

# **APPENDIX D**

## **LOCAL PLAN**

### **WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT**

# **New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area**

**JULY 1, 2024 – JUNE 30, 2027**

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## **SECTION 1: WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC ANALYSIS**

### **REGIONAL ECONOMIC CONDITIONS**

*1.1 A descriptive analysis of the regional economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations; and the employment needs of employers in those industry sectors and occupations.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area 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 368,056 people lived in this area in 2023. Total population in the region fell by 3,495 people over the previous five years, representing a .9% decrease in population. The median age of counties and cities varied greatly in 2022. The median age of Montgomery County and Radford City residents were 29.7 and 23.3, respectively. All other counties and cities had a median age range from 42.6 to 49.0. All counties and cities saw an increase in median age from 2021 to 2022, which was likely the product of population changes in individual age cohorts. Between 2018 and 2023, the 15-19, 20-24, 30-34, 35-39 age cohorts saw population increases ranging from just above 0% to 5%, and the 65-69, 70-74, 75-79, and 80-84 cohorts saw a larger percentage of population growth, ranging from 6% to 13%. The remainder of age cohorts saw a population decline, ranging from 1% to 13% during the same period.

The NRMR WDA contained 147,020 households in 2023, according to the ACS. Married-couple households, nonfamily households, and single parent households account for 46.8%, 5.8%, and 47.4% of the Region's households for the same year, and the region had an average family size of 2.9. Median household income in the NRMR WDA in quarter 3 of 2024 ranged from \$39,808 in Galax City to \$60,666 in Montgomery County. These were both lower than the median household income for the state (\$80,615) and the nation (\$69,021) 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 Center for Economic and Community Engagement (CECE) interpolated regional household data and cost of living data provided by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to generate living wage information for each county and independent city in the region. Living wages by county varied from \$17.78 an hour (approximately \$36,982 annually) in Bristol City, to \$20.76 an hour (approximately \$43,180.80) for conventional full time positions in the NRMR WDA for 2024 for a single adult household with no children. It is important to note that this average is reflective of all households in the NRMR WDA; 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 will require a lower living wage 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 18% (66,082) of residents for whom poverty status is determined in the NRMR WDA lived below the poverty line in Q3 of 2024, according to the ACS. This was higher than the poverty rate for the State (10.0%) and Nation (12.5%) for the same year.

Female-headed households with no spouse present saw the highest incidence of poverty in the NRMWDA; 28.7% of these households were under the poverty line in 2022. Furthermore, female-headed households accounted for 46.8% of all households under the poverty line in the NRMWDA for the same year. Residents who were unemployed, attained less than a high school education, or received some type of cash benefit 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 4.1% of these households living under the poverty line in 2023.

Data provided by the United Way of Southwest Virginia suggest that nearly a third of working households in the NRMWDA 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 childless worker in the NRMWDA in 2022 may have earned above the federal poverty level (\$13,590) but still earned below the estimated survival budget for this region (\$25,788). The United Way estimates that 31% of households in the NRMWDA fell within the ALICE threshold in 2022. Approximately 18% of households in the NRMWDA lived below the poverty line and 52% of households lived above both the poverty line and ALICE threshold. Proportionally, more households in the NRMWDA lived below the poverty line and/or ALICE threshold compared to the state of Virginia during the same year. The United Way estimates that 29% of Virginia households lived under the ALICE threshold, 11% lived below the poverty line, and 60% lived above the ALICE threshold in 2022.

Similar to poverty, certain groups were more likely to live above or below the ALICE threshold. For instance, only 19.2% of female-headed households with children in the NRMWDA lived above both the poverty line and ALICE threshold in 2022. Alternatively, 78.5% 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 than older households. Householders aged 25 and under in the NRMWDA had the highest incidence of poverty in 2022 (59.1%) but were marginally less likely to live under the ALICE threshold for the same year (23.5%) compared to older age cohorts. Householders aged over 65 in the NRMWDA were the least likely to live in poverty among all age cohorts (11.9%), but more likely to live above the poverty line and below the ALICE threshold (39.1%) than any other age cohort. Householders aged 45 to 64 were more likely to live above the ALICE threshold (59.9%) than any other age cohort. American Indian / American Native households were the most likely to live below the poverty line in 2022 (30.4% of all households), and Black households were most likely to live below both the ALICE threshold and poverty line (66.8% of all households).

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, the NRMWDA housed 200,066 jobs and 198,112 resident workers in 2023, which suggests that at least some industries within the NRMWDA rely on out-of-Region workers to satisfy their labor needs. Montgomery County and Washington County housed the most jobs and workers in the NRMWDA in 2020. Census data suggest that 81.9% of regional jobs were held by resident workers in 2018, with the remaining 18.1% of jobs being held by nonresident workers. A combined 4.9% of

jobs in the NRMW WDA were held by nonresident workers from Sullivan County, TN, Tazewell County, VA, and Roanoke City, VA in 2023. Census data suggests that 17.9% of resident workers in the NRMW WDA worked outside of the region during the same year. A combined 5.6% of workers living in NRMW WDA were employed in Roanoke City, VA, Sullivan County, TN, and Roanoke County, VA in 2023.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS REQUIRED**

*1.2 A descriptive analysis of the knowledge and skills required to meet the employment needs of the employers in the local area, including employment requirements for in-demand industry sectors and occupations.*

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 64,740 job postings for 29,088 available jobs in the NRMW WDA from August 2023 to August 2024. More than half of the jobs advertised in the NRMW WDA in this time period were located in Montgomery County (33.4% of postings), Washington County (15.9%), and Wythe County (8.7%).

