NC DEPARTMENT of COMMERCE
LABOR & ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

NORTH CAROLINA
COMMON FOLLOW-UP SYSTEM

A Report on the Operations of the North Carolina **COMMON FOLLOW-UP SYSTEM**

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A REPORT ON THE OPERATIONS OF THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMON FOLLOW-UP SYSTEM

May 2025

The 2025 Common Follow-up System (CFS) Operational Report provides information on CFS activities over the past calendar year. This report includes information related to education, employment and training programs for which data were reported by state agencies under the requirements of the North Carolina General Statute Chapter 96 Article 4[1].

WHAT IS THE COMMON FOLLOW-UP SYSTEM?

The Common Follow-up System provides information on the educational and employment outcomes of participants in publicly supported educational, employment, and training programs. It was established in response to a shared recognition among state agencies of the need for high-quality outcome data to support program planning, evaluation, and resource management.

Before the development of CFS, each agency conducted its own follow-up studies to meet specific programmatic, regulatory, or reporting requirements. These efforts varied in content and methodology, were often costly, and lacked coordination. There was no standardized approach to share information across agencies, analyze outcomes across programs, or evaluate the education and workforce system as a whole. CFS was developed as a cost-effective solution to these challenges, offering a unified and comprehensive framework for examining North Carolina's education, employment, and training systems.

HISTORY OF THE COMMON FOLLOW-UP SYSTEM

The CFS was developed in 1992 as a cooperative venture of the participating agencies under the auspices of the North Carolina State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NCSOICC). The participating agencies chose the former Employment Security Commission (ESC) as the system operator, due to its expertise with large data sets and its responsibility for the unemployment insurance wage file. In the initial year, a prototype matching system was developed. This matching system provided a mechanism whereby data submitted by an individual participating agency were matched to data submitted by each of the other agencies and to employment and wage information in the Unemployment Insurance wage file.

Over the first few years of operation, the CFS evolved in data processing procedures and system expansion and was converted from a single year matching system to a longitudinal database. The longitudinal database structure provided a mechanism for following an individual's progress across education, employment and training programs across time as well as supporting comparisons at specific intervals or points in time. This conversion also provided the opportunity to study the long-term impact of programs, to examine the interrelationships among agencies in the overall provision of services, and to gain a better understanding of the path individuals follow while utilizing these services. The number of individuals

[1] https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/ByArticle/Chapter_96/Article_4.html

processed per year increased from 330,045 in 1992 to over 1.7 million in 1995, while the number of agencies grew from six to eight over the same period.

In 1995, the General Assembly enacted legislation that amended Chapter 96 of the North Carolina General Statutes and established CFS by statute. The legislation defined system participation, established, and assigned operational and evaluative responsibilities, mandated data integrity and confidentiality, and outlined reporting requirements and schedules.

Over the next several years, there was increased interest in the data contained in the CFS. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 stimulated further interest and attention to the CFS data. WIA mandated the collection, calculation and reporting of performance and accountability measures for workforce training programs operated throughout the state. The ESC worked in collaboration with the Division of Workforce Development (DWD) on the development of procedures for the processing, calculation, and reporting of the state's WIA performance measures. To help meet the reporting requirements for WIA, additional data elements were added to the CFS in the calculation of performance measures.

During the 2001 Legislative Session, the General Assembly transferred the evaluative responsibility for the CFS from the Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM) to the ESC. In July of 2011, the General Assembly enacted legislation that transferred the ESC to the North Carolina Department of Commerce (NC Commerce). Responsibility for the CFS was moved to the NC Commerce's Labor and Economic Analysis Division (LEAD).

In 2012, the General Assembly enacted Session Law 2012-131 to reform the state's workforce development system. Part of the law called for NC Commerce to improve and strengthen the CFS and to collaborate with the Commission on Workforce Development to utilize information from CFS to create performance measures for the state's workforce development system. To improve and strengthen the CFS, NC Commerce began several initiatives to enhance technology for the system and update documentation for agency and programmatic information. CFS was migrated from its mainframe computing environment to a server-based platform to improve system capacity.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction was awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Education in 2012 to build a State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). The goal of the system was to provide a mechanism to follow individuals across North Carolina's K-12 education system, higher education, and into the workforce. The SLDS project was able to establish a link between the system and the employment-related data in CFS, which was completed through a joint effort between NC Commerce and the NC Department of Information Technology's Government Data Analytics Center (GDAC).

As part of its ongoing efforts to improve CFS, NC Commerce applied for and received a competitive grant in 2013 with the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (USDOLETA) through the Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) program. The grant was used to enhance the CFS technology capabilities and to fund the development of the North Carolina Tool for Online Workforce and Education Reporting (NC TOWER)[2]. NC TOWER is a public online reporting system that provides

[2] https://tower.nc.gov

employment and wage outcomes by program, degree, and institution for North Carolina's public secondary and post-secondary education systems.

To enhance the CFS system outputs, LEAD staff worked with the Division of Workforce Solutions and the NCWorks Commission to develop a set of performance measures for the state's Workforce Development System. These measures were used in the Commission's first report "Measuring the Performance of North Carolina's Workforce Development System: A First Look" in 2014, and the subsequent annual reports. The most recent report was prepared in December 2024 and released in January 2025[3].

During the 2014 Session, the General Assembly enacted Session Law 2014-100 which required NC Commerce to develop a plan for the transfer of the of the CFS information and technology to GDAC. NC Commerce worked closely with GDAC to develop the business and system requirements for the new system. In 2015, LEAD and GDAC migrated the historical CFS data from its mainframe computing environment into the GDAC server-based environment.

