



UPDATE: FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS TO ReCONNECT NC (9-15-21)

Recommendation #1 from ReCONNECT to Community.

\$2,000 for 2,000: Increase the number of people performing service years to 2,000 and boost annual support to them and their host organizations by \$2,000.

Update: The American Rescue Plan allots \$1B nationally to increase support and benefits for AmeriCorps. We are tracking NC's state commission to see if these increased benefits result in increased Service Years across the state.

Recommendation #2 from ReCONNECT Rural and Urban.

North Carolina Regional Exchange: Create the model for a NC Regional Exchange that builds deeper relationships between leaders in rural, urban, and suburban communities within an interconnected region to support one another by sharing connections to ideas, resources, and other people.

Update: IEI, Leadership North Carolina, the NC Rural Center and the Wildacres Leadership Initiative's William C. Friday Fellowship for Human Relations have met monthly to discuss and document the process, content and pilot implementation of a regional exchange program. Progress updates have been shared on emergingissues.org.

Recommendation #3 from ReCONNECT to Economic Opportunity.

A wraparound support services referral program located in a 2 or 4-year higher education institution within a 30 minute drive of every North Carolinian: Higher education institutions can utilize technology-based programs, such as "Single Stop" and "Aunt Bertha," to help connect students to public benefits and resources on-campus and in their community to help with poverty reduction and post-secondary education attainment.

Update: Of NC's 58 community colleges (located within a 30 minute drive of every North Carolinian), it is estimated that more than half operate a wraparound support services referral program through Aunt Bertha or Single Stop. The NC Student Support Center has made the Aunt Bertha program available at no cost to community colleges and Single Stop at a significantly reduced cost. Both programs are being evaluated in NC to examine their roles in student success.

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Recommendation #4 from ReCONNECT to Technological Opportunity.

Make NC the first state in the nation where every county has a digital inclusion plan: IEI, NC Broadband Infrastructure Office and other public and private partners launched Building a New Digital Economy in NC (BAND-NC) to support local communities in building out their digital inclusion plans. These well-developed sets of strategies are intended to help all residents understand how to best utilize broadband through access to the internet, a device that meets their needs, and the know-how to use it.

Update: One in five (19%) NC counties have completed or are in the process of developing digital inclusion plans as part of a county-level or regional planning process. A new round of BAND-NC funding to support the development of more digital inclusion plans and/or to support implementation of existing digital inclusion plan strategies across the state has launched. Applications are due November 1, 2021.

Recommendation #5 from ReCONNECT to Move Forward: Health and Well-Being.

Expand access to peer-operated alternatives for treatment of mental illness: NC should increase the availability of effective treatment approaches for mental health by replicating and scaling programs led by “peer-support specialists” -- people living in recovery with mental illness or substance use disorder and who provide support to others who can benefit from their lived experiences.

Update: In August 2021, Promise Resource Network opened “Retreat @ the Plaza,” the first ever peer-run respite house in NC, a model with proven success in improving quality of life and reducing hospitalization and associated costs. Guests can stay for free for up to 10 days when experiencing a mental health crisis. Efforts have also been made to identify equity issues for peer support specialists relative to wages, health insurance, upward mobility, advocacy, and their challenges in the workforce.

More information about the five recommendations can be found in our final report, *The Time is Now: Findings from the Institute for Emerging Issues Three-Year ‘ReCONNECT NC’ Project*. The full report can be found [here](#).

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