



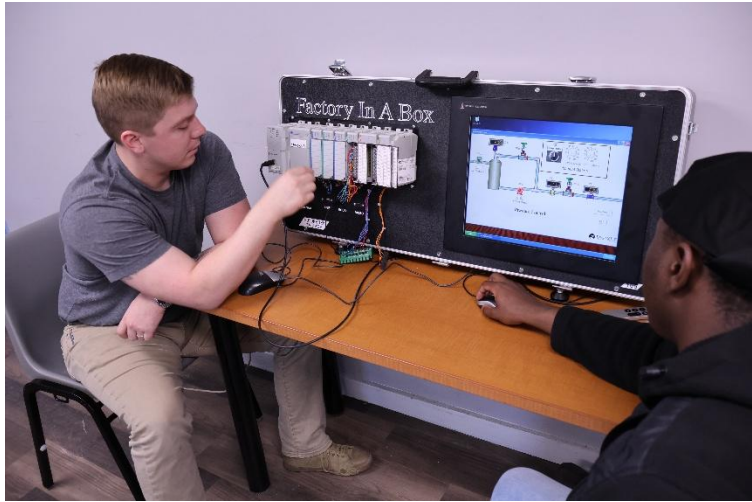
Rural Leaders for
Economic Mobility



Mobility Action Plan

Hertford County, N.C.

RURAL LEADERS FOR ECONOMIC MOBILITY
HERTFORD COUNTY
NORTH CAROLINA
Mobility Action Plan



County	Hertford County, North Carolina
County Seat	Winton, N.C.
County Population	~19,453
Labor Market	Four-county Roanoke-Chowan region — Hertford, Bertie, Northampton, Gates
RLEM Subgrant	\$50,000
Primary Contact	Kelly Bowers, Director, Hertford County Economic Development
Engagement Lead	Meredith R. Whitehead, CEO, The Cedric Group meredith.r.whitehead@gmail.com

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A \$875 million investment has arrived. The question is who fills those jobs.

Hertford County, North Carolina has 19,453 residents. Nearly one in four lives in poverty. Labor force participation is 51.9 percent — meaning for every working adult, there is another working-age adult outside the labor market entirely. That is the county that existed before February 2026.

In February 2026, USFR officially announced Project Green Lantern: an \$875 million specialty steel manufacturing facility projecting 625 full-time direct jobs across its first two phases, with average annual wages of \$80,000 to \$85,000. A signed Community Benefits Agreement commits \$24 million in local investment over 15 years, with named uses including vocational training, the Advanced Manufacturing Center at Roanoke-Chowan Community College, Chowan University and public education teacher retention. Surrounding that anchor: Entwistle (\$25–30M expansion), Structural Coating (36–100 jobs annually), Metal Tech (35 jobs), the Rivers Group reopening (300–400 employees), CF Nitrogen brownfield, Project Cyclone and Nucor's contingent expansion. The county must place several thousand workers into manufacturing, energy, healthcare and trades roles within five years.

The opportunity is not whether the jobs will arrive. They are arriving. The question is whether Hertford County residents — especially those on the wrong side of the income, education and access gaps — will be the ones who fill them, advance in them and stay.

Strategy	Focus	Anchor Partners	Timeline
1. Industry-Aligned Pipelines	Calibrate R-CCC manufacturing and healthcare programs to specific employer demand; stack credentials so workers can move across USFR, Entwistle, Structural Coating, Metal Tech and Nucor	R-CCC, WOC, Employer Roundtable, NC Works	2026–2028 ramp to system scale
2. Expansion Retention	Ensure every expansion job that can be filled by a Hertford or regional resident is filled by one; pair each employer with an R-CCC liaison; activate WIOA adult learners	R-CCC, NC Works / Hometown Talent, Hertford County ED	2026 — immediate activation
3. Mega-Project Rapid Response	USFR-specific cohort plan sized to facility phase timing; employer-paid apprenticeships; R-CCC capacity expansion; committed milestone schedule	USFR, R-CCC, WOC, Employer Roundtable	2026–2030 (CBA 15-year horizon)
4. Advanced Manufacturing Center	Physical infrastructure for the entire pipeline: welding bays, machining labs, industrial systems, NDT/QA at scale; Employer Roundtable home; wraparound services hub	R-CCC, USDA, EDA, NC IDF, USFR CBA funds	AMC operational 01/2028

