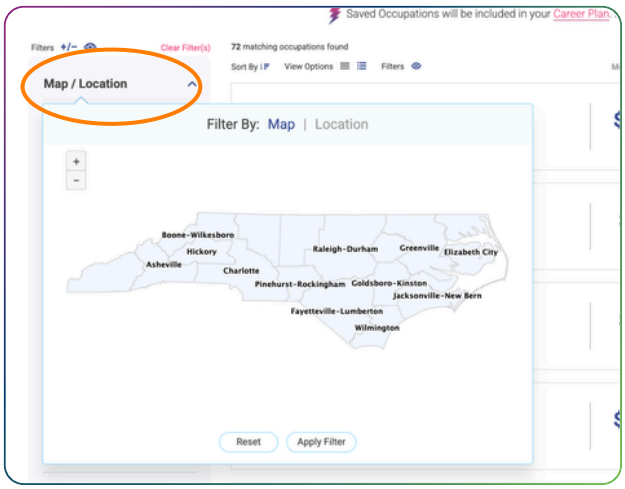
## YOUR 10-MINUTE ACTIVITY




**Step 1:** Go to Explore Occupations and filter to show ONLY 5-star occupations

**Step 2:** Note how many 5-star occupations exist statewide

# STAR JOBS RATING SYSTEM




**Step 3:** Now change the Location filter to YOUR region (or a region you serve)

**Step 4:** Does the number change? Which occupations dropped or added stars?

**Step 5:** Download the Star Jobs Regional Brochure for your area: [www.commerce.nc.gov/star-jobs-region](www.commerce.nc.gov/star-jobs-region)

**Step 6:** Open the brochure PDF and note what information it contains

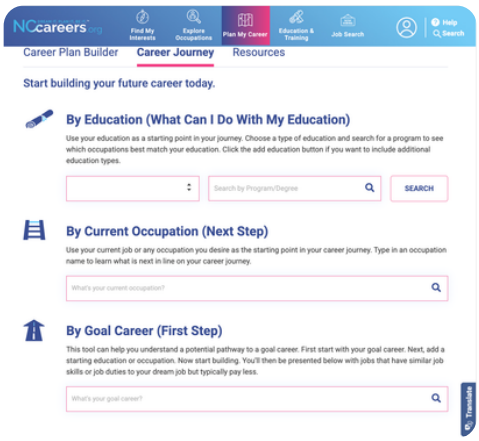
## BRING BACK TO SHARE:

The number of 5-star jobs in your region AND one occupation that has different star ratings in different regions.

### PRO-TIP:

Be careful not to position 5 star jobs as the "right" or "best" choice students should pursue. Star ratings are updated annually and reflect 10-year employment forecasts. Still, as the labor market continues to evolve at a rapid pace, projections should be viewed with flexibility. Students are often drawn to certain roles for meaningful reasons tied to their interests, talents, values, and lived experiences. If a student is excited about a 1 star job and can clearly articulate why it aligns with their unique skills and strengths, that is a signal worth honoring. Encourage students to use Star Jobs as one data point to inform their thinking, not as a rulebook. The goal is informed choice, not persuasion toward certain paths.

# CAREER JOURNEY: FIRST STEP & NEXT STEP TOOLS




## WHAT IT IS?

First Step identifies entry-level jobs that lead toward a dream occupation, building a pathway from the ground up. Next Step shows advancement opportunities from a current position, mapping upward career progression. Together, they help visualize career ladders.

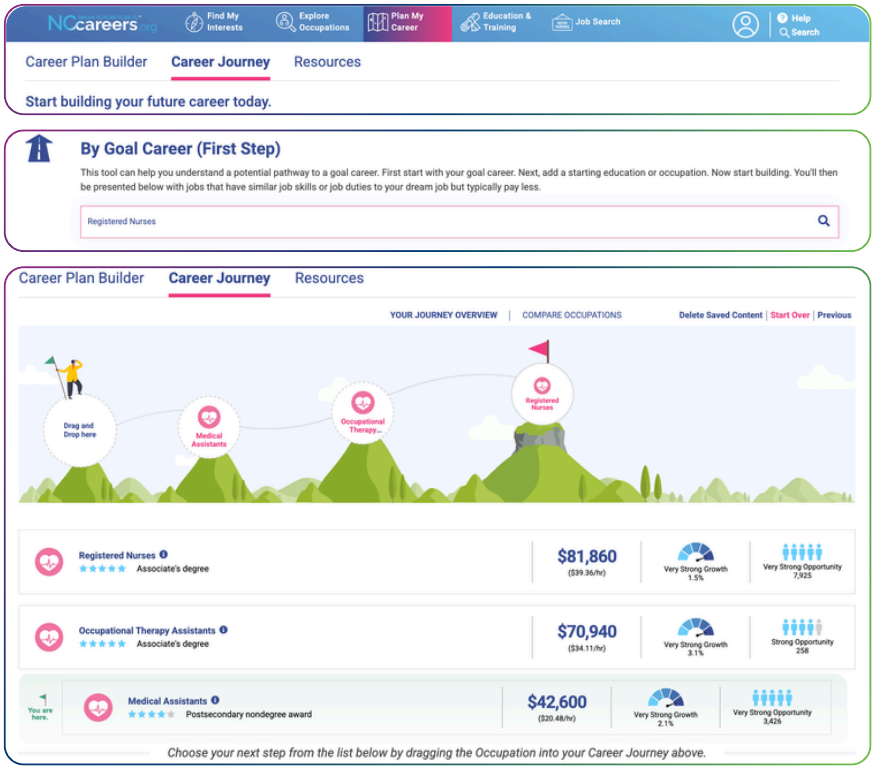
## USE WITH STUDENTS:

