



North Carolina Employment and Training Association



**Bold Moves for a New Era**

**May 6th-8th, 2026**

**[nceta.org](http://nceta.org)**

**2026 Spring Conference**

**HOTEL  
BALLAST**

301 N. Water Street, Wilmington, NC



*President, Malinda Marsh*



Greetings NCETA Conference Attendees:

On behalf of the North Carolina Employment and Training Association (NCETA), it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to Wilmington, NC for our 2026 Annual NCETA Conference as we celebrate 58 years of partnership, progress, and service. For nearly six decades, NCETA has been a statewide leader in workforce development—advancing best practices in programming, case management, job development, policy implementation, and service delivery. Our annual conference remains a place to reflect on where we’ve been, honor the work happening today, prepare for the challenges and opportunities ahead, and move forward with renewed dedication to our workforce community and those we serve.

This year, we gather under a theme that reflects and captures both urgency and possibility: “Game Changer: Bold Moves for a New Era.” We are living through a transformative moment in North Carolina’s economic landscape that is shifting rapidly. AI (Artificial Intelligence) is reshaping the workplace, Industries are evolving at unprecedented speed, and the needs of our diverse talent pipeline continue to shift. The “old way” is no longer enough. To meet this moment, we must embrace our roles not only as administrators, but as innovators and architects of the future. Our Core Pillars for 2026 - Innovate: We will explore forward-thinking strategies that push beyond traditional workforce models, offering new solutions for job seekers, employers, and communities. Inspire: Through success stories from NCWorks Career Centers, community colleges, and local partnerships, we reignite the passion that fuels our mission. Impact: Every session is designed with outcomes in mind.

We are here to equip you with tools that change lives and strengthen North Carolina’s economy. As the world continues to evolve, NCETA remains committed to staying at the forefront of professional and workforce development. We have moved from strictly in-person meetings to hybrid engagement, from programs like the Neighborhood Youth Corps to Career Pathways and integrated service delivery. Today we see a deeper alignment between Industry, WIOA and Perkins programs, skilled trades, expanded Apprenticeship opportunities, and the emergence of AI as a powerful tool for improving workforce outcomes. What has not changed in 58 years is the unwavering dedication of our frontline staff—professionals who show up every day to serve North Carolinians with excellence and to help employers find the skilled talent they need to thrive.

Thank you for choosing to invest your professional development resources in the 2026 NCETA Conference. Workforce partnerships have never been more essential, and we have designed this year’s program to reflect that urgency. You will find sessions on professional development, business services, customer service, veteran services, re-entry and emerging occupational trends from across the state. May this conference strengthen your connections, expands your knowledge, and enhances the skills that help you excel in your work. I encourage you to meet new colleagues, exchange ideas, and learn how others are addressing the challenges we all face. I am continually inspired by what we learn from one another, and this conference is one of the best opportunities to see the creativity and commitment driving workforce development across North Carolina.

We welcome your feedback on NCETA’s direction and invite you to join or renew your membership to take full advantage of the benefits we offer. The work you do each day is the engine of North Carolina’s prosperity. This May, I challenge you to bring your boldest ideas, listen with curiosity, and help shape the “New Era” of workforce development through your courage to lead. Thank you for your dedication, resilience, and commitment to making a difference. I look forward to seeing the Game Changers of North Carolina in action.

Sincerely,  
Malinda Marsh, President  
North Carolina Employment and Training Association



# ABOUT NCETA

## Connecting. Educating. Strengthening North Carolina's Workforce.

The North Carolina Employment and Training Association (NCETA) is a statewide professional association dedicated to advancing workforce development, employment, and training efforts across North Carolina. NCETA brings together workforce professionals, education and training partners, nonprofit organizations, employers, and state and local agencies to share knowledge, build capacity, and strengthen communities.

Through high-quality training, collaboration, and information sharing, NCETA serves as a trusted resource for professionals working to improve employment outcomes and promote economic stability throughout the state. Members benefit from professional development opportunities, networking, and quarterly newsletters featuring workforce updates, best practices, and ways to highlight and support innovative work happening across North Carolina.

NCETA also hosts an annual Spring Conference, welcoming hundreds of workforce leaders and partners each year to connect, learn, and explore new strategies to better serve jobseekers, businesses, and stakeholders.

NCETA is open to anyone committed to building a strong, inclusive workforce system –whether you work in workforce development, education, industry, economic development, government, nonprofit services, or workforce innovation. If you are shaping talent pipelines, advancing equitable access to opportunity, or strengthening North Carolina's workforce future, NCETA is for you. To become a member, visit our website at [www.nceta.org](http://www.nceta.org).