Beginning with the 2015 program year and continuing today, contributor data submissions and processing have been completed in the GDAC environment. During the following years, LEAD staff continued to work with GDAC and the contributing agencies to enhance the CFS content and infrastructure as well as make improvements to the contributor data portal.

How is the Common Follow-up System Operated?

The participating agencies supply data files based on their operational and reporting periods, which can be a calendar quarter, federal fiscal year, state fiscal year, academic term, or school year. The enhanced CFS is designed to receive and align information across varying reporting schedules. The number of submitted data files and corresponding file structures are customized for each agency and are aligned to contributing agency's existing information systems. The submitted files are created from administrative records that are maintained by each of the contributors and contain a wealth of information specific to each contributor, including demographic data, program enrollment information, program completion, course participation, services received, and other agency-specific information.

How are CFS Data Processed?

Each contributing agency has defined reporting timelines customized to their specific program and agency operations. These reporting timelines are developed in collaboration with the contributing agencies and are catalogued in the GDAC contributor portal. The enhanced CFS provides an automated email notification to each contributor with a reminder of their reporting deadlines. In addition, LEAD works closely with the contributing agencies to track reporting timelines and to identify any reporting delays. The contributing agencies transmit their data files to a secure GDAC environment. Once received, information is subject to an automated data validation process. The validation process generates Edit Reports for each submitted data file and the reports are available to the contributing agencies through the GDAC Contributor Portal. Contributors review the edit reports and consult with staff at LEAD to determine if updates or corrections are needed. Agencies are responsible for reviewing and approving

[3] https://www.commerce.nc.gov/measuring-performance-north-carolinas-workforce-development-system-january-2025-ncworks-commission/open

their final data submissions. Once approved the data are loaded to individual contributor warehouses in the GDAC environment.

In addition to the information supplied by the education, employment and training agencies, NC Commerce's Division of Employment Security (DES) provides employment and wage information as well as information on Unemployment Insurance claims and benefit recipients. These data are processed monthly and quarterly and loaded to specific tables within the GDAC environment. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, DES started to provide more timely weekly UI claims data to the CFS.

Following the completion of the data loading process, LEAD analyzes data from contributing agencies in conjunction with employment and wage data. The resulting information are utilized in the development and production of reports, data files and other related research products.

The confidential nature of information contained in the CFS mandates the use of strict safeguards in the collection, storage, and use of the data. CFS data are stored within the secure GDAC environment. Access to the systems requires individual user data access profiles, as well as individual user ID's and passwords. At the time of system enrollment and with every data release, contributors and staff are informed of the confidential nature of the data and the legal restrictions on its use. All informational products are subject to a set of data suppression procedures to prevent the disclosure of personally identifiable information.

IS THE CFS COST-EFFECTIVE?

The CFS is an efficient and cost-effective method for collecting longitudinal outcomes for education, employment, and training program participants. The extensive use of administrative records and automated matching systems allows the costs to be held below that of any system that would rely upon phone or mail surveys to collect similar data.

The cost-effectiveness of the CFS can also be evaluated in terms of the benefit that the data provide to the participating entities. The system generates matching employment and wage data for participants without the use of telephone or mail surveys. Benefits include time saved not having to produce mail and analyze responses from program participants, making the return on investment invaluable.

Several of the contributing agencies have utilized the information available through CFS to help meet a variety of state and federal performance, policy, and evaluation initiatives. The North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) has utilized the information to help in meeting federal performance requirements for the U.S. Department of Education including the National Reporting System for Adult Education programs and the Perkins core indicators. In addition, they utilized data from CFS in the development of a performance measures system for North Carolina's 58 Community Colleges including an employment measure that will be utilized to assess post-completion employment outcomes.

The University of North Carolina System (UNC) has utilized information through CFS to support internal analyses, assist in strategic planning and provide employment-related information to the UNC Board of

Governors in its program review process. The UNC dashboard[4] contains a variety of enrollment and graduation statistics including a link to the employment and wage outcomes in the NC TOWER web portal.

In addition, information from the CFS is utilized by agency partners in meeting state and federal performance and evaluation initiatives. These efforts have included the use of CFS data in assessing the provision of services to participants as well as the evaluation of employment and wage outcomes. CFS data is often utilized to support economic development activities in the state and assist stakeholders to make informed decisions for business recruitment and expansion. Career development programs across the state in both higher education and high schools also use the data.

WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF CFS DATA?

The scope of the CFS is extensive in terms of the number of contributing entities, the number of individuals included in the system and the breadth of program and service coverage. Review of follow-up systems in other states reveals that North Carolina's CFS offers the most comprehensive coverage of education and workforce program participant outcomes of any state longitudinal data system. Many states and governmental entities with similar missions and mandates view the CFS as a model for delivering follow-up information. The CFS is an efficient and cost-effective tool for long-term follow-up due to the reliance on automated matching of administrative records. However, since much of the data utilized in the CFS were originally gathered for different purposes, the resultant output possesses both inherent strengths and limitations. Several of the most significant areas are described below:

Wage information includes information on individuals:

- working in jobs covered under North Carolina Unemployment Insurance Laws

Available employment-related data includes:

- employment status of the individual
- size of the employing firm
- North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code of the firm.

Wage information reflects total quarterly earnings; hourly or weekly wages are not available.

Wage information is not available for individuals who:

- work outside of North Carolina
- are employed in North Carolina, but not covered by unemployment insurance (e.g., the self-employed, church and religious organization employees, summer camp employees, and other non-covered workers)

Employment-related information that cannot be determined includes:

- entry-on-duty date of employment for the individual
- employment type (i.e., permanent, temporary, part- or full-time)
- whether the person worked at all during the quarter
- number of hours worked for the quarter
- person's occupation.

