

03

**Workforce Strategy:
Goals, Strategies and
Best Practices**



Elevate NEFL Workforce Strategy – *Thematic Elements*

Goal 1 Theme – Awareness

Talent and Business Retention and Attraction

Goal 2 Theme – Access and Alignment

Inclusive Economic Development and Growth

Goal 3 Theme – Engagement and Career Mobility

Industry Partnerships and Career Pathways

Goal 4 Theme – Innovation and Elevation

Business Development and Incubation

Goal 5 Theme – Resiliency

Value of Lifelong Learning and Skill Development

Goals and Strategy Summary

GOAL 1: Northeast Florida is known as a great place to live, work, and learn. (Focus on Talent and Business Retention and Attraction)

- 1.1 Common and reinforced messages on career opportunities in Northeast Florida
- 1.2 Outreach and career access opportunities targeted to college students locally (reinforce FindYourJAX)
- 1.3 Targeted marketing and outreach to southern region of US and state of Florida university students
- 1.4 Increase system coordination (Economic and Workforce Development) to support business retention, expansion, and attraction efforts

GOAL 2: All residents have an opportunity to thrive in Northeast Florida (Focus on Inclusive Economic Development and Growth)

- 2.1 Coordinate and deploy social and wrap-around services to reach residents in need
- 2.2 Support Learn and Earn skill development models for all working residents
- 2.3 Common advocacy agenda for regional investments to bridge the “Benefits Cliff”

GOAL 3: Northeast Florida industry partnerships are strong and career pathways enable mobility (Focus on Industry Partnerships and Career Pathways)

- 3.1 Transition entry-level working population into careers in growing industries
- 3.2 Remove policy, perception, and communication barriers to upward mobility within the Northeast Florida workforce
- 3.3 Consistent, coordinated, and effective employer engagement is deployed to support business needs across the seven county region

GOAL 4: New Economy and STEM focus drives investment and alignment efforts in Northeast Florida (Focus on Business Development and Incubation)

- 4.1 STEM awareness, interest, and skill development is formally supported and scaled across the region (reinforce STEM2Hub and Renaissance JAX)
- 4.2 Coordinate advocacy, funding, and venture capital investments for STEM professional development, entrepreneur efforts, research & development

GOAL 5: Northeast Florida has a culture of lifelong learning and a resilient workforce (Focus on Value of Skills Development and Credential Attainment)

- 5.1 Expand and formalize efforts to increase credential completion in Northeast Florida (formally support and structure Earn Up)
- 5.2 Leverage and empower new education leadership within the regional systems (both in Higher Education and Secondary K-12 systems)



GOAL 1:

Northeast Florida is known as a great place to live, work, and learn.

(Focus on Talent and Business Retention and Attraction)

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT: Access to talent and a skilled workforce is critical in the new economy. Northeast Florida should focus on attracting talent and retaining the talent it's developing and attract new workers to the region. The same is true for the business community. Northeast Florida has impressive assets, both physical and intellectual, both of which can be leveraged to attract and retain the labor market and talent pool it needs to thrive.

1.1 Common and reinforced messages on career opportunities in Northeast Florida

Create and deploy consistent, regionally reinforced messaging centered on career opportunities in Northeast Florida. Use common messaging collateral, distributed through regional and local mechanisms, to create a greater understanding of career pathways in the regional economy. Leverage chamber and economic development partners to drive education and economic alignment and create a more streamlined advising function and community access to critical career pathways pivotal to the success and growth of the Northeast Florida economy.

1.1.2 Promote High School Career Academies and expand model throughout region

Florida was an early adopter of the High School Career Academy model and would benefit from capitalizing on this asset from a communication or marketing perspective targeted at both students and businesses. These academies should be further expanded throughout the region within each of the K-12 school districts to further create a ready to work labor pool with skills and experiences aligned to real industry opportunities within the region.

1.2 Outreach and career access opportunities targeted to college students locally (reinforce FindYourJAX)

Continue to support and reinforce the FindYourJAX campaign throughout the larger Northeast Florida region. Increase messaging on career opportunities and quality of life to persuade current college students and the future college-going population in the region to become lifelong Northeast Florida residents. Consider creating and conducting regionally focused career fairs in the region as a mechanism through which students, the college population, and other residents can directly connect with job opportunities in the area (see Gainesville "Stay in the Swamp" best practice).