Use First Step with students who want a career requiring extensive education (doctor, lawyer, engineer) to show how to build toward it.

Use Next Step with students already working or planning to start working to show growth paths. Great for students who can't go straight to college or need to work during school.

## WHY IT MATTERS:

se tools show that "I want to be a
tep might show CNA → LPN → RN →
rough steps.



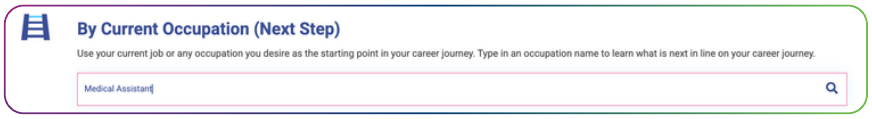

**Step 1:** Go to Plan My Career → Career Journey → By Goal Career (First Step)

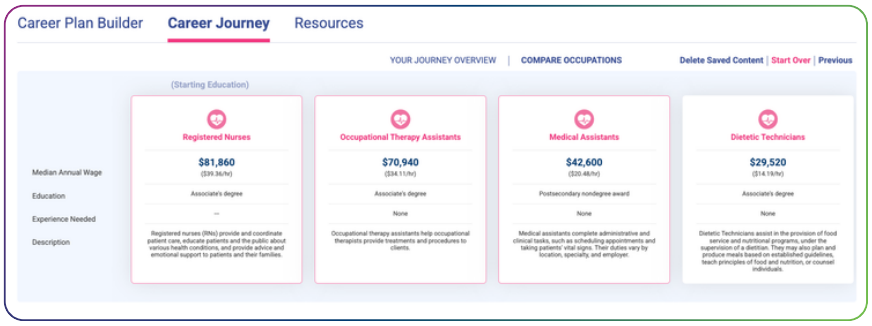
**Step 2:** Search for a career that requires significant education (try "Registered Nurse" or "Software Developer")

**Step 3:** Create a Career Journey by dragging at least two stepping stone jobs it suggests onto the mountain map above.

NORTH CAROLINA CAREER IMPACT PRO CERTIFICATION

# CAREER JOURNEY: FIRST STEP & NEXT STEP TOOLS




**Step 4:** Now go back to Career Journey → By Current Occupation (Next Step)

**Step 5:** Search for an entry-level job (try "Medical Assistant" or "Customer Service Representative")

**Step 6:** Note the advancement paths it shows from that starting point

**Step 7:** Try the "Compare Occupations" option and "Save" your Career Journey Map

## BRING BACK TO SHARE:

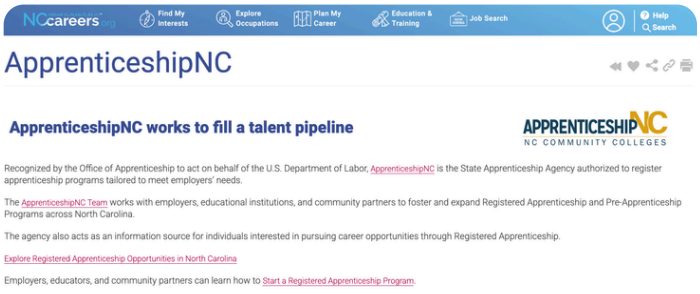
A complete career ladder (3+ positions) from entry-level to a career goal using one of the tools.

