

STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
Review of Apprenticeship Survey of NC Community College Presidents
August 2026

Request: At the request of the State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC), the North Carolina Community College System surveyed college presidents to develop a concise picture of current engagement with Registered Apprenticeship and identify where greater alignment may be useful. A second survey focused on college customer satisfaction will be developed and conducted.

Strategic Plan Reference:

Goal 4: Economic and Workforce Development

Provide education, training, and credentials to develop the most competitive workforce in the nation.

Strategies: 4.1.1, 4.2.1 & 4.3.1

Background/Rationale:

The July 31 response workbook contains 52 usable responses out of 58 colleges, representing 89.7% participation. This provides a broad and representative view of current college involvement, opportunity, and support needs.

Fifty-two of North Carolina's 58 community colleges provided responses. Presidents broadly view Registered Apprenticeship as strategically relevant, employer demand is evident across the state, and colleges are already serving in multiple roles. The findings also identify practical needs related to employer demand, sustainable funding and staffing, role clarity, regional data, standardized tools, and coordinated implementation.

As a follow up to this survey, a second survey focused on college customer satisfaction will be developed and conducted and will be administered on an annual basis. The purpose of this second survey is to understand how the ApprenticeshipNC team is doing, what is working well and what can be improved.

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Community College President Survey Report

Registered Apprenticeship and Regional Talent Strategy | Board-ready synthesis | July 31, 2026

Executive summary

Fifty-two of North Carolina's 58 community colleges provided usable responses. Presidents broadly view Registered Apprenticeship as strategically relevant, employer demand is evident across the state, and colleges are already serving in multiple roles. The findings also identify practical needs related to employer demand, sustainable funding and staffing, role clarity, regional data, standardized tools, and coordinated implementation.

Survey Purpose and Participation

At the request of the State Board, the North Carolina Community College System surveyed college presidents to develop a concise picture of current engagement with Registered Apprenticeship and identify where greater alignment may be useful. The survey was intentionally non-evaluative and recognized that colleges may serve as Group Sponsors, Related Technical Instruction providers, regional conveners, employer partners, or in a combination of roles.

The July 31 response workbook contains 52 usable responses out of 58 colleges, representing 89.7% participation. This provides a broad and representative view of current college involvement, opportunity, and support needs.

Indicator	Result	Interpretation
Strategic relevance	49 of 52 (94.2%)	Described apprenticeship as central to strategy or an important opportunity.
Current support role	43 of 52 (82.7%)	Support outreach, recruitment, pre-apprenticeship, advising, training, or partnerships.
Program sponsorship	37 of 52 (71.2%)	Reported sponsoring one or more Registered Apprenticeship programs.
RTI provision	36 of 52 (69.2%)	Provide Related Technical Instruction for apprenticeship programs.
Employer requests	42 of 52 (80.8%)	Have been asked by one or more employers for apprenticeship assistance.
Common employer need	36 of 52 (69.2%)	Report multiple employers in the same sector with a shared workforce need.

Executive Synthesis of Findings

Registered Apprenticeship is strategically relevant to nearly every responding college.

Twenty-nine presidents described Registered Apprenticeship as central to their college's strategy, 20 described it as an important opportunity, two said it is worth exploring, and one identified limited relevance under current conditions. No respondent selected "too early to determine." The findings show that apprenticeship is broadly understood as

connected to workforce development, economic development, employer service, student success, and regional talent strategy.

Colleges are already participating through multiple and overlapping roles.

Forty-three colleges identified a support role, 37 reported sponsoring one or more programs, 36 provide Related Technical Instruction, and 23 explicitly identified as Group Sponsors. The variation in how colleges use the terms sponsor and Group Sponsor reinforces the value of a shared role framework. The survey also shows that many colleges appropriately perform more than one function.

Employer demand is substantial, although market maturity varies by region.

Forty-two colleges reported that employers have asked for apprenticeship assistance; 36 reported multiple employers with a shared sector need; and 32 said an association, chamber, workforce board, or economic-development partner has identified apprenticeship as a priority. Eighteen also reported relevant workforce needs where apprenticeship has not yet been discussed, suggesting additional opportunity for informed employer engagement. Four colleges reported no clear evidence of demand, and two indicated a need for better local data.