GOAL 1:

Northeast Florida is known as a great place to live, work, and learn.

(Focus on Talent and Business Retention and Attraction)

GOAL 1 CONTINUED

1.3 Targeted marketing and outreach to southern region of US and state of Florida University students

Many students travel out of their home market to attend college in the southern region of the US or other downstate institutions in Florida. Northeast Florida can attract more students from the larger southern region through enhanced marketing, outreach, and other recruitment efforts to specifically target southern region and Floridian college graduates about the opportunities (both professional, social and lifestyle focused) in the area. Utilize traditional and social media marketing avenues to promote the unique assets Northeast Florida has to aid in the aggregate retention of talent from southern schools.

1.4 Increase system coordination (Economic & Workforce Development) to support business retention, expansion and attraction efforts

The ability for the region as a whole, and individual counties, in Northeast Florida to attract new business is critical for the health of the future economy. Creation of cohesive and comprehensive business and economic development “teams” regionally and within each county will create a more consistent asset base through which promotion of partnerships and services can be effectively communicated. Consider modeling the Flagler County approach to their economic development sales pitch. Include partners at these events and business opportunities that include representation from key stakeholders – the chambers of commerce, K-12 systems, CareerSource, higher education partners, and industry representatives. This will help to comprehensively highlight regional partnerships and systemic assets related to workforce development and talent access.



TALENT RETENTION AND ATTRACTION BEST PRACTICE

Gainesville, FL *“Stay in the Swamp”* *Career Fair*

(Goal 1; Strategies 1.2 & 1.3)



This comprehensive career fair is offered to University of Florida students (primarily from the business school program) to connect directly with employers. The fair is sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, CareerSource of North Central Florida, and the University of Florida’s Business School and Career Center.

In addition to connecting with employers, there is a Resource Avenue where cultural, professional, social, and educational organizations will chat with students about the benefits of working and living in the Gainesville region.

Link: <https://career.ufl.edu/students/events-and-programs/stay-in-the-swamp-fair/>



GOAL 2:

All residents have an opportunity to thrive in Northeast Florida

*(Focus on Inclusive
Economic Development
and Growth)*

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT: Inclusive economic growth is imperative for the health of Northeast Florida's future. Ensuring that all residents can access, and be successful within, the labor market needs to be top of mind in any program supporting skill development, career training and other incumbent worker efforts. NEFL should address the skills gap alongside the opportunity gap created in the new economy.

2.1 Coordinate and deploy social and wrap-around services to reach residents in need

Similar efforts have been deployed in NEFL, through work of the Community Foundation, United Way and a local model of "1,000 in 1,000" through the Family Foundation, that can be reinvigorated or leveraged to better coordinate poverty amelioration efforts across the region. Specific tactics are included below to support this strategy.

2.1.1 Identify and disperse services

Inventory and geo-map all social and wrap-around services to identify where investments are currently deployed. Determine where, and if, service gaps exist. Coordinate and disperse services via "satellite" or mobile access points in conjunction with CareerSource efforts to more effectively reach high poverty areas and the disengaged population.

2.1.2 Determine target neighborhoods and areas in need of services

Identify key neighborhoods and census tracts with the greatest poverty rates, highest unemployment percentages, and lowest labor participation rates in order to craft a highly targeted outreach and engagement strategy that will increase access to skill development, job opportunities, and other social services (childcare, transportation, housing and utility support).

2.1.3 Promote, scale and formalize workforce supports for veterans/Military

Formalize organizations providing services, or coordinating services, to veterans related to job placement, education access, advising, etc. Northeast Florida/Jacksonville support for veterans is a **NATIONAL BEST PRACTICE** and these efforts require permanent stability and organizational support with business model development, staffing plan and sustainable funding.



GOAL 2:

All residents have an opportunity to thrive in Northeast Florida

(Focus on Inclusive Economic Development and Growth)

GOAL 2 CONTINUED

2.2 Support Learn and Earn skill development models for all working residents

Continue to build upon and expand experiential learning opportunities in Northeast Florida. There are currently learn and earn models within high schools, career academy offerings, customized training, which are great best practices to expand. Consider working with other CareerSource areas to rebrand the work and learn model in order to incentivize employer involvement, partnerships, and championing of career exposure activities. Create learning opportunities across the full spectrum of the workforce, continuing to expand services beyond youth or K-12 activities with customized training within target industries statewide. Focus training opportunities on high-skill, high-wage occupations. Identify an entity to coordinate efforts regionally and with each county to create a common quality experience.