### PRO-TIP:

1. Encourage students to reach out to a professional in their community or on LinkedIn who is working in their desired end state occupation and ask them how they got there. Have students compare that real world story with the pathway shown in the First Step and Next Step tools. This activity helps students see that while tools can suggest common or typical pathways, careers are rarely linear. Talking with a real person reinforces that there are many valid routes to the same destination and that each career journey is shaped by individual choices, opportunities, and circumstances.

2. Professional associations are also excellent resources, as they often provide career maps, mentoring, and guidance for navigating an industry such as Advanced Manufacturing or a specific field like Human Resources. You can check out directoryofassociations.com and www.careeronestop.org to find Associations. Many have free resources and no cost memberships for students.

# APPRENTICESHIPNC INFORMATION




## WHAT IT IS?

Information about NC's registered apprenticeship program available through all 58 community colleges. Covers youth apprenticeships (for high school students), pre-apprenticeships, adult apprenticeships, and veteran pathways. Apprentices earn wages while learning, and employers see 90%+ retention rates.

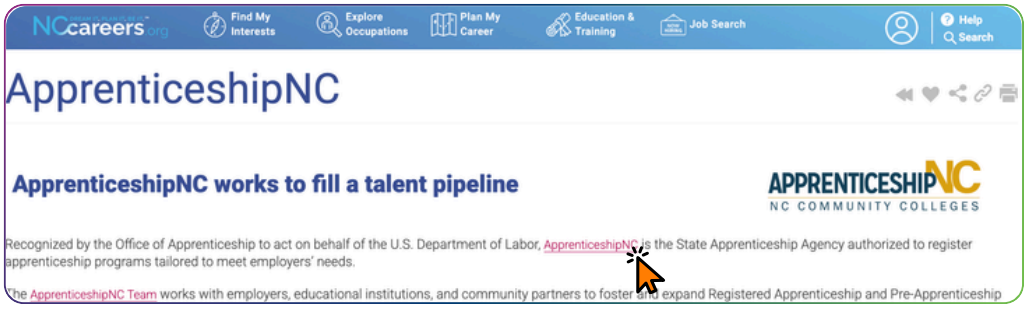
## USE WITH STUDENTS:

This is the "earn while you learn" option for students who can't or don't want to pay for traditional education. Youth Apprenticeships let high schoolers start apprenticeship while still enrolled. Great for students interested in skilled trades, healthcare, IT, and advanced manufacturing.

## WHY IT MATTERS:

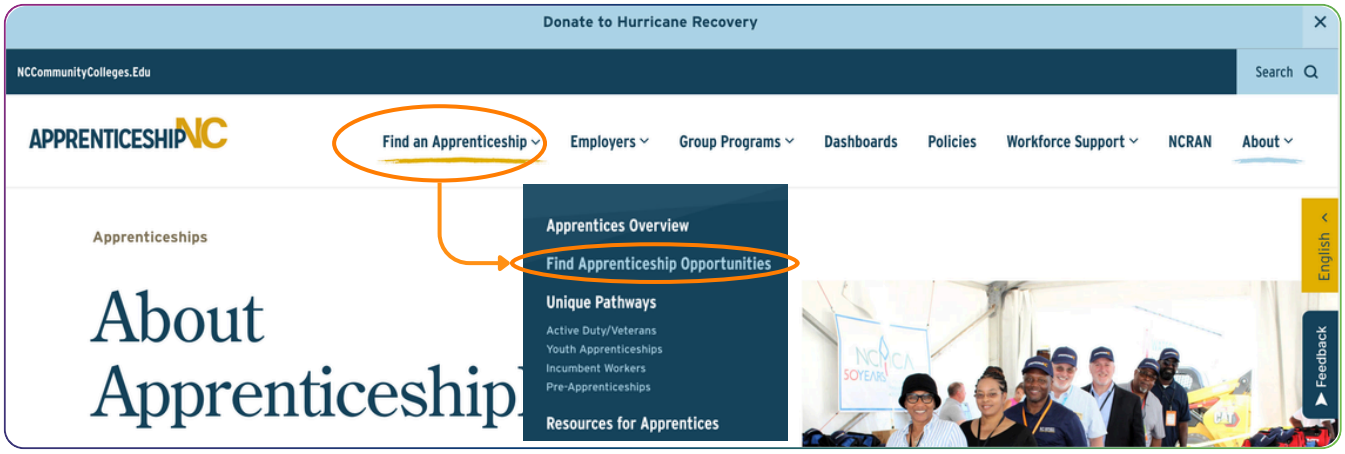
Apprenticeship is often overlooked in college-focused counseling. But apprentices earn money from day one, graduate debt-free, and have 90%+ job placement. For students for whom college isn't the right fit, this is a legitimate path to middle-class careers.

