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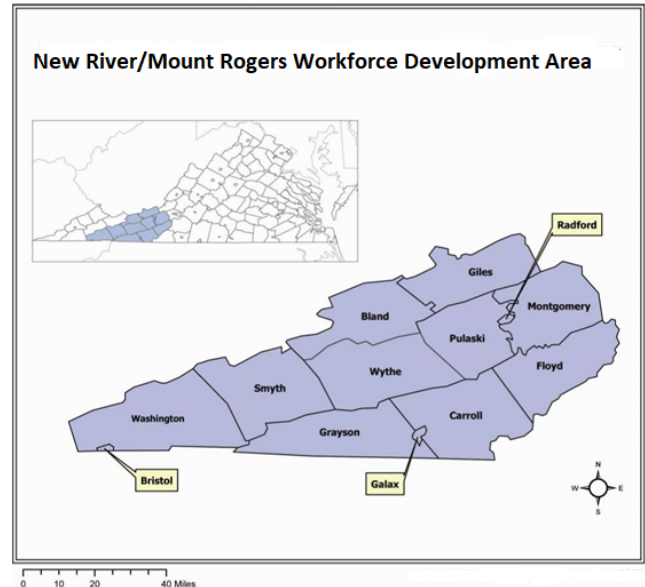
Workforce and Economic Analysis





Regional Economic Conditions

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area (Region II) is composed of ten counties (Bland, Carroll, Floyd, Giles, Grayson, Montgomery, Pulaski, Smyth, Washington, Wythe) and three independent cities (Bristol, Galax, and Radford). Data from the American Community Survey (ACS) estimates that 371,531 people lived in this area in 2019. Total population in Region II fell by 301 people (-0.8%) since the 2010 Decennial Census, where 371,832 people were counted. Median age increased from 40.4 in 2010 to 42.9 in 2019, which was likely the product of population changes in individual age cohorts. Only the 15-19, 25-29, and 30-34 age cohorts saw population growth ranging from 2% to 8% from 2010-2019. The remainder of cohorts aged under 60 experienced decline ranging from -3% to -15% during the same period. Alternatively, cohorts aged 60 and older experienced population growth at rates ranging from 9%-24%.



Region II contained 147,403 households in 2019, according to the ACS. Married-couple households, nonfamily households, and single parent households accounted for 48.2%, 13.9%, and 37.9% of the Region's households for the same year. Region II had an average family size of 3.0 for both married-couple households and single parent households in 2019. Approximately 31.2% of married-couple households and 48.2% of single parent households included children under the age of 18 for the same year. Average household income (AHI) in Region II was \$60,395 in 2019. This was lower than AHI for both the State (\$105,091) and Nation (\$92,324) for the same year.

A **living wage** is the lowest wage necessary to meet the minimum standard of living in a community or region. Household dynamics, such as the presence of dependents, and other cost of living factors influence living wages. For instance, it is likely that a single mother requires a higher living wage than a single person with no children. Virginia Tech's Office of Economic Development (VT OED) interpolated regional household data and cost of living data provided by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to generate a weighted average living wage of \$13.85/hour (approximately \$28,807 annually) for a conventional full-time position (2,080 hours a year) in Region II for 2019. It is important to note that this average is reflective of all households in Region II; individual households may require a higher or lower wage. For example, a married-couple household where both spouses are working and no child is present required a wage of \$9.10 to meet a

minimal standard of living in 2019. Alternatively, the Region's average single parent household (one householder, two children) required a wage of \$29.48 for the same year.

Poverty status is determined for all people except institutionalized people, people living in military quarters, people in college dormitories, and unrelated individuals under 15 years old. Approximately 19% (65,084) of residents for whom poverty status is determined in Region II lived below the poverty line in 2019, according to the ACS. This was higher than the poverty rate for the State (10.6%) and Nation (13.7%) for the same year. Female-headed households with no spouse present saw the highest incidence of poverty in Region II; 28.9% of these households were under the poverty line in 2019. Furthermore, female-headed households accounted for 41.3% of all households under the poverty line in Region II for the same year. Residents who were unemployed (37% lived under the poverty line), attained less than a high school education (27%), or received some type of cash benefit (24.6%) were also more likely to live in poverty for the same year. Alternatively, married couple households were the least likely to live in poverty, with only 6% of these households living under the poverty line in 2019.

Data provided by the United Way of Southwest Virginia suggest that nearly a third of working households in Region II live above the poverty line; however, they do not earn enough to satisfy the minimum cost of household essentials, including food, housing, childcare, etc. The United Way classifies these households as **asset limited, income constrained, employed** (ALICE). The ALICE threshold represents the widening gap between the federal poverty level and minimum cost of household essentials, also known as the "survival budget." For instance, a single, childless worker in Region II may earn above the federal poverty level (\$12,400) but still earn below the estimated survival budget for this Region (\$23,184).

The United Way estimates that 31.7% of households in Region II fell within the ALICE threshold in 2018. Approximately 17.4% of households in Region II lived below the poverty line and 50.9% of households lived above both the poverty line and ALICE threshold during the same year. Proportionally more households in Region II lived below the poverty line and/or ALICE threshold compared to the State. The United Way estimates that 29.5% of Virginia's households lived

NEW RIVER VALLEY

Counties of: Floyd, Giles (only),
Montgomery, Pulaski
City of: Radford



MOUNT ROGERS

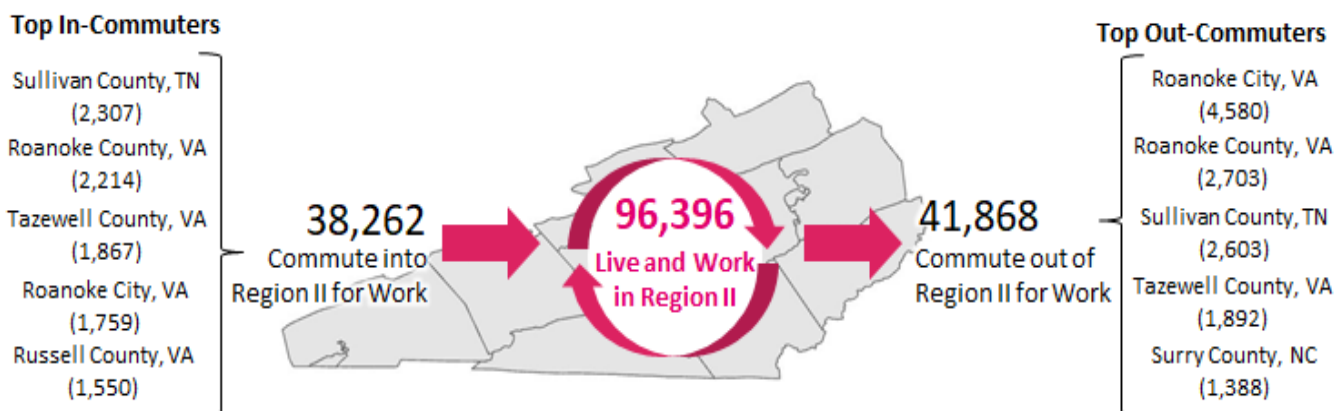
Counties of: Bland, Carroll, Grayson,
Smyth, Washington, Wythe
Cities of: Bristol, Galax



under the ALICE threshold, 10.3% lived below the poverty line, and 60.2% lived above the ALICE threshold for the same year.

Similar to poverty, certain groups were more like to live above or below the ALICE threshold. For instance, only 20.6% of female-headed households with children in Region II lived above both the poverty line and ALICE threshold in 2018. Alternatively, 79% of married couple households including children under 18 lived above both the poverty line and ALICE threshold during the same year. Younger households were more likely to live below the poverty line while older households were more like to earn below the ALICE threshold. Householders aged under 25 in Region II had the highest incidence of poverty in 2018 (62.5%) but were marginally less likely to live under the ALICE threshold for the same year (26%) compared to older age cohorts. Alternatively, householders aged over 65 in Region II were less likely to live in poverty (11%) and more likely to live below the ALICE threshold (43.7%).

Commuting patterns are also important to consider when getting an overall picture of a region's workforce. Employment is a measure of the total number of jobs contained within a region. A resident worker is employed and living in a region but may work outside of that region. According to EMSI, Region II housed 155,322 jobs and 154,313 resident workers in 2020, which suggests that at least some industries within Region II rely on out-of-Region workers to satisfy their labor needs. Montgomery County and Washington County housed the most jobs and workers in Region II in 2020. Census data suggest that 71% of regional jobs were held by resident workers in 2018, with the remaining 29% of jobs being held by nonresident workers. A combined 6.5% of jobs in Region II were held by nonresident workers from Sullivan County, TN, Roanoke County, VA, and Russell County, VA in 2018. Alternatively, Census data suggest that 29.2% of resident workers in Region II worked outside of the region during the same year. A combined 8.2% of workers living in Region II were employed in Roanoke County, VA, Sullivan County, TN, and Roanoke City, VA in 2018.





Knowledge and Skills Requirements

Target Industries & Occupations identified by the New River/Mount Rogers workforce development board include three existing target sectors: healthcare and social assistance, manufacturing, and construction. Two emerging target areas were also identified: professional, scientific, and technical services, and transportation and warehousing. VT OED reviewed the comprehensive economic development strategies of the two planning districts in Region II and ensured that these identified target sectors were congruent with the goals of these documents.