[4] https://www.northcarolina.edu/impact/stats-data-reports/

CFS CURRENT OPERATION (2024)

Improving the Quality of Workforce and Education Data

Throughout the 2024 calendar year, LEAD concentrated on enhancing the quality and consistency of the workforce and education data. This included a comprehensive review and update of data elements housed within the data warehouse, alongside significant improvements to data validation processes. In collaboration with key data contributors — including the UNC System, the Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS), the Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS), the North Carolina Community College System, and ApprenticeshipNC — LEAD implemented meaningful changes to data field selections and submission validation rules.

As part of its commitment to enhancing data quality and analytical accuracy, LEAD extensively leveraged the eLink project for data resolution and validation. Outputs from eLink were integral to refining NC TOWER reporting website, preparing the 2024 CFS Operational and 2025 CFS Evaluation reports, and fulfilling numerous specialized data requests and evaluation studies. Notably, eLink algorithms enabled the resolution of more than 250,000 Social Security Numbers, representing approximately 10% of the total population in the NC DPI high school student data for the CFS, spanning from 1991 to 2024.

For agencies that do not collect Social Security Numbers, such as the Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS), eLink remains the primary tool for linking individual records across datasets. In the case of DAAS, eLink achieved a 91% SSN resolution rate.

Meeting the Information Needs of Education and Workforce Stakeholders

The Common Follow-up System's robust infrastructure and diverse range of data sources continue to enable responsive, high-quality support for both internal and external data requests. Over the past year, LEAD staff provided data and analytical expertise to a wide range of partners, including the UNC System Office; the NC Community College System; Wake County Public School System; myFutureNC; NCWORKS Commission; NC Office of Science, Technology & Innovation; US Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education; the NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission; and multiple Workforce Development Boards and Career Centers.

CFS data played a critical role in supporting key initiatives such as the NCCCS Performance Measures Report (Perkins V Report), NCCCS Basic Skills Follow-Up Outcomes, and Wake County Public School System's student employment trajectory analyses. Additionally, the system supported the NC Department of Adult Correction in meeting the reporting requirements outlined in the Governor's Executive Order No. 303 by providing analysis of employment outcomes.

In 2024, LEAD completed a wage-matching request for the UNC System Office to support research on employment and wage outcomes, program return on investment, and the economic impact of higher education programs and institutions. The results were highly encouraging and led to an agreement between LEAD and the UNC System Office to establish this data support as an annual service.

Leveraging CFS to Evaluate Workforce and Education Programs

In alignment with its legislative mandate, LEAD continued its strategic focus on program evaluation and data storytelling to support data-informed decision-making across North Carolina's education and workforce systems. This work serves a broad audience, including state agencies, policymakers, and the general public.

Evaluation of Correctional Reentry Programs

During the reporting period, LEAD played a key role in a strategic collaboration with the NC Department of Adult Correction (NCDAC) Division of Rehabilitation and Reentry and the NC Office of Strategic Partnerships (OSP), conducting critical program evaluation research that directly advanced the NCDAC Research Agenda. Leveraging data from the CFS, LEAD carried out an in-depth evaluation of the Corrections Enterprise program. Following the success of this project, the partnership expanded to include evaluations of additional reentry initiatives such as Work Release and Academic Education programs, aimed at supporting individuals' transition back into the workforce.

Support for Postsecondary Program Impact Analysis

In 2024, LEAD provided data and analytical support to the SERVE Center at UNC Greensboro and the RAND Corporation for a study assessing the impacts of North Carolina's Career and College Promise (CCP) program on workforce outcomes.

Partnership with UNC's Education Policy Initiative

LEAD expanded its collaboration with the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC) at UNC Chapel Hill. This partnership examines NCDPI students' ACT WorkKeys scores and their postsecondary enrollment, degree attainment, employment, and wage outcomes after high school graduation. This project is sponsored by the Urban Institute's Student Upward Mobility Initiative to explore how education can more effectively enhance students' long-term economic mobility.

Outcomes for CTE Students with Disabilities

In partnership with the NCDPI Career and Technical Education (CTE) office, LEAD conducted an analysis on the post-graduation outcomes for high school students with disabilities identified as CTE concentrators. Findings from this study were shared at the 2024 CTE Summer Conference as well as at the 2024 NCDPI A.I.M. Conference.

Annual Workforce System Performance Reporting

As required by the General Statute[5], LEAD collaborated with the NCWorks Commission to produce the annual *Workforce Development System Performance Report*[6], leveraging CFS data to assess the impact and effectiveness of employment training programs in North Carolina.

[5] https://www.ncleg.gov/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_143B/GS_143B-438.10.pdf
[6] https://www.commerce.nc.gov/measuring-performance-north-carolinas-workforce-development-system-january-2025-ncworks-commission/open

Research Dissemination via CFS and The LEAD Feed

The CFS database continues to provide valuable insights into North Carolina's labor market. During the reporting period, LEAD staff published a series of studies on the CFS website[7] and *The LEAD Feed*[8], exploring workforce trends by occupation and social group. Featured publications include:

- What Works in Workforce? The Impact of Career and Technical Education (CTE) Concentration on Students with Disabilities[9]
- Insights on Post-Prison Job Quality from the NC Reentry Outcome Reporting System[10]
- Where do older jobseekers find work?[11]
- Older Workers in North Carolina's Labor Market[12]

Leveraging CFS to Strengthen Strategic, Data-Driven Collaboration

All of the analyses were conducted in collaboration with CFS partner agencies, including the UNC System Office, the NC Community College System, the NC Department of Public Instruction, the NC Division of Workforce Solutions, and the NC Department of Adult Correction. While LEAD provided the analytical capacity, the partner agencies contributed valuable insights and in-depth knowledge of their respective programs and the populations they serve.