The strongest near-term opportunities are concentrated in three sectors.

Advanced manufacturing was identified by 45 colleges, while construction and skilled trades and health care were each identified by 40. Education and teacher pathways, public safety, utilities, information technology, hospitality, transportation and logistics, and professional services were identified less frequently but remain important in regions where demand and instructional alignment exist.

The system has strong underlying capacity, but dedicated capacity remains uneven.

Most colleges report having employer relationships, instructional capacity, aligned credential pathways, employer-facing workforce-development capability, and a designated staff member with apprenticeship responsibility. Embedded comments nonetheless show that assigned responsibility is often shared with other functions and may not provide sufficient capacity for sustained employer development, program administration, and growth.

The conditions for expansion are practical and operational.

Among the 51 colleges completing the expansion questions, the most frequently selected conditions were clear and sustained employer demand (31), a clearer financial model or funding strategy (30), and additional staff capacity or clearer internal responsibility (27). Defined college roles, standardized occupational frameworks, stronger partnerships, and alignment between employer schedules and instructional delivery were also identified.

Presidents are asking for usable statewide infrastructure.

The most frequently selected forms of ApprenticeshipNC support were regional employer-demand and opportunity data (21), training for operational staff (17), technical assistance (13), standardized occupational frameworks and RTI options (13), and executive-level information (12). The embedded comments similarly emphasize templates, playbooks, process simplification, data visibility, employer-facing value, funding, and coordinated delivery.

President-Level Briefing: How Colleges Can Engage

North Carolina Community College System's ApprenticeshipNC registers and oversees Registered Apprenticeship programs in North Carolina on behalf of the U.S. Department of Labor. It also provides technical assistance, supports program quality, and helps employers, colleges, and partners expand high-quality apprenticeship opportunities statewide.

Community colleges can participate through several complementary roles. The appropriate role depends on employer demand, institutional capacity, instructional alignment, and regional strategy.

Group Sponsor

For colleges, sponsorship is generally performed through a Group Sponsor model. The college assumes the administrative and coordinating responsibility for a program that can serve multiple participating employers. This role

can move the college beyond a transactional training relationship and embed it more deeply in employer workforce strategy, program design, apprentice support, and regional talent development. It also requires sustained administrative capacity, compliance oversight, employer coordination, and portfolio discipline.

Related Technical Instruction Provider

The RTI-provider role is the most historically familiar role for community colleges. The college delivers classroom, laboratory, online, or hybrid instruction that complements structured on-the-job learning. For some occupations and colleges, this is the most appropriate role. In other cases, RTI is one component of a broader sponsorship or convening strategy.

Regional Convener

A college may convene employers, workforce boards, schools, chambers, economic-development organizations, and community partners around shared talent needs. Convening can aggregate fragmented employer demand, identify common occupations, and help determine whether the best sponsor is a college Group Sponsor, an employer, an industry association, or another intermediary.

Integrated Role

A college may appropriately serve as Group Sponsor, RTI provider, and regional convener at the same time. Other colleges may focus on one or two roles or build capacity in phases. The survey findings support differentiated college roles rather than a uniform expectation that every institution sponsor the same types of programs.

Current ApprenticeshipNC Initiatives Enabled by State Investment

The state's investment in ApprenticeshipNC provides an opportunity to convert strong local interest into more consistent statewide infrastructure. Several current initiatives align directly with themes identified by presidents.

Employer incentives in priority sectors

ApprenticeshipNC is seeking approval to repurpose SAEF 4 and remaining SAEF 3 funds for employer incentives focused on health care, advanced manufacturing, skilled trades, and utilities. The planned approach is pay-for-performance, with direct agreements between ApprenticeshipNC and participating employers. Additional details will be communicated after the amendment is approved.

Dedicated support for colleges and Group Sponsors

A dedicated position will support colleges, with particular emphasis on helping Group Sponsors mature and grow. This work includes helping colleges evaluate which occupations are appropriate for sponsorship, which are better served through an RTI-provider role, and where a convener or partner model is the stronger fit. That discipline is essential to responsible scaling.