5. Healthcare Pathway	Parallel pipeline to manufacturing: CNA through BSN articulation with Chowan University; structured for adult learners; paid earn-while-learn entry points	R-CCC, Chowan University, regional healthcare employers	2026 launch; scaling 2027–2028
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"The largest share of value creation and product integrity comes from core skilled trades — welders, NDT inspectors, machinists, lab technicians and heat-treatment specialists — which are the hardest roles to fill regionally. Local training capacity for these fields is currently insufficient. This program will enable Hertford County to produce a skilled local workforce instead of relying on imported labor." — USFR Training Facility Proposal Summary

Support Requested from Capstone Partners

Hertford County is asking capstone partners for support in four areas:

- Advanced Manufacturing Center capital — connections to EDA Public Works, USDA Rural Development Community Facilities, NC Industrial Development Fund and philanthropic funders (Gates Foundation, Golden LEAF, Z. Smith Reynolds, Kate B. Reynolds Trust) for the \$25–50M facility
- Project Cyclone employer network connections — introductions to companies in the Project Cyclone pipeline and site selector networks operating in northeastern North Carolina
- Workforce access infrastructure — technical assistance and funding connections for childcare, transportation and housing as workforce program supports for pipeline participants
- Peer learning and evaluation — rural workforce development programs that have successfully scaled earn-while-learn from boutique cohorts to system-level pathways serving several hundred participants per year

SECTION 1

Economic Mobility Vision — A county where residents fill the jobs being created here

Hertford County's economic mobility vision is grounded in a specific test. By late 2030, a Hertford County resident who entered the workforce pipeline in 2026 — a high school graduate without a college credential, with limited transportation, from a household below the county's median income — should be able to point to: a credential they earned, a job paying above the county's living-wage threshold, retention past one year, and continued residence in Hertford County. If that resident does not exist by 2030, the plan has not worked as designed.

In the next decade, Hertford County aims to:

- Reduce the share of residents below the living-wage threshold through credentialed employment in manufacturing, energy, healthcare and trades
- Increase the share of regional jobs filled by regional residents — currently only 48.6 percent of four-county labor shed workers are employed in their home county
- Operationalize the Workforce Oversight Committee and Advanced Manufacturing Center as durable, self-sustaining regional institutions
- Build earn-while-learn pathways that serve several hundred participants per year — not boutique cohorts but a system-level pipeline
- Open designed pathways for currently excluded workers: adults without credentials, justice-involved residents, disconnected youth, dislocated workers

The Opportunity — and the Equity Imperative

Economic development creates jobs and tax base. Economic mobility ensures the people who live in a community can access those jobs, advance in them and remain in the place they have chosen to call home. The two are deeply related — Hertford's incoming employer pipeline is the most powerful mobility lever the county has ever held — but they are not the same. Reporting on jobs created tells the development story. Reporting on who got those jobs, what they are paid five years later and whether they still live in Hertford tells the mobility story. This plan is written in the language of mobility.

