MARKET ENTRY

Raleigh or Richmond?

A fictional safety training firm wants to sell on-site forklift classes to manufacturers and warehouses with 20–99 employees. Its owner can pilot one territory this quarter.

Test Richmond first.

Richmond has 61 more sites in the target segment. That gives a small sales team more prospects to test at a similar outreach cost.

EMPLOYER LOCATIONS BY METRO

2023 County Business Patterns, establishments with 20–99 employees

Industry	Raleigh	Richmond
Manufacturing	128	172
Warehousing and storage	15	32
Target locations	**143**	**204**

WHAT THE COUNTS TELL US

Richmond has about 43% more qualifying locations. An establishment is a physical site. One employer can operate several, and purchasing may be centralized. Build a parent-company list before estimating the number of contracts.

PRICING CHECK

Wake Tech lists $90 per person for a scheduled class in the Raleigh area. CARITAS lists $95 in Richmond, plus $3.32 for card payments. These are prices for individual seats. Both metros still need quotes for comparable on-site group training.

PILOT DESIGN

What would change the choice?

A Raleigh distributor with access to training buyers could outweigh Richmond's larger pool of sites. Test buying authority and acquisition cost before committing to a permanent territory.

A TWO-WEEK SALES TEST

1. Build two comparable lists.

Select ten distinct parent companies per metro. Match the mix of manufacturers and warehouses as closely as practical. Confirm a local or central training buyer for each.

2. Run the same offer.

Use the same outreach sequence and on-site class offer. Track sales hours, travel, qualified meetings, quotes and deposits by metro. Record how partner introductions were obtained.

3. Decide on the next sales dollar.

Compare cost per qualified meeting and contribution per paid booking. Switch the next test to Raleigh if its referral channel produces more paid bookings per dollar. Extend the test if the results are too sparse.

AN ILLUSTRATIVE BREAK-EVEN POINT

At an assumed $900 pilot cost and $300 contribution per booking after delivery costs, three paid bookings cover the test. Replace both assumptions with actual quotes, travel costs and sales time.

SOURCES AND METHOD

In the Census MSA file, use areas 39580 and 40060. Sum the 20–49 and 50–99 employee columns for manufacturing (31–33) and warehousing and storage (493). Pricing pages reviewed November 20, 2026.

U.S. Census Bureau · 2023 County Business Patterns, MSA data

Wake Technical Community College · Forklift course and listed fees

CARITAS Richmond · Forklift training and registration fee