2.3 Common advocacy agenda for investments to bridge the “Benefits Cliff”

“Benefits cliff” is a term that describes what happens when public benefits programs quickly phase down or out, leading to an abrupt reduction or loss of benefits for families as household earnings increase, but do not increase enough for self-sufficiency to be reached or that cause a net loss of income plus benefits. Specific tactics are included below to ameliorate this issue.

2.3.1 Determine agenda for policy change and other supports to mitigate the “Benefits Cliff”

Advocate for a consistent message, agenda, and approach for potential policy changes focused on education funding, transportation, social services, increased wages, and other supports to move lower income workers into higher wage pathways. Specifically target the deployment of resources or programs for the disengaged populations (see *strategy 2.1.2*) and other residents with historical barriers to labor participation. Reference the Florida Chamber Foundation position: *Less Poverty, More Prosperity: The Florida Fiscal Cliffs Report* in creation of the regional message.

2.3.2 Public/Private investment in transportation solutions

Advocate and support regional public and private investment in transportation services to increase workforce accessibility and mobility. Leverage regional partnerships and employer champions to encourage scaled buy-in and investment to fund transportation services addressing the first mile/last mile challenge in current public transportation offerings. Consider blended funding to support this solution from private industry, economic development, and other philanthropic entities. (See *Ridesharing and Vanpooling Best Practice*).



TRANSPORTATION SUPPORT BEST PRACTICE

Tulsa, OK VRide Vanpooling Regional Ridesharing

(Goal 2; Strategy 2.3.2)



Tulsa has a notable lack of public transit in certain areas of the city, which in turn affects their workforce and overall economy.

More readily available transportation services increase workforce accessibility and mobility for entire communities. In Tulsa, the Tulsa Regional Chamber, Goodwill, Workforce Tulsa, and several other community organizations partnered, with funding from the George Kaiser Family Foundation and the United Way, to create this ridesharing service.

Link: <http://tulsatrc.org/tulasas-first-innovative-vanpooling-program-begins/>

Other successful models have deployed Ride Share vouchers or blended (public and private) funding to provide free access to already established public transportation.

Jacksonville's Park and Ride offering, a great asset to the downtown region, could be scaled through examples like the VRide program to service less accessible areas of the region.



GOAL 3:

Northeast
Florida industry
partnerships
are strong and
career
pathways
enable mobility

*(Focus on Industry
Partnerships and Career
Pathways)*

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT: Increased coordination, collaboration, and engagement within the industry sectors and between education and workforce development efforts will increase overall business satisfaction and positively impact career pathway creation, access, and mobility for NEFL residents.

3.1 Transition entry-level working population into careers in growing industries

Consistent, coordinated, and sustained employer engagement will lead to codified career pathways in which all populations can experience economic progress. Increased regional messaging about opportunities and targeted employer engagement within key industry sectors will further enable economic mobility and career resiliency for NEFL residents. Specific tactics are included below to support this strategy.

3.1.1 Implement and promote entry to middle skill career pathways

Focus on the promotion and implementation of career pathways from entry- to middle-skill opportunities. Focus on removing barriers for upward career mobility at all levels. Leverage the occupational information focused on transitions for clusters of skills/jobs from low-skill to high-growth, high-wage careers. Leverage and build upon supplemental career pathway collateral marketing materials that have been developed under the Elevate Northeast Florida strategy process. These career pathway maps have documented occupational transition and progression to and from the following occupational clusters: Healthcare Support – Patient Care and Administrative Services; Customer Service – Healthcare and Financial Services; Trades – Advanced Manufacturing and Transportation Technologies.

3.1.2 Target key industries in employer engagement and credential completion strategies

Target the key industry clusters as determined through this strategy (Target Clusters included in this report and the Target Industry Validation Report) to begin building committees within the Sector Partnership approach in Northeast Florida (*Talent Advancement Networks* – see strategy 3.3) and work to create on and off-ramps to employment through increasing assessment of prior learning, experiential skill development, and articulation agreements to expedite career progression.