State Occupational Frameworks

ApprenticeshipNC is developing State Occupational Frameworks that bring greater structure and consistency to work processes and Related Technical Instruction. The RTI component is intended to be stackable and menu-driven, with common options that can be used across all 58 colleges where appropriate. These frameworks will reduce the need to design every program from the beginning and strengthen alignment with certificates, diplomas, degrees, and other credentials.

Sponsor software and administrative tools

ApprenticeshipNC is pursuing a sponsor software solution such as WorkHands that can be made available at no cost to sponsors, including both college and non-college programs. The purpose is to reduce administrative friction, improve apprentice-progress tracking, support documentation, and create a more consistent sponsor experience.

Data-informed team structure and goals

ApprenticeshipNC's team structure and performance goals are being aligned with market opportunity, recent apprenticeship production, and active program infrastructure. The 2027–2028 statewide target is 6,508 new Registered Apprentice enrollments. Every team member is evaluated 65% on shared statewide attainment and 35% on a role-specific goal. Regional targets are informed by 35% adjusted recent enrollment production, 50% regional workforce, and 15% active Registered Apprenticeship infrastructure. The operating model includes 12 regional consultants and three statewide capacity roles focused on college Group Sponsors, industry-led group programs, and large employers/key accounts.

Cross-Cutting Themes From Embedded Comments

- Apprenticeship is relationship-intensive, and many colleges distinguish between having an assigned staff member and having sufficient dedicated capacity.
- Employer cost, wage support, RTI expense, and the availability of incentives are recurring considerations, particularly for small and mid-sized employers.
- Colleges value process simplification, standard templates, implementation playbooks, clear milestones, and stackable occupational models.
- Clear coordination among colleges, ApprenticeshipNC, workforce boards, economic-development organizations, intermediaries, and other statewide initiatives is important to a consistent employer experience.
- Regional data and appropriate visibility into apprenticeship activity are important for planning, employer service, reporting, and instructional coordination.
- Several responses also validate current practices, including localized regional convenings, effective regional consultant support, and established regional models that may offer lessons for broader application.

College-Specific Synthesis

Interpretive note: These summaries synthesize each college's selected responses and embedded comments. They are not evaluations of institutional performance.

North East

Beaufort Community College. Beaufort is already engaged as a Group Sponsor and views Registered Apprenticeship as central to its strategy. The college reports employer demand and identifies opportunity in advanced manufacturing, construction and skilled trades, and public safety. Its response reflects a mature partner with a specific operational need for technical assistance related to NCRAN.

College of the Albemarle. No usable response was recorded in the July 31 response workbook.

Halifax Community College. Halifax reports sponsoring apprenticeship activity and views Registered Apprenticeship as central to its strategy. It reports strong demand signals from employers and regional partners, particularly in advanced manufacturing and health care. The embedded comment requests direct assistance with establishing and maintaining the apprenticeship component.

Martin Community College. Martin is not currently involved but views Registered Apprenticeship as an important opportunity and identifies regional convening as its likely role. The college reports limited staff bandwidth and no dedicated funding for apprenticeship coordination, together with employer concerns about paperwork and administrative burden.

Pitt Community College. Pitt is highly engaged as a sponsor, Related Technical Instruction provider, and support partner and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. Its primary concern is the cost borne by small skilled-trades employers for training, supervision, onboarding, and participation. The response emphasizes the importance of practical financial support with accessible eligibility requirements.

Roanoke-Chowan Community College. Roanoke-Chowan identifies as a Group Sponsor and views apprenticeship as an important opportunity. The college emphasizes the need for additional employer-facing field capacity so that businesses, chambers, industry associations, and economic-development partners can receive sustained outreach and assistance.

Southeast

Brunswick Community College. Brunswick is active as an RTI provider and support partner and views apprenticeship as an important opportunity. Its response calls for consistent training for local apprenticeship ambassadors and dedicated resources for outreach, employer engagement, placement coordination, and reporting support.

Cape Fear Community College. Cape Fear reports engagement as a sponsor, Group Sponsor, RTI provider, and support partner and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. Its response points to regional data, technical assistance, employer demand, instructional scheduling, and funding as important elements of continued growth.