Additional research, analytical, and reporting efforts were carried out in continued partnership with myFutureNC and the NC Office of Strategic Partnerships. LEAD staff actively integrated CFS data into a wide range of presentations addressing education, workforce development, and economic trends. These engagements included sessions at key stakeholder convenings such as the NCWorks Partnership Conference; NCWorks Commission Quarterly Business Meetings; the Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission meeting; the Joint Reentry Council Education Subcommittee Meeting; the Governor's Crime Commission meeting; the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's A.I.M. Conference; the 2024 CTE Summer Conference; the NC Judicial Branch Advisory Commission Meeting; the Workforce Development Board Executive Directors Council meeting; the Prosperity Zone Regional Operations Directors meeting.

Delivering Workforce and Education Performance Insights

During the reporting period, LEAD continued to provide accessible, data-driven insights by updating and expanding several statewide tools to report on workforce training and education outcomes. These tools utilize data from the CFS to inform decision-making by policymakers, education, workforce professionals, and the public.

Enhancing NC TOWER[13]

LEAD staff worked to update the North Carolina Tool for Online Workforce and Education Reporting (NC TOWER) and successfully migrate it to a new platform. NC TOWER is a web-based tool powered by CFS data, providing employment, wage, and postsecondary enrollment information for more than 2.2 million

[7] https://nccareers.org/cfs/
[8] https://www.commerce.nc.gov/news/the-lead-feed
[9] https://www.commerce.nc.gov/news/the-lead-feed/cte-concentration-students-disabilities
[10] https://www.commerce.nc.gov/news/the-lead-feed/nc-post-prison-reentry-outcomes
[11] https://www.commerce.nc.gov/news/the-lead-feed/where-do-older-jobseekers-find-work
[12] https://www.commerce.nc.gov/news/the-lead-feed/older-workers-north-carolinas-labor-market
[13] https://tower.nc.gov

students. It includes graduates from North Carolina public high schools, the North Carolina Community College System, and the University of North Carolina System, spanning nearly two decades and providing a rich source of longitudinal outcome data.

Expanding NC Reentry Outcome Reporting System (NC-RORS)

In 2024, LEAD expanded the North Carolina Reentry Outcome Reporting System (NC-RORS)[14] to include data on additional reentry programs. NC-RORS is an interactive dashboard that tracks post-prison employment and wage outcomes by industry sector and disaggregated this data by gender, race/ethnicity, and participation in-prison programs, covering individuals released from state prisons over the past 25 years. NC-RORS is built on data submitted to the CFS by the NC Department of Adult Correction (DAC) and Division of Employment Security (DES).

Designed to shed light on the labor market outcomes of formerly incarcerated individuals, the dashboard supports the workforce of professionals and criminal justice stakeholders in identifying barriers to reentry, improving support services, and promoting successful reintegration into the workforce. LEAD staff also used NC-RORS to present reentry outcomes to multiple state agencies and commissions, including the Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, Governor's Crime Commission, the Joint Reentry Council Education Subcommittee, NC Judicial Branch Advisory Commission.

Workforce Service Delivery Outcome Dashboard

LEAD continued to maintain and update the Workforce Service Delivery Outcome Dashboard[15], developed in collaboration with the Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS), the Local Workforce Development Boards (WDB), and the NC Association of Workforce Development Boards. This dashboard utilizes CFS data to report the number of participants served, services provided, and key outcome measures, such as post-program participation employment and wage information.

NC Labor Supply and Demand Dashboard

LEAD also continued enhancements to the NC Labor Supply and Demand Dashboard[16], which relies on CFS data to monitor education pipeline development. The dashboard tracks the number of students graduating and earning postsecondary credentials from both the NC Community College System and the UNC System, offering valuable insights into workforce readiness and talent supply.

Cross-Sector Partnership through the NC Longitudinal Data System

LEAD remained a critical partner in the development and growth of the North Carolina Longitudinal Data Service (NCLDS), a cross-sector partnership among North Carolina's early childhood, K-12, and post-secondary/workforce systems. Its mission is to modernize and integrate data infrastructure to provide policymakers and stakeholders with timely, actionable insights that span the full education-to-workforce pipeline. The initiative represents a collaborative effort among key agencies including the NC Department of Health and Human Services (ECIDS), the NC Department of Public Instruction (NCSW), and the NC Department of Commerce's Common Follow-up System (CFS).

[14] https://analytics.nccommerce.com/NC-RORS/
[15] https://analytics.nccommerce.com/NC-WDB-Services/
[16] https://analytics.nccommerce.com/NC-Labor-Supply-Demand/