# Wednesday, May 6th

Registration / Exhibitor Setup  
Moderator Training  
Opening Presentation / Lunch  
Workshops  
Caucus Meeting

Open at 11:00 am  
11:00 am - Dudley Room  
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm  
3:15 pm - 5:15 pm  
5:30 pm - 6:00 pm  
*Dinner is on your own*

## Welcome to the 2026 NCETA Spring Conference

Malinda Marsh  
*NCETA President*

### Cape Fear Workforce Development Board

Eric Barton  
*Workforce Development Board Chair*

Brian Jackson  
*Workforce Development Board Director*

Mike Forte  
*Chief Local Elected Official*

### Division of Workforce Solutions

Jennifer Jones  
*Chief Operating Officer*

### NC Community College System

Arbony Cooper  
*State Director  
for WIOA Title II*

Barbara Boyce  
*Workforce Consultant*

 Grand Ballroom

## Opening Speaker - Joy Jamerson

**Keep Your Fire Burning: Even When You Want to Extinguish It!**

Joy Jamerson is an accomplished workforce leader with 21 years of experience advancing innovative talent strategies and building career pathways across healthcare, education, corporate, and nonprofit sectors. Her expertise includes Registered Apprenticeships, talent pipeline development, strategic partnerships, and program leadership. Joy has served as a college instructor and Director of a federally funded Educational Talent Search program, supporting student success and expanding opportunities for diverse learners. She currently leads national workforce initiatives that connect students and job seekers to meaningful, higher-wage careers through apprenticeship program design, employer partnerships, and professional training. Joy is passionate about organizational transformation and creating pathways that help individuals thrive in education and the workplace.



Concurrent Workshops 3:15 - 4:15 pm

Merrick

**Fuel the FIRE: Turning Purpose into Sustainable Action (Without Burning Out)**

**Presenter:** Joy Jamerson

Fuel the FIRE is an interactive, strategy-driven session that helps workforce professionals translate renewed motivation into sustainable daily practices. Participants will learn to protect their energy, set healthy boundaries, and design a personal FIRE Sustainability Plan aligned with their role, workload, and leadership responsibilities. Rather than pushing people to “do more,” this session focuses on doing what matters—on purpose. Participants will leave with a clear, personalized roadmap for maintaining momentum, managing emotional labor, and staying effective without sacrificing themselves.

Harnett

**From the Classroom to the Career: Building Workforce Pathways to AHS—The Power of Adult High School**

**Presenters:** Monica Miller, Lynika Drye, Melissa Morlock, Aja Winstead

Discover how Bladen, Cape Fear, and Pitt Community Colleges are transforming lives through their Adult High School (AHS) programs. This session highlights each college’s unique approach, including program structure, student supports, and proven success strategies. Participants will gain practical insights to build or enhance AHS programs that help adult learners return to education and complete their diplomas. The session will also explore how AHS advances workforce development through career-aligned pathways that prepare students for in-demand industries.

Carolina

**NFJP in Action - Expanding Workforce Access for Farmworkers**

**Presenter:** Jacob Rogers

The National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) supports migrant and seasonal farmworkers in accessing education, training, and career services to improve economic opportunities. However, many workforce partners and stakeholders lack awareness of NFJP eligibility, services, and its alignment with WIOA programs across North Carolina. This session will provide an overview of the program, the population it serves, and the unique barriers farmworkers face. Participants will gain practical strategies to increase awareness, strengthen referrals, and enhance collaboration with NFJP grantees and partners. Attendees will leave with actionable tools to improve coordination and expand access to workforce services for agricultural communities.

Lilington/Caswell

**Beyond the Workforce: Integrating Wellness and Workforce Strategies for Sustainable Success**

**Presenter:** Dr. Norman Collins

As the workforce landscape evolves, organizations increasingly recognize that true success extends beyond technical skills and job readiness—it requires nurturing the whole person. This workshop explores how holistic wellness principles can be seamlessly woven into workforce development efforts to enhance retention, productivity and overall organizational health. Through evidence-based discussion and interactive application, attendees will gain actionable tools for creating wellness informed workforce initiatives that drive sustainable success and meaningful community impact.

Concurrent Workshops 4:15 - 5:15 pm



Carolina

**Breaking Barriers, Building Futures: Employment Strategies for Returning Citizens**

**Presenter:** Dennis Gaddy, Paul Stayert

Employment is a cornerstone of successful reentry, yet many individuals face structural and social barriers long after release. This session provides a framework for understanding those barriers and offers actionable strategies to support justice-impacted individuals in finding and retaining meaningful work. Attendees will leave with practical approaches to advocacy, employer engagement, and workforce development that promote dignity, equity, and long-term success.



Merrick

**The Human + AI Partnership: Enhancing Professional Output Without the Burnout**

**Presenter:** Dr. Lane Freeman

Artificial intelligence is reshaping the workforce across industries. In this interactive session, Dr. Lane Freeman shares practical strategies for integrating generative AI into workforce development, education, and training. Participants will learn AI’s capabilities, how to move beyond fear-based approaches, and ways to build AI literacy. Through real-world examples, attendees will see how AI can enhance productivity and support career transitions while gaining actionable strategies to lead in an evolving economy.



Lilington/Caswell

**Keep it 100! Connecting More Than a Job - NC Partners and Participants**

**Presenters:** Ryan Phillips and Nikia Jefferies

“Keep It 100” highlights More Than A Job NC’s commitment to delivering high-quality workforce services across all 100 counties. This interactive session explores how the program effectively onboards new providers and participants with clarity, consistency, and support. Attendees will learn strategies for structuring provider engagement, creating participant-centered onboarding experiences, and standardizing tools while allowing for local flexibility. Participants will leave with practical strategies and a clear pathway to join and contribute to the growing MTAJ-NC network.



