

For Immediate Release

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JOCO LEADERS BEGIN GATHERING INPUT FOR WORKFORCE STRATEGY

Recommendations Will Aim to Fill Short- and Long-Term Talent and Skills Needs

Johnston County, N.C. – September 30, 2022. Leaders from across a broad spectrum of Johnston County education, workforce and economic development have begun reaching out to local stakeholders, inviting them to offer their perspectives on the county’s current and anticipated talent and laborforce needs. That input will form the basis of a strategic plan to enhance coordination among partners and ensure county employers have access to the skills necessary for their long-range success.

“Talent and workforce issues have been a top concern of business leaders and site-selection consultants in recent years all over the country, and we’re working to gather everybody in Johnston County onto the same page and make sure we harness every available resource to its fullest potential,” explains Chris Johnson, director of the Johnston County Office of Economic Development. As part of the new Johnston County Workforce Alliance, the Office is working closely with Johnston Community College, Johnston County Public Schools, three local chambers of commerce, the NC Works Career Center, the Johnston County Partnership for Children and other organizations to cast the widest possible net. “We want businesses large and small to chime in, as well as HR professionals, educators, job-seekers, high school students and their parents,” Johnson says.

County officials have engaged the expertise of Economic Leadership LLC, a Raleigh-based consulting firm with clients nationwide, to help gather and organize input. Stakeholder

guidance will inform a comprehensive workforce strategy expected to be completed early next year. The strategy will also help drive the county's efforts to recruit new companies and support the success and expansion of existing employers.

"JoCo is not new to this issue at all," says Greg Payne, vice president of Economic Leadership LLC. "They've been focused on workforce for a long time. Their goal is to take it to the next level." Payne will use a variety of data tools to gather input, including one-on-one interviews, focus groups and online surveys. He and his colleagues will also examine national best practices that can be relevant to JoCo's action plan. "Communities everywhere are talking to HR people about their hiring experiences and workforce availability," Payne says. "JoCo really wants to go beyond that. They want to talk to their workforce partners, students, parents and others about their level of awareness of available resources."

Johnston County's growing population and workforce sets it apart from many U.S. communities, according to Payne. But that also means county leaders must focus on the mix of local jobs and how workforce development programs align with future skills needs. "It's not easy to do," he says. But the issue is not expected to leave the spotlight any time soon. "Nationally, workforce will be a challenge for years to come given demographic realities," says Payne, whose strategy will also inform efforts to reverse the tide of out-commuting Johnston County residents who have expressed interest in working closer to home.

"We're really trying to take it to the next level," says Joy Callahan, a former Johnston Community College official who now coordinates the Johnston County Workforce Alliance. The Alliance is especially eager to hear from small businesses, she says, and participation from the Benson Chamber of Commerce, Clayton Chamber of Commerce, and Triangle East Chamber of Commerce will help attract input from those employers. "Johnston County has always had quality education and workforce development assets," Callahan says, "but we've never had a plan to come together and make bigger strides."



The Johnston County Economic Development Office (JCEDO) facilitates value-added interaction between government, education, and the private sector in encouraging and promoting job creation and economic investment in Johnston County. A unit of county government, JCEDO collaborates with local, regional, and statewide partners and allies in providing confidential location assistance to businesses and technical support to the county's 11 municipalities. Its menu of services includes customized digital mapping, labor and wage analysis, site readiness assistance and incentive packaging. For additional information, visit www.GrowWithJoCo.com

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