Manufacturing

The regional manufacturing sector accounted for the largest portion (17.2%) of total employment in Region II; 25,985 workers were employed in businesses belonging to this sector in 2020. This sector was expected to add 1,003 jobs from 2015-2020, according to an estimation based on the growth of the national economy and the performance of the national manufacturing sector during this period. Instead, 883 jobs were eliminated from the manufacturing sector from 2015-2020 (3% decline), underperforming expected job change by 1,886 jobs. However, EMSI projects a 6% employment growth (1,479 jobs) for this sector over the next five-year period (2020-2025). The manufacturing sector had a location quotient of 2.13 in 2020, which suggests that employment in this sector was more concentrated in Region II compared to all regions of the Nation. The regional manufacturing sector supplied 26.4% of the Region's GRP in 2019 (\$3.16 billion). Five distinct clusters dominated employment in the regional manufacturing sector: transportation equipment manufacturing; electrical equipment, appliance, and components manufacturing; chemical manufacturing; forest and wood products; and food and beverage processing.

The regional transportation equipment manufacturing cluster accounted for 30% of employment (7,749 jobs) in the Region's manufacturing sector. This cluster was expected to add 783 jobs from 2015-2020, according to an estimation based on national economic and national cluster performance. Instead, this cluster added 232 jobs during this period (3% growth), which indicates that this cluster was **not competitive**. EMSI projects 7% employment growth (561 jobs) for the region's transportation equipment manufacturing cluster over the next five-year period (2020-2025). This cluster was highly specialized in heavy duty truck manufacturing (104.82 LQ), truck trailer manufacturing (50.27), motor vehicle steering and suspension components manufacturing (15.03), and motor vehicle gasoline engine and engine parts manufacturing (8.58) in 2020. Five additional industries had LQ values between 1.0-3.5 during the same year. The transportation equipment manufacturing cluster supplied 35% (\$1.1 billion) of the regional manufacturing cluster's GRP in 2019.

The region's **chemical manufacturing** cluster was composed of 6,135 workers in 2020, which accounted for 23.6% of regional manufacturing sector employment. The region's chemical manufacturing cluster was expected to add only seven jobs from 2015-2020,

based on national economic growth and national cluster performance. However, the regional chemical cluster added 333 jobs during this period, which suggests that this cluster **was competitive**. EMSI projects 6% employment growth (333 jobs) for this cluster over the next five-year period (2020-2025). This cluster was highly specialized in explosives manufacturing (130.08 LQ), photographic film, paper, plate, and chemical manufacturing (83.09), custom compounding of purchased resins (29.81), and artificial and synthetic fibers and filaments manufacturing (25.59) in 2020. An additional fifteen industries had LQ values between 1.2-15.5 for the same year. The chemical manufacturing cluster supplied 30.7% (\$970.4 million) of the regional manufacturing sector's GRP in 2019.

The regional **electrical equipment, appliance, and components** manufacturing cluster accounted for 10.2% of employment (2,648 jobs) in the Region's manufacturing sector in 2020. This cluster was expected to create 11 jobs from 2015-2020, based on national economic growth and national cluster performance. Instead, 235 jobs were eliminated (8% decline) during this period; this cluster was **not competitive**. EMSI projects a 7% employment decline (182 jobs) for this cluster over the next five-year period (2020-2025). The regional cluster was highly specialized in motor and generator manufacturing (39.46 LQ), other lighting equipment manufacturing (37.62), power, distribution, and specialty transformer manufacturing (15.35), and commercial, industrial, and institutional electric lighting fixture manufacturing (14.92) in 2020. Three additional industries belonging to this cluster had LQ values between 2.0-4.0. The regional electrical equipment, appliance, and components manufacturing cluster generated \$300.4 million in 2019, which accounted for 9.5% of the regional manufacturing cluster's GRP.

The manufacturing portion of the region's **forest and wood products** cluster was composed of 2,563 workers in 2020 (9.9% of sector employment). This cluster was expected to eliminate 57 jobs from 2015-2020, according to an estimation based on national economic and industry trends. A total of 579 jobs were eliminated in the Region's forest and wood product manufacturing cluster, which suggests that the regional cluster is **contracting at a faster pace** than the national cluster. EMSI projects 7% employment growth (192 jobs) for this cluster over the next five-year period (2020-2025). This cluster was highly specialized in cut stock, resawing lumber, and planing (22.15 LQ), other paperboard container manufacturing (11.15), prefabricated wood building manufacturing (9.55), upholstered household furniture manufacturing (8.01), other millwork (7.76), and reconstituted wood product manufacturing (7.32) in 2020. Eight additional industries had LQ values between 1.1-3.4 for the same year. The forest and wood product manufacturing cluster supplied 5.2% (\$165.3 million) of the regional manufacturing sector's GRP in 2019.

Finally, 2,075 workers were employed in businesses belonging to the region's **food and beverage processing** cluster in 2020, which accounted for 8% of regional manufacturing cluster employment. This cluster was expected to add 222 jobs from 2010-2025, based on national economic and industry performance. The regional food and beverage processing cluster grew by 403 jobs (24% growth) during this period, indicating **competitiveness**. EMSI projects 14% employment growth (294 jobs) for this cluster over the next five-year period (2020-2025). The regional food and beverage cluster was highly

specialized in other snack food manufacturing (11.72 LQ), soft drink manufacturing (10.29), other animal food manufacturing (8.20), and bottled water manufacturing (3.29) in 2020. An additional five industries had LQ values ranging between 1.0-2.0 during the same year. This cluster generated \$261.7 million in 2019, which accounted for 8.9% of the regional manufacturing sector's GRP for the same year.

Miscellaneous **assemblers and fabricators** (15.3% of sector employment), **first-line supervisors** of production and operating workers (3.8%), and electrical, electronic, and electromechanical **assemblers** (3.5%) were the largest occupations by employment within the Region's manufacturing sector in 2020. These three occupations were also the sector's **most in-demand occupations** for the same year. Miscellaneous assemblers and fabricators saw 654 annual openings and 2,163 hires; electrical, electronic, and electromechanical assemblers saw 149 openings and 330 hires; and first-line supervisors of production and operating workers saw 144 openings and 402 hires.

Attachment B lists a more detailed overview of in-demand manufacturing occupations.



Healthcare and Social Assistance

The healthcare and social assistance sector was the third largest sector in Region II by employment in 2020. This sector accounted for 11.4% of the Region's employment (16,500 jobs) during that year. The Region's healthcare and social assistance sector was expected to add 1,573 jobs from 2015-2020, according to an estimation based on national economic performance and the performance of the national sector. Instead, 588 jobs were added (4% growth) across the regional healthcare and social assistance sector during this period. This degree of underperformance suggests that the regional sector was **not competitive** during the past five years. EMSI projects 7% employment growth (1,194 jobs) for this sector over the next five-year period (2020-2025). The healthcare and social assistance sector had a location quotient of 0.83 in 2020, suggesting that employment in this sector was less concentrated in Region II compared to the Nation. The regional sector also generated 8% (\$953.1 million) of the Region's GRP during 2019.

Home health and **personal care aides** (12.9% of sector employment), **registered nurses** (12.1%), and **nursing assistants** (9.4%) were the largest occupations by employment within the region's healthcare and social assistance sector in 2020. Occupations with high annual openings, a measure of new and replacement jobs within an occupation, and that paid a livable wage (\$11.50) were considered in-demand. The nursing assistant occupation led the sector in demand for 2020 with 265 annual openings and 1,338 hires. Registered nurses (181 annual openings), licensed practical and vocational nurses (104), social and human service assistants (76), and medical assistants (61) were the following most in-demand occupations for the same year.

Attachment B provides an overview of in-demand healthcare and social assistance occupations.

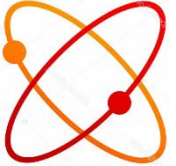


Construction/Skilled Trades

The regional construction sector accounted for 3.9% (6,032 workers) of total employment in Region II for 2020. This industry experienced a net change of -17 jobs from 2015-2020; 604 jobs were eliminated and 587 jobs were created. The regional construction sector was expected to add 867 jobs from 2015-2020, according to an estimation based on national economic and sector-specific performance. The regional construction sector underperformed this expectation by 884 jobs, indicating that it was **not competitive** during this period. EMSI projects less than 1% employment change (32 jobs) for this sector over the next five years. The construction sector had an LQ of 0.68 in 2020, suggesting that employment in this sector was less concentrated in Region II compared to the Nation. This sector generated \$444.66 million in 2019, which accounted for 3.7% of the Region's GRP.

Construction laborers (17.3% of sector employment), **carpenters** (11.5%), **first-line supervisors** of construction trades and extraction workers (8.3%) and operating engineers and other construction equipment operators (4.8%) were the largest occupations by employment within the region's construction sector. These three occupations also led this sector in demand in 2020.

Attachment B provides an overview of in-demand construction and skilled-trades occupations.



Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services

The Region's professional, scientific, and technical services sector accounted for 3.3% (5,121 jobs) of regional employment in 2020. This sector was expected to see the addition of 569 jobs from 2015-2020, according to an estimation based on national economic performance and national sector performance. Instead, 152 jobs were eliminated across the Region's professional, scientific, and technical services sector during this period. Employment decline amid a period of national growth suggests that this sector was **not competitive** over the past five years. EMSI projects 4% employment growth (208 jobs) for this sector over the next five-year period (2020-2025). The professional, scientific, and technical services sector had a location quotient of 0.5 in 2020, suggesting that employment in this sector was half as concentrated in Region II compared to the Nation. This sector generated \$542.6 million in 2019, which accounted for 4.5% of the Region's GRP.