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3.2 Remove policy, perception, and communication barriers to upward mobility within the Northeast Florida workforce

During the information gathering portion of this project (community survey, focus groups and interviews), many residents expressed a challenge in progression beyond middle-career opportunities in the region NEFL while many employers expressed a challenge in locally sourcing senior-level positions. This points to a disconnect in messaging around these pathways. Specific tactics are included below to address this issue.

3.2.1 Promote internal, incumbent worker career pathways

Encourage employers to more widely promote their internal pathways to their incumbent workforce. This strategy will increase internal upward mobility and open up more entry- or mid-level opportunities and provide access to longer term career pathways for both entry- and middle-skill workforce populations.

3.2.2 Increase articulation agreements and bridge programming

Create more articulations or bridge programming, as well as direct support for working learners, to help them move from certificate or associate's degree level credential attainment onto a bachelor's degree and higher education pathway thus leading to longer term career mobility. Consider creating a committee within Earn Up that focuses on higher level degree attainment once the first post-secondary credential has been obtained. (See *Commonwealth of Virginia articulation best practice*.)

3.2.3 Create networking group for mid-career workforce

Retaining talent is a key element of this strategy. While there is a robust young professionals network in Northeast Florida, there is little to no formal or social network for mid-career residents. Consider creating a "Beyond Young Professionals" group in the region in order to create a space for middle career workers to find community, mentorship, learning opportunities, and activities that will allow them to continue to be active in the workplace and engaged with the community. This type of network has the potential to support retention of middle- to senior-level workers within the labor market and the region.



DEGREE COMPLETION & ARTICULATION BEST PRACTICE

Virginia Community College System 4-VA Degree Completion Initiative

(Goal 3; Strategy 3.2.2)



The Virginia Community College System (VCCS) created a degree completion initiative called 4-VA in order to make it easier for community college graduates to earn bachelor's degrees by improving access to those degrees.

The program also increases online offerings, allowing both adults and traditional students who cannot commute to earn degrees and increase their employment opportunities.

VCCS designed transfer capacities for several professional Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) concentrations and provided marketing material to targeted communities to help with development of pre-admission counseling and advising.

Link: <https://4-va.org/>

GOAL 3:

Northeast Florida industry partnerships are strong and career pathways enable mobility

*(Focus on Industry
Partnerships and Career
Pathways)*

GOAL 3 CONTINUED

3.3 Consistent, coordinated, and effective employer engagement is deployed to support business needs across the seven county region

During stakeholder engagement in this strategy development process, the Elevate team convened two Workforce Partners meetings. Throughout these two conversations, and a group follow-up, it was determined that there was interest in formalizing this partnership. This is a key strategy to ensuring that regional employer engagement is consistent, coordinated and, more to the point, effective and impactful. Specific tactics are included below to support this strategy. (See IA best practice)

3.3.1 Formalize the Talent Advancement Network (Sector Partnership)

Formalize the Talent Advancement Network with executive-level representation from multiple sectors and single- sector specific committee representation from businesses located across the entire region. This group will focus efforts on creating cohesive messages and approaches to building pathways, communicating evolving workplace skill needs, and working with talent supply partners. Some activities this group can consider pursuing include, but are not limited to:

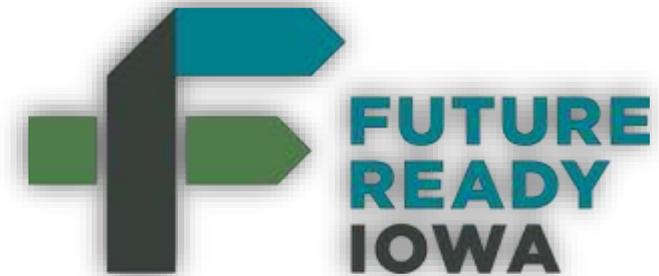
- Define full career spectrums for key industries in region
- Create public facing messages about career opportunities
- Work with education partners to create new Career Technology Education programs
- Develop and value stackable credentials
- Connect with Earn Up and new education leadership about skill gaps in labor market
- Develop consistent and skill-based hiring/talent sourcing practices
- Structure and implement experiential learning opportunities
- Coordinate efforts on job fairs and other recruiting efforts
- Convene an annual “State of the Industry” forum to highlight work of the network and skill needs