## YOUR 10-MINUTE ACTIVITY



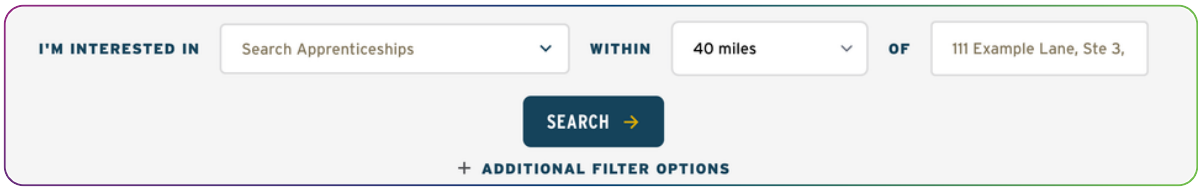

**Step 1:** Visit: [NCcareers.org/apprenticeshipnc](NCcareers.org/apprenticeshipnc)

**Step 2:** Click on [ApprenticeshipNC](ApprenticeshipNC) and once there navigate to “Find an Apprenticeship”




NORTH CAROLINA CAREER IMPACT PRO CERTIFICATION

# APPRENTICESHIPNC INFORMATION




**Step 3:** Put in your zip code to see apprenticeship opportunities within 40 miles of your location

**Step 4:** Browse the list (if there are too many, you can go back and make the search more specific)

**Step 5:** Note at least one Apprenticeship you'd like to find out more about

**Step 6:** Ask your regional apprenticeship coordinator their contact information and reach out to them to learn more. Ideally, create a WBL opportunity with that employer for some of your students.

## BRING BACK TO SHARE:

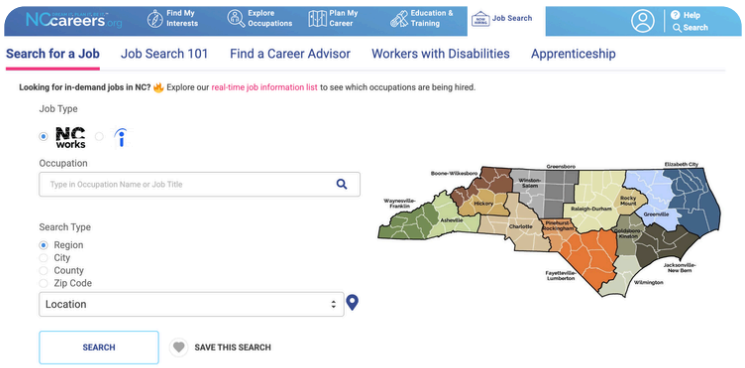
An apprenticeship in your area you'd like to learn more about and a communication with the contact.

### PRO-TIP:

1 Apprenticeships are powerful because they allow students to earn a wage while building real skills, professional networks, and industry credentials, often without taking on debt. They combine classroom learning with hands on experience, which makes career goals feel tangible and achievable, especially for students who learn best by doing. Apprenticeships can also strengthen the overall career preparation system by offering high-skill, high-wage opportunities alongside other postsecondary options, helping ensure that students have more choices for their future.

2 It is also important for students to understand that apprenticeship is one form of Work-based Learning, alongside options like internships, job shadowing, and paid work experiences. If you want to explore how apprenticeships and other WBL strategies can be offered to students in a structured, equitable way, download the WBL Manual to learn more: WBL Manual

# JOB SEARCH INTEGRATION




## WHAT IT IS?

Direct integration with NCWorks (the state job board) and Indeed, allowing users to search real job listings filtered by occupation, location, and job type. Links to NC State Government jobs as well. Job listings appear directly in occupation profiles for seamless research-to-search flow.

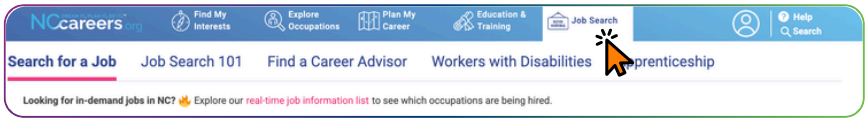
## USE WITH STUDENTS:

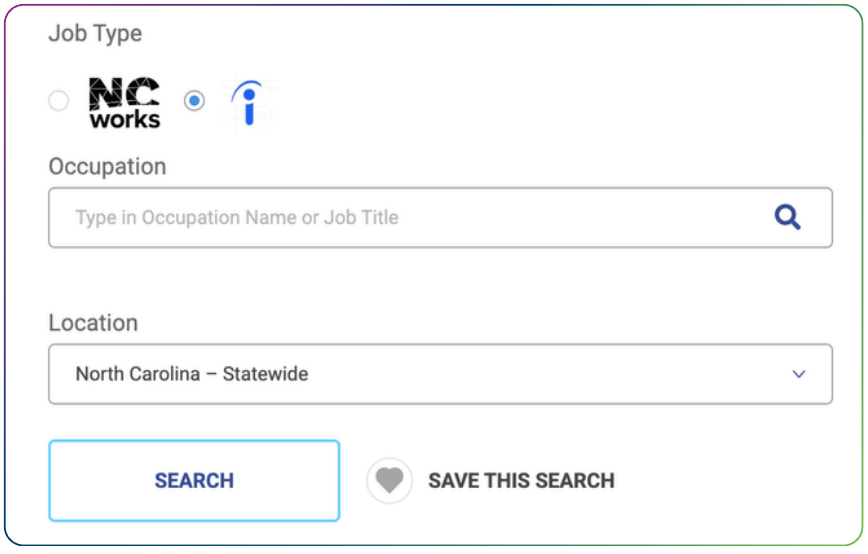
Use this to make career exploration concrete - show students actual job postings for careers they're considering. Have them read real job descriptions to understand what employers actually want. For seniors, this is where career exploration becomes job searching.

## WHY IT MATTERS:

Students need to see that the careers they're exploring have real, current job openings in companies hiring in their area. Reading actual job postings teaches them what skills and qualifications employers want. It also shows them the range of employers hiring for each occupation in their region.

## YOUR 10-MINUTE ACTIVITY



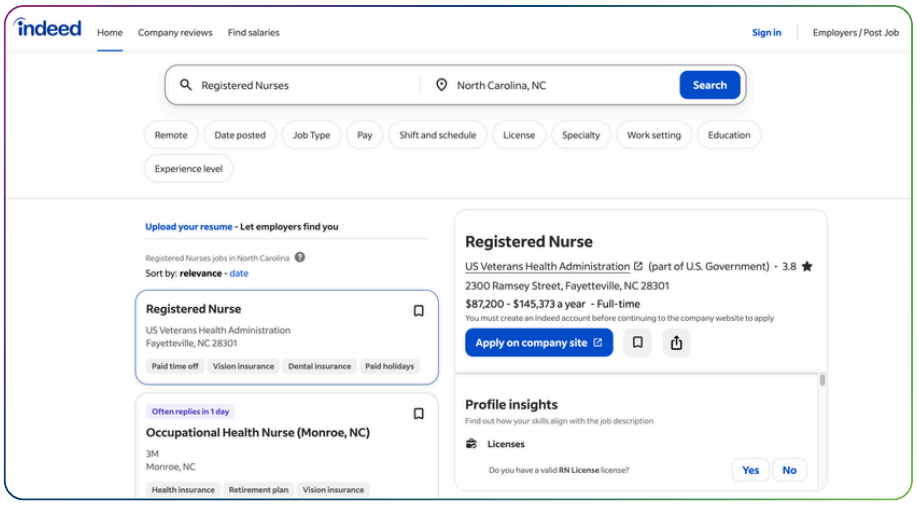

**Step 1:** Click Job Search at the top of the NCcareers.org homepage

**Step 2:** Choose NCWorks or Indeed to search for jobs (we recommend Indeed to see more options)

**Step 3:** Type in a common occupation students are exploring to see actual current jobs for that occupation

**Step 4:** Set your Search Type (you can play around with different options later)

# JOB SEARCH INTEGRATION




**Step 5:** Read ONE full job posting - note the qualifications required and employers who are hiring in your area

**Step 6:** Explore a few more jobs of interest

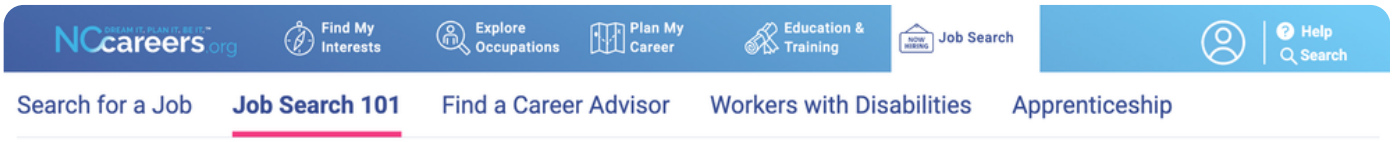
## BRING BACK TO SHARE:

A current job opening for one occupation in your region, which employer(s) are hiring for that position, AND one qualification from that job posting.