Harnett

**Internship and Work-Based Learning Done Right**

**Presenter:** Kristy Brinson

This session gives a clear look at how EIPD’s internship program creates real opportunities for jobseekers while supporting employers in meaningful ways. This session highlights the practical steps, partnerships, and lessons learned that help internships lead to long-term success for everyone involved. Participants will also explore how structured internships can strengthen talent pipelines and improve retention outcomes. Attendees will gain actionable strategies to design or enhance internship programs that better connect individuals to sustainable career pathways.

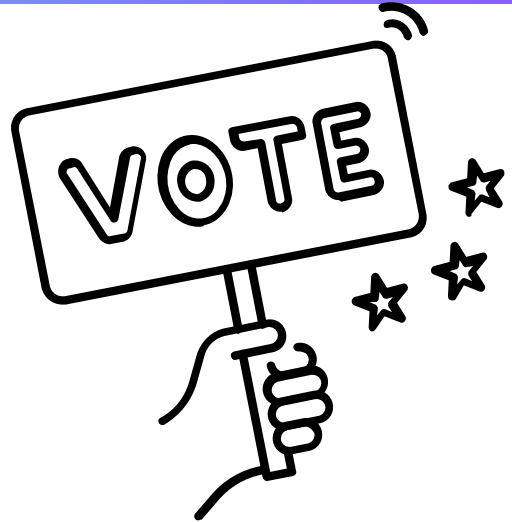
Break 5:15-5:30 pm



# Regional Caucus Meeting 5:30 pm

 Lillington/Caswell

Join us for the Regional Caucus Meetings & Board Elections for Western, Piedmont, and Eastern regions. This is your opportunity to vote in the NCETA 2026–2027 Board elections, engage in regional priorities, and help shape the direction of our association. We'll also welcome and orient new members—so come participate, connect, and make your voice heard!



*Dinner on your own in beautiful Wilmington!*



### **The Basics**

Known for its delicious Brunswick stew and a variety of house dogs.  
319 N Front St. Ph: 910-343-1050

### **Copper Penny**

Offers a burger and onion rings, with the onion rings being a standout.  
109 Chestnut St. Ph: 910-762-1373

### **Caprice Bistro**

Features steak frites and blackened salmon, providing a taste of the bistro's offerings.  
10 Market St. Ph: 910-815-0810

### **Savorez**

Known for its fresh sushi and sashimi, as well as a variety of Japanese dishes.  
402 Chestnut St. Ph: 910-833-8894

### **Mellow Mushroom**

Creatively inspired stone-baked pizzas, wings, fresh salads, burgers, craft beers and cocktails.  
208 N Water Street Ph: 910-769-6688

# Thursday, May 7th

Registration / Exhibitor Setup

Open at 8:00 am

Breakfast on your own

Workshops

9:00 am - 4:00 pm

*Elevate & Celebrate*

5:30 pm - 11:00 pm

Awards Banquet Dinner and Dance

featuring guest speaker Chinita Arceneaux

## Concurrent Workshops 9:00 am - 10:00 am



Carolina

### Reimagining Orientation: Paper Trails to Digital Paths

**Presenters:** Dr. Kimberly Gregory, Veronica Powell

Curious about how colleges are modernizing their orientation processes? In this dynamic workshop, Southeastern Community College and the College of the Albermarle pull back the curtain on their fully developed orientation workflows. Each college will walk you through their approach from traditional paper-based methods to fully electronic systems, highlighting the pros and cons and lessons learned along the way. Whether you're considering a digital transition or refining your current process, this side-by-side comparison offers valuable insight to help you build a workflow that works!



Merrick

### Changing the Game with Apprenticeship

**Presenter:** Sonja Godsey

This interactive workshop focused on innovative strategies for integrating apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship into WIOA-funded programs. Participants will explore new federal and North Carolina guidance and what it means for expanding work-based learning opportunities. The session will highlight creative, compliant approaches to braiding funding and maximizing resources at the local level. Attendees will engage in practical discussions and examples that challenge traditional models and spark new ideas. Participants will leave with actionable strategies to strengthen apprenticeship pathways and drive workforce outcomes.



Harnett

### Leveraging My Future NC Profiles and Local Partnerships to Strengthen Workforce Development

**Presenters:** Toni Blount, Casey Sadler, Sarah Hardesty

This session explores the 2026 myFutureNC Attainment Profiles and updated Workforce Development Board Profiles to better understand workforce readiness across North Carolina. It highlights Carteret County's healthcare pipeline initiative as a model for cross-sector collaboration. Participants will learn how to apply data locally, replicate effective partnerships, and build stronger career pathways. Attendees will leave with practical tools and strategies to advance attainment and strengthen talent pipelines.



