

## **The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board Coordinates Large Regional Initiative to Serve Businesses and Laid-off Workers**

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board (NR/MR WDB) has been awarded \$1.2 million in State Rapid Response funds to coordinate and oversee a Regional Rapid Response initiative to serve individuals and supply chain companies impacted by the large number of plant layoffs and closures throughout the region. This initiative will cover three Workforce Areas; Western Virginia, New River/Mount Rogers and Southwest Virginia, which includes 29 jurisdictions in Southwest Virginia (Planning Districts 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5).

The purpose of Rapid Response is to promote economic recovery and vitality by developing an ongoing, comprehensive approach to identifying, planning for, or responding to layoffs and dislocations, and preventing or minimizing their impacts on workers, businesses and communities. A successful Rapid Response system **must** include:

- **Informational and direct reemployment services for workers**, including, but not limited to: information and support for filing unemployment insurance claims; information about the TAA program and support for filing petitions for TAA certification; information on the impacts of layoff on health care coverage or other benefits; information on and referral to career services; reemployment-focused workshops and services; training;
- **Delivery of solutions to address the needs of businesses in transition**, provided across the business lifecycle (expansion and contraction), including comprehensive business engagement and layoff aversion strategies and activities designed to prevent or minimize the duration of unemployment;
- **Convening, brokering and facilitating connections, networks and partners** to ensure the ability to provide assistance to dislocated workers and their families such as home heating assistance, legal aid and financial advice; and
- **Strategic planning, data gathering and analysis** designated to anticipate, prepare for and manage economic change.

It is the intent of the NR/MR WDB to be a leader in the region in developing an “on-going, comprehensive approach” system in which the processes of regional engagement, program alignment and communication will be agile and flexible, enabling the region to adjust and/or respond to economic disturbances and shifts.

The Plan for this initiative can be found here: <http://nrmrwib.org/business-solutions/strategic-plan/>.

The Strategies and Action Items listed are intended to build on and/or leverage other activities and initiatives taking place in the region (e.g. POWER Grant, Sector Partnerships, etc.) though they may not be specifically mentioned, consideration has been given. Most of the Strategies and Action Items will span all three WDAs, but some may not (based on need and/or desire of the Area).

Although the Rapid Response funds to support noted activities are only available until August 31, 2017, this Plan is intended to put processes in place that will create an environment that enables economic transition for the region. This Plan is just the beginning. Outcomes and results from some activities in this initiative may not be fully realized for several years to come.

A Project Management Team has been designated and there will be three local Workforce Area Implementation Teams (yet to be determined). These teams will be at the forefront of insuring the success of the Plan by bringing to the table their own expertise and by pulling in other regional experts to guide activities and processes and to evaluate outcomes.

For more information about the Regional Rapid Response Plan contact Marty Holliday at [marty.holliday@nrmrwib.org](mailto:marty.holliday@nrmrwib.org) or 540-633-6764.