Assets & Strengths	Obstacles & Challenges
✓ USFR Project Green Lantern: \$875M, 625 jobs, \$24M Community Benefits Agreement signed	✗ 22.7% poverty rate; median household income of \$48,964
✓ Expansion cohort: Entwistle, Structural Coating, Metal Tech, Rivers Group, CF Nitrogen, Project Cyclone, Nucor	✗ 51.9% labor force participation — nearly half of working-age adults outside the labor market
✓ \$51M state-funded inland port secured — county-owned barge transportation system operational	✗ Only 67.8% of employed Hertford residents work inside the county; labor market is four-county
✓ R-CCC Works! and Hometown Talent proven earn-while-learn models operating	✗ 20.5% of households without internet; 32.5% housing cost-burdened

✓ Workforce Oversight Committee formally established; 10-member multi-institution composition	X Childcare, transportation and housing as binding constraints on workforce participation
✓ Roanoke-Chowan Community College as spine of credentialing infrastructure	X No four-county workforce governance body yet — WOC is the foundation being built
✓ Chowan University for four-year BSN and bachelor's pathways	X Adult, dislocated and reentry pathways thin — equity gap widest here
✓ Hertford County ACT Work Ready Community certification maintained	X Housing cost pressure increasing as industrial growth arrives

SECTION 2

Local Conditions — What the data and employer and resident voice say about the workforce gap

The County and the Region

Hertford County is one of four counties in a shared labor shed — Hertford, Bertie, Northampton and Gates — with a combined population of 63,433. Fewer than half of regional workers are employed in their home county, which means any workforce plan that treats the labor market as Hertford-only systematically undercounts both the challenge and the opportunity. This plan is built on four-county data and designed for four-county scale, with Hertford leading.

Indicator	Hertford County	Four-County Region	Source
Population	19,453	63,433	ACS 2019–2023
Poverty rate	22.7%	21.2%	ACS 2019–2023
Median household income	\$48,964	\$48,938	ACS 2019–2023
Labor force participation	51.9%	50.0%	ACS 2019–2023
Unemployment rate	4.7%	4.4%	ACS 2019–2023
Workers employed in home county	67.8%	48.6%	ACS 2019–2023
Households without internet	20.5%	26.1% (up to 29.9%)	ACS 2019–2023
Housing cost-burdened households	32.5%	30.3%	ACS 2019–2023
Average weekly wage	\$915	Regionally comparable	BLS

What the Data Reveals

Three patterns sit underneath the headline numbers. First, the gap between unemployment (4.7%) and labor force participation (51.9%) reveals what the jobless rate hides: nearly half of working-age Hertford residents are not in the labor market at all. The mobility opportunity is not primarily about reducing unemployment — it is about pulling disconnected adults into the labor market as the jobs arrive.

Second, only 67.8 percent of Hertford residents who work are employed inside the county. The labor market is fundamentally four-county. Third, 20.5 percent without internet and 32.5 percent housing cost-burdened mean workforce participation is constrained not primarily by job availability or skills, but by the infrastructure of daily life — broadband to apply, stable housing during training, transportation to reach the job site, childcare so a parent can participate.

What Employers and Residents Have Said

"Limited public transportation options... make it difficult for residents to access essential services, including healthcare, grocery stores, and employment opportunities." — 2024 Hertford County Community Health Needs Assessment

"Housing costs have increased — driven in part by local industrial growth — causing the availability of affordable housing to decrease and pushing many low-income families into substandard living conditions or out of the county altogether." — 2024 Hertford County Community Health Needs Assessment

Employer voice points to one conclusion: Hertford County's hiring challenge is not employer reluctance to hire locally. It is the absence, today, of the training pipeline and the workforce access infrastructure that would let local residents fill the jobs being created. USFR has stated explicitly that local training capacity for skilled trades is currently insufficient. Entwistle's exploration of an on-site day care center as part of its expansion proposal names childcare as a barrier the company is willing to fund around — because it cannot wait for the public sector to solve it. Nucor's contingent expansion signals that labor availability, not site conditions, is the gating concern.

SECTION 3

Mobility Pathway — How the governance structure and five strategies connect to lasting economic mobility

The chartered Workforce Oversight Committee and co-convened Employer Roundtable govern a coordinated workforce engine: scaled R-CCC manufacturing and healthcare programs, paid earn-while-learn pathways at system scale, four named pathways for currently excluded workers, an Advanced Manufacturing Center providing physical capacity for the pipeline, and integrated workforce access infrastructure addressing childcare, transportation, housing and broadband as one coordinated function.