Carteret Community College. Carteret views apprenticeship as central and identifies sponsorship as its likely role. The college highlights the need for staff capacity to support the intermediary function, stronger employer engagement, and clearer integration of registered and non-registered apprenticeship-like models with Related Technical Instruction.

Coastal Carolina Community College. Coastal Carolina is currently a support partner and views apprenticeship as worth exploring, although not yet a defined priority. The college reports limited current employer interest in its service area while continuing to convene employers and regional partners to build awareness and assess opportunity.

Craven Community College. Craven is engaged across sponsor, Group Sponsor, RTI, and support roles and views apprenticeship as an important opportunity. Its response highlights the potential for overlapping statewide and regional initiatives to create employer confusion and calls attention to the importance of clearly understood roles among the System Office, colleges, ApprenticeshipNC, myFutureNC, and economic-development partners.

James Sprunt Community College. James Sprunt is engaged as a sponsor, RTI provider, and support partner and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. The college proposes standardized implementation toolkits with templates, milestones, and step-by-step guidance and extends an invitation for System Office and ApprenticeshipNC representatives to meet with college leadership about strengthening its program.

Lenoir Community College. No usable response was recorded in the July 31 response workbook.

Pamlico Community College. No usable response was recorded in the July 31 response workbook.

Wayne Community College. Wayne reports broad involvement as a sponsor, Group Sponsor, RTI provider, and support partner and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. The college identifies regional convening as its likely role and highlights the importance of a clearer financial model and president-level understanding.

North Central

Central Carolina Community College. Central Carolina is deeply engaged and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. Its response indicates that small and mid-sized employers are interested but often hesitant because of the additional financial investment. The college specifically identifies support for Related Technical Instruction expenses as a way to reduce barriers.

Durham Technical Community College. Durham Tech is active as a sponsor, RTI provider, and support partner and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. The college positively evaluates the shift to localized regional-consultant convenings, noting that the approach supports deeper and more sector-specific discussions with employers and workforce partners.

Edgecombe Community College. Edgecombe identifies as an RTI provider and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. Its embedded comment focuses on the need for assistance and support for employers with apprenticeship paperwork and administrative requirements.

Johnston Community College. Johnston reports sponsoring apprenticeship activity and views apprenticeship as an important opportunity. It reports employer demand in advanced manufacturing, construction and skilled trades, and health care. Its responses emphasize clearer role definition, stronger local partnerships, role guidance, and technical assistance.

Nash Community College. Nash is highly engaged across sponsor, Group Sponsor, RTI, and support roles and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. The college reports broad employer and partner demand and identifies continued engagement with workforce-development and continuing-education leadership as appropriate.

Piedmont Community College. Piedmont is not currently involved but views apprenticeship as an important opportunity. The college indicates that it is ready to begin, has established local industry relationships, and needs practical guidance, startup support, and examples of successful approaches used by peer institutions.

Vance-Granville Community College. Vance-Granville is active as a sponsor, RTI provider, and support partner and views apprenticeship as an important opportunity. Its response highlights the need for greater coordination among colleges and third-party organizations operating in pre-apprenticeship and Group Apprenticeship, particularly where service-area boundaries overlap.

Wake Technical Community College. No usable response was recorded in the July 31 response workbook.

Wilson Community College. Wilson is active as a sponsor, RTI provider, and support partner and views apprenticeship as an important opportunity. The college identifies the availability of funding as a central concern as apprenticeship activity expands across more institutions.

Sandhills

Bladen Community College. No usable response was recorded in the July 31 response workbook.

Fayetteville Technical Community College. Fayetteville Tech is active as a sponsor, RTI provider, and support partner and views apprenticeship as an important opportunity. Its response raises concerns about uneven support, the local staffing and operating burden carried by colleges, the visibility of regional staff contributions, and the limited availability of employer incentives.

Montgomery Community College. Montgomery is active as a sponsor, RTI provider, and support partner and identifies regional convening as its likely role. Its responses emphasize defined roles, stronger partnerships, standardized frameworks, employer convening, and peer learning.

Richmond Community College. Richmond reports current and past involvement and is uncertain about its preferred future role. The college identifies a significant need for greater visibility into apprenticeship activity within its service area, including activity sponsored by other organizations, and also calls attention to dedicated college capacity.

