

North Carolina's Southeast (NCSE) is one of the seven regional economic development partnerships in North Carolina and a member of the North Carolina Partnership for Economic Development. Since 1996, the Commission has worked to facilitate the arrival of 103 new companies to Southeastern North Carolina, along with 8,275 new jobs and \$903,275,000 in industrial investment.

NCSE's mission is to:

*Provide strong economic development leadership in southeastern North Carolina through innovative marketing and collaborative regional initiatives that will create new jobs, generate capital investment, and secure new business locations.*

Part of NCSE's mission is to build capacity within the region for advancing economic growth, including promoting a better trained and skilled workforce that can fully compete in the global economy.

Globalization is driving competition in company locations, job skills, and technology, and a higher skilled workforce is a must for quality regional economic growth. The eleven county southeastern region faced challenging economic transitions in the last decade. Much of the traditional and low-skilled manufacturing industries in the region, including apparel and textiles, relocated overseas. Most companies and industry sectors that now consider the region for locations have fewer jobs that require greater skills and competencies. At the same time, new opportunities have arisen in the region, including the growth of defense related businesses and jobs in the Fort Bragg region; the growth of the traditional and renewable energy sectors (i.e. GE Nuclear Energy); growth in food processing and agri-business; and the development of distribution and logistic companies that can utilize the region's excellent transportation assets.

Global workforce skills identified and required by many companies today include at least the following base level skills: critical thinking and problem solving; applied technology, applied mathematics, teamwork, locating and using information, and applied science.

NCSE plans to conduct a regional workforce analysis to thoroughly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce based on the region's business and industry clusters. Since a full analysis of the workforce in the southeast region has never been done, this project will be important in making decisions for most aspects of economic development planning in the region. Most companies now rank the workforce of an area as one of the top three considerations in their criteria for locating a business or industry.

#### **Key Points Concerning the Workforce Analysis**

- All current characteristics of the workforce will be examined, including overall strengths and weaknesses, available skills sets within industry sectors, gaps and deficiencies tied to specific industry sectors, and the region's ability compete for jobs and companies in these industry sectors.
- The analysis will look at skills levels within declining industry sectors that could potentially be transitioned to emerging industry sectors in the region, such as helping workers transition from textiles to automated food processing, or a woodworker machinist to an advanced manufacturing position or a position in the energy sector.
- The business and industry sectors that will be analyzed for workforce characteristics are: transportation/logistics, energy (including renewable energy), boatbuilding and marine trades, building product materials, food production, agri-industry, and metalworking. These sectors arose from an industry cluster analysis in the early 2000s as having predominant industry clusters in the region. The aerospace sector will be included, as NCSE is currently examining this as a targeted industry sector for job creation, based on existing assets in the region and the region's proximity to other aerospace assets. Biotechnology and defense contractors are important clusters in the region and will be touched on, but there are currently significant state efforts on workforce development in these sectors.
- The study will evaluate the current status of the manufacturing base in region, aligned on the ten year historic gain/loss in jobs, types of jobs and processes, and data reflecting future projections for the sector, including advanced manufacturing. Manufacturing crosses several industry sectors, employs 11% of the overall workforce, and pays the highest wages of any sector.

- The study will compare the present and future workforce needs to the current and future education and training capabilities of the workforce development system to identify gaps.
- The study will identify and describe the K-12 education, community college and university programs that are producing skilled workers for the cluster, including curriculums in the universities, STEM (Science Technology Engineering Math) and Career Technical Education (CTE) programs in K-12, and existing workforce training programs in the community colleges.
- The study will lead to the development of a strategic action and implementation plan for the region to meet present and future workforce needs.
- The study will be a collaborative effort, with NCSE acting as the facilitator of the project. Other organizations and institutions that will be involved include the Career Technical Education programs for K-12 in the region, the community college workforce training programs, the three regional state universities (Fayetteville State University, UNC-Pembroke, and UNC-Wilmington) and the five Workforce Investment Boards. Economic development organizations will play a key role as well.
- The study is being funded by the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the North Carolina Workforce Commission, and North Carolina's Southeast.

*The Southeast region consists of the following counties: Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, Cumberland, Hoke, New Hanover, Pender, Richmond, Robeson, Sampson, and Scotland*

*Contact: Steve Yost, Director, North Carolina's Southeast*