The five-year outcome is measurable reduction in Hertford County's share of residents below the living-wage threshold and measurable increase in the share of regional jobs filled by regional residents.

	Inputs	Activities	Outputs (12 Mo)	Short-Term Outcomes (1–2 Yr)	Long-Term Outcomes (5 Yr)
Governance	Chartered WOC; Employer Roundtable; USFR \$24M CBA; 4-county MOU; Cedric Group engagement	Bi-monthly WOC; bi-monthly Employer Roundtable; co-designed credentials; 4-county MOU executed	WOC operating; MOU active; Employer Roundtable established; AMC funded	Partners coordinated; employer demand forecasts integrated into training design; AMC on track	Durable regional governance self-sustaining without external consulting support
Pipelines & Apprenticeships	R-CCC manufacturing and healthcare programs; WIOA Title I; Hometown Talent; earn-while-learn	Paid apprenticeships scaled; R-CCC Works! expanded; Tier 1–4 credential stack operational; adult-learner entry points open	200–500 enrollees/year; first USFR cohort placements; Healthcare Pathway first CNA cohort	75%+ completion rate; 65%+ placement at 60 days; 70%+ 6-month retention; wages above county average	150+ skilled-trades completers annually; Healthcare Pathway producing CNAs, LPNs, RNs at scale
USFR Rapid Response	USFR \$875M investment; \$24M CBA; R-CCC capacity; AMC	USFR cohort plan: 30–50 enrolled (2026) → 80–120 (2027) → 120–160 completers (Q2 2028)	First USFR cohort enrolled; CBA funds activated; AMC capital secured	USFR Phase 1 commercial startup (Q2 2028): 30+ R-CCC completers hired	USFR Phase 2–3: 120–150+ cumulative completers; steady state 150+/yr replacement hiring

<p>Equity Pathways</p>	<p>WIOA Supportive Services; Rivers Group; reentry partners; disconnected youth network</p>	<p>4 sub-pathways: adults without credentials, justice-involved, disconnected youth, dislocated workers; case management; community seat on WOC</p>	<p>Reentry pathway operational with Rivers Group; youth cohorts enrolled; dislocated worker track active</p>	<p>Annual equity audit showing pipeline serving excluded populations proportionally</p>	<p>Hertford resident from 2026 entry: credential, living-wage job, 1-year retention, still in county</p>
<p>Access Infrastructure</p>	<p>WIOA Supportive Services; NC Childcare Subsidy; NC DOT; BEAD broadband</p>	<p>Workforce Access Coordinator at enrollment activates: childcare voucher, transportation, housing referral, broadband voucher simultaneously</p>	<p>Coordinator operational; all 4 access systems activated for participants; dashboard tracking access utilization</p>	<p>Reduced dropout from access barriers; participants completing training at higher rates</p>	<p>Access infrastructure integrated into county budget as recurring workforce investment</p>

SECTION 4

Strategic Actions & Implementation — Five strategies, one workforce engine

Hertford County's workforce engine is already running. The RLEM subgrant supported the Cedric Group consulting engagement that produced this plan — a six-month, four-phase process of project initiation, infrastructure assessment, implementation design and final synthesis. The Workforce Oversight Committee is formally established. R-CCC Works! and Hometown Talent are operating. USFR is officially announced. The strategies below describe how to scale what exists into a system.

STRATEGY 1 — INDUSTRY-ALIGNED PIPELINES

Calibrating training to verified employer demand — and stacking credentials so workers advance

USFR has stated directly that local training capacity for skilled trades — welders, NDT inspectors, machinists, lab technicians, heat-treatment specialists — is currently insufficient and that without local capacity the county will rely on imported labor. Strategy 1 is the response: calibrating R-CCC's manufacturing programs to the specific demand profile of the expansion cohort, co-designing credentials with the Employer Roundtable, and stacking those credentials so workers can move between USFR, Entwistle, Structural Coating, Metal Tech and Nucor without restarting training.