Lillington/Caswell

### NC Career Launch- An Initiative to Align Systems, Braid Funding, and Expand Youth Apprenticeship Opportunities

**Presenters:** Scott Panagrosso, Charlie Milling, Cierra Tucker

This session provides an overview of the NC Career Launch program, a statewide effort to align systems, braid funding, and expand youth apprenticeship opportunities. Participants will learn how a coordinated approach supports both new and existing programs using multiple funding streams. The session will highlight successful registered apprenticeships as models and share best practices for sustainability. Attendees will also explore strategies for collaboration to strengthen and grow these efforts.

Break 10:00 am - 10:30 am

## Concurrent Workshops 10:30 am - 11:45 am



Carolina

### Veteran Resources and Services

**Presenter:** Saul McCloyen

Veterans bring valuable skills, leadership experience, and strong work ethics to the civilian workforce, yet many still face barriers when transitioning from military service to employment. This session will provide an overview of key veterans' workforce programs and resources available through the public workforce system and partner agencies. The session will also highlight effective strategies for connecting veterans to employment, engaging employers who value military experience, and building strong partnerships with veteran-serving organizations. Through discussion and practical examples, attendees will gain insights into best practices for serving veterans, navigating available programs, and ensuring veterans successfully transition into meaningful civilian careers.



Merrick

### Workforce Pell: Strengthening Systems and Collaboration with Community Colleges

**Presenter:** Anne Bacon

This session explores Workforce Pell and its impact on strengthening collaboration between workforce systems and community colleges. Recent federal legislation expands Pell Grants to short-term training programs that lead to credentials, employment, and academic credit. Participants will learn how North Carolina is building an implementation model through interagency collaboration and alignment between education providers and the WIOA system. The session will highlight how community colleges and workforce partners can leverage this opportunity to expand training pathways and improve outcomes. Attendees will also engage in discussion and provide input on building stronger, more connected partnerships.



Lillington/Caswell

### Keep Your Fork at 50+, The Best is Yet to Come

**Presenter:** Mark Smith

This presentation outlines how many of the men and women over age 50 have been thrust back into the workforce since COVID 19. The apprehension they carry with feeling out of place and unwanted in a society that deems them a liability. We know that age discrimination is real, but do we better equip our seasoned workforce to stand tall and reach new personal goals? (I know first-hand and share the story of how I lost my job in 2018 at age 54 and the mindset shift I had to overcome to reach my second career.)



Harnett

### ADVISSSSSSS'IT LIKE IT'S HOT

**Presenter:** Felicia Gilmore

This session will provide strategies to community college representatives for new adult learners and non-traditional students to assist them with information and techniques to make them as comfortable as possible if they are starting a new career furthering their educational goals, or starting a new career path through the community college system.



Lunch on your own - 11:45 - 1:45 pm

## Concurrent Workshops 1:45 - 2:45 pm



Merrick

### Aligning WIOA Title II and Apprenticeship

**Presenters:** Rebecca Loli, Linda Robinson, Carrie Russell, Matthew Brown

More than 2,100 employers in North Carolina use Registered Apprenticeship to train their workforce, because research across industries points to a five-year post-completion retention rate of 90% or higher for most employers. Registered Apprenticeship is not only good for employers, but it is great for participants too! Multiple studies indicate apprentices make an average of \$400,000 more over the course of their careers than non-apprentices. Learn how WIOA Title II Adult Education programs can align with the work of ApprenticeshipNC to support students' entry into or advancement within rewarding careers. Attendees will engage with resources from ApprenticeshipNC and the Registered Apprenticeship Center of Excellence, in addition to unpacking examples of current adult education integrated education and training (IET) programs that are also pre-apprenticeships, or workplace literacy programs that train incumbent workers.



Carolina

### Why Mindset Matters to Reentry

**Presenter:** Dr. Crystal McIver

The participants attending this workshop will take a deep dive into the mindset of a person who is institutionalized. Come learn how to help staff and clients understand how important it is to include mind reset, a cognitive-based intervention to reentry programs. Participants will walk away with a clear understanding of how the mind and the way a person thinks can affect their outcomes.



Harnett

### Level Up: Using Games to Transform Workforce Engagement

**Presenter:** Brandi Bragg

Workforce engagement doesn't have to be boring. This session introduces game-based strategies that are transforming how workforce professionals attract, engage, and support youth, job seekers, and employers. Participants will experience live Kahoots and interactive booth games designed to break down barriers, spark curiosity, and make career pathways fun. These tools have been tested in rural and regional events to increase participation, build stronger connections, and leave lasting impressions. Attendees will walk away with practical ideas they can adapt immediately—whether building out career fairs, training events, or everyday outreach. By turning career pathways into a game, workforce practitioners become true “game changers” in how they inspire and connect with their communities.



Lillington/Caswell

### Change is Hard at First, Messy in the Middle, But Rewarding in the End

**Presenter:** Mark Smith

Change is inevitable, but growth is optional. Humanistically, many of us resist change for a wide range of reasons. Some believe that staying the same without growth works well for them, but in reality, nothing stays the same. This presentation outlines how change, especially in the world we see today, can be a good thing as all three components are shared (Hard, Messy and Rewarding).