Lawyers (6% of sector employment), **management analysts** (4.1%), and **software developers** and software quality assurance analysts and testers (4.1%) were the largest occupations by employment within the regional professional, scientific, and technical services industry. Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks (229 annual openings), accountants and auditors (110), management analysts (102), software developers and software quality assurance analysts and testers (72), and computer use support specialists (65) were the top in-demand occupations within the region's professional, scientific, and technical services sector in 2020.

Attachment B provides an overview of in-demand Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services occupations.



Transportation, Logistics, and Warehousing

The transportation and warehousing sector was composed of 3,795 jobs in 2020, which accounted for 2.4% of total employment in Region II. Approximately 822 jobs were expected to be created across this sector from 2015-2020, according to an estimation based on national and sector-specific growth. This sector added 180 jobs during this period, which suggests low competitiveness. EMSI projects 6% employment growth (209 jobs) over the next five-year period (2020-2025). The regional transportation and warehousing sector had an LQ of 0.64 in 2020, which suggests that employment in the regional sector is less concentrated compared to the nation. This sector supplied 3.3% (\$395.5 million) of the Region's GRP in 2019.

Heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers (23.3% of sector employment), **laborers and freight, stock, and material movers** (7.5%), **light truck drivers** (6.6%), and **stockers and order fillers** (6.6%) were the largest occupations by employment within the region's transportation and warehousing sector. The laborers and freight, stock and material movers and heavy and tractor-trailer truck driver occupations also led the sector in demand with 408 and 406 openings in 2020, respectively.

Attachment B provides an overview of in-demand Transportation and Warehousing occupations.

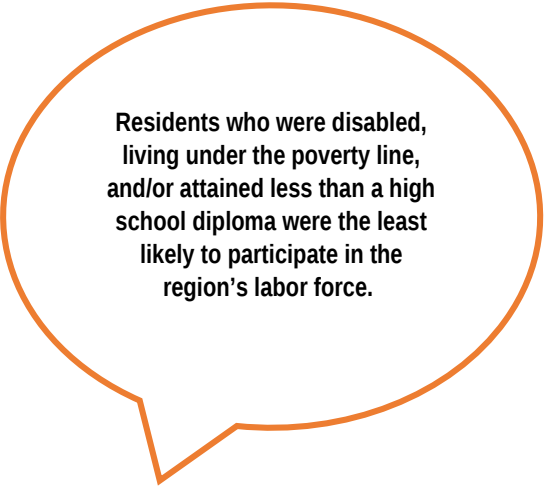


Local Workforce Analysis

Understanding the current labor force is crucial to building and achieving our economic goals in the region. Virginia Tech's Office of Economic Development (VT OED) not only provides overview data about employment, but also they break down this information by sectors and dig deeper into the issues of underemployment in our workforce. This work is an important contribution toward sectoral Action Items by helping to provide a deeper understanding of individual and categorical business partner workforce needs. Quarterly Reports can be viewed on our website or by clicking the link: http://bit.ly/wda2_qtr_rpts

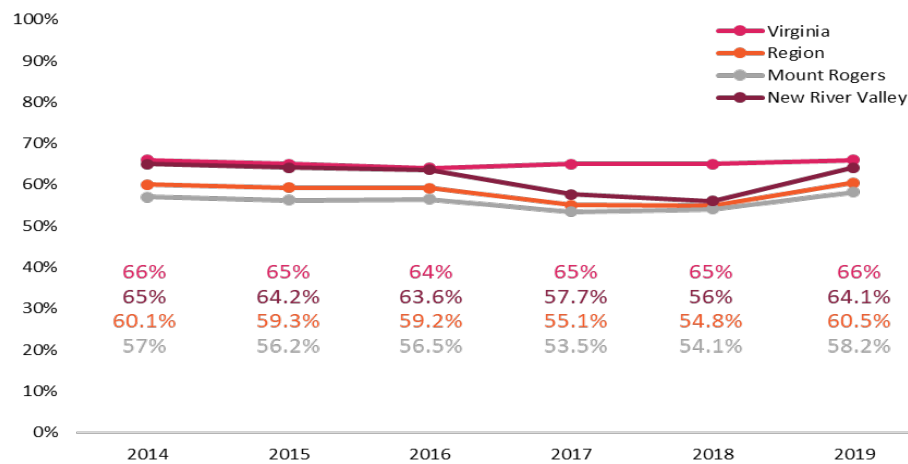
The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area (NRMRWDA) had a **civilian noninstitutionalized population** of 313,895 in 2019, according to ACS data. This number is reflective of the total number of individuals that could participate in the workforce. Region II saw a **labor force participation rate** (LFP) of 60.5% in 2019, according to the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC). This compares to an LFP of 59.3% in 2015. LFP in Region II was **lower** than that of the State (63.4%) and Nation (63.1%) in 2019. Additionally, 26% of individuals aged between 20-64 in Region II **did not work** in 2019. Region II had a proportionally greater number of non-workers in 2019 compared to the State (20.2%) and Nation (22.4%) for the same year. The **average median age** of workforce participants in Region II was 40.7 years of age in 2019, according to the ACS. This compares to 39.6 years of age for the State and Nation during the same year. Workers aged between 45-54 accounted for the largest portion of the Region's workforce (20.3%). Approximately 7.5% of workforce participants were **nearing retirement age** (60-64) in 2019 and 5.9% of workforce participants were aged over 65 for the same year.

Several factors were correlated with higher and lower LFP in Region II, including age, gender, poverty status, and disability status. LFP was highest among residents aged between 25-44; 76.9% of residents in this age cohort participated in the region's labor force in 2019. Labor force participation was lower for residents aged 24 and under (56.5%) and for residents aged 45 and older (44.8%) for the same year. LFP was marginally higher for men aged between 20-64 (71.9%) compared to women in the same age group (68.2%) in 2019. However, women with children under 18 were the most likely to participate (75.2%) in the 20-64 age group. Residents who were disabled (37.4% LFP), living under the poverty line (42.4%), and/or attained less than a high school diploma (49.8%) were the least likely to participate in the Region's labor force in 2018.



Residents who were disabled, living under the poverty line, and/or attained less than a high school diploma were the least likely to participate in the region's labor force.

Labor Force Participation Rates:



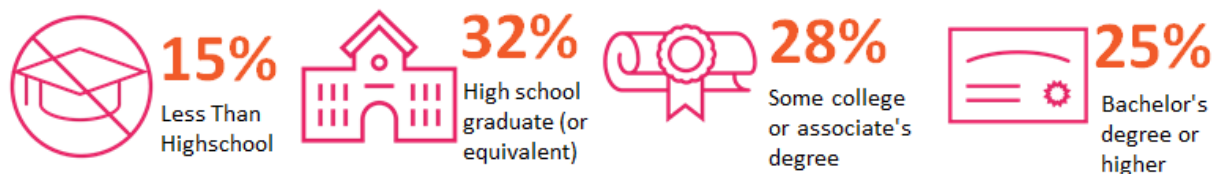
Sources: EMSI Developer, 2020.3 Dataset; US Census, 2018 5-Year Estimates; Virginia Employment Commission; BLS Annual State Employment Status

Workers with **more credentials** tend to be better compensated compared to their less credentialed counterparts. Occupations with **no formal education requirements** paid the **lowest** in Region II while occupations requiring **bachelor's degrees** and above paid the **highest**, with some exceptions. Occupations requiring a high school diploma had the most variation in compensation. Additionally, large occupations requiring some college or postsecondary achievement paid similar wages to occupations requiring only a high school diploma.

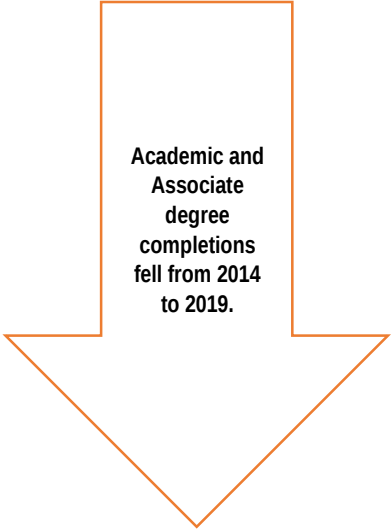
Educational Attainment:

Educational attainment was varied for people aged over 25 in the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area (Region II). For instance, 15% of individuals aged over 25 did not have a high school diploma, 32% attained a high school diploma or equivalency, 28% had some college experience or an associate's degree, and the remaining 25% attained a bachelor's degree or higher in 2020. A greater proportion of workers in Region II did not have a high school diploma compared to the State and Nation. Alternatively, a larger portion of working-age residents had an associate's degree compared to the State and Nation. Workers in Region II, however, were less likely to have a bachelor's degree compared to the same geographies.

Education Attainment, 2020



Overall completions for 1-year **academic programs**, **1-2-year academic programs**, and **associate's degrees** fell by -32% (179 completions), -29% (206), -4% (41) in Region II from 2014-2019, respectively. Nevertheless, allied health diagnostic, intervention, and treatment (83 completions), diesel mechanics technology/technicians (30), welding technology/welder (23), and general computer and information sciences programs (21) were the most popular 1-year academic programs in 2019. General liberal arts and sciences (337 completions), allied health diagnostic, intervention, and treatment (37), licensed practical/vocational nurse (36) programs were the most popular 1-2-year academic programs for the same year. Finally, Liberal studies (513 completions), registered nursing (162), agricultural production operations (54) and industrial electronic technology/technician (43) programs were the most popular associate's degree programs.