3.3.2 Expand support for sector management and increase system access, coordination

The Sector Manager model should be expanded to have more staff and adopt a “broker model” to focus on selling solutions to businesses, regardless of where and what their needs might be. Create a sector “team” with a wider scope of work beyond services offered through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act or CareerSource NEFL. Employers need a single point of contact to access talent development and talent sourcing in the region, at all levels of partnership and talent needs. The strategy allows all partners to move towards a more robust group of regional sector specialists to allow for a seamless exchange of employer demand to system solution. The objective is to broker solutions regardless of whether the particular solution can be directly offered by the sector manager’s organization.



SECTOR PARTNERSHIP BEST PRACTICE



Iowa Statewide Sector Partnership Toolkits

(Goal 3; Strategy 3.3)

The State of Iowa has several sector partnerships across the state, with toolkits to help other communities identify where they are and where they want to be, in order to develop a thriving workforce sector partnership. They have three toolkits that include an evolution process and each stage includes elements necessary for growth:

- [Toolkit 1.0: Planning](#) – In this stage, a facilitator or convener is needed to determine whether a partnership makes sense and prepares, launches, and identifies specific partners
- [Toolkit 2.0: Emerging](#) – In order to be emerging, the partnership must have at least one facilitator, have engaged private sector champions, and include partners from several areas
- [Toolkit 3.0: Sustaining](#) – Sustaining partnerships have a *clear* facilitator, are led by an industry, have a broad industry engagement, have engaged partners, operate under a long term strategic plan, and have developed at least one effective career pathway in support of a target industry cluster

GOAL 4:

New Economy and STEM focus drives investment and alignment efforts in Northeast Florida

*(Focus on Business
Development and
Incubation)*

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT: STEM skills will continue to be a core aspect of the new economy and future industry needs. There are a number of STEM, research & development and entrepreneurship efforts already underway in NEFL that will require continued, scaled, and sustained support to drive the new and globally competitive talent pool and labor market.

4.1 STEM awareness, interest, and skill development is formally supported and scaled across the region (reinforce STEM2Hub and Renaissance JAX)

The New Economy will continue to demand a workforce that is increasingly more focused on technology skills and engineering principles; specifically the industries of importance in Northeast Florida. Significant measures are already underway in order to drive more interest and students towards STEM fields. These efforts should be supported, formalized, and scaled across the region. Specific tactics are included below to support this strategy.

4.1.1 STEM2Hub is promoted locally, regionally and nationally as a key asset to the region

STEM2Hub work should be expanded and formalized so that funding is sustained beyond legislative support. Consider a business model for this program that could be replicated nationally, similar to Project Lead the Way (PLTW), but focused on out-of-school time and not programmatic curriculum development. PLTW can be a cost-prohibitive option, but similar curriculum can be developed regionally (and state approved) as a “home-grown” option.

4.1.2 Continue to support STEM-focused interest development efforts like Renaissance JAX

Determine the feasibility of scaling programs similar to Renaissance JAX throughout the whole region and beyond K-12 participation. Different “competitions” and learning opportunities can spur interest in technology and engineering fields for students of all ages as well as workers in Northeast Florida. This will ensure that there is a pathway and continual skill development opportunities specifically in technology centric fields and career pathways.



GOAL 4:

New Economy and STEM focus drives investment and alignment efforts in Northeast Florida

*(Focus on Business
Development and
Incubation)*

4.2 Coordinate advocacy, funding, and venture capital investments for STEM professional development, entrepreneur efforts, and research & development

Venture Capital in the region is low when compared to other benchmark communities and research and development expenditures have significantly decreased over the past few years. It is critical for the region to leverage investments, in a more coordinated fashion, in order to elevate entrepreneurship, startup, and innovation activities. Specific tactics are included below to support this strategy.

4.2.1 Funding advocacy to support and sustain teacher residency around STEM subject areas

Advocate for funding to support and sustain the teacher residency around STEM. Build on the experience of the *Quality Education for All* education fund and determine ways to formalize this program and/or articulate the legislative return on investment to drive more localized investments from school systems. Consider implementing a teaching contract within low performing schools for a specific number of years in exchange for STEM education tuition in order to gain a clear return on the investment.