Tier Structure	Tier 1 (3–4 months): Open-entry welding, machining, industrial systems certificates; CNA for healthcare entry Tier 2 (12–18 months): Full diploma; LPN and MA in healthcare; includes paid apprenticeship Tier 3 (24 months): AAS; RN (ADN) in healthcare Tier 4: AWS-certified welding, NDT Level I/II/III; BSN through Chowan University
Lead Partners	R-CCC (spine of credentialing), WOC, Employer Roundtable, NC Works / Mid-East Commission
Key Partners	USFR, Entwistle, Structural Coating, Metal Tech, Nucor, Chowan University, Hertford County Public Schools (CTE/CCP)
Timeline	2026: Employer Roundtable co-designs credentials; Tier 1 cohorts launch → 2027: Full diploma programs expanded; AMC capital secured → 2028: AMC operational; system at 200–500 enrollees/year
Measurable Outcomes	≥75% completion rate; ≥65% placement at 60 days; ≥70% 6-month retention; ≥4.0/5.0 employer satisfaction; 200–500 annual enrollees at scale
Earn-While-Learn	R-CCC Works! scaled to system level (200–500/yr); Hometown Talent private-sector slots for manufacturing and healthcare; WIOA stipends for Tier 1 and 2 adult learners; \$13–15/hr Tier 1, \$15–22/hr Tier 2, \$18–28/hr Tier 3

STRATEGY 2 — EXPANSION RETENTION
Making sure every expansion job that can be filled locally is filled locally

Without intentional capture, expansion jobs at Metal Tech, Structural Coating, Entwistle and Alfiniti are filled by workers commuting in from outside the county. Strategy 2 pairs each expanding employer with a designated R-CCC Employer Liaison, prioritizes Hometown Talent placements into expansion pipelines, routes WIOA-eligible adult learners directly into expansion jobs through accelerated training, and activates wraparound services around expansion timing. This is the strategy that makes the difference between a county that hosts manufacturing growth and a county that benefits from it.

Lead Partners	R-CCC (Employer Liaison model), Hertford County Economic Development, NC Works / Hometown Talent
Employer Pipeline	Metal Tech (+35 jobs), Structural Coating (+36–100/yr), Entwistle (~30 jobs), Alfiniti expansion, Rivers Group/Geo Group reopening (300–400 employees)
Timeline	2026: Immediate activation — Employer Liaison assigned to each expansion employer; Hometown Talent slots prioritized → 2027: WIOA direct-placement pipeline at scale; wraparound activated for all expansion placements
Measurable Outcomes	Share of expansion jobs filled by Hertford/regional residents; Hometown Talent private-sector placements; WIOA adult learner direct placements; 30/60/90-day retention at expansion employers
Budget	Covered within NC Works WIOA Title I; R-CCC operating budget; Hertford County ED operations

STRATEGY 3 — MEGA-PROJECT RAPID RESPONSE
Sizing the workforce engine to the USFR hiring wave

USFR's Project Green Lantern is sui generis in Hertford County's history: \$875 million, 625 direct jobs in the first two phases, \$80,000–\$85,000 average wages, a signed \$24 million Community Benefits Agreement. The county does not get many chances like this. Capturing the workforce dividend requires an organizational response sized to the event and timed to the construction calendar. The USFR cohort plan below specifies targets by year, the apprenticeship structure, and the milestones that hold partners accountable to the USFR facility timeline.