Break 2:45 pm - 3:00 pm

## Concurrent Workshops 3:00 - 4:00 pm



Merrick

### **Beyond the Acronyms: IET and IELCE That Make an Impact**

**Presenters:** Stephanie Reeder, Cindy Ho

Explore key concepts and strategies for planning and implementing IET and IELCE programs. This sessions covers the student journey from onboarding to completion, the role of Advansys reporting, and the benefit of IETs for students and programs. Learn from challenges, lessons experienced and see how a successful Pre-IET Bootcamp from 24-25 year brought these models to life.



Harnett

### **Building Better Workforce Leaders: Applying the EEL Framework to Strengthen Culture, Collaboration, and Outcomes**

**Presenter:** Ulric Hill

Workforce systems are evolving quickly, and today's challenges demand leadership that goes beyond program management or technical expertise. This session introduces Empowered Equity Leadership (EEL), a five-pillar leadership development model designed to strengthen decision-making, communication, and culture-building skills across employment and training systems. Participants will learn how equity-centered leadership strengthens workforce competencies, increases team accountability, and improves system responsiveness for job seekers and employers. Through real-world scenarios and interactive activities, the session explores how EEL supports leaders in building Radical Awareness and Empathy, Shared Power, Inclusion, Courageous Accountability, Growth-Centered Impact, and Mission-Driven Equity Action. Attendees will gain practical tools to develop staff, enhance organizational culture, and integrate equity into leadership practices, leading to stronger outcomes.



Lillington/Caswell

### **Future Ready: An End-to-End Framework for Employability Skills Training in 2026 and Beyond**

**Presenter:** Barbara Boyce

As the world of work evolves, so must the way we prepare students for success. This interactive session explores the top 10 trends shaping employability skills training in 2026, framed as a journey from the student perspective – starting with lived experience and growth mindset, building modern competencies, validating skills through micro-credentials and applied learning, and ending with updated job-seeking and workplace readiness practices. This session will highlight practical strategies, real-world examples, and discussion prompts that empower college staff to operationalize employability skills training for the 2026 workforce and beyond.



Carolina

### **The Making of an Employable Student**

**Presenters:** Angela Mobley, Jennifer Phelps

Get an inside look at Martin Community College's High School Equivalency programs and Data Manager workflows. This session dives deep into strategies, innovative practices, and how they support adult learners on their journey to earning their HS diploma. Step into the shoes of a detail-oriented Data Manager at MCC. This session offers an intensive, start-to-finish walkthrough of how data is managed within the College and Career Readiness (CCR). From daily tasks to big-picture strategies, gain firsthand insight into the workflows that keep data accurate, organized and impactful. Perfect for anyone looking to understand or improve data management practices in educational settings.

Break 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm

## Elevate & Celebrate Award Dinner and Reception Event

# 5:30 pm - 11:00 pm

Join us for **Elevate & Celebrate** Awards Dinner and Reception Event—an evening to connect, celebrate, and recharge with colleagues from across the workforce community.



### Presentation of the Harold Smith Legacy Award

The **Harold Smith Legacy Award** is being presented in honor and memory of Harold Smith, recognizing the lasting impact of his contributions to the workforce community. This award celebrates a workforce professional who exemplifies the leadership, dedication, and kindness that Harold demonstrated throughout his career. It serves as a tribute to his legacy while highlighting individuals who continue to carry forward his values in their work. Moving forward, the award will be presented annually to honor those who embody the spirit of service and excellence in workforce development.



### Chinita Arceneaux



Guest speaker, Chinita Arceneaux, Director of Program Quality and Special Projects with the Division of Employment Security will present:

#### Embracing Change: The evolution of Unemployment Insurance in the 21st century

North Carolina’s unemployment insurance program has consistently evolved since the Pandemic catapulted it toward new innovations and modernization. The North Carolina Division of Employment Security has embraced innovative technologies and strategies in how it delivers direct services to its customers. Learn about these new technologies and approaches and how North Carolina continues to be a leader in customer service, efficient self-service mechanisms, and client-oriented relationships.



### Dance immediately following dinner presentation

*Riverview Terrace*

*Evening Dress Code: Coastal Chic (Elevated Beach Attire)*

Guests are encouraged to dress in coastal chic attire, a blend of professional elegance with relaxed beach-inspired style. Following the dinner presentation, the evening continues with a lively reception featuring a DJ, inviting you to unwind, connect, and celebrate. Hit the dance floor, and enjoy a night of great music, conversation, and coastal-inspired fun.



# Friday, May 8th

**Breakfast Buffet**  
**Workshops**  
**Closing Session**

**8:00 am - 9:00 am**  
**9:00 am - 10:00 am**  
**10:15 am - 11:45am**

## Concurrent Workshops 9:00 am - 10:00 am



Carolina

### **Career Pivot Strategies: Leveraging Data to Identify Career Transitions**

**Presenter:** Anchal Gupta

Career pivots often raise big questions: What opportunities exist? Which careers match my skills? Where is the demand? NC Labor & Economic Analysis Division (LEAD) staff explore how to leverage data to navigate career transitions. Participants will gain practical strategies to guide career planning conversations and support successful transitions through NCcareers.org and additional data sources.