Approximately 55% of job postings during this time period in the NRMW WDA did not list an educational requirement, although many of these occupations may require an education credential that was omitted from the posting. 19% of job postings required a high school degree or GED®, 9% required an associate's degree, and the remaining 29% required a bachelor's degree or higher. Similarly, 70% of postings did not list an experience requirement. Approximately 14% of postings required 0-1 years of experience, 10% 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. A valid driver's license was the most in demand qualification in the NRMW WDA for the time period; 11.4% of unique job postings listed this as a requirement. Healthcare certifications were also in high demand, according to job postings data. Approximately 11.3% of postings required a Registered Nurse (RN) license, and Basic Life Support (BLS), Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) certifications were also in high demand.

Similar to qualifications, hard skills tended to align with specific industries and occupations. Nevertheless, the top-five in-demand hard skills in NRMW WDA were merchandising (10% of postings), nursing (9%) cash register (5%), marketing (4%), and food safety and sanitation (4%). In-demand soft skills were more universal. For instance, communications, customer service, and management skills were listed in 27%, 25%, and 21% of all job postings in NRMW WDA for postings from August 2023 to August 2024, respectively.

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area has several in-demand employment sectors that drive our economy. These sectors include both traditional industries like manufacturing and healthcare as well as emerging industries such as information technology and transportation/logistics.

### **Manufacturing**

The Manufacturing sector is a critical driver of economic growth and job creation in our region,

offering high-demand, high-wage career opportunities across a variety of industries, including automotive, electronics, and medical devices. With ongoing advancements in automation, robotics, and digital technologies, our manufacturers are increasingly adopting Industry 4.0 practices, creating a pressing need for a skilled and adaptable workforce capable of operating and maintaining sophisticated equipment.

However, the sector faces a growing skills gap, particularly in roles that require technical expertise in areas such as CNC machining, welding, industrial maintenance, and mechatronics. Businesses are also seeking individuals with foundational skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and adaptability to keep pace with technological advancements. Our region must prioritize training programs, apprenticeships, and credentialing opportunities that equip workers with both the technical and foundational skills needed for success in modern manufacturing environments.

From August 2023 to August 2024, the Region's manufacturing sector recorded 2,560 job postings for 1,709 openings, though postings often underrepresent actual openings. Montgomery, Washington, and Wythe counties were the top locations for postings, with 44% specifying educational requirements, primarily a high school diploma or equivalent. Soft skills such as operations, customer service, communication, and teamwork were in high demand, along with certifications like a valid driver's license, security clearance, and forklift certification. The top hard skills included food safety, machining, and machine operation. The sector, which employed 27,031 workers in 2023, accounted for 13.5% of total employment and 22.1% of the Region's gross regional product (GRP) at \$3.56 billion. It grew by 500 jobs from 2018-2023, exceeding projections, and is expected to grow another 8% (1,353 jobs) by 2028. Dominant clusters include transportation equipment manufacturing, chemical manufacturing, electrical equipment manufacturing, plastics and rubber products, and wood products, collectively generating a significant portion of the sector's GRP.

Transportation equipment manufacturing, the largest cluster, employed 8,131 workers in 2023, contributing 30% (\$1.1 billion) of the sector's GRP, though its growth rate was lower than anticipated. Chemical manufacturing employed 3,058 workers, added 469 jobs from 2018-2023, and accounted for 21% (\$746.5 million) of the GRP. Electrical equipment manufacturing saw modest growth, employing 2,862 workers, with an 11% projected growth by 2028, and contributed \$309.6 million to the GRP. Plastics and rubber products manufacturing employed 2,394 workers and was highly competitive, contributing 8.1% (\$287.3 million) of the GRP. Wood product manufacturing, though smaller with 1,620 workers, showed strong specialization, contributing \$162.5 million to the GRP. Key occupations included assemblers and fabricators, first-line supervisors, and electrical assemblers, which accounted for significant employment and hiring activity, reflecting the sector's overall growth and competitiveness.

Working through our Manufacturing Sector Partnership is essential to build a robust talent pipeline and attract and retain advanced manufacturing businesses. Addressing these workforce challenges will help ensure our region remains competitive in the global economy, supporting economic resilience and long-term growth in a sector that continues to transform through innovation and technology. Knowledge, skills, and certifications needed for employment include both technical (hard) and foundational (soft) skills.

*Technical Skills:*



- Blueprint Reading and Interpretation – Ability to read and interpret technical drawings and specifications.
- Machinery Operation – Knowledge of operating CNC machines, lathes, mills, and welding equipment.
- Quality Control (QC) – Understanding of inspection processes, precision measurement tools (e.g., calipers, micrometers), and quality assurance protocols.
- Electrical and Mechanical Maintenance – Skills in troubleshooting and repairing manufacturing equipment, including HVAC systems, hydraulic systems, and Programmable Logic Controllers (PLCs).
- Safety Standards – Familiarity with OSHA regulations, lockout/tagout procedures, and personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements.
- Computer Skills – Proficiency in Computer-Aided Design (CAD), Computer-Aided Manufacturing (CAM), and inventory management software like ERP systems.

*Foundational Skills:*

- Attention to Detail – Ensuring products meet quality and safety standards.
- Problem-Solving – Troubleshooting machinery issues and improving production processes.
- Teamwork and Collaboration – Working effectively with technicians, engineers, and line workers to achieve production goals.
- Time Management – Meeting production deadlines and minimizing downtime.
- Adaptability – Responding to evolving technologies and automation in manufacturing.

*Credentials and Certifications Needed for Employment*

- Certified Production Technician (CPT)
- Blueprint Reading Certification
- CNC Programming Certification
- Welding Certifications (e.g., American Welding Society - AWS)
- OSHA Safety Training Certification
- PLC (Programmable Logic Controller) Certification
- Lean Manufacturing Techniques Certification

By addressing these technical and foundational skills gaps and promoting certification programs, the region can strengthen its workforce, ensure economic resilience, and position itself as a hub for advanced manufacturing excellence in the years to come.

## **Healthcare and Social Assistance**

The Healthcare and Social Assistance sector is one of the fastest-growing industries in our region, driven by an aging population, advancements in medical technology, and increasing demand for community-based care. This sector offers high-demand career opportunities across a broad range of roles, from clinical positions such as nurses and medical technicians to support roles in administration, case management, and social work.

