

**Workforce Development/Talent Pipeline**

***Issue: How can we solve the three major workforce challenges that the region faces...?***

- Aligning Virginia talent with current and prospective job opportunities;
- Adapting education & training programs to meet current & prospective Virginia business needs;
- Attracting and retaining talent from outside Virginia

Headers (project categories)

**1. Assessment of Employer Needs**

- “Ready to work” skills development (e.g. soft skills);
- Create business-defined talent development strategies, e.g. IWT, OTJ, apprenticeships, internships, credentialing, etc;
- Undertake sub-regional asset mapping;
- Establish sector partnerships/employer collaboratives

**2. Talent/job interface**

- Create programs to expose youth at a younger age to hands-on opportunities (e.g. field trips to major employers);
- Create technology-based (e.g. virtual reality) career pathway materials for K-12 students in order to recruit at an early age;
- Enlist help from businesses to bring modern equipment into the schools for students to be trained in an environment reflective of modern industry;
- Develop a “real people who make real choices” marketing campaign, featuring successful business people who entered their careers from various avenues – credentialed programs, voc/tech certifications, community college, apprenticeships, and 4-year degrees;
- Create a system for assessing the skills and talents of refuge and immigrant populations, certifying/legitimizing their credentials, and connecting them with area employers;
- Supporting the creation of workforce and technology resources – e.g. CUED-In app;
- Creation of a centralized system where employers can list employment opportunities and apprenticeships for job seekers; system could also be used for high school students (and above) to access co-op education, internships, and mentorships, and could provide for career exploration and training resources, as well – a singular system that goes from career exploration to training to employment;
- Establish more education/employer partnerships;
- Utilize CUED-In software as model for linking employee skills with employer needs across the region;
- Work with employers to provide guaranteed workforce/job after graduation in certain high-demand fields (similar to ???-agreements with VCCS), “Hand Shake Integration;”
- Have business and industry partner with schools to create mentorships that allow students to work in the field.

### 3. Promoting education-to-employment pipelines

- Nimble/catalyst/"MVP" program between schools and technology companies;
- Youth apprenticeship coordination, support, and implementation;
- Partner with Northern Virginia on creating/developing cyber security/intelligence programs for non-IT employees;
- Partner with Danville/Martinsville/NCI to expand advanced manufacturing and mechatronics to enhance employment opportunities;
- Partner with employers to create apprenticeship/intern programs – rural to rural;
- **Create a public-private collaborative (Valley Talent Collaborative) based on results of a survey of education and training options for each city/county in Region 8, prioritizing gaps, and creating programs to address those gaps; youth and talent pipeline development would occur via WBL; adult/upskill pipeline development (similar to pilot program with Hershey); opportunities disseminated through mobile app (i.e. CUED-In);**
- Better engage community college partners with both K-12 pipeline and industry needs;
- Talent to Jobs program: focused on students/adults "lost" in the education maze but possessing unique talents outside higher education and technology schools;
- Addressing the pilot shortage by developing programs for airlines;
- Creating deeper employment partnership with the Inland Port to develop degree programs in logistics and certificate programs;
- Attract school employees with experience in other careers (besides higher ed);
- Change focus of K-12 education to career readiness vs. college readiness;
- Create work-based learning (WBL) coordinators that work with school systems and area businesses.

### 4. Talent attraction and retention

- Promote community amenities and recreational activities, enticing families to move to the area;
- Create recruitment and retention "bootcamps;"
- **Develop a program targeting large employers in NoVA, DC, MD, and WV -- where high-tech jobs cannot be filled due to shortage in qualified workers – and encouraging them to "migrate" these jobs to Region 8 where available employees could work remotely and at a lower wage level; could create "hubs" along the Valley corridor based on the BRCC cyber program model;**
- Create programs for start-ups since start-ups attract talent;
- Encourage cool, tiny home communities to attract younger workers;
- Address employment barriers for non-traditional shifts where childcare is an issue;
- Implement "working bridges" model for workforce retention; support services for employees are available through the workplace (e.g. resource coordinator, income advance);
- With Amazon coming to NoVA, jobs in high demand fields will become more competitive; offer/leverage the unique characteristics of the Valley to existing employees and recruit talent from out of state;

- Create financial incentives for targeted skills;
- Think “outside the box” and offer employee benefits outside the norm: e.g. student loan payback programs;
- Promote the Valley as the “education corridor” and aggressively show students how they can stay in the Valley via shadowing/internships/jobs.