4.2.2 Promote STEM-focused business and job development in Northeast Florida

Expand academic research on research & development, specifically within STEM fields, to create a more focused magnet for STEM businesses and job development in Northeast Florida. Determine the feasibility to develop or expand research functions at University of North Florida in order to provide a parallel function at the University of Florida that leads into the local economy.

4.2.3 Identify and coordinate philanthropic and venture capital funding

This funding coordination should be directed towards bringing more STEM, entrepreneur support, and research & development investments into the region. New business development and research in the Jacksonville metro has a funding level which is very low when compared to other benchmark regions.



GOAL 5:

Northeast Florida has a culture of lifelong learning and a resilient workforce

*(Focus on Value of Skills
Development and
Credential Attainment)*

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT: Constant upskilling, increased credential attainment, and shifting occupational skills need to be valued and supported in the NEFL labor market. By creating systems, incentives, and benefits for pursuing education and keeping skills, knowledge, and abilities at the highest levels, the region will drive cultural norms thereby producing a more resilient workforce and a skilled working population.

5.1 Expand and formalize efforts to increase credential completion in Northeast Florida (formally support and structure Earn Up)

Degree completion strategies are critical for communities to create a culture of lifelong learning. Earn Up, while incredibly valuable in its present state, requires significant scale and formalized support in order to achieve greater scale and impact in the region. The group can drive further investment in credential alignment and attainment for the region. Consider expanding scholarships and non-school related financial assistance as a way to further increase success within a credential pathway, leading to greater credential attainment in the region. Specific tactics are included below to support this strategy.

5.1.1 Continue to support Earn Up and move towards a formal business model

Create a business plan and organizational structure to scale and sustain Earn Up in order to increase attainment outcomes and affect regional impact through growing the overall education attainment levels. Potentially, consider a membership model that links this group with the Talent Advancement Network in order to create sustained revenue and increase operating dollars.

5.1.2 Create scholarship opportunities to increase college going opportunities in NEFL

Coordinate funding from the philanthropic community and private sector support to mitigate tuition costs for certain populations. Increase the opportunity for historical disenfranchised and lower socioeconomic populations' ability to gain access to new skills and high-wage career pathways. Consider focusing a portion of the scholarship dollars on working learners interested in obtaining a bachelor's degree to address lower than average bachelor's degree completion rates in the region. (See *Tenn. Reconnect best practice*).



GOAL 5:

Northeast Florida has a culture of lifelong learning and a resilient workforce

*(Focus on Value of Skills
Development and
Credential Attainment)*

5.2 Leverage and empower new education leadership within the regional systems (both in Higher Education and Secondary K-12 systems)

Residents perceive the quality of the education institutions in the region to be a core regional strength to build on, particularly the post-secondary institutions. There is new leadership coming into the region in both higher education and K-12. It is critical to include this group of leaders as this strategy is implemented. Specific tactics are included below to support this strategy.

5.2.1 Create a subcommittee of Earn Up (or separate group) to galvanize the new education leadership in the region

This group should include superintendents of K-12 school districts, career and technical education leaders, as well as presidents and provosts of the higher education institutions. This effort would be convened and managed by EarnUp to determine the vision of the work to be implemented and create an accountability system to connect with the Talent Advancement Network.

5.2.2 Use the leadership community of practice to replicate and scale regional best practices.

Specifically, look to innovative models such as the elementary and middle school career academies at Flagler Schools, the University of North Florida Transportation and Distribution Flagship program, and other initiatives supported by the Jacksonville Public Education Fund in order to ensure coordination of programming across region. This will ensure a standard of quality across the region and create seamless engagement of industry across the talent supply stakeholders at scale and not on one-to-one relationships.



SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT BEST PRACTICE

Statewide Tennessee Reconnect Degree Completion Initiative

(Goal 5; Strategy 5.1.2)



The State of Tennessee created an initiative to help adults enter higher education in order to gain new skills, advance in the workplace, and complete their degree or credential.

The initiative includes Tennessee Reconnect Communities (TRC), locally-based collaboratives comprised of local community leaders, employers, and higher education institutions that provide adults with free advising, career counseling, support, and personalized paths into and through college.

The initiative was created by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission in partnership with the Graduate! Network. The TRC's receive technical assistance and funding from the Lumina Foundation and the State of Tennessee.