### PRO-TIP:

You can also view live job listings directly from each occupation profile, making it easy to move from career exploration to real world opportunities. Each profile also shows key labor market information, including the number of jobs in the region and projected job growth. Using this data alongside actual job postings helps students understand demand, hiring trends, and what employers are looking for right now, connecting interests to opportunity while building realistic expectations about the local job market.

# RESUME & INTERVIEW RESOURCES




## WHAT IT IS?

Comprehensive guides for resume writing (chronological, functional, electronic formats), cover letters, interview preparation, and references. Includes downloadable samples, action verb lists, and special "First Resume Tips" for students with no work history.

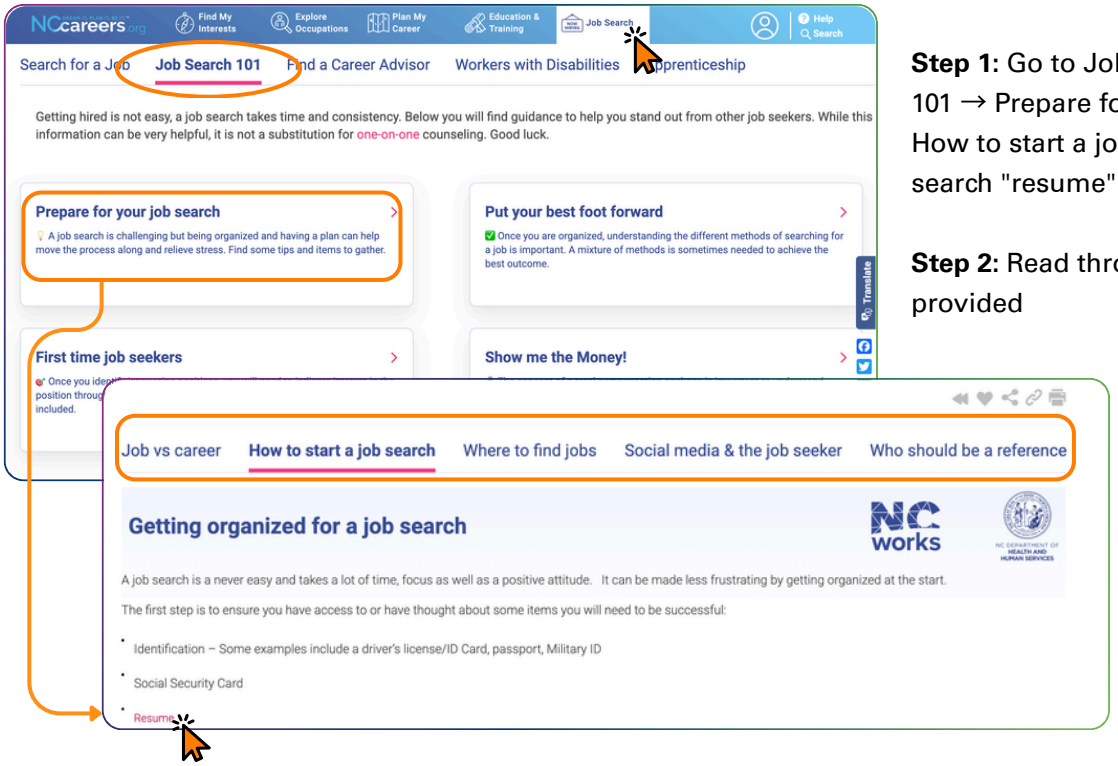
## USE WITH STUDENTS:

The "First Resume Tips" are gold for students creating their first resumes. Walk students through the resume types to help them choose the right format. Use the sample interview questions for mock interview practice. Great for seniors and any student preparing for jobs or internships.

## WHY IT MATTERS:

Many students have never seen a resume or cover letter before. These resources provide templates and examples they can actually follow. The "First Resume Tips" specifically address the challenge students face: how to write a resume when you haven't worked.