Academic and Associate degree completions fell from 2014 to 2019.

In-Demand Skills & Qualifications:

Jobs are often posted across a multitude of webpages, job boards, etc. This oftentimes creates multiple postings for the same job. For instance, there were 341,697 job postings for 85,559 available jobs in Region II in 2019. More than half of the jobs advertised in Region II in 2019 were located in Montgomery County (28.7% of postings), Washington County (11.8%), and Wythe County (10.2%).

Approximately 66% of 2019 job postings in Region II did not list an educational requirement, although many of these occupations may require an education credential that was omitted from the posting. Nevertheless, 14% of 2019 job postings required a high school degree or GED, 5% required an associate's degree, and the remaining 25% required a bachelor's degree or higher. Similarly, 69% of 2019 postings did not list an experience requirement. Approximately 13% of postings required 0-1 years of experience, 12% required 2-3 years, and 6% required 4 or more years of experience.

In-demand qualifications varied for each industry and occupation; information regarding in-demand qualifications for target industries is found below. **Commercial Drivers License** (CDL) was the most in-demand qualification in Region II for 2019; 13.9% of job postings listed a CDL as a requirement. **Healthcare qualifications** were also in high demand, according to job postings data. Approximately 4.3% of postings in Region II required a Bachelor's of Science in Nursing (BSN), Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), Nurse Practitioner, and Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) credential. Qualifications related to **business administration**, operations, and management; **food service**; and **logistics** were also in-demand in 2019.

Similar to qualifications, **hard skills** tended to align with specific industries and occupations. Nevertheless, the top-five in-demand hard skills in Region II were **merchandising** (6% of 2019 postings), **restaurant operation** (6%), **nursing** (5%), **flatbed truck operation** (4%), and **basic life support** (3%).

In-demand **soft skills** were more universal. For instance, **communications, customer service, and management** skills were listed in 20%, 18%, and 15% of all job postings in Region II for 2019, respectively.



Top-posted **soft skills** include communications, customer service, management, and leadership



Healthcare and Social Assistance

There were 37,186 postings for 7,761 job openings within the Region's healthcare and social assistance sector in 2019. Montgomery County, Washington County, and Wythe County were the most popular locations for these postings. Approximately 3,803 healthcare job postings listed an educational requirement in 2019; 26% called for a high school diploma or equivalent, 29% called for an associate's degree, and the remaining 45% called for a bachelor's degree or higher.

Bachelor's of Science in Nursing (BSN) was the most in-demand qualification for this sector in 2019; 8.5% of all health care postings required this certification. Additionally, 7.4% of postings called for Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) certifications, and 5.9% called for Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) certifications. Top hard skills for healthcare postings in 2019 were nursing, CPR, rehabilitation, and basic life support. Communications, customer service, management, and leadership were the top-posted soft skills for the same year.



Manufacturing

There were 18,071 postings for 3,301 job openings within the Region's manufacturing sector for 2019. It is important to note that job postings for manufacturing occupations tend to underrepresent the actual number of job openings in this sector. Montgomery County, the City of Radford, and Wythe County were the most popular locations for these postings. Approximately 2,098 job postings listed an educational requirement in 2019; 34% called for a high school diploma or equivalent, 12% called for an associate's degree, and the remaining 56% called for a bachelor's degree or higher.

CDL was the most in-demand qualification for manufacturing postings in 2019; 7.3% of postings called for this certification. Bachelor's of Science in Business, project management professional certification, and certified safety professional were the next most in-demand qualifications for the same year. Top hard skills listed in these postings were auditing, corrective and preventive action (CAPA), lean manufacturing, and

continuous improvement processes. Additionally, communication, management, operations, and leadership with the top-posted soft skills.



Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services

There were 27,519 postings for 6,071 job openings within the Region's professional, scientific, and technical services sector for 2019. Montgomery County, the City of Radford, and Washington County were the most popular locations for these postings. Approximately 2,745 postings listed an educational requirement in 2019; 35% called for a high school diploma or equivalent, 7% called for an associate's degree, and the remaining 58% called for a bachelor's degree or higher.

The top-posted qualifications for these positions were CompTIA Security +, product certification (2.4% of 2019 postings), product certification (1.8%), Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (1.3%), and IAT Level II Certification (1.2%). Top-posted hard skills in 2019 were scripting, selling techniques, auditing, accounting, and underwriting. Communication, customer service, management, sales, and operations were the top-posted soft skills for the same year.



Construction/Skilled Trades

There were 6,201 postings for 2,021 job openings with the region's construction sector for 2019. It is important to note that job postings for construction occupations tend to underrepresent the actual number of job openings in this sector. The vast majority (77%) of job postings for construction occupations did not list an education requirement in 2019. Occupation data suggest that many construction occupations do not require a formal education credential, especially labor-intensive construction occupations. Approximately 13% of 2019 postings called for a high school diploma, 3% called for an associate's degree, and 7% called for a bachelor's degree or higher.

Many construction postings in Region II also did not list required qualifications. A small number of postings listed CDL, certified forklift operator, and flagger certification as a requirement in 2019. Sales was the most commonly listed hard skill for construction postings, followed by painting, plumbing, carpentry, and HVAC. Similar to other target industries, top soft skills for construction postings were communications, valid driver's license, research, and customer service.



Transportation, Logistics, and Warehousing

There were 58,382 job postings for 16,679 job openings within the region's transportation, logistics, and warehousing sector in 2019. Montgomery County, Pulaski County, and Wythe County were the most popular locations for postings. It is important to note, however, that the bulk of postings were generated by national transportation firms and are not location-dependent. Almost all 2019 postings for logistics positions (97%) did not list an education requirement.

Approximately 63.4% of 2019 postings required a CDL in 2019. Other in-demand qualifications were related to driver endorsements for specialized freight, such as hazardous materials and double and triple-trailer configurations. The most frequently listed hard skills were flatbed truck operation, over-the-road driving, dry van truck operation, and truckload shipping. Desired soft-skills included a good driving record, customer service, operations, and management skills.



Workforce Development Activities

The region is home to three state universities, three community colleges, and several proprietary higher educational institutions. The Workforce system accesses these excellent educational partners and augments training through various credentialing, individual training, and includes the **Manufacturing Center of Excellence**. Within the region, all workforce programs have a specific footprint and customers are made aware of the programs and performance of the programs through various forms of data.

K12 Public School System Pipeline:



24

High Schools in Region II



11:1

Average students to teacher ratio for grades 8 to 12



13,600

Students enrolled in the 2019 to 2020 school year for grades 9 to 12



93.6%

Graduation rate in 2018, excluding GED completions



3.3%

Dropout rate in 2018



62.9%

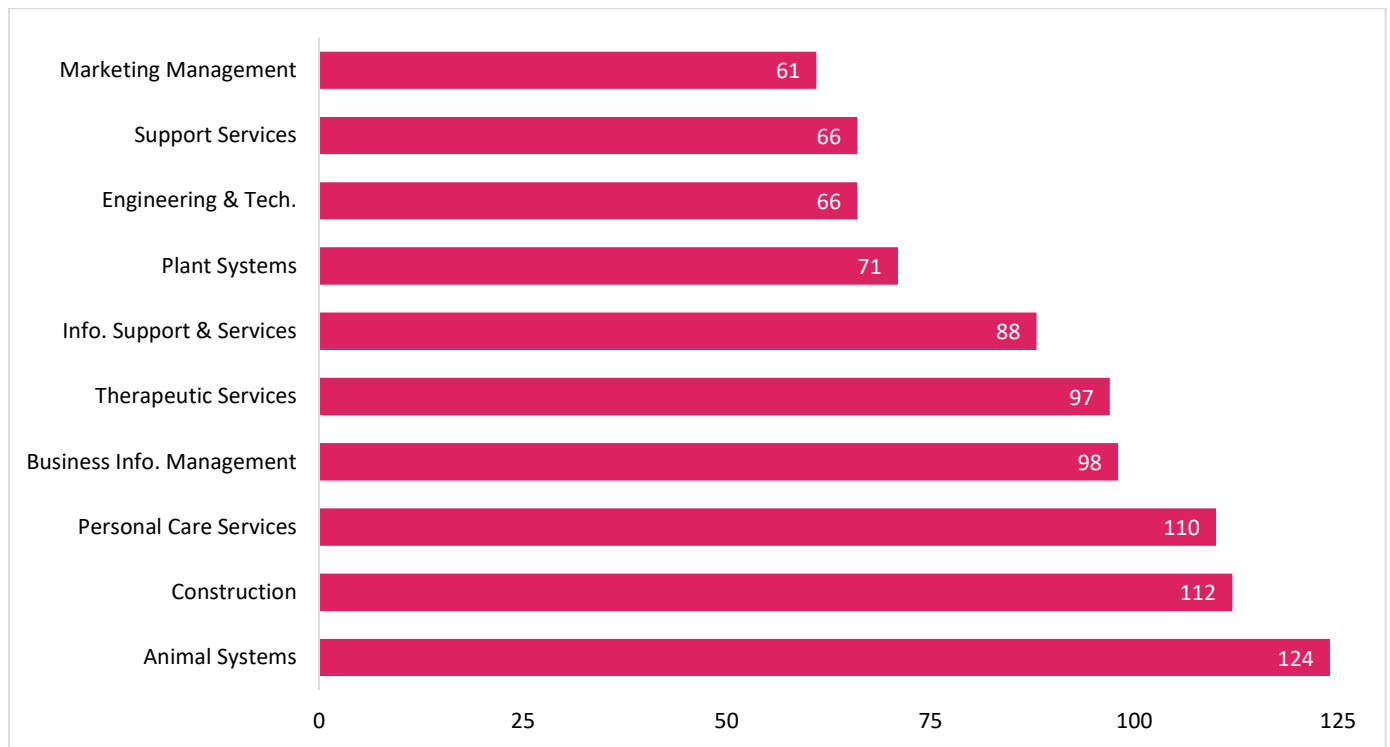
Average percent participation in school nutrition meal eligibility for 2018 to 2019 school year