Merrick

### **Tech Tactics: How More than a Job Uses Innovation to Expand Workforce Impact**

**Presenter:** Ryan Phillips

In just two years, More Than A Job NC has reimagined how employment and training services are delivered across North Carolina, especially in rural and underserved areas. This session explores how technology has been used to enhance service delivery, expand access, and increase efficiency without replacing the human element of workforce services. Participants will learn practical examples of innovations such as standardized processes, virtual provider onboarding, paperless enrollment, and tools like a centralized SharePoint hub and referral automation. The session will also highlight statewide branding, a redesigned website, and digital outreach strategies that have strengthened engagement. Attendees will engage in discussion and leave with actionable ideas to improve reach, efficiency, and innovation in their own programs.



Harnett

### **Delivering High Quality Business Services**

**Presenter:** Glenda Morrow

This highly interactive workshop is designed for workforce professionals, business services representatives, and workforce board staff who want to elevate their employer engagement strategies and deliver consistent, high-value business services.

Participants will learn how to move beyond transactional outreach to build strategic, consultative partnerships with employers. Drawing on best practices aligned with guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor and national workforce system standards; this session provides practical tools that can be implemented immediately in the field.



Lillington/Caswell

### **Pre-ETS: Connecting Students with Disabilities to Career Pathways**

**Presenter:** Scott Levine

EDSI's Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) program helps students with disabilities explore careers, build workplace skills, and prepare for education and employment. Through five core services, students gain confidence, clarify their goals, and develop the skills needed to succeed in the workforce. EDSI also partners with workforce organizations and WIOA programs to expand opportunities and better serve diverse job seekers. The program aims to strengthen collaboration, increase work-based learning, and support employers in tapping into a broader, inclusive talent pool.



Break 10:00 am - 10:15 am

## Closing Session

Merrick/Lilington/Caswell

NCETA Board Election Results  
Closing Remarks - NCETA President, Malinda Marsh

### Why Workforce is Still the Game Changer

presented by Solomon McAuley

Join us for this closing keynote that refocuses leaders on the reality that people –not just technology–drive performance, culture, and long-term success. As automation accelerates, it challenges the idea that tools can replace the human element, highlighting the critical role of engagement, accountability, and culture. The session underscores that workforce strategy is a shared leadership responsibility, not just an HR function, and reveals how everyday workplace environments reflect an organization’s true brand. Attendees leave with a renewed commitment to intentionally invest in and empower their people as a key competitive advantage.



## NCETA Board of Directors

### Officers

- Malinda Marsh, President
- Mose Dorsey, Vice - President
- Krystal Rinehart, Treasurer
- Sonja Godsey, Secretary
- Robert Witchger, Past President



### Western Region

Emily Nicholson

### Piedmont Region

- Veronica Howard-Green
- Russell Ingram
- Sandra Webster

### Eastern Region

- Carla McWilliams
- Rose Motley
- Linda Smith
- William Wooten

### Liaisons

- Deon Carter
- Arbony Cooper
- Stephanie Deese
- Nikia Jefferies
- Solomon McAuley
- Susan Oney



NCETA honors the life and legacy of Harold Smith, a dedicated and long-serving member of the NCETA Board whose impact on workforce development across North Carolina will be felt for generations to come. Harold was a passionate advocate for opportunity, equity, and excellence in service to job seekers, employers, and communities. His leadership, wisdom, and unwavering commitment helped shape the direction of NCETA and strengthen the workforce system throughout the state.

Harold was known not only for his professional contributions, but for his generosity, mentorship, and the genuine care he showed to colleagues and partners. His presence on the Board brought insight, integrity, and a steady voice of experience that guided many important decisions.

In honor of Harold's enduring legacy, NCETA is proud to establish the **Harold Smith Legacy Award**. This award recognizes individuals who exemplify the values Harold lived every day—leadership, service, innovation, and a deep commitment to strengthening workforce opportunities for all. The inaugural award will be presented at this year's conference, serving as a lasting tribute to Harold's impact and a celebration of those who continue his work.

Though Harold is no longer with us, his legacy lives on through the countless lives he touched, the systems he helped improve, and the leaders he inspired. We are grateful for his service, his friendship, and the lasting difference he made.

With gratitude and remembrance,  
*NCETA Board of Directors*

Thank you!



## Eckerd Connects proudly sponsors NCETA

NCETA extends our sincere appreciation to Eckerd Connects for their generous support and continued partnership in advancing workforce development across North Carolina and beyond. With a mission to empower individuals to build better lives through education, workforce development, and life skills training, Eckerd Connects has a long-standing history of serving youth, young adults, and families facing barriers to success.

Through innovative programs and strong community partnerships, Eckerd Connects delivers impactful services that include job training, career readiness, education pathways, and support services designed to help individuals achieve sustainable employment and long-term stability. Their work aligns closely with the goals of NCETA and the broader workforce system—creating opportunities, strengthening talent pipelines, and supporting economic mobility for all. Eckerd Connects’ commitment to collaboration, innovation, and service excellence continues to make a meaningful difference in communities nationwide. Their support of this conference helps bring together leaders, practitioners, and partners dedicated to strengthening our workforce system and expanding opportunities for those we serve.

