INTRODUCTION
From birth to career, there are many opportunities to develop strategies and interventions to increase attainment and improve workforce alignment. Below are some key areas and indicators that highlight where interventions may be possible to improve overall educational attainment outcomes.

COUNTY OVERVIEW
McDowell County is in the Hickory Prosperity Zone sub-region. It’s one of 50 rural non-metro counties in NC. Overall, 4% of 25-44-year-olds in McDowell County have earned a master’s degree or higher as their highest degree; 13% have a bachelor’s degree; 15% have an associate degree; 26% have some college, no degree; 29% have a high school diploma; and 13% have less than a high school diploma.

How students in McDowell County traditional public schools are currently doing:

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<th>Percent of McDowell County schools by academic growth status, 2019</th>
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NC goal: 2 million by 2030

2020 County Attainment Profile

Building the Foundation: Pre-K to 8
High-quality early learning and strong academic progress in early years helps prepare children for future success.

McDowell County has 14 public schools with performance grades. Of these schools, none were classified as low performing in 2019.

Ready for College & Career
High school completion is a crucial step on the pathway to postsecondary success or the beginnings of a career. Activities that prepare students to navigate the transition to postsecondary include gaining experience in college-level coursework and applying for financial assistance.

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These metrics capture student progression and educational attainment from high school graduation to postsecondary completion. They indicate relative strengths and weaknesses of McDowell County at each stage of the postsecondary pipeline.

McDowell County has a student-to-school counselor ratio of 326:1.

Labor Market Outcomes
Lack of technical skills and lack of education are among the primary reasons why NC employers struggle to fill vacancies. These metrics capture labor market outcomes among recent graduates, the alignment between postsecondary degree production and labor market demand, and future job demands.

Opportunities for Growth
Compared to rural non-metro counties and the state, these three areas represent the biggest opportunities for McDowell County to improve future attainment outcomes.

Transition to Postsecondary
48% of McDowell County seniors enroll in postsecondary within 12 months of graduation, below the rural non-metro county average of 57%.

FAFSA Completion
48% of McDowell County high school seniors complete the FAFSA, below the rural non-metro county average of 55%.

High School Graduation
83% of McDowell County 9th graders complete high school in 4 years or less, below the rural non-metro county average of 86%.

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## Largest postsecondary institutions in your Prosperity Zone sub-region

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<th>Institution Name</th>
<th>Undergraduate Enrollments 2017-18</th>
<th>Graduate or Transfer in 8 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrollments</td>
<td>16,315</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catawba Valley Community College</td>
<td>6,125</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute</td>
<td>4,636</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Piedmont Community College</td>
<td>2,306</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenoir-Rhyne University</td>
<td>1,830</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDowell Technical Community College</td>
<td>1,418</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
Enrollments reflect degree- or credential-seeking undergraduate enrollments. The graduate or transfer rate is drawn from IPEDS and represents the share of students who either graduate with a degree or credential from the institution or transfer to another institution within 8 years. The 8-year outcome is the only measure that includes information on transfer out. Detailed data guidance is provided at [http://go.unc.edu/countydata](http://go.unc.edu/countydata)

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### Local Cross-Sector Promising Practice: McDowell Strategic Employment Plan Initiative (SEPI)

The McDowell Economic Development Association and the Region C Workforce Development Board studied the employment needs of McDowell County to develop a strategic regional plan.

We identified this example of an emerging cross-sector promising practice in partnership with local leaders. If you have additional examples you’d like to share with myFutureNC, please respond to this [short survey](#).

For more information about each indicator, including data sources and methodology, visit: [dashboard.myfuturenc.org/county-data-and-resources/](https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/county-data-and-resources/)

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### ABOUT CAROLINA DEMOGRAPHY

Located within the Carolina Population Center at UNC-Chapel Hill, we use data and other available research to help you put a face or a story on the population-level changes facing your community. Our analysts provide a full array of demographic data and research services to inform decision making, evaluation, and policy across North Carolina, where we serve organizations and people in all 100 counties.

- ncdemography.org
- demography@unc.edu
- @ncdemography

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### ABOUT MYFUTURENC

MyFutureNC is a statewide nonprofit organization focused on educational attainment and is the result of cross-sector collaboration between North Carolina leaders in education, business, and government. Our mission is to prepare North Carolina for the future by empowering individuals, strengthening communities, and ensuring our economic viability in a global economy.

- myfuturenc.org
- facebook.com/myfuturenc
- @myFutureNC