Year	Cohort Target	Facility Milestone
2026	30–50 enrolled	Pipeline established; CBA funds activated; first cohort enrolled
2027	80–120 enrolled / 30–60 completers	Construction-phase ramp; AMC capital secured; first completer wave
Q2 2028	120–160 completers	USFR Phase 1 commercial startup; AMC operational

Q4 2028 / Q2 2029	150–200 completers/yr	USFR Phase 2 + 3 commercial startups
2030+	Sustained 150+/yr	Steady state; replacement and growth hiring

Apprenticeship Structure	3 days work at USFR (or partner facilities during construction phase) / 2 days class at R-CCC. Apprentice wage: \$15–22/hr during apprenticeship, scaling with skill milestones. Post-apprenticeship guaranteed offer at USFR subject to operational need; full employment wages \$80,000–\$85,000.
CBA Funding Uses	\$1M at groundbreaking + \$1.5M annually for 14 years + \$2M final payment. Named uses: vocational and technical training, AMC at R-CCC, Chowan University, R-CCC general assistance, public education teacher retention.
Support Needed	Employer network connections to Project Cyclone; federal apprenticeship funding (NCDOL, USDOL); DOL Strengthening Community Colleges grant for AMC capacity

STRATEGY 4 — ADVANCED MANUFACTURING CENTER
The physical infrastructure that lets the pipeline operate at volume

R-CCC's existing manufacturing program capacity will not scale to USFR-and-cohort demand without expanded physical infrastructure. The Advanced Manufacturing Center is the facility, the convening hub and the regional asset that makes the workforce engine operational at volume. It is one of the named uses of funds in USFR's signed Community Benefits Agreement. It is also the physical home of the Workforce Access Coordination function — on-site childcare partnership, broadband-equipped study spaces, transportation hub and partner offices.

Facility Scope	Welding bays (24–40 stations, AWS certification at multiple codes); machining lab (CNC, conventional, metrology); industrial systems lab (PLC, motor controls, hydraulics); NDT/QA capacity; Employer Roundtable convening space; wraparound services hub
Capacity	200–300+ annual completers; 400–600 concurrent enrollment; 5,000+ student-hours of employer contract training annually
Capital Cost	\$25–\$50M depending on scope, site selection and reuse vs. new construction. Equipment: \$5–15M. Annual operating: \$3–6M at steady state.
Funding Sources	USDA Rural Development Community Facilities; EDA Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance; EDA Build to Scale; NC Industrial Development Fund; DOL Strengthening Community Colleges; USFR \$24M CBA reinvestment; philanthropic (Gates Foundation, Golden LEAF, Z. Smith Reynolds, Kate B. Reynolds Trust); County and regional capital
AMC Timeline	2026: Scope and funding strategy finalized; capital applications submitted → 2027: Construction underway → Q1 2028: AMC operational (at minimum, first wing) → Q3 2028: Full operational capacity

STRATEGY 5 — HEALTHCARE PATHWAY
The parallel pipeline — for the county's largest employment sector after manufacturing

Manufacturing is the dominant story, but not the only one. The Ahoskie Urgent Care is locating in the county. The regional hospital system continues to staff against an aging population. Allied health roles — CNAs, medical assistants, LPNs, RNs, behavioral health technicians — consistently top WIOA priority occupation lists in northeastern North Carolina. The Healthcare Pathway disproportionately serves residents who do not see themselves in manufacturing, and it is also rural healthcare infrastructure development: keeping clinicians and care workers in Hertford County to serve Hertford as the population ages.

