



The First Five Years

2013-2018

*The Foundation is a non-partisan research and policy organization dedicated to equipping businesses to thrive and fostering a healthy economic climate across all North Carolina communities. Through data-driven initiatives, we address issues in three pillars: **Education and Talent Supply, Business Climate, and Infrastructure and Growth Leadership**. By researching the roots of our biggest challenges, crafting sound policy recommendations, and tracking our progress, we drive a future-focused vision to expand economic growth and prosperity. The NC Chamber and aligned business organizations leverage this work to advocate for positions that produce a nationally competitive business climate here in North Carolina.*

Foundation Beginnings

In 2013, Chamber leaders started to examine what must happen for North Carolina to optimize our competitive potential in the decades ahead. They determined that the business community needed the capacity to create the vision and “good jobs plan” for North Carolina’s future. As a result, they launched the NC Chamber Foundation and the start of **North Carolina Vision 2030**, a long-term, future-focused strategy to make North Carolina the best state to live and work. Over the years, we have streamlined that strategy, and today three pillars encompass the critical work of the Foundation as defined in Vision 2030: **Education and Talent Supply, Competitive Business Climate, and Infrastructure and Growth Leadership**.

Education and Talent Supply

With a rapidly evolving global economy, the race for talent is increasingly competitive. In every industry, employers are asking the same question: How are we going to find, secure, train, and retain the best workers? North Carolina must develop and maintain a first-rate, leading talent pipeline by aligning education and workforce development systems that are effective, agile, accountable, flexible, and consistently produce a competitive, diverse, and world-class workforce.

Competitive Business Climate

While North Carolina appears near the top of a growing number of noteworthy state business climate rankings, we cannot be complacent, as other states are constantly working to be more competitive. North Carolina must continually strive to position its business climate to be more competitive in order to attract new investment and create and retain more high-quality jobs.

Infrastructure and Growth Leadership

When we launched **Vision 2030**, there were more than nine million people living in North Carolina. By 2030, the population was expected to grow to 12 million, making North Carolina the seventh most populated state in the nation. This growth brings many opportunities, but it begs the question: Are we ready?

To support our growing population, North Carolina must identify ways to continue investing in the development and maintenance of sound physical infrastructure. This includes modernizing our investment portfolios in transportation (roads, bridges railways, ports, and airports), water and sewer, energy, and broadband communications. These investments will enable our state to meet the demands and capitalize on the opportunities new growth will bring.

North Carolina Vision 2030: Early Initiatives and Successes

The first five years of the NC Chamber Foundation have yielded a tremendously positive impact on our state’s business climate. The following studies and initiatives served to jump start our work on Vision 2030. Subsequent years’ endeavors will continue to add to these successes.

Improved Safety and Transportation Infrastructure

In 2014, the NC Chamber Foundation commissioned the Institute for Transportation Research and Education at NC State University to identify potential pathways for achieving a diversified, stable, and economically efficient revenue model that would address then-current challenges while meeting North Carolina’s long-term transportation needs. The study identified 16 recommendations for alternative funding methods and changed the dialogue to demonstrate that modernizing our transportation investment portfolio is a key priority for our continued economic success.



The data from that [study](#) was widely reviewed by public officials and key thought leaders and used as an instrumental data set in achieving legislative reforms that secured recurring investments and a more sustainable funding model for North Carolina. Once-in-a-generation legislative reforms secured in 2015 ended the annual \$216-million transfer from the Highway Fund to the General Fund, adding \$708 million in new, recurring transportation revenue every two years and creating \$2 billion in new funds for transportation infrastructure projects over the next decade. The motor fuels tax was indexed under a new, annually adjusted formula to account for our state's growing population. The measures also provided the NC Ports Authority with \$35 million to support modernization efforts – the first annually reoccurring state appropriation ever awarded for this important purpose.

Data from this initial study is being built upon through new research which will play a critical role in the next phase of transportation funding reform.

Improving Competitiveness through Tax Reform

The NC Chamber Foundation commissioned the Tax Foundation to illustrate the positive economic impact of tax reforms, provide a competitive analysis of six competitor states, and outline next steps in tax policy to further enhance our state's competitive position. The information in [North Carolina Illustrated](#) has been used to further advocate for improvements to our state's tax climate.

Protecting Hire Standards

The NC Chamber Foundation led the Hire Standards, NC coalition to educate North Carolinians on the importance of high academic standards. This coalition joined the voices of our state's military, teachers, business leaders, police chiefs, parents, and local chambers of commerce. Starting in 2015 and throughout the following years, our Hire Standards, NC team monitored the work of the Academic Standards Review Commission and kept coalition members informed on its proceedings. At various points in the standards review process, both the Hire Standards, NC coalition and the NC Chamber submitted recommendations to the commission. In addition, the Hire Standards, NC team worked with other education groups, especially educators, to produce additional emails, calls, position papers, and testimony for submission to the commission.