However, our region faces a workforce shortage in healthcare, particularly in rural localities where access to healthcare services is limited. Addressing this gap requires training programs that equip individuals with critical technical skills, including patient care, medical coding, and electronic health records (EHR) management, as well as soft skills such as communication,

empathy, and cultural competency.

In 2023, the healthcare and social assistance sector was the fourth largest employment sector in the NRMR WDA, accounting for 9.4% of the region's workforce (18,717 jobs) and contributing 7% (\$1.2 billion) of the region's gross regional product (GRP). Although the sector grew by 7% (adding 1,226 jobs) from 2018 to 2023, it underperformed compared to projections of 1,465 new jobs, reflecting competitiveness challenges. EMSI projects a 10% growth (1,879 jobs) from 2023 to 2028. Key occupations include home health and personal care aides, registered nurses (RNs), and nursing assistants, which collectively accounted for nearly half of sector employment. Demand remains high, with significant annual openings for these roles, including 606 for personal care aides, 313 for nursing assistants, and 201 for RNs in 2023. Between August 2023 and August 2024, there were 20,988 job postings for 9,185 openings, with Montgomery, Washington, and Pulaski counties as primary locations. Approximately 33.2% of postings required an RN license, and other common certifications included Basic Life Support (16.7%) and Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (10.0%). Top technical skills were nursing, orthopedics, trauma care, and home health care, while soft skills like communication, research, customer service, and management were highly valued. Despite recent challenges, the sector is poised for growth and remains vital to regional workforce development.

Working through our Healthcare and Social Assistance Sector Partnership is essential to building a strong talent pipeline that can meet the region's growing healthcare needs. Credentialing programs such as Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), and Medical Billing and Coding Certifications are vital to ensuring a qualified workforce that can support community health and well-being. Knowledge, skills, and certifications needed for employment include both technical (hard) and foundational (soft) skills.

#### *Technical Skills:*

- Medical Knowledge – Understanding human anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, and medical terminology.
- Patient Care Skills – Proficiency in performing basic clinical procedures (e.g., taking vitals, administering injections, wound care).
- Electronic Health Records (EHR) – Familiarity with EHR systems like Epic, Cerner, or Meditech.
- Infection Control and Sterilization – Knowledge of hygiene practices, sanitation protocols, and PPE usage.
- Diagnostic and Treatment Skills – Skills in performing diagnostic tests, administering medications, and providing therapy.

#### *Foundational Skills:*

- Communication – Explaining complex medical information to patients and families in a way they can understand.
- Empathy and Compassion – Providing emotional support to patients and showing empathy for their situations.
- Critical Thinking – Making quick, informed decisions in high-pressure situations.
- Attention to Detail – Ensuring accurate documentation and medication administration.
- Teamwork – Collaborating with doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals.
- Time Management – Handling multiple patients and prioritizing tasks effectively.

**Certifications Needed for Employment:**

- Basic Life Support (BLS)
- Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS)
- Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)
- Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)
- Registered Nurse (RN)
- Electronic Health Records (EHR) Proficiency

By addressing these skills and certification gaps, the region can build a resilient healthcare workforce, ensuring quality care and community health support for years to come.

**Information Technology and Cybersecurity**

The Information Technology and Cybersecurity sector is experiencing significant growth in our region, particularly due to tech-oriented start-up businesses and the increasing reliance on digital infrastructure. In-Demand Occupations include Software Developers, Cybersecurity Analysts, IT Support Specialists, Network Administrators, and Data Analysts. Employment in the IT sector requires a balanced mix of technical and foundational skills. Hard skills ensure candidates have the technical proficiency to perform specific job functions, while soft skills ensure they can work effectively in a professional environment. Training programs should address both areas to prepare individuals for long-term success in IT roles.

Including this sector in with our existing Sector Partnerships will be essential to building a robust talent pipeline and attract and retain businesses. Addressing these workforce challenges will help ensure our region remains competitive in the global economy, supporting economic resilience and long-term growth in a sector that continues to transform through innovation and technology. Knowledge, skills, and certifications needed for employment include both technical (hard) and foundational (soft) skills.

*Technical Skills:*

- Networking Fundamentals – Understanding of LAN, WAN, VPN, firewalls, routers, and switches.
- Cybersecurity – Knowledge of encryption, threat detection, malware protection, and security best practices.
- Cloud Computing – Familiarity with platforms like AWS, Azure, or Google Cloud.
- Programming Languages – Proficiency in languages such as Python, Java, C++, SQL, or JavaScript.
- Database Management – Ability to manage and manipulate databases using SQL and NoSQL.
- Operating Systems – Knowledge of Windows, Linux, and MacOS.
- Software Development – Familiarity with development methodologies like Agile and DevOps.
- IT Support and Troubleshooting – Skills in diagnosing and solving hardware/software issues.
- Hardware Knowledge – Understanding of physical components like servers, PCs, and peripherals.
- Data Analysis and Reporting – Using tools like Excel, Power BI, or Tableau to analyze and visualize data.



### *Foundational Skills:*

These skills are crucial for teamwork, problem-solving, and professional growth.

- Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking
  - Ability to troubleshoot complex IT issues.
  - Applying logic to diagnose system errors.
- Communication Skills
  - Explaining technical concepts to non-technical stakeholders.
  - Writing clear documentation and reports.
- Time Management and Prioritization
  - Managing multiple tasks and deadlines efficiently.
  - Balancing reactive troubleshooting with proactive system maintenance.
- Team Collaboration
  - Working with cross-functional teams (developers, network engineers, management).
  - Using collaboration tools like Slack, Microsoft Teams, and GitHub.
- Adaptability and Continuous Learning
  - Keeping up with the fast-paced changes in technology.
  - Embracing new tools, languages, and methodologies.
- Customer Service Skills
  - Patience and empathy in resolving user issues.
  - Ability to deliver a positive customer experience in IT support roles.
- Attention to Detail
  - Ensuring accuracy in code, configurations, and documentation.
  - Identifying vulnerabilities and inconsistencies in systems.