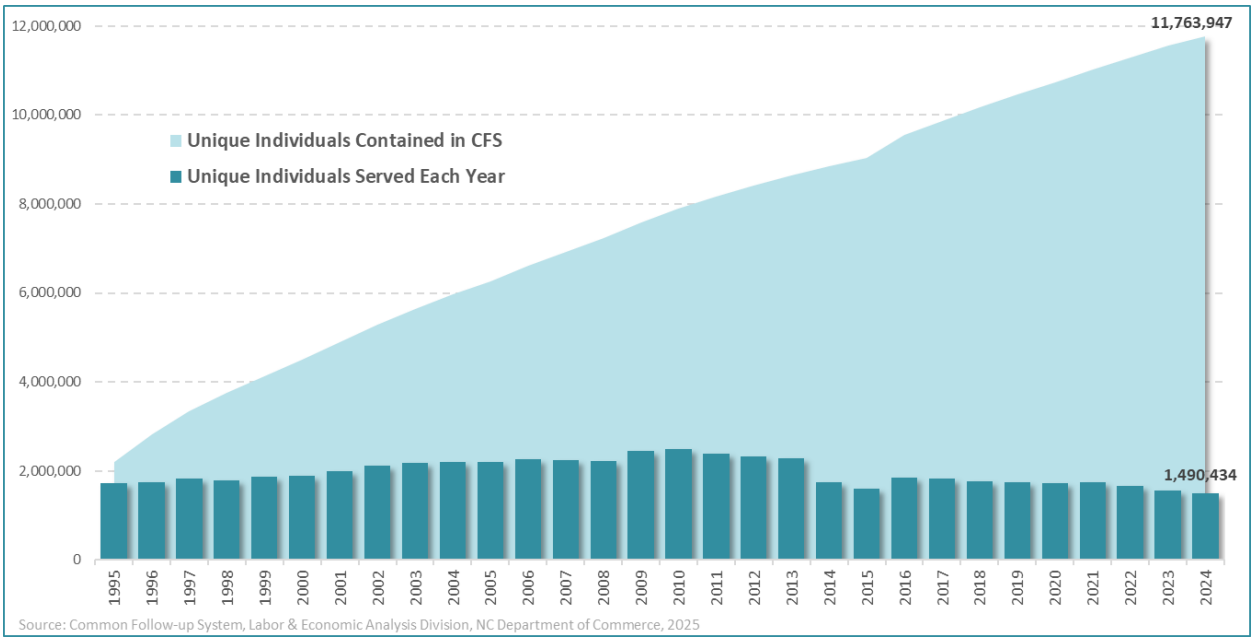
PARTICIPATION SUMMARY ACROSS THE YEARS

CFS has expanded dramatically since it started in the early 1990's. LEAD and the contributing agencies have made concerted efforts to incorporate information regarding additional programs and the individuals they serve, as well as to solicit the participation of other divisions or agencies. The analyses that are included in the following sections reflect data supplied by the contributing entities for services that were provided through June 2024.

Figure 1 shows the total number of unique individuals included in the system between the 1994-1995 and 2023-2024 program years[17], as well as the number of individuals served each year by publicly funded education and workforce training programs contained in CFS. The system currently includes information on over 11.7 million unique individuals.

The total number of unique individuals within the CFS was obtained by performing a total unique count of validated Social Security Numbers contained in the system across all contributing agencies by program year. Analyses of data indicate that the number of individuals who received services through one or more of the contributing entities ranged from the high of 2.3 million in program year 2010-2011 to 1.4 million in the most recent 2023-2024 program year.

Figure 1. Growth and Scope of the Common Follow-up System Since Inception, PY 1995 to 2024



The following entities provided information on individuals enrolled in education and employment training programs during the 2022-2023 program year:

- **North Carolina Department of Adult Correction (DAC)**
- **North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI)**
- **North Carolina Department of Commerce**

[17] Program year runs from July 1 through June 30.

- **Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS)**

- **North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services**
  - **Division of Services for the Blind (DSB)**
  - **Division of Social Services (DSS)**
  - **Division of Employment and Independence for People with Disabilities (EIPD)**
  - **Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disability, and Substance Abuse (DMH)**
  - **Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS)**
- **North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS)**
- **University of North Carolina (UNC)**

In addition to the information supplied by the education, employment and training agencies, the DES provided CFS a wealth of employment and wage information as well as information on Unemployment Insurance claims and benefit recipients.

Analyses of agency's historical data in CFS provide an understanding of the scope of the system, as well as an overview of service provision by contributing agencies over time. Table 1 presents information regarding the number of individuals served by each of the contributing agencies by year as well as the total number of individuals served across all contributing agencies. Counts of the number of individuals by each agency were obtained by performing a unique count of individuals with SSNs submitted by the agency by program year. The agency totals over the ten-year time period are counts of unique individuals across multiple years. Individuals can receive services from a given agency across multiple program years. The unique count of individuals from all agencies within a given year are unique counts of individuals across agencies. Individuals may be served by more than one agency in a given year or across years.

TABLE 1. Individuals Served by Agency and by Program Year

Agency	Program Year										Individuals served per agency, 2015-2024
	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	
NC Division of Aging and Adult Services	--	318	339	312	315	244	181	231	529	189	**951**
NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disability, and Substance Abuse	--	6,412	6,908	8,033	7,828	7,668	6,249	5,924	5,265	1,598	**19,668**
NC Department of Adult Correction	183,066	196,897	192,211	189,033	184,884	169,727	155,535	148,623	147,552	146,225	**481,536**
NC Department of Public Instruction	201,036	455,313	456,827	455,457	444,110	435,146	430,938	417,732	392,970	279,693	**1,302,183**
NC Division of Services for the Blind	3,213	3,266	3,190	2,882	3,012	3,005	2,444	2,530	2,629	3,184	**8,491**
NC Division of Social Services	18,568	24,737	50,048	12,671	15,727	14,680	12,125	11,108	11,650	10,620	**98,849**
Employment and Independence for People with Disabilities	48,642	57,588	51,575	47,632	46,207	41,129	34,751	32,837	31,475	45,421	**165,058**
NC Division of Workforce Solutions	469,939	392,772	350,631	306,920	300,700	358,796	433,133	349,836	218,714	246,630	**1,892,146**
NC Community College System	659,784	702,328	691,025	674,748	669,894	602,136	548,984	583,599	632,247	629,997	**3,125,165**
University of North Carolina System	233,382	245,712	248,233	251,849	256,282	259,766	263,849	263,116	258,256	260,186	**890,679**
Individuals served per program year across all agencies	**1,590,395**	**1,852,722**	**1,828,985**	**1,758,378**	**1,743,113**	**1,721,625**	**1,737,376**	**1,670,919**	**1,566,459**	**1,490,434**	**5,645,129**

Source: Common Follow-up System, Labor & Economic Analysis Division, NC Department of Commerce 2025

Note: Because individuals may be served by more than one agency in a given year or across years, rows and columns may not add to the totals. All counts only include participants with valid SSNs.