School Division CTE Completers 2018-19 School Year:

Division	H.S. Enrollment	CTE Completers	% CTE Completers	Dual Enrollment	% Dual Enrollment
Bland County	245	60	24.5%	54	22.0%
Bristol City	670	84	12.5%	145	21.6%
Carroll County	1,101	183	16.6%	431	39.1%
Floyd County	636	75	11.8%	187	29.4%
Galax City	351	66	18.8%	66	18.8%
Giles County	776	154	19.8%	245	31.6%
Grayson County	448	93	20.8%	175	39.1%
Montgomery County	2,931	302	10.3%	882	30.1%
Pulaski County	1,229	214	17.4%	279	22.7%
Radford City	509	26	5.1%	107	21.0%
Smyth County	1,328	218	16.4%	336	25.3%
Washington County	2,233	323	14.5%	471	21.1%
Wythe County	1,251	251	20.1%	243	19.4%

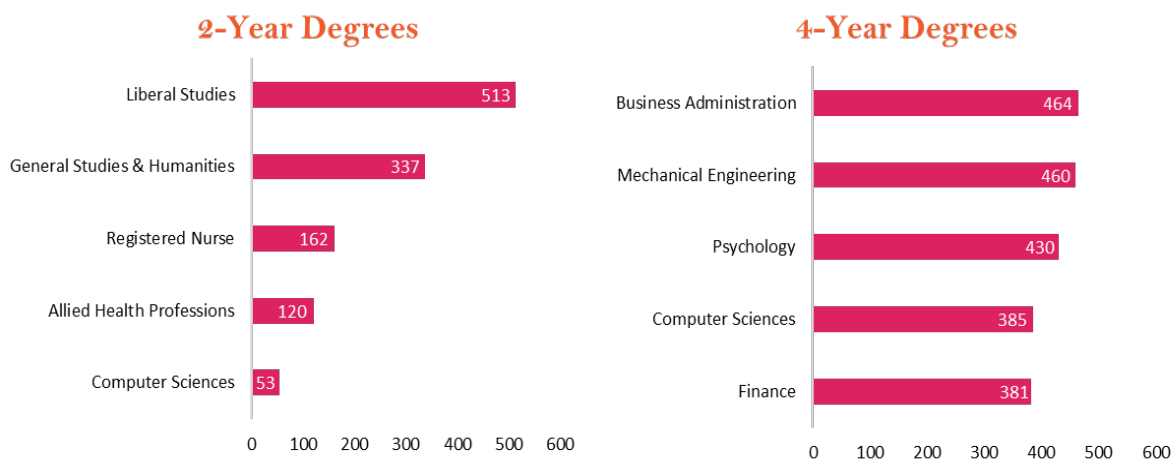
Each school division in Region II offered CTE and dual enrollment programs for the 2018 academic year. Despite high CTE participation, more students participated in dual enrollment programs. Washington County had the highest number of CTE completers in 2018 while Montgomery County had the highest number of dual enrollment students.

Top 10 CTE Programs by Completion 2018:



Higher Education Pipeline:

Top 5 Program Completions by Degree Type



The NRMRWDB Discretionary Programs and Projects:

The NRMRWDB's current discretionary grant programs and opportunities are listed below. Each of these projects targets individuals in the region who have barriers to employment. Programs use an Integrated Education and Training (IET) model to help individuals with barriers increase their employability skills and obtain employment. Programs provide holistic and flexible programming that emphasizes personal responsibility and provides job skills training, work experience, job readiness training, supportive services, and other work-related expenses for careers that matter. This model helps achieve the directive under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to "help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in a global economy."

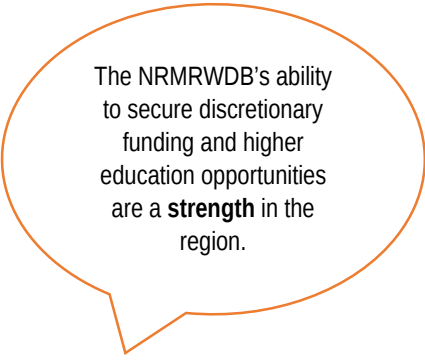
For detailed description, see "Other Programs and Services" in the One-Stop Delivery System Section.

- Pathways to the American Dream (DOL America's Promise)
- Economic Equity (VCCS)
- Pathways to Self-Sufficiency (VCCS RSVP)
- Pathways to a Strong and Healthy Region (ARC POWER)
- Work-Ready Community (Tobacco Commission)

Strengths and Weaknesses:

One of the strengths noted in the SWOT Analysis was the NRMRWDB's ability to seek additional (discretionary) funding to support and meet the unique needs of the businesses and the labor force in the region. This intent is to target resources to enable economic growth through workforce development activities.

Another of the strengths of the region is the availability of higher education opportunities with three community colleges, two state universities and a private four-year college in the regional footprint. Although this is a strength, many graduates (of the universities and the colleges) leave the region for higher paying wages. There are several initiatives in the region to market both the career opportunities and the quality of life to these graduates. The NRMRWDB will be supporting these initiatives through the Career Lattice development, business and job seeker engagement activities, and marketing of "in-demand" occupations.



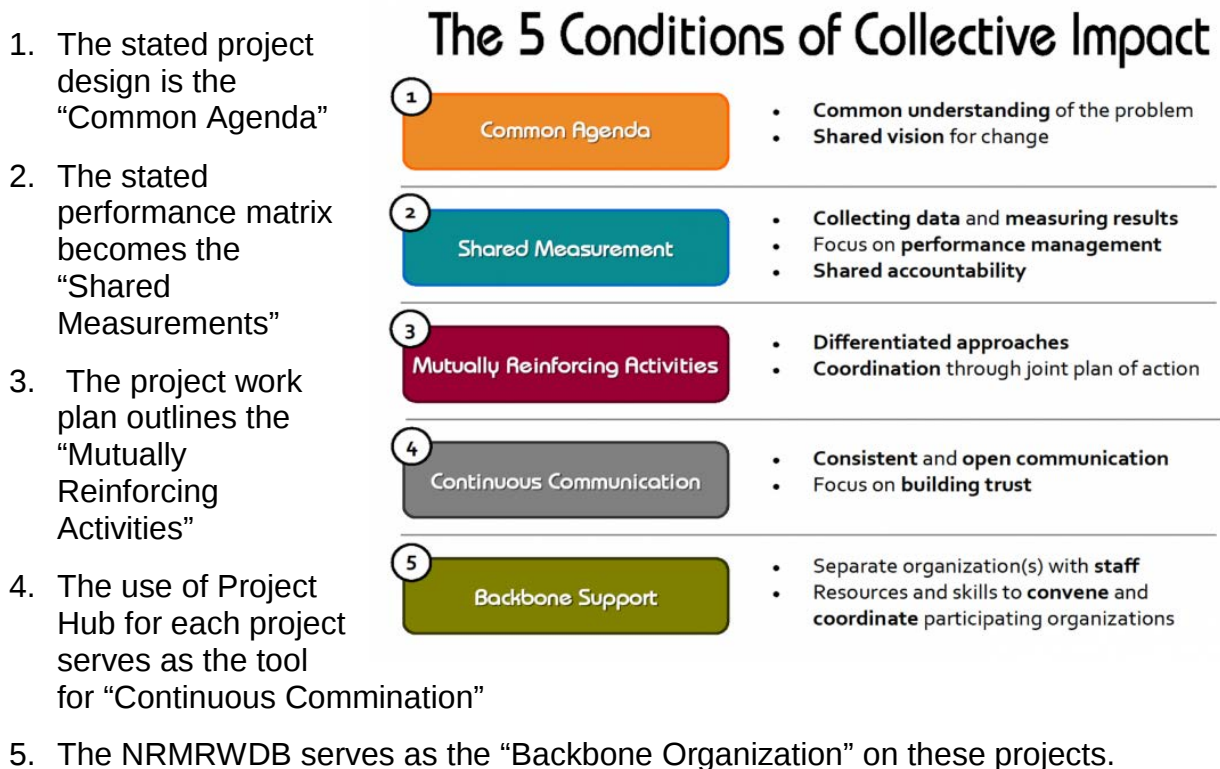
The NRMRWDB's ability to secure discretionary funding and higher education opportunities are a **strength** in the region.