Tier Structure	Tier 1: CNA and entry-level direct care (3–6 months), \$13–17/hr Tier 2: MA and LPN (12–18 months), \$17–24/hr Tier 3: RN — ADN (24 months), \$25–35/hr Tier 4: BSN through Chowan University articulation, \$30–45/hr Specialty tracks: behavioral health technician, allied health, healthcare informatics
Lead Partners	R-CCC (Tier 1–3 delivery), Chowan University (BSN articulation), Ahoskie Urgent Care, regional hospital system
Key Features	Structured for adult learners (often second-career, often women, often parents); paid earn-while-learn entry points at every tier; wraparound services activated at enrollment; Chowan University BSN articulation so workers can advance all the way through
Timeline	2026: CNA program launched; healthcare employer MOUs signed → 2027: LPN and MA programs expanded; Chowan articulation agreement finalized → 2028: Full four-tier pathway operational at scale
Measurable Outcomes	CNA placements at 90 days; healthcare employer satisfaction; wage progression at 1 and 2 years; share of county healthcare jobs filled by county residents; LPN and RN completers per year

SECTION 5

Governance & Partnerships — The Workforce Oversight Committee, Employer Roundtable and four-county coordination

The Workforce Oversight Committee (WOC) is the standing governance body responsible for the workforce strategy, convened by Hertford County Economic Development under a charter adopted by the Hertford County Board of Commissioners. The Employer Roundtable is a standing body co-convened by Hertford County ED and R-CCC that articulates aggregate hiring demand, co-designs credentials and coordinates hiring sequencing across employers.

Because the labor market is fundamentally regional, the plan operates under a four-county coordination MOU covering Hertford, Bertie, Northampton and Gates. Hertford leads; adjacent counties participate at graduated levels. Strategic direction: WOC recommends, County Board approves. Operational decisions: WOC working groups. Curriculum and credentialing: R-CCC with Employer Roundtable validation.

Workforce Oversight Committee Membership

Member	Organization	Role in the Plan
Dr. Murray Williams	President, R-CCC	Leads the community college anchoring the regional workforce pipeline and R-CCC Works!
Steven Mathews	VP Industry Education, R-CCC	Operational lead for welding, industrial systems, machining and apprenticeship structures
Dr. Rosemary Thomas	President, Chowan University	Baccalaureate pathways and BSN articulation for the Healthcare Pathway
Harri Lovett	VP, Chowan University	Operational partner for stackable credentials and dual enrollment
Jesse Pratt	Superintendent, Hertford County Public Schools	Leads K-12 entry point of the entire workforce pipeline; CTE and CCP expansion
Tonya Freeman	Hertford County Public Schools	Schools partner for high school role in R-CCC Works! Phase 2 and CTE alignment
Jennie Bowen	NC Works (Mid-East Commission)	Connects county to state workforce system — WIOA, NC Works Career Centers, WDB
Trey Goodson	NC East, STEM	Regional STEM pipeline alignment feeding manufacturing and energy roles
Merril Flood	East Carolina University	Research, evaluation and university-level workforce alignment including allied health
Angela Dunston	FYBE / Roanoke Cooperative	Youth employment, state workforce perspective, rural broadband and energy infrastructure
Kelly Bowers	Director, Hertford County ED	Primary County liaison, project sponsor and WOC convener

SECTION 6

Sustainability & Funding Strategy — Three-horizon architecture with diversified sources

Sustainability is built in three layers: durable infrastructure that runs without external consulting support (chartered WOC, four-county MOU, AMC operating, integrated Workforce Access Coordination); diversified funding so no single source can collapse the system; and institutionalized commitment from each partner, codified in MOUs and recurring in the County operating budget. By 2028, the WOC meets on its established cadence without external facilitation; the AMC is operational; the MOU is in force; and Hertford County's adopted budget includes a recurring workforce coordination line item.