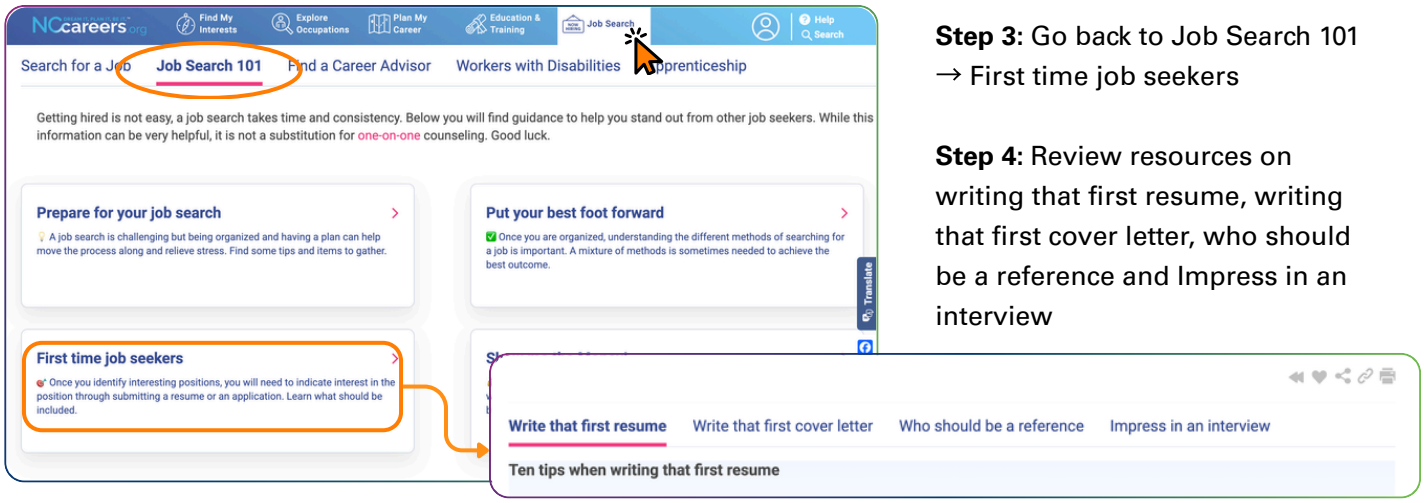
## YOUR 10-MINUTE ACTIVITY




**Step 1:** Go to Job Search → Job Search 101 → Prepare for Your Job Search → How to start a job search → Resume (or search "resume")

**Step 2:** Read through the resume tips provided

# RESUME & INTERVIEW RESOURCES




**Step 3:** Go back to Job Search 101 → First time job seekers

**Step 4:** Review resources on writing that first resume, writing that first cover letter, who should be a reference and Impress in an interview

## BRING BACK TO SHARE:

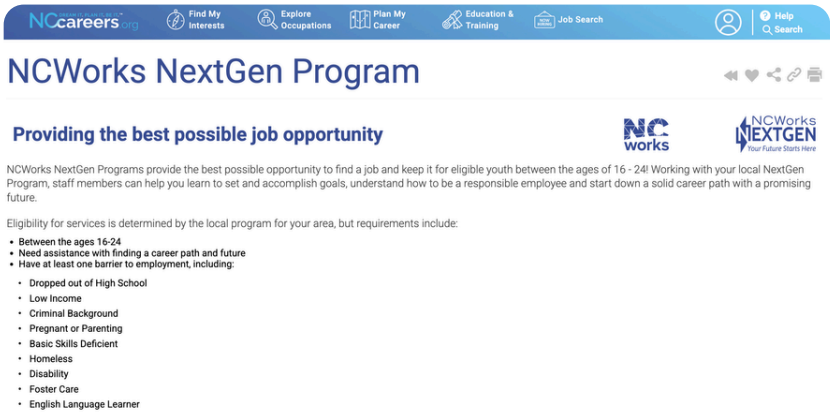
Two helpful resources from your Job Search 101 exploration.

### PRO-TIP:

AI tools are now widely used by employers to screen resumes, so how a resume is written and structured matters more than ever. Many free tools, including AI, can be very helpful for formatting resumes, drafting bullet points, and writing cover letters, especially for first time job seekers. The key is to preserve the student's authentic voice and clearly reflect their real skills, experiences, and strengths rather than relying on generic language.

AI can also be used strategically by asking it to review a resume against a specific job description, identify missing keywords, and suggest improvements that increase the likelihood of passing automated resume screeners. This helps students understand how resumes are evaluated while still staying true to who they

# SPECIAL POPULATION RESOURCES: YOUTH (NCWORKS NEXTGEN)




## WHAT IT IS?

Resources for youth ages 16-24 facing barriers, including the NCWorks NextGen program. Qualifying barriers include: dropped out, low income, criminal background, pregnant/parenting, basic skills deficient, homeless, disability, foster care, or English language learner. Services include goal setting, education assistance, job readiness, and work-based learning.