Robeson Community College. Robeson is a support partner with past involvement and views apprenticeship as central, while anticipating a limited role at this time. Its response indicates that employers are interested when reimbursement is available but may not perceive sufficient value without a direct monetary incentive.

Sampson Community College. Sampson is not currently involved and identifies limited relevance under current conditions. The college reports that its limited manufacturing base and the established human-resource approaches used by large agricultural employers reduce the apparent fit of Registered Apprenticeship in its service area.

Sandhills Community College. Sandhills is highly engaged across sponsor, Group Sponsor, RTI, and support roles and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. It reports strong demand across multiple sectors but notes that internal relationship-development and implementation capacity is reaching its limit. The college also raises concerns about the reliability of anticipated wage support from workforce partners.

Southeastern Community College. Southeastern is highly engaged and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. The college emphasizes the need for a full understanding of sponsor, Group Sponsor, and employer-partner roles, assistance from a regional coordinator, and regular updates for presidents. An embedded follow-up note expresses interest in continued service as the presidents' liaison to the committee.

Piedmont Triad

Alamance Community College. Alamance is engaged across sponsor, Group Sponsor, RTI, and support roles and views apprenticeship as an important opportunity. The college reports strong demand across several sectors and emphasizes continued streamlining of registration and approval while recognizing that the central operating relationships are between colleges and employers.

Davidson-Davie Community College. Davidson-Davie is highly engaged across sponsor, Group Sponsor, RTI, and support roles and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. The response reports strong employer demand and positively recognizes the effectiveness of its ApprenticeshipNC regional consultant in working with the college and employers.

Forsyth Technical Community College. No usable response was recorded in the July 31 response workbook.

Guilford Technical Community College. Guilford is active as a Group Sponsor, RTI provider, and support partner and views apprenticeship as an important opportunity. The college identifies RTI provision as its likely future role and indicates that regional employer-demand and opportunity data would provide the greatest value.

Randolph Community College. Randolph reports sponsoring apprenticeship activity and views apprenticeship as worth exploring, although not yet a defined priority. The college questions whether current resources have produced sufficient growth and expresses interest in significantly shorter, stackable models, including a potential pilot of one year or less.

Rockingham Community College. Rockingham is active as a sponsor, RTI provider, and support partner and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. The college calls for a strategic framework and standard operating procedure that clarifies how college staff and ApprenticeshipNC collaborate while minimizing duplication.

Surry Community College. Surry is deeply engaged across sponsor, Group Sponsor, RTI, and support roles and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. The college identifies state labor policies affecting placement of students into pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship as an ongoing concern.

Southwestern

Central Piedmont Community College. Central Piedmont is active as a sponsor, RTI provider, and support partner and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. The college proposes an Industry Apprenticeship Playbook Library containing ready-to-launch models with occupations, work processes, competencies, RTI recommendations, timelines, wage progression, employer evidence, and college contacts.

Cleveland Community College. Cleveland is highly engaged and views apprenticeship as central, with Group Sponsorship as its likely role. The college calls attention to employer incentives, localized marketing, and dedicated college personnel, noting that Group Sponsors absorb substantial administrative, compliance, and instructional responsibilities for participating employers.

Gaston College. Gaston is active as a sponsor, RTI provider, and support partner and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. The college reports employer demand and strong internal capabilities and identifies funding and standardized frameworks as important conditions for continued expansion.

Mitchell Community College. Mitchell is active as a sponsor and support partner and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. The college emphasizes the need to improve employer understanding of the apprenticeship value proposition and address misconceptions about cost relative to organizational benefit.

Rowan-Cabarrus Community College. Rowan-Cabarrus is highly engaged across sponsor, Group Sponsor, RTI, and support roles and views apprenticeship as an important opportunity. It identifies RTI provision as its likely role and highlights the value of executive-level information and training for operational staff.

Southwestern Community College. Southwestern is active as an RTI provider and support partner and identifies Group Sponsorship as its likely role. Its response emphasizes employer incentives, a more structured implementation process, practical templates, defined points of contact, and the particular staffing and employer-engagement challenges found in rural areas.