Over the ten-year period spanning July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2024, over 5.6 million individuals received services through the contributing agencies. This includes nearly 1.9 million individuals who received a variety of workforce services through the DWS which is the state administrative entity for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I and Title III programs.

Over 3.1 million individuals participated in education and training programs through the NCCCS, which is responsible for administering WIOA Title II programs. While DWS and NCCCS delivered services to large numbers of individuals, North Carolina's public school system provides the building blocks upon which other education, employment and training services rely. During the same period, more than 1.3 million students were enrolled in public high school programs[18]. UNC is the state's publicly supported university system and provides educational programs to over 890,000 individuals.

Several agencies provide services to very specific sub-populations. The Division of Social Services provided employment and supportive services to more than 98,000 Work First Program participants over the ten-year period, while the Department of Adult Correction provided services to over 481,000 offenders in prison, or on probation or parole. The Division of Employment and Independence for People with Disabilities provided rehabilitation services to over 165,000 individuals with physical and mental disabilities, and Division of Services for the Blind provided vocational rehabilitation services to more than 8,400 blind, visually impaired and multi-handicapped individuals.

It is important to keep in mind that some entities are authorized to provide services to large segments of the population (e.g., DWS and NCCCS), while others are authorized to provide services to very specific sub-populations based on stringent eligibility criteria including occupational goal, income, disability type, severity of disability, and educational requirements (e.g., DSS, EIPD, DSB and UNC).

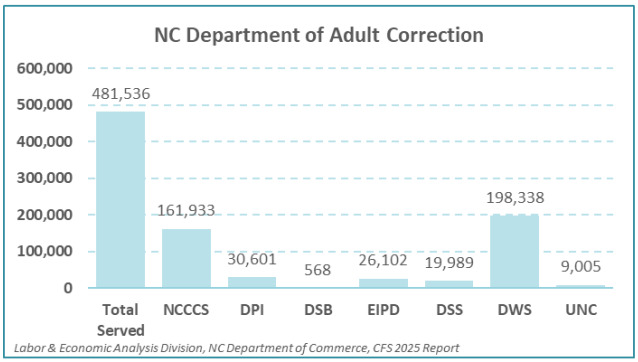
INTERRELATIONSHIPS AMONG AGENCIES IN THE PROVISION OF SERVICES

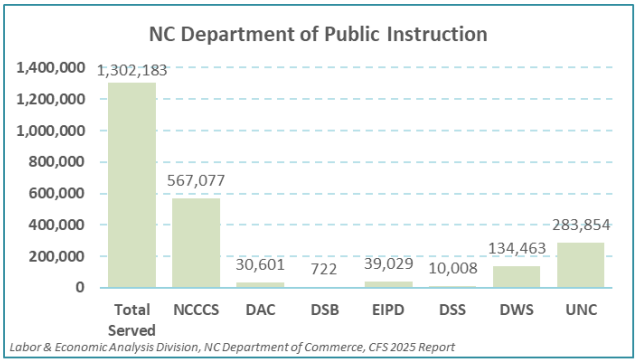
A core strength of the CFS is its longitudinal structure, which fosters the examination of the interrelationships among entities in the overall provision of services and an understanding of the path individuals follow while utilizing these services. This capacity supports ongoing state and national efforts, such as the NCWorks Career Center System**,** the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**,** and various agency-led initiatives—focused on greater coordination, collaboration, and integration of services.

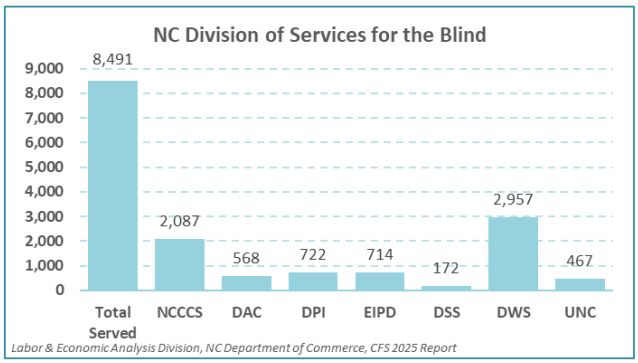
To examine these interrelationships, LEAD analyzed CFS data across the past ten program years (July 1, 2014, through June 30, 2024). These analyses incorporated data from all contributing agencies, which vary in organizational structure, ranging from multi-divisions within a given agency to inter-agency collaborations. Each agency's dataset included information on one or more programs and/or services. The analysis identified the number of unique individuals served by each agency, the number of unique individuals served across agencies, and the overlap of individuals receiving services from more than one agency. These findings offer valuable insight into the extent of service integration and are visualized in Figure 2.

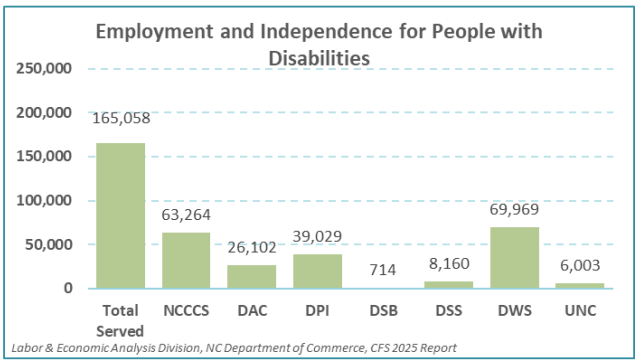
[18] The reported number of high school students can be lower due to adoption of eLink solution to improve data quality. However, the number may grow higher over time as more data becomes available in eLink.