### *Credentials and Certifications Needed for Employment*

Businesses often require or prefer certifications such as:

- CompTIA (A+, Network+, Security+)
- Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA)
- Microsoft Certified: Azure Fundamentals
- AWS Certified Solutions Architect
- Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP)

### *Emerging Technologies*

To stay competitive, IT professionals need awareness of:

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML)
- Internet of Things (IoT)
- Blockchain
- Automation Tools

## **Transportation, Logistics, and Warehousing**

The Transportation, Logistics, and Warehousing sector has long been a critical component of our region's economy due to our strategic location at the crossroads of Interstates 81 and 77, providing direct access to major markets across the Eastern United States. This sector plays a vital role in ensuring the efficient movement of goods and materials, supporting industries such as manufacturing, retail, and agriculture. Further, this sector offers stable, well-paying careers

that are critical to supporting the region's economic growth. Addressing workforce development in this sector will help ensure that the region remains a competitive hub for logistics and distribution, driving long-term prosperity and economic resilience.

With the continued growth of e-commerce, global supply chains, and just-in-time delivery models, demand for skilled professionals in this field is higher than ever. In-Demand Occupations include CDL Drivers, Forklift Operators, Logistics Coordinators, Warehouse Associates, and Supply Chain Managers, all of which require a mix of technical and foundational skills to ensure the smooth operation of supply chains and logistics networks.

To meet the region's growing logistics needs, it is essential to invest in training programs and credentialing opportunities that provide workers with key technical skills, such as inventory management, fleet management, and route optimization, as well as foundational skills, including communication, problem-solving, and time management.

This sector in the region saw significant job posting activity from August 2023 to August 2024, with 4,358 postings for 1,844 openings. Montgomery, Washington, and Pulaski Counties were the most common posting locations, although many job listings came from national transportation firms that were not location-dependent. A large proportion of postings (75%) did not specify education requirements, with around 13% requiring a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and others requesting specialized freight driver endorsements like CDL Class A and B Licenses. In-demand skills included truck driving, merchandising, warehousing, and forklift operation, while key soft skills sought by businesses were customer service, loading and unloading, management, and communication.

In terms of employment, the regional transportation and warehousing sector accounted for 8,674 jobs, or 4.3% of total employment in the NRMW WDA in 2023. The sector saw moderate job growth, adding 2,541 jobs from 2018 to 2023, surpassing the estimated 2,300 jobs projected for the period. EMSI forecasts a 16% growth (1,415 jobs) in the sector from 2023 to 2028. Despite growth, the sector's location quotient (LQ) of 0.79 in 2023 indicates that employment is less concentrated in the region compared to the national average. This sector contributed 3.2% (\$519.1 million) to the region's Gross Regional Product (GRP) in 2023.

The largest occupations in the sector by employment were heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers (19.3%), stockers and order fillers (19.2%), freight laborers and movers (17.0%), and light truck drivers (9.4%). Stockers and order fillers, along with heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers, also led the sector in demand, with average annual openings of 569 and 458, respectively, from 2018 to 2023.

Including this sector in with our existing Sector Partnerships will be essential to building a robust talent pipeline and attract and retain businesses. Addressing these workforce challenges will help ensure our region remains competitive in the global economy, supporting economic resilience and long-term growth in a sector that continues to transform through innovation and technology. Knowledge, skills, and certifications needed for employment include both technical (hard) and foundational (soft) skills.

#### *Technical Skills*

- Commercial Driver's License (CDL)
  - Essential for truck drivers, delivery drivers, and heavy equipment operators.

- Types: CDL Class A, B, and C depending on vehicle type.
- Forklift Operation Certification
  - Required for warehouse workers operating forklifts and other machinery.
- Inventory Management and Supply Chain Knowledge
  - Understanding warehouse management systems (WMS) and inventory tracking software (e.g., SAP, Oracle, NetSuite).
- Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT) Certification
  - Necessary for transporting hazardous goods and materials.
- Knowledge of Shipping Regulations and Documentation
  - Familiarity with U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) regulations, shipping documentation (bills of lading, customs forms), and safety protocols.
- Fleet Management Software Proficiency
  - Experience with systems like Verizon Connect, Samsara, and Fleetio for managing vehicles and routes.
- Route Planning and GPS Navigation
  - Skills in route optimization to reduce delivery time and fuel costs.
- Mechanical Skills
  - Basic vehicle maintenance and troubleshooting knowledge for truck drivers.
- OSHA Safety Compliance
  - Knowledge of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines to ensure a safe working environment.
- Technical Math and Measurements
  - Ability to calculate weights, distances, and other logistics metrics.

#### *Foundational Skills*

- Communication Skills—Clear communication with team members, supervisors, and customers regarding delivery schedules, delays, and issues.
- Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking—Ability to adapt to unexpected changes in delivery schedules, inventory issues, or supply chain disruptions.
- Time Management—Efficiently managing routes, schedules, and deadlines to ensure timely deliveries and efficient warehouse operations.
- Attention to Detail—Ensuring accuracy in shipping documentation, inventory counts, and order fulfillment.
- Teamwork and Collaboration—Coordinating with drivers, warehouse staff, and dispatch teams to ensure smooth operations.
- Customer Service Skills—Representing the company positively when interacting with clients, especially in delivery roles.
- Adaptability and Flexibility—Ability to handle fast-paced, dynamic environments, and adjust to changing priorities.
- Digital Literacy—Familiarity with mobile devices, scanners, and warehouse software systems.
- Cultural Competency—Understanding and working respectfully with diverse teams and clients.
- Workplace Safety Awareness—Recognizing potential hazards and following protocols to prevent accidents.