Stanly Community College. Stanly is highly engaged and views apprenticeship as central, with Group Sponsorship as its likely role. The college raises detailed concerns about access to apprentice, employer, and sponsor information when it provides Related Instruction for programs it does not sponsor, including effects on reporting, tuition-waiver administration, and internal coordination.

South Piedmont Community College. South Piedmont reports engagement as a Group Sponsor, RTI provider, and support partner and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. The response indicates broad employer and partner demand in advanced manufacturing, construction and skilled trades, and health care, although the final three survey items were not completed.

Northwestern

Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute. Caldwell is highly engaged and views apprenticeship as central, with Group Sponsorship as its likely role. The college emphasizes the need for a sustainable staffing and funding model for both the System and colleges and notes the value of best practices for managing program revisions during the first year of an initiative.

Catawba Valley Community College. Catawba Valley is active as a sponsor, RTI provider, and support partner and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. The college calls for system-wide marketing that communicates the importance and accessibility of apprenticeship across North Carolina.

McDowell Technical Community College. McDowell is highly engaged across sponsor, Group Sponsor, RTI, and support roles and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. The college requests clear regional opportunity data paired with ready-to-adapt occupational, competency, wage-progression, and instructional templates that can move employer interest more quickly toward implementation.

Mayland Community College. Mayland is active as an RTI provider and support partner, with past involvement, and views apprenticeship as an important opportunity. The college identifies RTI provision as its likely role and points to employer demand, role definition, staff capacity, technical assistance, and peer examples as important considerations.

Western Piedmont Community College. Western Piedmont is highly engaged across sponsor, Group Sponsor, RTI, and support roles and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. The college emphasizes the importance of coordinating employer engagement through the local college so businesses experience a clear and unified point of contact.

Wilkes Community College. Wilkes is a support partner with past involvement and views apprenticeship as an important opportunity. The college highlights the need for staff capacity to support the intermediary role and clearer understanding of how registered and non-registered apprenticeship-like models can work with Related Technical Instruction.

Western

A-B Tech Community College. A-B Tech is highly engaged across sponsor, Group Sponsor, RTI, and support roles and views apprenticeship as an important opportunity. The college recommends examining the Good Jobs WNC model for potential broader application across the state.

Blue Ridge Community College. Blue Ridge is highly engaged across sponsor, Group Sponsor, RTI, and support roles and views apprenticeship as central to its strategy. The college reports broad sector opportunity and emphasizes an urgent need for a position dedicated solely to apprenticeship rather than shared with Customized Training.

Haywood Community College. Haywood is a support partner and views apprenticeship as an important opportunity, identifying regional convening as its likely role. Its responses point to employer demand, role definition, staff capacity, technical assistance, and operational staff training as important considerations.

Isothermal Community College. Isothermal is highly engaged and views apprenticeship as central, with Group Sponsorship as its likely role. The college supports continued technical assistance and streamlined processes while emphasizing that employer incentives and outreach should reinforce, rather than bypass, durable college-employer relationships.

Tri-County Community College. Tri-County is active as a sponsor and support partner and views apprenticeship as an important opportunity. The college emphasizes the need for a streamlined and coordinated process that reduces the perceived complexity of development, registration, and compliance, particularly for small and mid-sized employers.

Source and Method

Source: Pres Survey Response Summary 07.31.26.xlsx.

Analysis basis: Counts were recomputed from the individual college response rows rather than relying solely on the workbook's summary table. Embedded comments in column U and embedded follow-up notes in column V were extracted and reviewed. Multi-select questions can total more than the number of respondents. South Piedmont completed questions 1–7 but not questions 8–10 or the follow-up item.

Conclusion

The survey presents a clear and encouraging picture. Presidents broadly view Registered Apprenticeship as strategically relevant, employer demand is evident across much of the state, and colleges already contribute through sponsorship, Related Technical Instruction, convening, employer engagement, and student support. The responses also show that the full potential of the community college system has not yet been realized. The state investment in ApprenticeshipNC creates the capacity to strengthen employer participation, support colleges and Group Sponsors, standardize occupational models, reduce administrative friction, align team resources with market opportunity, and produce measurable statewide growth.