Workforce Development Capacity:

The SWOT survey responses highlighted the strong and innovative leadership role that the NRMRWDB plays in the region. Staff are collaborative, passionate, and tenacious in pursuing funding and finding solutions to individual, regional, and systemic challenges.

Collective Impact has been the focus of the NRMRWDB for the last five plus years as we have worked to establish a model for the region's workforce development system. The additional funding and creative program design, through discretionary grants, has created the opportunities that allow the five conditions for collective impact (shown below) to begin to manifest in the region.

Each new program/project is designed to build on current regional strengths and partnerships through the use of Integrated Resource Teams to serve individuals and Business Solutions Teams to serve businesses. Both teams are designed to bring additional partners into the collaboration. Tools such as B2B Engage© (client management tool) and ProjectHub® (a project management tool) are used for communication and data collection for the partners in each project to have access to information as needed. These programs also add funding and other resources that allow the workforce system to meet specific industry needs and/or the needs of special populations through the collective impact approach as well as the braiding and leveraging of regional resources. The lessons learned about the collective impact model is beginning to flow into standard practice in the workforce system.



Regional Indicators that Affect the Workforce:



3.4%

Immigrants
(of total population)



7.5%

Veterans



10.3%

Female-headed families
(% of total households)



18.4%

Below poverty rate



19.5%

Disabled



23.3%

Seniors (65+)



17%

Excessive drinking



30%

Adult obesity



18%

Adult smoking



44,930

Total number of
food insecure



18,065

Total number with
limited access to
healthy food



141

*Total number of
drug overdose
deaths



3.8

Average number of
physically unhealthy
days



3.9

Average number of
mentally unhealthy
days



25%

Physically inactive



The Region's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, And Threats



SWOT Analysis:

The SWOT Analysis for the 2021-2023 NRMW Strategic Plan occurred in November and December of 2020. Input for the analysis was broadly acquired through a **survey** to all workforce system stakeholders, which received 74 responses. Approximately 82% of respondents said their knowledge of the workforce system was somewhat or very high. Only three respondents said they had no real knowledge of the workforce system. In order of most to least number of responses, most responses came from the following:

- Someone currently participating in a workforce program through one of the following agencies: DARS, DBVI, Goodwill Industries, People Inc., VEC, VIEW, Mount Rogers Regional Adult Education, New River Community College Office of Transitional Programs, or Pathways to the American Dream (23 responses)
- Someone who works for local, regional, or state government (16 responses)
- A member of the NRMW Workforce Development Board (13 responses)
- Someone who works for one of the One-Stop System Partners: Adult Education, VEC, DARS, DBVI, DSS, WIOA Program Operator, Board staff, etc. (7 responses)

Additional and more in-depth input was received through **six facilitated meetings** that lasted between one and two hours. Meeting participants were asked to reflect on the state of the region's workforce system, the SWOT analysis from the previous plan, responses from the current SWOT survey, and possible Action Items the workforce system should develop in the upcoming plan. These sessions were divided among key workforce system stakeholders that included:

1. Direct service providers to adult workers
2. Education partners
3. Chambers of commerce and economic development partners
4. IT businesses
5. Manufacturing businesses
6. Healthcare businesses

The following is a summary of all SWOT findings, listed in order of most to least responses. Answers shaded in gray are those where at least one-third of respondents agreed with the given response. As a reminder, a SWOT analysis reviews the Strength and Weaknesses of the workforce system and those within the system, as well as the Opportunities and Threats in the outside environment that workforce system partners can take advantage of or account for in their work.

Strengths of the Workforce System:

For the top responding groups, the majority of respondents unanimously agreed that the **greatest strengths** of the workforce system are the experienced individual working in the system and the active pursuit of funding and programming to address workforce issues in the region. Among workforce development board members and government officials, good fiscal management, strong links with local government and alignment with state programs were considered great strengths. Among those who said they had participated in workforce programming, the drive toward **regional impacts** and **strong referral processes** among partner agencies in the system were top strengths.

In addition to reinforcing many of the survey responses, meeting participants also highlighted the **strong and innovative leadership role** that the workforce development board plays in the region. Staff are collaborative, passionate and tenacious in pursuing funding and finding solutions to individual and systemic challenges. Many of the recent programming, for instance *Pathways to the American Dream*, have focused on industry needs. Employers who have used these programs and other system resources responded positively and have expressed gratitude. Resulting from these strengths, many participants noted the increase in participation in workforce activities in the past three to five years.

Answer Choice	Respondents	%
Experienced Board staff	51	69%
Actively developing programs and seeking funding to meet the region's workforce issues	46	62%
Experienced Program Operator staff	43	58%
Ability to align with State Programs	37	50%
The Workforce and Consortium Boards are driven towards regional impact	37	50%
Good fiscal management	36	49%
Strong links with local governments	34	46%

Board and staff participate in many regional special projects (job fairs, symposiums, special grant projects, etc.)	32	43%
Strong referral process among partner agencies within the system	27	36%
Strong Business Service Coordination	23	31%
Internal service delivery procedures are consistent and provide good compliance framework	22	30%
High level of board member involvement	21	28%
Strong training provider selection and oversight by WDB	21	28%
Increased partner presence in One-stop Centers.	16	22%
Greater business involvement in board activity	15	20%
Representative service delivery by jurisdiction	2	3%

Words in **bold were also highlighted during facilitated meetings*

Weaknesses of the Workforce System:

For the top responding groups, the majority of respondents unanimously agreed that the **greatest weakness** of the workforce system is the **stigma of vocational education programs** creating a shortage of skilled workers. After that, there was less agreement on other weaknesses. Among workforce development board members, the greatest weaknesses were **education programming** not meeting the needs of businesses, **territorialism** among workforce organizations leading to poor system coordination, and **not being proactive** in job training for future industries/occupations. One survey respondent explained that system staff do well with pursuing proactive opportunities but the system overall remains reactive. Government officials cited poor marketing of the system, **limited measurable impact**, and the system **not being customer-friendly** as top weaknesses. Among those who said they had participated in workforce programming, **poor marketing** and limited measurable impact were also cited, but an equal amount of respondents said they hadn't experienced any weaknesses.

In facilitated meetings, there was some debate concerning **underutilize workforce programs** and whether education institutions were not meeting business needs. For both issues, some questioned whether the business community was as forthcoming about their workforce needs, leading to underutilization and poor program alignment. Others pointed out the education program alignment had improved considerably, and the biggest issue was marketing resources to improved underutilization of resources.

Answer Choice	Respondents	%
Stigma of vocational education programs is creating a shortage of skilled workers	28	37.8%
The system is not customer friendly (difficult to navigate)	21	28.4%
Measurable local impact	20	27.0%
Poor marketing of services provided by the WDB	20	27.0%

Territorial issues between workforce system organizations causes a lack of coordination of services	20	27.0%
Education is not meeting the needs of regional businesses (training and/or credentials offered)	13	17.6%
Not being proactive in job training for future industries or occupations	12	16.2%
Lack of jurisdictional coordination in workforce development/training initiatives - very competitive between PDC's	12	16.2%
Lack of coordination of services to businesses	9	12.2%
Lack of partner presence/participation in some of our One-Stop Centers	9	12.2%
Not proactive in recruiting programs or providers	8	10.8%
Inconsistency with services to businesses	6	8.1%
Inconsistency with co-enrollments of participants and braiding/leveraging of funds for job seekers	5	6.8%
Inexperienced/undertrained front-line staff	4	5.4%
One-Stop Centers are inconsistent in basic service delivery (varying degrees of customer driven service)	3	4.1%

*Words in **bold** were also highlighted during facilitated meetings

Opportunities for the Workforce System:

For the top responding groups, the majority of respondents unanimously agreed that the greatest opportunity of the workforce system is **low cost of living**. Among workforce development board members and government officials, a large pool of graduates from higher education institutions were considered great opportunities. Among workforce development board members and those who said they had participated in workforce programming, **availability of federal, state and private grants** were top opportunities.

In facilitated meetings, other opportunities considered were adapting a West Virginia **simulated workspace program** to help students of regional CTE programs gain workplace soft skills, helping youth in the region gain employment, growing telework opportunities, and supporting business development efforts at New River Community College.

Answer Choice	Respondents	%
Low cost of living	45	60.8%
Access to interstate system	44	59.5%
Availability of Federal, state and private grants	41	55.4%
Pool of available workers, with upgradable skills and a good work ethic	35	47.3%
Attractions for tourism	34	45.9%
An abundance of natural resources & good environmental quality	33	44.6%

Large pool of graduates (from VT, RU and three community colleges)	33	44.6%
Minimal union activity	30	40.5%
Multi-jurisdictional cooperation (Regionalism)	29	39.2%
Ability to quickly add training programs at the community colleges to meet employer needs	28	37.8%
Low crime rates	27	36.5%
Research and Business Development from VT & RU	22	29.7%
Entrepreneurial activities and support	21	28.4%
Increased involvement of business sector	20	27.0%
Broadband is available in many areas – completion of the “last mile” is possible	19	25.7%
Availability of support resources, capital and business sites for start-up and small businesses	18	24.3%
Availability of quality educational (P-20) and training resources	18	24.3%
Access to quality healthcare	18	24.3%
Expansion of infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, etc)	15	20.3%
Access to int’l airports (CLT), inland ports (Pulaski & Elliston), and Foreign Trade Zone (NRV Airport)	14	18.9%

Words in **bold were also highlighted during facilitated meetings*

Threats to the Workforce System:

There was limited agreement on top threats to the system. Among workforce development board members, the greatest threats were **declining/aging population**, **lack of opportunities** for recent college graduates, and **low wages** (not livable wages). Government officials agreed that a declining/aging population was the top threat, but respondents also cited **limited fiscal capacity** of state and local governments and the **decline of corporate involvement** in community activities/initiatives. Among those who said they had participated in workforce programming, **low wages** (not livable wages) was the most cited responses, while some also said lack of opportunities for recent college graduations.