## 5. Other

- Establish a local training fund based on training loan fund models;
- Pursue Inland Port-Port Connection;
- Talent Hub: create opportunities for individuals to explore their gifts and skills needed in business and industry

## Site Development

***Issue: How can we collaborate regionally to increase the inventory of shovel ready sites in the Shenandoah valley to attract prospects?*** Keep in mind that the VEDP’s VBRS and GO Virginia are not mutually exclusive and can be combined to solve this problem.

Ideally, Site Development projects should align with the parameters defined by the VEDP by meeting the following criteria:

- acreage (min of 25)
- roadways (interstate proximity & 4-lane highways within 10 miles of site)
- rail access on/adjacent to site
- water and sewer capacity (distance from site and available capacity)
- natural gas (distance from site, available capacity/pressure)
- power metrics (distance from site, available capacity/voltage/transmission)
- broadband (accessible or fiber distance from site)

Headers (project categories):

### 1. Site Readiness Investigation

- Discover/Identify sites with lowest cost per Tier 4 status – which ones provide the “most bang for the buck;”
- Pursue site readiness upgrade for Stuarts Draft sites;
- Create an identification and evaluation process for multiple municipalities to target sites (e.g. third-party evaluation)

### 2. Enhance visibility of existing sites

- **Create a task force or utilize the ED Ad Hoc Committee to determine sites to advance in the region; suggestions include:**

- **Martin site (Augusta County – Stuarts Draft area), Staunton Crossing site, Blue Mountain site (SVA);**
- Lyndhurst/Waynesboro Sewer;
- Waynesboro/Augusta Wastewater upgrade (industrial park area);
- Staunton Crossing site;
- Winchester Regional Airport (Gov's Hill);
- Acorn Site Grading (Harrisonburg) – 84 acres

### **3. Complete general site improvements**

- Develop site for transload (freight) service;
- Develop Tier 4 sites;
- Assess site development opportunities in the Afton Mountain area and explore possible collaboration with Region 9.

### **4. Create industrial megasite**

- Blue Mountain/SHD site (Augusta County – Regional Airport area);
- **Study the use of a RIFA with pool of funds for landowners to improve properties (would be repaid upon sale of land); form task force of recommended sites to determine feasibility and identify "top 3;"**
- Develop a multi-use Ag Center with commercial kitchen, local food hub, food lab, training center, smart farming technology

### **5. Other**

- Encourage State programs to keep taxes reduced on unused industrial land;
- Create RIFA for Shenandoah Valley – host workshops for elected officials/staff to discuss benefits/mechanics of RIFA and determine interest;
- Create a tax revenue sharing process to encourage multi-municipality collaboration;
- Research and evaluate NC incentive programs to see if there are any that can be copied to encourage/increase available sites in VA;
- Expand broadband throughout the region;
- Develop a site for a regional Ag Center/Food Hub;
- Create a revenue/cost sharing plan;
- Agreement between localities to support mutually beneficial projects;
- Undertake a study in methods of public-private partnerships with site readiness; could be a statewide program – e.g. private land/public infrastructure, both benefit in a sale/transfer;
- Educate elected officials on benefits of RIFAs: 30% of something is better than 100% of nothing

## Start-up Ecosystems/Innovation/Commercialization

***Issue: What activities can we undertake to foster the development of a thriving start-up culture? How can GO Virginia be a catalyst to facilitate the development of the fundamental building blocks of such an effort, or to enhance the ones already in place that may lead to new, growing industry clusters?***

Headers (project categories):