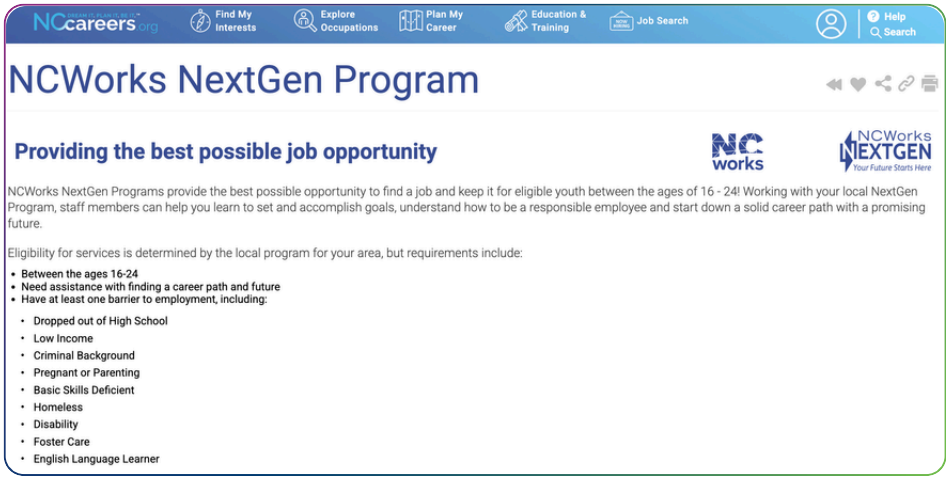
## USE WITH STUDENTS:

Know which of your students qualify for additional services! NCWorks NextGen provides intensive support for at-risk youth. If you work with students facing these barriers, connect them to the regional Workforce Development Board for NextGen services. These aren't just website resources - there's actual funding and staff support available.

## WHY IT MATTERS:

Students facing barriers need more than a website - they need intensive support. NextGen provides that through 20 regional Workforce Development Boards. Many counselors don't know these services exist or how to connect students to them.

## YOUR 10-MINUTE ACTIVITY




**Step 1:** Visit: [NCcareers.org/ncworks-nextgen-program](NCcareers.org/ncworks-nextgen-program)

**Step 2:** Find the list of qualifying barriers for NCWorks NextGen

# SPECIAL POPULATION RESOURCES: YOUTH (NCWORKS NEXTGEN)

To find the NCWorks NextGen program for your area, find your county and find contact information on the appropriate website below:

| Program | Website | Counties Served |
|---|---|---|
| Cape Fear WDB | https://capefearcog.org/workforce-development/ | Brunswick, Columbus, New Hanover, Pender |
| Capital Area WDB | https://capitalareancworks.com/youth-services/ | Chatham, Orange, Lee, Johnston, Wake |
| Centralina WDB | https://www.centralinaworkforce.com/nextgen-service.php?NextGen-Services-1 | Anson, Cabarrus, Iredell, Lincoln, Rowan, Stanly, Union |
| Charlotte Works | https://www.charlotteworks.com/services/youth-young-adults/ | Mecklenburg |
| Durham County WDB | https://www.ncworksnextgendurham.com/ | Durham |
| Eastern Carolina WDB | https://www.ecwdb.org/resource-media.php?Locations-Youth-Service-Providers-58 | Carteret, Craven, Duplin, Greene, Jones, Lenoir, Onslow, Pamlico, Wayne |
| Foothills WDB | https://foothillsregion.org/workforce-development/ | Cleveland, McDowell, Polk, Rutherford |
| Gaston County WDB | https://gastongovworks.com/whowehelp/youth/ | Gaston |
| GuilfordWorks | https://guilfordworks.org/services/young-adult-services/ | Guilford |

**Step 3:** Locate the NCWorks NextGen program for your area

**Step 4:** Explore their website and contact information

**Step 5:** Set a goal to find out more information about the programs offered

**Step 6: Consider:** Which of your students might qualify for NextGen services?

## BRING BACK TO SHARE:

Your regional NextGen contact. One specific question or area you would like to learn more about (for example, eligibility criteria, referral process, student supports, or program outcomes).

### PRO-TIP:

Encourage students and families to connect with their local NextGen representative for more information about youth support services. NextGen programs, funded through WIOA, provide career readiness, training assistance, and supportive services for eligible youth ages 16 to 24, particularly those who meet criteria similar to how we define special populations.

To find the NextGen contact in your area, visit the NC Association of Workforce Development Boards website and select your local board: **www.ncawdb.org/local-boards**

NCWorks believes in second chances. Career Centers offer specialized employment support for individuals with criminal records, including reentry-focused staff, resume and interview help, and connections to second-chance employers. These services are usually offered via your local NCWorks Career Centers. Learn more here: **nccareers.org/second-chance-employment-career-success**

NORTH CAROLINA
CAREER IMPACT PRO
CERTIFICATION

# Discovery Activities

**For Educators who support students in their Career Journey**

DREAM IT. PLAN IT. BE IT.
NCcareers.org

**February 2026**