### *Credentials and Certifications Needed for Employment*

- Commercial Driver's License (CDL)
- Forklift Certification
- Inventory Management
- Route Planning
- Hazardous Materials Endorsement (HAZMAT)

### **Construction and Skilled Trades**

The Construction and Skilled Trades sector is a significant industry, driven by infrastructure projects and residential/commercial development. The demand for a skilled workforce in the construction and skilled trades sector is rapidly growing across the region due to ongoing infrastructure projects, residential and commercial development, and a surge in sustainable building initiatives. However, businesses are facing significant challenges in filling these roles, particularly due to an aging workforce and a gap in younger individuals pursuing careers in skilled trades. This labor shortage threatens to delay critical projects, increase costs, and impact the region's economic growth.

To meet the region's current and future needs, a concerted effort is required to promote technical training programs, apprenticeships, and industry-recognized certifications like those offered by Home Builders Institute (HBI), NCCER, and OSHA. These credentials ensure workers possess both the technical skills (such as carpentry, plumbing, electrical, and HVAC) and foundational soft skills (like communication, teamwork, and problem-solving) required to succeed in the field. The construction and skilled trades sector provides high-paying, stable career opportunities for residents, particularly those reentering the workforce, transitioning from correctional facilities, or seeking alternative career pathways. Investing in workforce development initiatives, vocational training, and partnerships with businesses will be essential in addressing this skills gap and ensuring a strong pipeline of qualified professionals to support the region's economic development goals. In-Demand Occupations include Electricians, Plumbers, HVAC Technicians, Carpenters, and Heavy Equipment Operators. Knowledge and skills needed for employment include both technical (hard) and foundational (soft) skills.

This sector accounted for 5% of regional employment in 2023, employing 10,047 workers and contributing \$856.45 million to the region's GRP (5.3%). From 2018 to 2023, the sector added 1,961 jobs, surpassing projections by 1,093 jobs, indicating high competitiveness. Over the next five years, the sector is projected to grow by 6%, adding 614 jobs. While the region's construction sector has a location quotient (LQ) of 0.90—indicating a lower employment concentration compared to the national average—key occupations include construction laborers (21.5% of sector employment), carpenters (18.4%), first-line supervisors (10.2%), and electricians (6.2%).

Between August 2023 and August 2024, there were 942 job postings for 511 openings in the construction sector, with Montgomery, Washington, and Smyth counties leading in postings. Notably, job postings underrepresent actual openings, particularly for labor-intensive roles. Most postings (66%) did not specify educational requirements, while 30% required a high school diploma, 3% an associate's degree, and 5% a bachelor's degree or higher. Beyond a valid driver's license, few postings listed qualifications such as a CDL, security clearance, or OSHA certification. The top hard skills sought included construction, power tool operation, food safety and sanitation, and

self-service technologies, while essential soft skills were operations, communication, customer service, and teamwork.

Working through our Skilled Trades Sector Partnership is essential to building a strong talent pipeline that can meet the region's growing construction and skilled trades needs. Credentialing programs such as OSHA 10 and 30, NCCER (National Center for Construction Education and Research) certifications, Home Builders Institute (HBI) Pre-Apprenticeship Training, and specialized trade licenses in fields like electrical, plumbing, and HVAC are vital to ensuring a qualified workforce that can support infrastructure development and community growth. The knowledge, skills, and certifications needed for employment in construction and skilled trades include both technical (hard) skills, such as blueprint reading and equipment operation, and foundational (soft) skills, such as communication, teamwork, and safety awareness.

#### *Technical Skills and Credentials*

- Tool Proficiency – Knowledge of using hand tools (hammers, wrenches) and power tools (drills, saws).
- Blueprint Reading – Ability to interpret construction and engineering blueprints.
- Electrical, Plumbing, or Carpentry Skills – Depending on the trade, knowledge in specific areas like wiring, pipefitting, or woodworking.
- HVAC and Refrigeration – Understanding of heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and refrigeration systems.
- Safety Standards – Familiarity with OSHA guidelines, ladder safety, scaffolding, and fall protection.
- Licensure and Certifications – Many trades require certifications such as:
  - Commercial Driver's License (CDL)
  - Electrician's License
  - Plumbing License
  - OSHA 10 or OSHA 30 Certification
  - NCCER (National Center for Construction Education and Research)
  - Certified Welder (CW)
  - Home Builders Institute (HBI)

#### *Foundational Skills*

- Problem-Solving—Diagnosing and fixing issues in systems or structures.
- Attention to Detail—Ensuring accuracy in measurements, cuts, and installations.
- Physical Stamina—Handling physically demanding tasks over long periods.
- Customer Service—Interacting with clients and providing service explanations.
- Adaptability—Adjusting to different job sites, weather conditions, and new technologies.

### **Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services**

The Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services sector is growing in our region, particularly in areas like engineering, research, insurance and technical consulting. This sector's expansion is driven by advancements in technology and increasing demand for specialized expertise across various industries. Key areas of growth include infrastructure development, digital transformation, and sustainable solutions and risk management, which create a steady demand for professionals with diverse skill sets.



In-Demand Occupations include Engineers (Mechanical, Civil, Electrical), Accountants, Project Managers, Research Scientists, Business Analysts, and Insurance Professionals. These roles require a combination of advanced technical skills, regulatory knowledge, and problem-solving abilities to address complex challenges in both private and public sectors.

This sector demonstrated significant job market activity from August 2023 to August 2024, with 4,115 job postings for 1,972 openings. The most postings were in Montgomery County, the City of Radford, and Washington County. Approximately 1,260 postings included educational requirements, with 72% seeking a bachelor's degree or higher. Top qualifications included CompTIA Security + (6.5% of postings), secret and security clearances (6.2% and 5.9%, respectively), and IAT Level II Certification (2.9%). In-demand hard skills were project management, computer science, auditing, and automation, while soft skills focused on communication, management, operations, and customer service.

The sector accounted for 4.0% (8,445 jobs) of regional employment in 2023, generating \$753.04 million and comprising 4.8% of the region's gross regional product (GRP). Employment growth between 2018-2023 added 736 jobs, falling short of the projected 1,050, highlighting a competitive challenge. The sector's location quotient of 0.5 (2020) indicated employment concentration at half the national level. EMSI projects a 10.6% growth (847 jobs) from 2023-2028.