Creating Economic Opportunity Across All Communities

In 2016, the Foundation commissioned [Spreading Economic Opportunity Across North Carolina](#), often referred to as the rural economic development study. All 20 of the recommendations put forth in the study have been addressed in some way through efforts of the NC Chamber Foundation or through legislation backed by the NC Chamber.

- The NC Chamber Foundation developed the Apprenticeship Advisory Council, which currently includes representatives from 12 companies from across the state.
- The study identified a goal of 30 Certified Work Ready Communities in our state which was quickly surpassed. Though the NC Chamber Foundation is no longer the certifying body, it continues to be involved in promoting the initiative.
- Broadband was identified as an area of concern in nonurban areas. The NC Chamber continues to coordinate with members to put a focus on rural broadband and has developed needed next steps in this area.
- After it emerged as a prevalent theme on the rural tour, the Foundation commissioned a study on regulatory competitiveness to identify best practices in improving permitting processes.
- Using feedback from the rural tour to inform their agenda, the NC Chamber's advocacy team successfully repealed the onerous mill machinery and equipment tax.
- North Carolina's substandard health care climate was identified as a key area that must be improved through a business-driven strategy, especially in rural areas. By convening stakeholders along the health care supply chain to collaborate on solutions, the Foundation's Roadmap to Value-Driven Health initiative began to tackle those concerns.



Increasing Regulatory Competitiveness

In 2017, the Foundation released [Environmental Regulatory Competitiveness Benchmarking for North Carolina](#), completed by AECOM. The study benchmarked North Carolina's environmental permitting and regulations against six other southern states. Some examples of study recommendations that the NC Chamber and NC Chamber Foundation have worked to address include:

- Working with the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality to streamline both the permitting process and the contested case process, promoting efficiency and predictability that enables businesses to simplify and accelerate project delivery.
- Commissioning Black and Veatch to develop a comprehensive water plan that will ensure the future security of North Carolina's water supply and infrastructure capabilities.

Closing the Skills Gap

Also in 2017, the NC Chamber released [Roadmap to Career](#), an education research initiative conducted by Ted Abernathy, managing partner of Economic Leadership LLC. This research steered the NC Chamber Foundation toward a focus on apprenticeships, work-based learning, work-ready communities, and career pathways. The most crucial part of the research, however, was the discovery of data deficiencies around North Carolina's skills gap. This finding led the NC Chamber Foundation to its work on the regional skills assessments, otherwise known as the *State of Our Workforce*.

Launched in 2018, the *State of Our Workforce* is a regional initiative with statewide ramifications that aims to help stakeholders better understand their workforce challenges by providing data specific to their geographic area. It was launched first as a local study in the Triangle by the Capital Area Workforce Development Board, City of Raleigh, Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce, Wake County Economic Development, and others. The North Carolina Chamber Foundation built upon those efforts to scale the program statewide. The Asheville area was the first to participate, releasing its results in January 2019. The data provided from this analysis will be instrumental in better aligning education systems, economic development initiatives, and business needs.

The Roadmap to Value-Driven Health

After respondents to the NC Chamber's 2015 CEO Poll identified health care costs as their top issue – and the one over which they believe they have the least control – the NC Chamber Foundation retained Benfield Gallagher to help develop a Healthcare Strategy Roadmap for the state with the goal of making North Carolina a top-10 state for health and health care value. The intent of the [NC Chamber Healthcare Strategy Roadmap: Preliminary Report](#) was to provide the framework for a statewide, multi-stakeholder initiative under the leadership of the NC Chamber. The research helped to build a common language with business leaders and led to the development of three different stakeholder groups. One of those groups, the NC Chamber Foundation's Health Care CEO Council, made clear when reviewing the initial Roadmap to Value-Driven Health study that more information was needed. Specifically, the council requested more research on potential models that could be implemented in North Carolina. It was on their recommendation that the NC Chamber Foundation executed the next phase of the Roadmap to Value-Driven Health in 2018.

[The Roadmap to Value-Driven Health: Benchmarking Study Results and Implications for North Carolina](#), analyzes initiatives in states and regions that are successfully driving health care value to outline possible next steps for North Carolina to do the same. Specifically, this report analyzes two Regional Health Improvement Collaboratives (RHICs) and several Health Information Exchanges (HIEs) to gain insight into the benefits and key challenges encountered through different approaches. As the study indicates, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to health care and North Carolina's stakeholders across the health care supply chain will need to work together to decide what makes most sense for the state. No matter the path that is chosen for North Carolina, job creators must take the lead and data must be treated as a shared commodity. The NC Chamber Foundation proposes to do more work in this area in the coming years.