All agreed that the **COVID-19** pandemic has been a threat to the region as much as the nation, particularly with respect to the uneven impact on lower skilled workers. Emphasized in almost all facilitated meetings were also the growing need for **more accessible wrap-around resources** including childcare, transportation and behavioral health facilities. Indeed, substance use disorder was described as an ever present and growing challenge to achieving a worker-ready region. Limited affordable housing in Blacksburg, Christiansburg and Floyd were also key concerns. Finally, education providers cited the difficulty of attracting a pool of talented teachers due to the stigma about the Southwest Virginia region (i.e. Appalachia).

Answer Choice	Respondents	%
Declining/Aging population	47	63.5%
Low wages (service vs. production) – minimum wage is not a “living” wage	46	62.2%
Lack of opportunities for recent college graduates	45	60.8%
Area left out of State-wide decisions	37	50.0%
Lack of needed infrastructure for “knowledge based” workers (i.e.: broadband is not everywhere, lack of social & cultural amenities) creating a void in these high tech/high wage jobs	37	50.0%
Potential Recession	36	48.6%
Limited fiscal capacity of state and local governments (State government is failing to meet its obligations creating more financial stress on local governments)	34	45.9%
Competition rather than cooperation between localities for economic development	31	41.9%
Decline of corporate involvement in community activities/initiatives	25	33.8%
A disorganized workforce development system (at state-level)	24	32.4%
Exporting of jobs & businesses (and projection of more job losses)	24	32.4%
Low importance of advanced education by some citizens	21	28.4%
Continued disregard for the environment and natural resources	18	24.3%
Electronic crime (internet fraud)	14	18.9%

Words in **bold were also highlighted during facilitated meetings*



Availability of Comprehensive Youth Services

Youth workforce investment activities in the New River/Mount Rogers Region, including activities for youth with disabilities, range from career guidance to comprehensive training leading to meaningful employment in an in-demand occupation in the region. Successful models using these types of activities include Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs used by our board.

Strategy for Ensuring the Availability of Services:

Currently, two program operators, **Goodwill Industries of the Valleys** and **People Incorporated of Virginia**, provide youth services in all localities in the region. Goodwill serves the localities of Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski, and Radford. People, Inc. serves the localities of Bland, Bristol, Carroll, Galax, Grayson, Smyth, Washington and Wythe. Annual monitoring evaluates a percentage of files for each Case Manager. Through monitoring, the Operations Coordinator evaluates the availability of services and determines whether all program elements are being provided. Written findings are provided to the operators, and each finding must be addressed. Staff participate in available trainings offered directly through the NRMWDB, in WorkforceGPS, and others to support their professional development needs. Other strategies to ensure that youth services are available include use of the Virginia Workforce Connection System and partnerships with various agencies and organizations through Integrated Resource Teams.

Seventy-five percent of the funding must be spent on out of school youth per state guidelines. WIOA operators have developed detailed eligibility criteria to meet the needs of our regional youth population and to support the pipeline to employment for all young people with targeted programming for the most at risk in our region. Through strict fiscal monitoring, funds are appropriately used in our youth programs.

Identification and Selection of WIOA Youth Operators:

All WIOA Title 1 Program Operators, including Youth Program Operators, are selected through a competitive procurement process. A Request for Proposal (RFP) is posted publically on our website and notices are sent out through: 1) email to prospective bidders, 2) a public notice in the region's two largest newspapers, and 3) social media. A bidder's conference is held for all prospective bidders to answer questions about the RFP. Once received, each proposal is documented on when and how it was received and by the bidder's name. A team of NRMWDB and CLEOs is created to review and score each proposal. The scored proposals are presented to the NRMWDB's Youth Committee to review and make a recommendation to the NRMWDB and the Consortium Board. A formal vote is taken at each board meeting on awarding contracts and funding amounts.

For the PY20, Goodwill Industries of the Valleys was awarded the contract to serve youth in the New River Valley (Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski and Radford) and People Inc. of Virginia for the Mount Rogers area (Bland, Bristol, Carroll, Galax, Grayson, Smyth, Washington and Wythe).

Ensuring Youth Access to Required Program Elements:

Through collaborations, direct support, and monitoring, we ensure that youth clients are offered the Fourteen Elements available to them as described in the following table:

Element	How the Element is being provided
1. Tutoring, study skills training and evidence based dropout prevention Action Items that lead to completion of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent or for a postsecondary credential.	For in-school youth, we can deliver tutoring, but do not currently have that need. Adult Education provides this service for out-of-school youth.
2. Alternative secondary school offerings.	Provided through the local school systems.
3. Summer employment opportunities directly linked to academic and occupational learning.	The WIOA Youth Program Operators provide summer work experience that is linked to the participant career goals/training. Although this was a challenge during COVID.
4. Paid and unpaid work experience, including summer employment opportunities, internships, pre apprenticeship programs, job shadowing and on the job training opportunities.	The WIOA Youth Program Operators provide work experience, summer employment opportunities, and internships that are consistent with the youth's career goals and training. Unfortunately, transportation is a major barrier to most of our youth participants. Public transportation does not exist in most of our service delivery area. Lack of transportation dramatically effects the work experience opportunities that are available to participants, particularly the more rural counties.

5. Occupational skill training which shall include priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that are aligned with in demand industry sectors and occupations.	Regional training providers for this service. Unfortunately, the short-term programs best suited for our youth participants are limited. COVID created another barrier as “on-line” training is frequently not an option due to: technology skills, technology accessibility and individual learning styles. In partnership with non-WIOA funded programs the opportunity to have access to WorkKeys Assessments and WorkKeys 2.0 Curriculum adds additional skills support.
6. Leadership development opportunities, which may include such activities as positive social behavioral and soft skills, decision making, team work and other activities.	The WIOA Youth Program Operators provide this which typically take the form of community service activities, college tours, etc. With the shift to the out-of-school youth population, it is more difficult to manage attendance at these activities. In partnership with other programs the availability of Conover assessments, WorkKeys assessments and follow-up curriculum helps with the soft skill development.
7. Supportive Services.	The WIOA Youth Program Operators provide many of these services to youth in training or work based learning. Through the use of Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs) other organizations help with many supports that an eligible youth might need.
8. Adult mentoring for a duration of at least 12 months, which may occur both during and after program participation.	This element is rarely used due to the geography of the region, lack of transportation for youth as the appropriate mentor may not be located geographically near the youth. Prior to COVID, “virtual” resources were limited. There may be an opportunity here to improve the use of this element, by incorporating more virtual mentorships where appropriate.
9. Follow-up Services for a minimum 12- month period.	The WIOA Youth Program Operators are providing this service and have created robust follow-up Action Items that keep participants engaged throughout the 12-month period. They use a variety of contact methods and provide continuous career information to the participants throughout the follow-up period.

10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling, including drug and alcohol abuse counseling, mental health counseling, as well as referrals to counseling, as appropriate to the needs of individual youth.	The WIOA Youth Program Operators refer participants to the local CSBs for these services. The region, like many around us, is battling undisclosed substance abuse issues and have identified the need for additional education and services in this area. The local WDB is a recipient of an ARC POWER grant to develop a “recovery ready” region and additional resources should become available during the grant period.
11. Financial Literacy education.	This is provided as part of work readiness through a variety of methods including Financial Empowerment and programs offered through Local Credit Unions.
12. Entrepreneurial skills training.	Although this is touched on during work readiness, a more intentional approach is needed.
13. Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors and occupations.	The WIOA Youth Program Operators review LMI with participants as part of the development of their plan.
14. Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to post-secondary education and training.	The WIOA Youth Program Operators are utilizing more assessment through WorkKeys and Northstar Digital literacy. In the southern part of the region there is a partnership between that WIOA Program Operator and Job Corp and through various other programs funding to develop Integrated Education and Training Programs (like PIVA) are being developed and promoted to youth as appropriate.

How Program Design Addresses Youth Service Strategies:

WIOA services are prioritized to serve out-of-school youth through a minimum expenditure requirement of 75 percent and focusing on work experiences through a minimum expenditure requirement of 20 percent. The NRMWDB Youth Program focuses on providing youth with educational and career success through work-based learning and attainment of credentials. Through a framework of leveraged resources, our programs support entry into and along career pathways. To do so, we have strong partnerships with the educational institutions in our region as well as various community based organizations and other youth-serving organizations to integrate service delivery.

Partnership Engagement:

Our Workforce System has formed the necessary partnerships to advance the youth services vision. Key partners and stakeholders have reviewed relevant youth data and identified the overarching service needs of in-school and out-of-school youth. Through the development of Integrated Resource Teams, we are striving to develop with key partners and stakeholders an on-going, collaborative approach for recruiting, referring, and providing holistic youth services. Partners that could be included in the Active Resource Coordination/Case Management of the IRT flow (depending on the needs of the particular youth) are: Adult Education, Alternative Education/Schools, Apprenticeship/Pre-Apprenticeship, business partners, Community/Faith Organizations, Career & Technical Education (secondary/post-secondary), Community Organizations, Job Corps, Juvenile/Adult Justice Organizations, Local School Districts, TANF, Vocational Rehabilitation, various other funding sources for Training and Supportive Services.