Key occupations in 2023 included personal financial advisors (8.4% of sector employment), accountants and auditors (7.9%), software developers (6.6%), project management specialists (6.1%), and insurance professionals such as underwriters and claims adjusters (4.2%). Top in-demand roles were personal financial advisors (199 annual openings), accountants and auditors (163), project management specialists (158), market research analysts and marketing specialists (152), and insurance professionals (119).

Credentialing programs such as Certified Professional Technical Communicator (CPTC), Project Management Professional (PMP), cybersecurity certifications, and various IT and data analysis credentials are vital to ensuring a workforce capable of delivering high-quality professional services. The knowledge, skills, and certifications needed for employment in this sector include both technical (hard) skills, such as data management, coding, and regulatory compliance, and foundational (soft) skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication. Emphasizing adaptability and continuous learning ensures that professionals remain at the forefront of rapidly evolving industries, driving both regional economic growth and innovation.

#### *Technical Skills:*

- Proficiency in industry-specific software such as AutoCAD, MATLAB, and SAS
- Data analysis and visualization tools (e.g., Excel, Power BI, Tableau)
- Project management methodologies (e.g., Agile, Waterfall)
- Coding and programming languages (e.g., Python, SQL, Java)
- Engineering principles and practices
- Technical writing and documentation skills
- Knowledge of insurance underwriting, claims processes, and risk management

*Foundational Skills:*

- Effective communication, both written and verbal
- Problem-solving and critical thinking
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Time management and organizational skills
- Adaptability to new tools and technologies
- Continuous learning mindset

*Credentials and Certifications Needed for Employment:*

- Project Management Professional (PMP)
- Certified Public Accountant (CPA)
- Lean Six Sigma Certification (Green Belt, Black Belt)
- AutoCAD Certification
- Data Analysis Certifications (e.g., Microsoft Certified: Data Analyst Associate)
- Professional Engineer (PE) License
- Certified ScrumMaster (CSM)
- Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA)
- Advanced Degrees in STEM fields (e.g., Master's or Ph.D. in Engineering, Computer Science, Data Science)
- OSHA Safety Certifications

**Agriculture and Agribusiness**

The Agriculture and Agribusiness sector remains a significant part of our economy, with a growing focus on agribusiness, sustainable farming practices, and technological advancements that improve efficiency and production. In addition to traditional farming roles, the agriculture sector offers numerous career pathways in agribusiness, food safety, and equipment operations. Emerging trends such as precision agriculture, organic farming, and regenerative practices are reshaping the industry, making it essential for workers to have both traditional agricultural knowledge and modern technical skills. In-demand occupations include Farm Managers, Agricultural Technicians, Food Safety Specialists, Equipment Operators, and Agribusiness Specialists. These roles contribute to local food systems, promote sustainability, and drive economic growth in rural areas.

Including the Agriculture and Agribusiness sector in our Sector Partnerships is essential to cultivating a robust talent pipeline capable of meeting the region's growing demand for sustainable farming practices, technological advancements, and value-added agricultural production. Credentialing programs such as Commercial Pesticide Applicator Certification, Nutrient Management Certification, and Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) credentials are critical to ensuring a workforce prepared to implement modern agricultural techniques and maintain regulatory compliance. The knowledge, skills, and certifications needed for employment in this sector include both technical (hard) skills, such as precision agriculture, equipment operation, and food safety, as well as foundational (soft) skills, such as problem-solving, adaptability, and effective communication. Emphasizing innovation, sustainability, and continuous learning will ensure that professionals remain at the forefront of evolving agricultural practices, driving regional economic growth and supporting long-term food security.

### *Technical Skills*

- **Crop Production and Management:** Understanding soil science, crop rotation, pest management, and irrigation techniques.
- **Livestock Care and Management:** Knowledge of animal husbandry, veterinary basics, and ethical treatment practices.
- **Precision Agriculture:** Familiarity with GPS, drones, and other technologies to optimize planting, fertilizing, and harvesting.
- **Equipment Operation and Maintenance:** Skills to operate and maintain farm machinery, including tractors, combines, and irrigation systems.
- **Food Safety and Quality Control:** Ensuring compliance with food safety regulations and implementing best practices for handling, processing, and packaging agricultural products.
- **Agribusiness Management:** Business planning, marketing, supply chain management, and financial management tailored to the agricultural industry.
- **Environmental and Sustainable Practices:** Knowledge of regenerative farming practices, conservation, and sustainable resource management.

### *Foundational Skills*

- **Communication Skills:** The ability to clearly communicate with team members, customers, and stakeholders.
- **Problem-Solving Skills:** Critical thinking to address issues such as crop diseases, equipment malfunctions, and market fluctuations.
- **Adaptability:** The agricultural industry is highly impacted by weather, market trends, and regulations, requiring flexibility and quick decision-making.
- **Teamwork and Collaboration:** Agriculture often involves working as part of a team, whether on a farm, in a food processing facility, or in an agribusiness office.
- **Time Management:** Managing planting, harvesting, and processing schedules efficiently to maximize productivity.
- **Digital Literacy:** Familiarity with agricultural software, databases, and digital tools for managing inventory, tracking production, and analyzing data.
- **Work Ethic and Physical Stamina:** Agriculture requires dedication and hard work, often involving long hours and physically demanding tasks.

### *Credentials and Certifications Needed for Employment*

- **Pesticide Applicator License** – Required for individuals applying pesticides on crops.
- **Commercial Driver's License (CDL)** – Necessary for operating heavy farm equipment and transporting goods.
- **Certified Crop Advisor (CCA)** – Credential for professionals who provide advice on crop production and soil management.
- **Animal Welfare Certification** – Ensures ethical treatment of livestock and adherence to welfare standards.
- **HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) Certification** – Important for food safety specialists working in food processing and packaging.
- **Agribusiness Management Certification** – Focuses on financial planning, marketing, and operations in an agricultural context.
- **Precision Agriculture Specialist Certification** – Provides training in GPS, drones, and data analytics for optimizing farming operations.