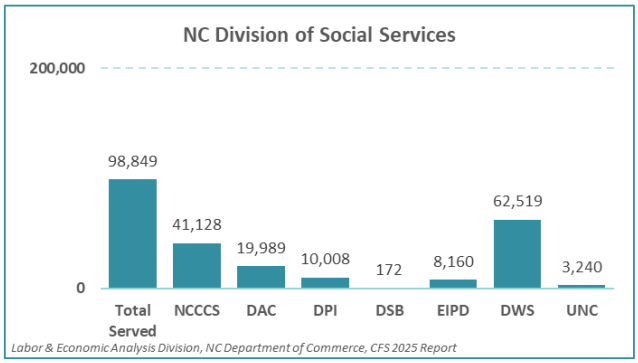
Figure 2. Total Unique Individuals Served by Each Agency and Number of Individuals Also Served by One or More of Other Agencies Program Years: 2014 - 2015 through 2023 - 2024

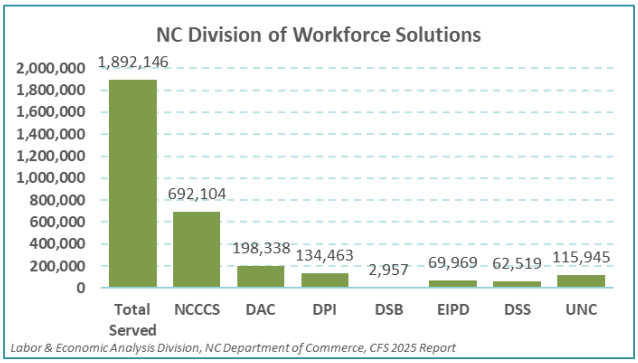


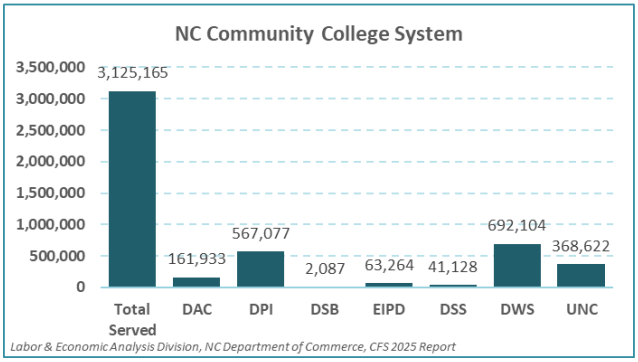


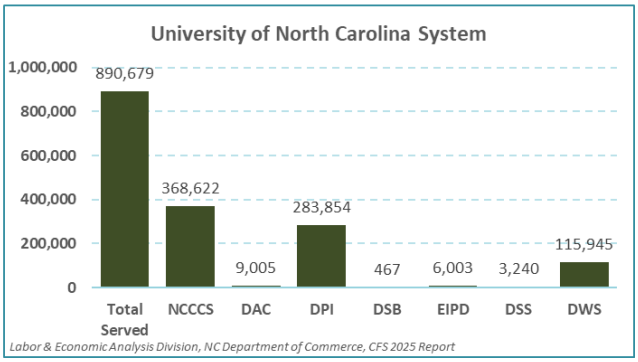










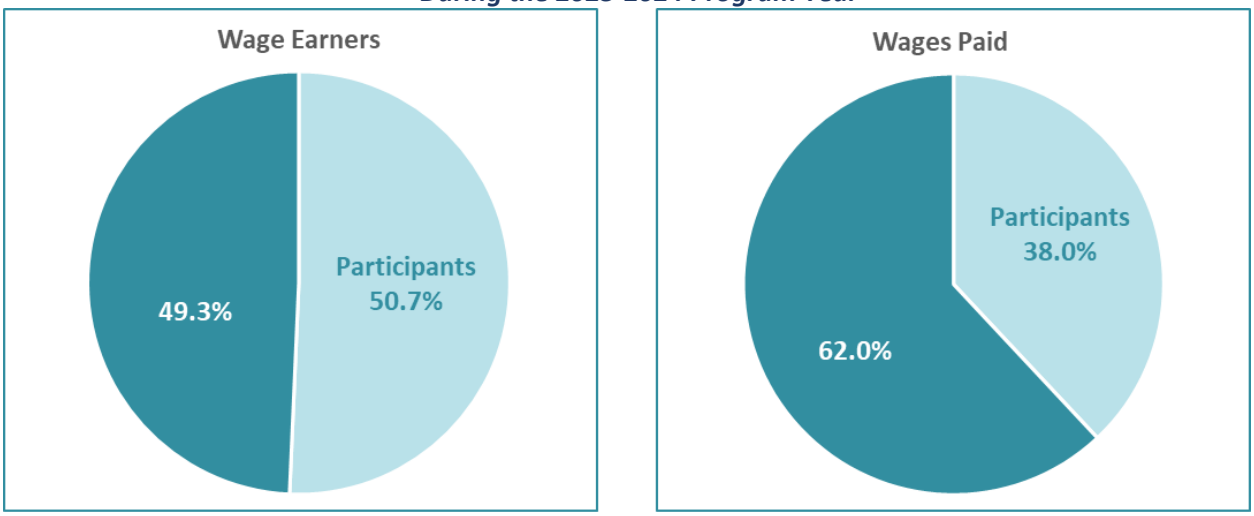


Relationship of Individuals Served to the North Carolina Economy

In addition to providing information regarding the number of participants served by each agency, CFS may also be utilized to provide an understanding of the relationship between participants of the state's education, employment, and training programs and the overall economy.