Governance and Leadership:

Our board has formed the necessary structure to ensure WIOA youth provisions are implemented and continuously improved. Individuals with experience relating to programs for youth are involved in the design and implementation of our WIOA youth services programs. We have policies outlining the criteria for youth eligible providers and a Youth Council that meets to review and evaluate the Youth Program Operators and their respective activities/programs to support the region's youth. Duties and functions of the Youth Council are defined, and include functioning as a convener to coordinate local resources; providing information; and assisting with planning, operations, identification of service providers, and other issues relating to the provision of services to youth, which includes identifying the lead staff supporting the Youth Council.

Organizational Capacity and Alignment:

Our Workforce System has the personnel, policies, and shared vision in place to support the targeted youth population and service offerings outlined in WIOA. We have spending rate policies and have an integrated vision for serving youth that supports a service delivery system that leverages other federal, state, and local resources to support in-school and out-of-school youth. We have identified professional development needs for front-line staff serving youth and youth service providers.

Service Delivery and Integration:

We facilitate the development, availability and delivery of workforce, education and training programs that are responsive to the needs of targeted youth populations. Our RFPs reflect the out-of-school and work experience requirements and assist in identifying providers with the capacity to successfully provide services. Specific strategies are in place to identify and recruit out-of-school youth. Partnerships and resources have been identified to carry out these strategies, including dropout recovery efforts, connecting with Adult Basic Education, serving TANF recipients, and coordinating with Health and Human

Services partners. The appropriate partnerships exist among our workforce system and the state education agency/local school districts to access free or reduced price lunch information to identify eligible populations.

Program Elements:

Our workforce system facilitates inclusion of the 14 Program Elements to ensure each is adequately providing youth with needed support.

Identification, Recruitment, and Retention of Youth:

In order to identify, recruit and retain OSY, Program Operator staff will contact and provide presentations to agencies that serve drop-outs, unemployed and low income persons such as: the Virginia Career Works centers, Local Departments of Social Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, Drug Courts, Adult Education Programs, Health Departments, Local Food and Clothing Banks, Churches, Public Housing, etc. Relationships with these organizations is strengthened through the use of Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs) and regional Professional Development opportunities that are offered to all workforce partners in the region.

Efforts to Ensure Expenditure Rate of Youth Funds:

Board staff review all Program Operator expenditure reports as well as related Fiscal Agent program financial records on a monthly basis to ensure that all program expenditures are in line with planned projected program expenditure levels. Additionally the Board's Operations Coordinator conducts an in depth review of all Program Operator financial expenditure activities during the annual compliance monitoring review visit. Extensive efforts are made by Board staff to ensure that all program expenditure rates are in line with program requirements.

Youth Service Policy:

Our policy regarding serving youth who do not meet income requirements is addressed in our [Youth Services](#) policy which is posted on our website.

Youth Services Coordination Efforts:

See Partnership and Engagement as well as descriptive information about Integrated Resource Teams to follow in this section.

Child Labor and Safety Regulations Compliance:

Compliance with applicable child labor and safety regulations are addressed in our "General Terms and Conditions" which are included as a part of all approved Program Operator contracts for WIOA service delivery. Item 27(e) of this document addresses compliance with child labor and safety regulations. The [General Terms and Conditions](#) document is posted on our website under the policies section.

Pay-for-performance Policy:

Our region does not use Pay-for-Performance.



Availability of Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities

In collaboration with our program operators, the NRMRWDB is working to develop a client-centered approach, where system partners and programs coordinate in a way that each customer or job seeker has a pathway to improving his or her education, knowledge, skills and, ultimately, his or her employment prospects, with a focus on in-demand careers. The Area's education, job skills development, and career training system must ensure that the workforce development system focuses on the individual customer's aspirations and needs and provides access to pathways for improving employment prospects. In many cases throughout the existing system, activities and services provided are program-focused, with the specific program being placed at the center of service delivery. In such a model, greater focus is given to meeting program requirements and less attention is paid to truly serving the individual. This has left the customers navigating a complex web of program requirements, often having to visit multiple program locations, multiple times, and providing the same information at each stop in order to receive the services needed. This paradigm must shift dramatically towards ensuring that system partners and program requirements are aligned with the customer at the center of service delivery. In this client-centered approach, system partners and programs coordinate in a way that each individual has a pathway to improving his or her education, knowledge, and skills and entering into a fulfilling and rewarding career, with partner and program resources designed to complement the individual's pathway.

Adult and Dislocated Worker employment and training activities in the New River/Mount Rogers Region include a range of services to assist clients in obtaining meaningful employment with family sustaining wages. Career services include basic, individualized, and follow-up, detailed as follows:

Basic:

Outreach, intake and orientation to the information, services, programs, tools and resources available through the Area 2 workforce system.
Initial assessments of skill level(s), aptitudes, abilities and supportive service needs.
In and out of area job search and placement assistance (including provision of information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations and non-traditional employment).
Access to employment opportunity and labor market information.
Performance information and programs costs for eligible providers of training, education and workforce services.

Information on performance of the local Workforce system.
Information on the availability of supportive services and referral to such, as appropriate.
Information and meaningful assistance on UI claim filing
Determination of potential eligibility for workforce Partner services, programs, referrals.
Information and assistance in applying for financial aid for training and education program not provided under WIOA.

Individualized:

Comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels and service needs.
Development of individual employability plan to identify employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate combination of services for the customer to achieve the employment goals.
Referral to training services.
Group counseling.
Literacy activities related to work readiness.
Individual counseling and career planning
Case management for customers seeking training services; individual in and out of area job search, referral and placement assistance.
Work experience, transitional jobs, registered apprenticeships and internships.
Workforce preparation services (e.g., development of learning skills, punctuality, communication skills, interviewing skills, personal maintenance, literacy skills, financial literacy skills, and professional conduct) to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment or training.
Post-employment follow-up services and support (Is not an individualized career service but listed here for completeness).

Follow-up:

For both WIOA and discretionary grants, Follow-up is provided on all clients. A follow-up staff person contacts Adult/DLW clients **each quarter** and youth **every four weeks**. For discretionary project, follow-up is conducted once each month. The purpose of follow-up

is to determine if the client needs assistance. If the client is no longer working or enrolled in school, then the Follow-up staff do the following:

- Note the change in status on the follow-up internal tracking system and in the Virginia Workforce Connection (VAWC) for WIOA and B2B Engage® for discretionary grant participants.
- Email the case manager about the client's change in status. Case manager reaches out to offer job search assistance.

Follow-up is also used to confirm whether or not the client is employed or enrolled in an educational or training program. Follow-up staff retrieve **Employment Verification** and **Education Credentialing Verification** also during Follow-up. If the client indicates that s/he would like additional assistance because of salary, reduced hours, job satisfaction, conflict in the workplace, or other issues, then the request is documented in the internal tracking system for the monthly report. The client's case manager is contacted to provide the assistance.

Self-Sufficiency:

Definitions for self-sufficiency are continued into the Board's ["Self-Sufficiency"](#) policy and those considered as hard to serve are defined in the Board's ["Priority of Services"](#) policy. Both policies are posted on the Board's website and are accessible for viewing.

To fully incorporate these elements within the functional and aspirational programming in the region, goals 1 and 5 and their subsequent Action Items located in the earlier Goals and Action Items section further define and integrate opportunities for access and delivery of targeted career services.

In 2018, 51% of Southwestern Virginia households lived in poverty or were ALICE, compared to 39% of all Virginia households. These households contribute to Southwest Virginia's economy by earning, spending, and paying taxes, yet they still struggle to make ends meet. The NRMWDBs [Self-Sufficiency and Employed Worker](#) Policy reflects the need to serve this population.

Hard-to-Serve Populations:

The NRMWDB definition of "Hard-to-serve" populations with multiple barriers to training/employment are those that have more than one of the following issues: those who are receiving public assistance, are TANF eligible or are classified as low income; or those that are basic skills deficient or lack a high-school diploma/GED; or those who are offenders; or those with a disability; or those with a substance use disorder; or those that are homeless; or those that lack transportation; or those who are unable to secure safe/affordable childcare.

Integrated Resource Teams:

The IRT approach, one of the key strategic service delivery components of the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI), a project of the U.S. Department of Labor in which the NRMWDB participated, is an informal agreement at the “customer level” that involves diversified service systems coordinating services and leveraging funding in order to meet the needs of an individual jobseeker. This strategic approach is customer-centered and supports the integrated nature of WIOA, resulting in enhanced coordination of services and supports to a jobseeker. While not all participants in NRMWDB programs have a disability, the IRT approach has been identified as a best-practice to assist participants as they prepare for and transition into employment. Tools such as the **Collaborative Funding Agreement (CFA)**, created in the America’s Promise grant, help the members of the IRT clearly understand the participant’s needs and who is responsible (financially and otherwise) for supporting each specific need. The CFA is a living document, shifting as the needs of the participant change throughout his/her experience in the program. A copy of the CFA is included in the appendices. ProjectHub® is used to support collaboration and coordination efforts among team members.

IRT Flow of Services