- OSHA Safety Certifications – Ensures safe practices in handling equipment and hazardous materials on farms.
- First Aid and CPR Certification – Essential for workers in rural areas where medical assistance may not be immediately available.

Sustainable Agriculture Certification – Focuses on environmentally responsible farming practices, including soil health, water conservation, and biodiversity. By acquiring both technical and foundational skills, along with the necessary credentials, individuals can build rewarding careers in the agriculture and agribusiness. The demand for skilled professionals in this field is expected to grow as the industry continues to adopt new technologies and prioritize sustainability.

### **Public Safety**

The Public Safety sector plays a crucial role in ensuring community safety and resilience, offering diverse career opportunities that are essential for maintaining law and order. From law enforcement and emergency response to cybersecurity and public health, this sector is pivotal in safeguarding our communities and responding to evolving threats and emergencies. With advancements in technology and digital transformation, the Public Safety sector is increasingly adopting innovative practices to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. This shift creates a growing demand for skilled professionals capable of utilizing sophisticated equipment and leveraging data-driven insights to make informed decisions.

However, the sector faces a significant skills gap, particularly in technical roles such as cybersecurity analysis, forensic investigation, emergency management, and crisis intervention. Employers seek individuals with strong problem-solving abilities, critical thinking skills, and adaptability to handle complex situations and emerging threats effectively. It is crucial to prioritize training programs, apprenticeships, and certifications that equip workers with both the technical expertise and foundational skills needed to excel in various public safety roles.

From August 2023 to August 2024, the region's Public Safety sector recorded 1,704 job postings for 2,045 openings, though actual openings often exceed posted positions. Counties like Montgomery, Washington, and Pulaski were prominent in job postings, with 28% of listings requiring a high school diploma or equivalent. Soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and crisis management were highly sought after, along with certifications like CPR, first aid, and specific law enforcement clearances. Key technical skills included cybersecurity protocols, emergency response procedures, and forensic analysis techniques. In 2023, the sector employed 12,126 workers, comprising 7.9% of total employment in the region. Over the past five years, the sector has slight growth, adding 188 jobs since 2019. Future growth is anticipated at 7% (1,227 jobs) by 2030, driven by expansions in cybersecurity infrastructure and emergency response capabilities. Major clusters within the sector include law enforcement agencies, emergency medical services, cybersecurity firms, and disaster preparedness organizations. Law enforcement, the largest cluster, employed 10,500 workers in 2023.

#### *Technical Skills:*

- Criminal investigation, surveillance, evidence handling
- First aid, CPR, disaster response, hazardous materials
- Network security, threat detection, digital forensics
- Fire suppression, search and rescue, HAZMAT control

- Incident command, emergency planning, active shooter response

#### *Foundational Skills:*

- Quick decision-making under pressure
- Effective collaboration and public interaction
- Responding to evolving threats with integrity

#### *Credentials & Certifications*

- Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET), POST Certification
- EMT Certification, Paramedic License
- Firefighter I & II, NFPA Certifications
- CISSP, Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH)
- CPR, FEMA ICS Training, HAZMAT Certification

### **Energy/Minerals**

The Energy & Minerals sector is a cornerstone of the regional economy, providing essential resources that power industries, homes, and infrastructure. Spanning traditional energy production, renewable energy development, and mineral extraction, this sector supports high-wage, in-demand careers that are critical for economic stability and growth. With increasing global demand for energy efficiency, sustainability, and resource security, the industry is undergoing significant technological advancements, requiring a skilled and adaptable workforce.

However, the sector faces workforce challenges, particularly in specialized technical roles such as geoscience, engineering, mining operations, and renewable energy technology. Employers seek individuals with expertise in areas like automation, equipment maintenance, environmental compliance, and data analytics. Foundational skills, including problem-solving, critical thinking, and adaptability, are equally important to meet evolving industry demands. To remain competitive, the region must prioritize workforce development through training programs, apprenticeships, and industry-recognized certifications.

From August 2023 to August 2024, the region's Energy & Minerals sector recorded 6,614 job postings for 6,976 openings, though actual hiring demand likely exceeds posted figures. Montgomery, Washington, and Wythe were the leading areas for job postings, with 27% of listings requiring a high school diploma or equivalent. Soft skills such as detail orientation, communication, and a good driving record were in high demand, along with technical skills in construction, polishing, sawing, and machinery. Certifications in Inventory Control Systems were also highly sought.

From 2023 to 2024, the sector employed 15,016 workers, accounting for 2.7% of total employment and contributing 2.0% (\$272 million) to the region's gross regional product (GRP). The industry added 1,312 jobs from 2018 to 2023 and is expected to expand by another 7% (1,089 jobs) by 2028.

Key industry clusters include crushed and broken limestone mining and quarrying, other crushed and broken stone mining and quarrying, and electric power distribution. Crushed and broken limestone mining and quarrying remains the largest cluster, employing 7,253 workers in 2024 and contributing approximately 65% (\$178 million) of the sector's GRP.



*Technical Skills:*

- Energy systems management (oil, gas, solar, wind, hydro)
- Heavy equipment operation (excavators, drills, loaders)
- Automation and control systems
- Environmental monitoring and regulatory compliance
- Geospatial analysis and geological surveying
- Renewable energy installation and maintenance
- Industrial machinery maintenance and repair
- Data analytics for energy efficiency and predictive maintenance

*Foundational Skills:*

- Problem-solving and critical thinking
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Communication and leadership
- Adaptability and resilience in hazardous environments
- Crisis management and emergency response
- Project management and decision-making

*Credentials & Certifications:*

- OSHA 10/30 Safety Certification
- HAZMAT Handling Certification
- Commercial Driver's License (CDL)
- Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) Certification
- National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies (NICET)
- North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) Solar Certification
- Certified Energy Manager (CEM)
- Industrial Electrical and Instrumentation Certifications

**Education (early childhood and Career & Technical)**

The Education sector, encompassing both early childhood education and career and technical education (CTE), plays a pivotal role in shaping the workforce of the future and ensuring economic vitality. From early childhood educators who lay the foundation for lifelong learning to career and technical educators who prepare individuals for in-demand, high-wage occupations, this sector is essential to regional growth. With increasing demand for skilled labor and a focus on early childhood development, both areas of education are seeing heightened attention and investment, requiring a skilled and dedicated workforce.

