



Happy Fall to our Steering Committee & Partners!

Here is the latest news on several of our initiatives from your CREATE Bridges WNC team:

### **Talent Pipeline -**

We've been working with CTE Directors from our region to develop new Career Cafes that will introduce K-12 students to the CREATE sectors as potential career paths. There are endless job opportunities and careers in Hospitality and Tourism that can begin for them right here in our area.

The next step is working with business owners to plan engaging and interactive visits, showing our students what these sectors do and how they can be part of it. There are some wonderful H&T related programs that the schools have already designed for their students. Our talent pipeline initiative is focused on connecting students to these programs, helping them to expand, as well as developing and implementing Career Cafes to initiate interest in the Hospitality & Tourism industry.

### **Got Your Back & Ready to Rock training -**

The *Got Your Back* Online Academy for employers in the CREATE sectors will go live in October, we are still working to make it as user friendly as possible. It will allow businesses to participate at their own pace. We are excited to share this course with business owners and managers so that they can truly stand out as a preferred employer in WNC.

The *Ready to Rock* training offerings we are designing for employees in the CREATE sectors will be launched online this Fall. They will begin with a soft skills course designed by Dr. Annie Wilson, professor at Western Carolina University who specializes in organizational psychology and employment assessment. Employees will also be offered the opportunity to receive industry recognized [credentials](#) by taking courses through the NFR Foundation training program RISE Up that provides foundational employability skills in retail and customer service.

## Secret Shoppers -

Wendy Cagle's Entrepreneurship class at Western Carolina University has the list we assembled of 130 businesses within our 5 counties. Becky and Eli got to meet them and these students are engaged and excited! We're thrilled that they will be studying and investing their time into helping these businesses be the best that they can be by working with them on any blindspots they may have.

## WE SPEAK WNC -

So excited about our *WE SPEAK WNC* Conference, which will be happening on February 27 and 28, 2023 at the Harrah's Cherokee Casino. We are grateful to the casino for their support!

This event is quickly growing as we partner with more organizations and local talent. WNC employers and employees will both have an entire day dedicated to them, introducing local resources and benefits available, providing career advancement opportunities in our CREATE sectors and introducing the campaign for our region in a big way!

- If you haven't heard about this yet, here's an overview -

*WE SPEAK WNC* is more than a cross promotional live event, it will exist online as a website created to connect our region. For locals, for business owners, for students, for tourists and everyone in between...this is a brand new marketing tool to navigate and to promote WNC. The icing on the cake is that it is also an unprecedented regional buy local campaign - an incentive to spend your money in our own backyard.

Everyone who has received this update has something unique to bring to the table. We want to hear your ideas, suggestions and questions as we develop the website, the two day conference and the buy local program.

Check on the progress of all of CREATE Bridges WNC's initiatives [here](#). You can also take a peek at our [project timeline](#).

Please reach out to Eli and jump right in with us. CB is tentatively scheduled to end in March and we're working hard to make as many positive and lasting impacts in WNC as we possibly can. We welcome your input and appreciate your support!

Thank you!