We thank Eckerd Connects for their leadership, partnership, and investment in the success of NCETA and the communities we serve.



**eckerd.org**

**Empowering Potential.  
Building Careers.**

**383k**

Total students, clients, and families served

**24k**

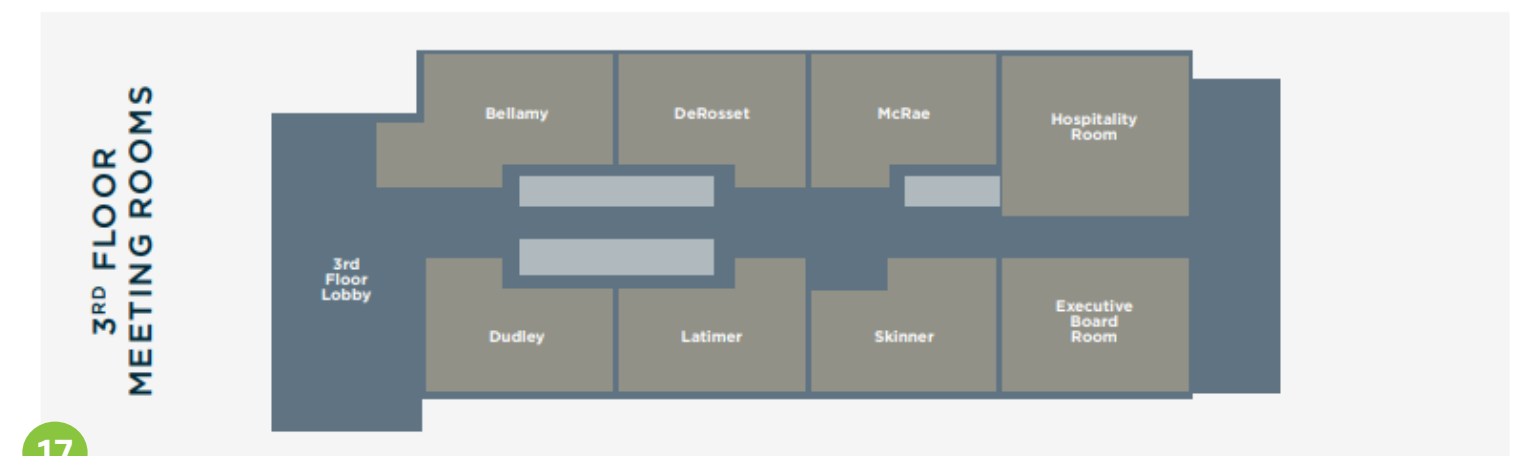
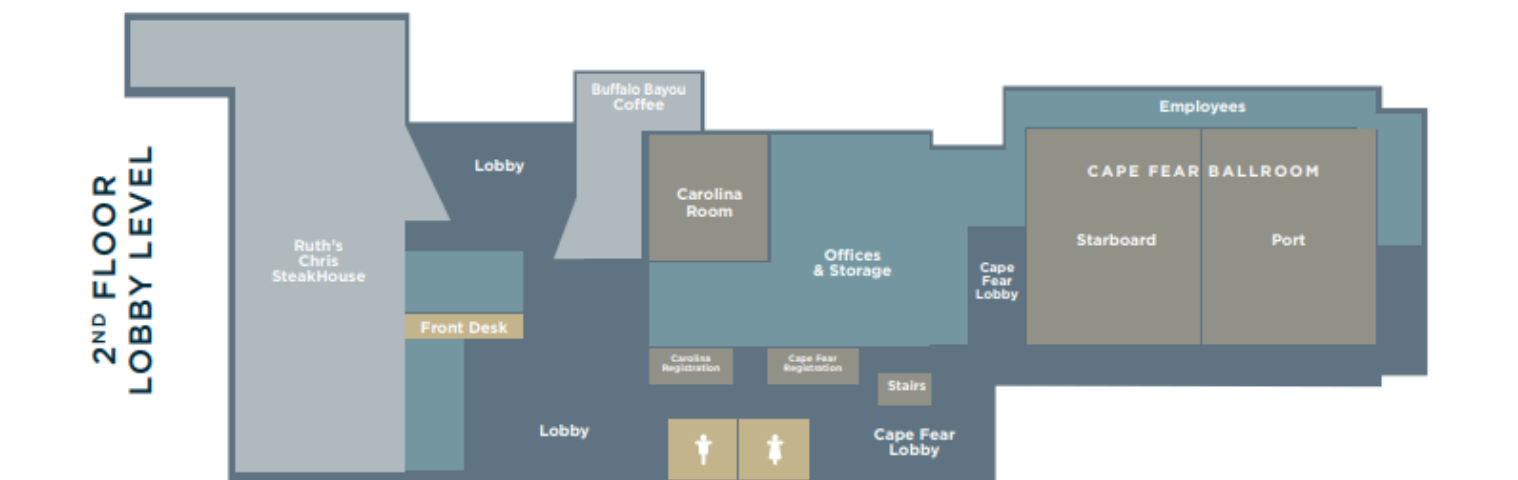
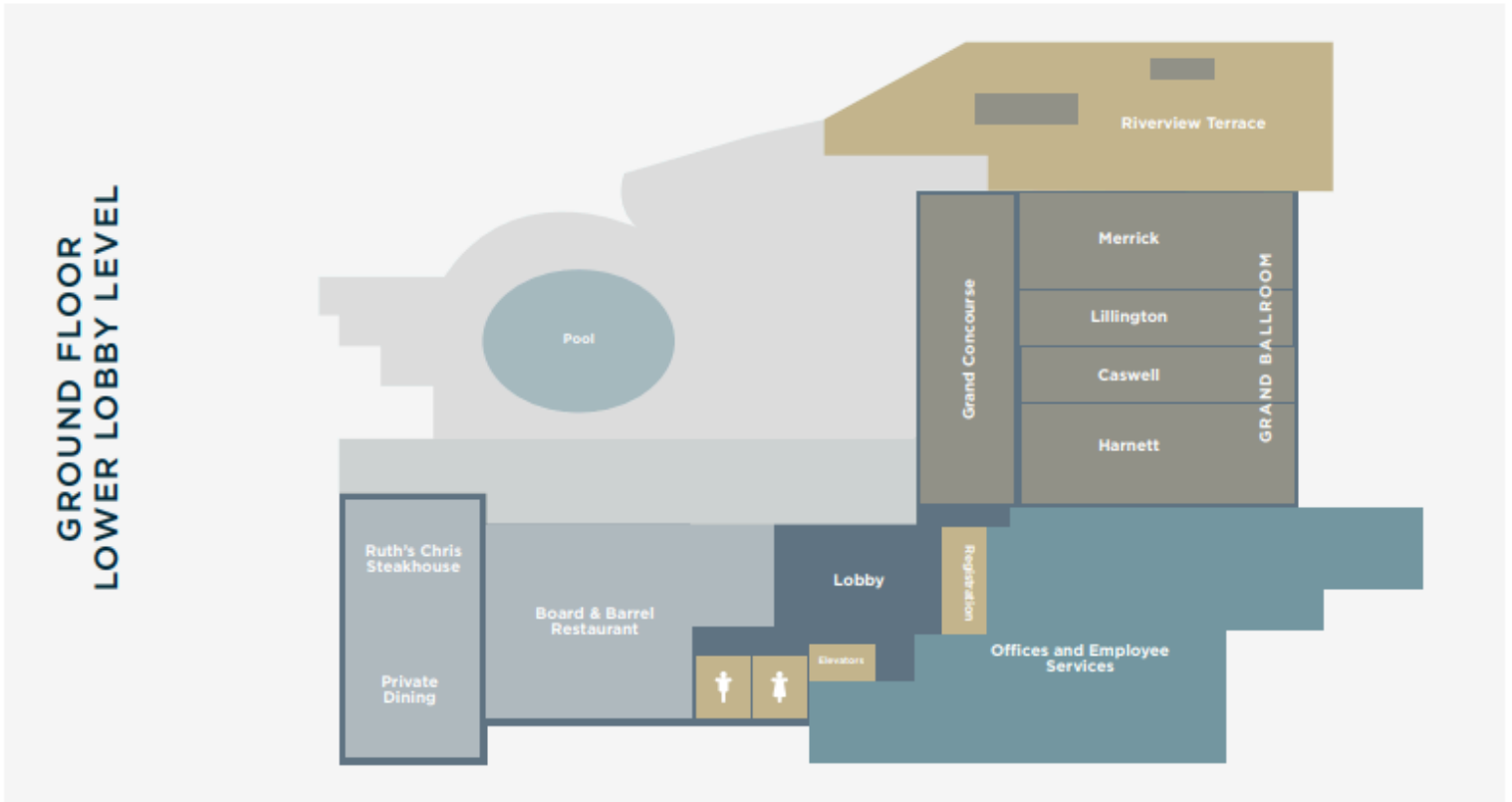
24,602 students, clients, and families served in FY 2024

**151**

Programs across all service areas

**21**

20 states served plus Washington, D.C.





Thank you for being part of this year's NCETA Conference—we truly appreciate your time, engagement, and commitment to strengthening our workforce community. Be sure to check out our next online Professional Development series event on May 21<sup>st</sup> at 10:00 am. Visit [nceta.org](https://nceta.org) for details on this and many more upcoming events!

Please travel safely, and be sure to stay connected as we share details for next year's conference and other upcoming NCETA events.

Before you go, don't forget to complete our survey—your feedback is invaluable and helps us continue to grow and improve each year. We look forward to seeing you again soon!

*We gratefully acknowledge our sponsors and exhibitors whose partnership and investment help drive meaningful connections, innovation, and impact at the NCETA Spring Conference. We invite you to visit the Exhibitor Hall and participate in our Exhibitor Engagement BINGO for a dynamic networking experience.*



---

**Empowering Potential.  
Building Careers.**