### **1. Advancement of integrated accelerators-incubators-entrepreneurial hubs**

- Creation of a “cyber accelerator” through advancement of BRCC’s cybersecurity initiative to other rural regions with community college access and broadband;
- Establishment of a Research & Development Accelerator;
- Regionwide assistance and funding for “proof of concept” development;
- Link proof of concept development resources and customer discovery (“Lean Launchpad”) principles to accelerate innovation;
- Take Valley Innovation Roadmap on a “road show” to communities up and down the Valley (e.g. already scheduled for April 11 in Staunton, May 6 in Harrisonburg) – particularly underserved communities – to provide services or help them in developing their own core of resources;
- Subsidizing incubators or hub spaces (similar to Lighthouse U in Richmond) to help address the funding gap in being able to join incubators/co-working spaces for early-stage start-ups;
- Partner with Region 9 (maybe others nearby) to develop a scale-up/prototype manufacturing facility (since land/buildings for doing this in Region 9 are limited);
- Create initiatives that provide access to equipment and talent at low/no cost for students interested in advancing ideas (e.g. through industry connections, incubators, other schools);
- Create a mobile makerspace that can be taken to smaller communities and partnered with entrepreneur workshops, hack-athons, etc. Could be focused on high schools, elementary schools or open to the public.

### **2. Engagement of college & university business schools and professional service providers (to assist start-up companies from ideation through growth and scale-up)**

- Work with higher ed providers to develop a best practice approach for engaging students in fall/summer start-up boot-camps;
- Build upon BRCC’s cyber security program with JMU’s cyber intelligence graduate certificate program, particularly in rural areas;
- Development of e-learning opportunities for business planning;
- Building online/self-paced educational programs for entrepreneurs wanting more knowledge of business basics (e.g. marketing, financing, design, etc.);
- Develop consulting arms at universities and colleges to support start-ups across campuses;
- Use partnership of current makerspaces and hubs to build out training programs to assist individuals with career changes.

### **3. Catalyze follow-on venture funding to go beyond initial risk capital sources**

- **Create a \$10 million, professionally-managed “seed fund” across all nine regions of Virginia.**

#### 4. Regional Entrepreneurial “Quarterback” (to provide coordinated services)

- Integrate/raise awareness of Shenandoah Valley Innovation Coalition as a Valley-wide umbrella website resource to tap into entrepreneurial assets;
- Connect more start-ups with mentors/sponsors/and trusted and experienced subject matter experts;
- Create business mentor programs that focus on basic management skills;
- Engage professional services organizations to support start-ups with “basic” needs: legal, finance/banking, zoning/permitting, accounting, insurance;
- Assess JMU’s ability to help in coordinating entrepreneurial activities across Region 8, both within and outside of the University;
- Facilitating academic and community connections;
- Identify entrepreneurial resources in the region and at what stage of business they’re available to entrepreneurs;
- Identify a coordinating entity which can serve as a point of contact for entrepreneurial activities, including connecting people and knowledge resources around the Valley and across the State;
- Coordinate/develop more focused support systems, i.e. lots of councils, organizations, and boards that have similar missions.
- **Establish a regional “quarterback” (person or entity) that would address all of the above items.**

#### 5. Other

- Designate/establish Entrepreneurial Centers of Excellence for colleges and universities in the region, e.g. SU: Virtual Reality; JMU: Cybersecurity & Intel; MB: Sustainable Enterprises; curriculum development would correspond for associated clusters;
- Develop a virtual social network (website) with examples of how others have faced and resolved business issues;
- Create and promote youth entrepreneur workshops for K-12 students;
- Facilitate introductions across localities for start-ups to meet/talk about issues they are facing.

#### Scale-Ups

*Issue: How can we foster an environment where existing small and medium businesses can grow?*

Headers (project categories):

##### 1. Access to capital

- Create a Round A/B investment fund;
- Develop regional incentive programs for small-medium size businesses;

##### 2. Business Mentoring

- **Establish a regional Economic Gardening Program (particularly for software development companies);**
- Develop business/leadership coaching programs;
- Expand local BRE programs;
- Create programs and resources that help address owners' limitations;
- Development of exit and transition strategies for businesses sticking around (and not exiting) after hitting their peak;
- Helping businesses address lack of good employees and related productivity issues.

### **3. Supply Chain Enhancements**

- **Creation of and access to a regional/statewide supply chain database**

### **4. Other**

- Fund a gap analysis to identify business needs to scale-up operations (phase 1) and develop programming to address these needs (phase 2);
- "Educating the educators" – scaling up education;
- Pooling business resources and sharing access;
- **Develop business resources around the growth and production of industrial hemp;**
- Explore options for replacing plastics;
- Putting individuals/future employees "in the know."