During the 2023-2024 program year, over 5.7 million unique individuals worked in jobs covered by North Carolina's unemployment insurance laws with their wages reported to the DES and these individuals earned over $314.1 billion in total wages. Of these over 5.7 million wage earners, approximately 2.9 million (or 50.7%) participated in education, employment, and training programs through one of the participating agencies during the ten-year period from July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2023. These program participants earned $119.4 billion in total wages or 38.0% of all wages reported to the DES in PY 2023-2024.

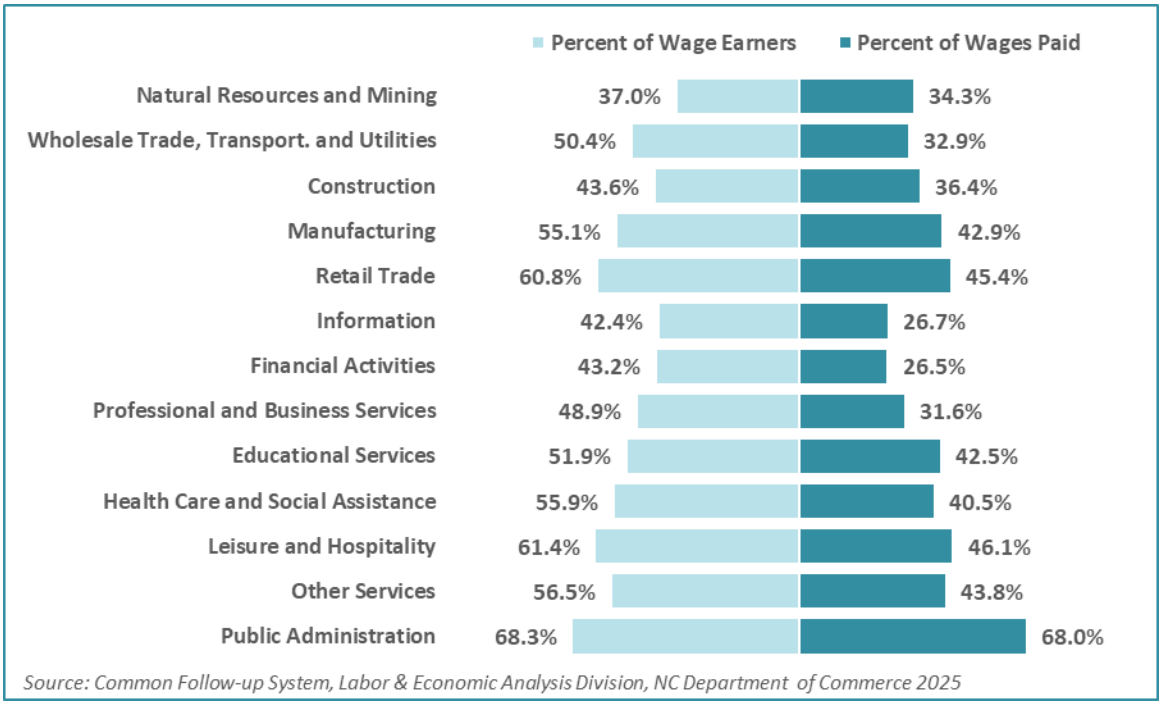
Figure 3. Ratio of Participants of North Carolina's Education, Employment and Training Programs (July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2023) to All Wage Earners and Wages Paid During the 2023-2024 Program Year



Source: Common Follow-up System, Labor & Economic Analysis Division, NC Department of Commerce 2025

Further analyses demonstrate that vast majority of individuals employed in most of the state's major industry sectors had participated in programs and services provided by one of the contributing agencies in the last ten years (Figure 4). More than half of individuals employed in the following major industry sectors have been program participants of the contributing agencies in the last ten years: Wholesale Trade, Transport, and Utilities (50.4%), Manufacturing (55.1%), Retail Trade (60.8%), Educational Services (51.9%), Health Care and Social Assistance (55.9%), Leisure and Hospitality (61.4%), Public Administration (68.3%), and Other Services (56.5%).

Figure 4. Ratio of Participants of North Carolina's Education, Employment and Training Programs (July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2023) to All Wage Earners and to All Wages Paid by Industry Sector During the 2023-2024 Program Year



Source: Common Follow-up System, Labor & Economic Analysis Division, NC Department of Commerce 2025

The analyses also revealed that at least 30% of the wages in all major industry sectors (except for Information and Financial Activities) were paid to individuals who had participated in programs and services through one of the contributing agencies in the last ten years. These results clearly indicate the connection between education, employment, and training programs and the state's economy as well as the continued need for coordination among education, workforce development and economic development efforts.

CFS Operation Summary

North Carolina's education and employment training system is central to building a highly skilled workforce, enhancing quality of life, and strengthening the state's competitiveness in a global economy. The Common Follow-up System serves as an effective mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness and impact of North Carolina's education and employment training programs by the integration of administrative data from multiple agencies and programs.

Through its longitudinal design, CFS enables the comprehensive analysis of educational and employment outcomes, provides insights into the paths individuals take across various services, and highlights the interconnected roles of education and workforce systems in supporting both individual success and broader economic development.

With its unique ability to link education and workforce outcomes across time and agencies, the Common Follow-up System has become a cornerstone of North Carolina's data infrastructure. As the state continues to focus on economic mobility, program accountability, and workforce resilience, sustained investment in CFS is essential to maintain the capacity to deliver timely, actionable insights to guide policy and program decisions.

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https://www.commerce.nc.gov/about-us/divisions-programs/labor-economic-analysis-division

NC DEPARTMENT of COMMERCE
LABOR & ECONOMIC ANALYSIS