Funding Source	Target Use	Year 1 Status
Cedric Group consulting (\$37,500)	Plan development, infrastructure assessment, implementation design	Deployed
WIOA Title I (Adult, Dislocated, Youth) — NC Works	Program delivery, earn-while-learn stipends, supportive services	Active
USFR Community Benefits Agreement (\$24M / 15 yrs)	Vocational training, AMC at R-CCC, Chowan University, teacher retention	Signed and committed
Hometown Talent — WIOA funded	Private-sector manufacturing and healthcare placements	Operating
USDA Rural Development	Business/industry loan guarantees; community facilities; rural business development	Pursuing
EDA Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance	AMC capital construction	Year 2 application
DOL Strengthening Community Colleges	R-CCC capacity expansion for AMC programming	Year 2 application
NC Industrial Development Fund	AMC capital	Year 2 application
Philanthropic (Gates, Golden LEAF, Z. Smith Reynolds, Kate B. Reynolds)	AMC capital and operations; workforce pipeline equity investments	Year 2 development
HRSA Rural Health Workforce	Healthcare Pathway delivery	Year 2 application
R-CCC earned revenue (contract training, AMC)	Long-term AMC operating sustainability	Year 3+ ramp
County operating budget — recurring workforce coordination line	Permanent governance infrastructure	FY2027 commitment

Risks and Safeguards

Risk	Safeguard
USFR or anchor delay/cancellation	Plan is sector-pathway-resilient; expansion cohort and Healthcare Pathway generate substantial demand even at reduced USFR scale
Multi-county coordination breakdown	Graduated MOU participation — Hertford leads; adjacent counties adopt as ready; regional benefits documented per county
Access infrastructure underbuilt	Workforce Access Coordinator treats integration as participant experience, not participant burden — activated simultaneously at enrollment
Funding-stream fragility	Three-horizon architecture with diversified sources; no single stream decisive
Equity wash	Three equity questions applied to every recommendation; Section 7.7 designs explicit pathways for excluded workers; community seat on WOC; annual equity audit
AMC funding cliff	AMC operating model specifies recurring revenue: training fees, employer contracts, R-CCC base, contract training — stress-tested against three demand scenarios

SECTION 7

For More Information — Contacts and how to partner with Hertford County's workforce initiative

Hertford County welcomes partnerships with employers, educational institutions, philanthropic organizations, state and federal partners and other rural counties working on workforce development and economic mobility. For information about Hertford County's Mobility Action Plan and opportunities to partner, contact:

Organization / Contact	Role	Contact
Kelly Bowers Director, Hertford County Economic Development	Primary County liaison and project sponsor for the workforce strategy	Contact via Hertford County Economic Development office
Meredith R. Whitehead CEO, The Cedric Group	Engagement lead; plan author; implementation support	meredith.r.whitehead@gmail.com
Dr. Murray Williams President, Roanoke-Chowan Community College	Leads R-CCC — the spine of the credentialing infrastructure and AMC anchor	mjwilliams@roanokechowan.edu
Steven Mathews VP Industry Education, R-CCC	Operational lead for industry-aligned programming and apprenticeship structures	sjmathews@roanokechowan.edu
Jennie Bowen NC Works (Mid-East Commission)	Regional workforce board; WIOA programming; Hometown Talent	jbowen@mideastcom.org
Hertford County Board of Commissioners	Final approvers of strategy and funding; receive briefings at each milestone	Contact via County Manager's office

Full Partner Contact List

Complete WOC membership with contact information, sample four-county coordination MOU, sample Employer Roundtable charter, sample apprenticeship agreement template, sample job descriptions and sample AMC RFP language are included in the Appendices of the full Hertford County Mobility Action Plan — Workforce Development Component (The Cedric Group, May 2026).

ABOUT RURAL LEADERS FOR ECONOMIC MOBILITY (RLEM)

Rural Leaders for Economic Mobility (RLEM) was a 22-month peer-learning initiative that supported rural county leaders in advancing equitable economic mobility. The initiative brought together leaders from 10 rural counties to strengthen local systems that expand opportunity for residents, particularly in communities facing persistent workforce, education and infrastructure challenges. NACo continues to share RLEM experiences with rural counties across the United States.

Mobility Action Plans

The central outcome of the RLEM initiative is the development of a Mobility Action Plan (MAP) in each participating county. These locally informed roadmaps help counties move from learning to action by identifying priority economic mobility challenges, target populations and practical short- and long-term implementation strategies.