However, the sector faces significant workforce challenges, particularly in early childhood education and CTE fields, where there is a growing need for qualified teachers and instructors. In early childhood, specialized knowledge in child development, classroom management, and early literacy is in high demand. In CTE, there is a pressing need for instructors with expertise in trades and technical fields such as welding, HVAC, and cybersecurity. Furthermore, both areas require educators with strong soft skills, including communication, problem-solving, and adaptability, to meet the diverse needs of students. Addressing these challenges through targeted training, certification programs, and professional development is crucial for ensuring a robust pipeline of skilled educators.

From August 2023 to August 2024, the region's Education sector recorded 1,627 job postings for 696 openings, with postsecondary teachers in particularly high demand. Montgomery County, Radford City, and Pulaski County saw the highest number of job postings, with 68% of listings requiring at least a high school diploma or equivalent. Soft skills including teaching, research, and communication were in high demand, along with technical skills like curriculum development, special education, and interdisciplinary research. Key technical skills for early childhood education included child development knowledge, administrative support, and curriculum planning, while CTE positions emphasized knowledge in alternative education practices.

In 2024, the Education sector employed 1,394 workers, accounting for .9% of total regional employment and contributing approximately 1.3% (\$146 million) to the region's gross regional product (GRP). The sector has grown steadily, adding 162 jobs since 2018, with expectations for continued growth of 7% (98 jobs) by 2028, driven by increased demand for high-quality education at both the K-12 and postsecondary levels.

Colleges, universities, and professional schools employed 616 workers in 2024, contributing 65% (\$95 million) to the sector's GRP. This cluster is expected to experience modest growth of 3% by 2028 in part due to steadily increasing enrollment numbers at local colleges and universities. Elementary and secondary schools were the next largest sector of employment, employing 383 workers in the same year. This sector is also expected to experience modest growth of 5% by 2028, a further signal of the region's demand for high-quality education.

Key occupations in the Education sector include early childhood educators, CTE instructors, teaching assistants, and administrators, who are essential to supporting student achievement and workforce readiness. This sector faces a unique opportunity to build a robust talent pipeline by increasing access to teacher preparation programs, expanding mentorship and training for new educators, and developing industry partnerships to ensure alignment with labor market needs.

#### *Technical Skills:*

- Child development and behavior management
- Curriculum planning and instructional design
- Early literacy and numeracy instruction
- Classroom management and discipline strategies
- Special education techniques and individualized learning plans
- Technical skills in specialized fields (e.g., welding, HVAC, automotive repair, cybersecurity)
- Operation of industry-standard tools, machinery, and equipment
- Career readiness and job-specific skills development (e.g., electrical systems, machine operation)
- STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education
- Safety protocols and technical procedures in vocational training
- Use of educational technology and industry-specific software

#### *Foundational Skills:*

- Communication (oral and written) with students, parents, and colleagues

- Problem-solving and critical thinking
- Adaptability to diverse learning needs and environments
- Collaboration and teamwork with educators, families, and community stakeholders
- Leadership in classroom management and student engagement
- Cultural competency and creating inclusive learning environments
- Conflict resolution and mediation in educational settings
- Time management and organizational skills

#### *Credentials & Certifications:*

- Child Development Associate (CDA)
- State-specific teaching licenses or certifications
- CPR and First Aid Certification
- Special Education Certifications (if applicable)
- Trauma-Informed Care Certification
- Associate's or Bachelor's Degree in Education, Early Childhood, or related field
- Industry-recognized certifications (e.g., ASE for Automotive Service Excellence, AWS for Welding)
- CompTIA IT Certifications (A+, Network+, Security+)
- OSHA Safety Certifications
- Teaching Certification in Vocational/Technical Education
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) Certification

### **Hospitality and Tourism**

The Hospitality and Tourism sector is a growing industry in our region, driven by our natural beauty, cultural heritage, and increasing visitor traffic to local attractions. This sector includes a variety of sub-industries such as accommodations, The hospitality and tourism sector is a vital and growing industry in our region, driven by its natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and increasing visitor traffic to local attractions. This sector encompasses a wide range of sub-industries, including accommodations, food services, event planning, recreation, and travel services. Businesses within this industry require a skilled workforce capable of delivering exceptional customer service, efficiently managing operations, and adapting to evolving market trends. Regional Strengths and Key Attractions

Southwest Virginia, despite workforce and economic challenges, has made significant strides in tourism and small business development. The region has leveraged its abundant natural assets and cultural history to attract visitors, particularly through:

- Outdoor Recreation – Hiking, ATV riding, horseback riding, fishing, and adventure tourism.
- Music and Heritage Tourism – The Crooked Road Heritage Music Trail, a 330-mile scenic route connecting key music venues and festivals, including the Birthplace of Country Music Museum and the Floyd Country Store's live Appalachian music scene.
- Small Business Growth – Investments in Airbnbs, campgrounds, food trucks, and tourism-related ventures supported by seed capital programming and Small Business Development Centers.

#### **Tourism Development and Workforce Initiatives**

To support the growth of hospitality and tourism, local educational institutions are implementing programs in hospitality management and outdoor recreation management. These initiatives aim to

build a workforce that is well-equipped to sustain and expand the sector. Key efforts include:

- UVA Wise Investment – In 2022, more than \$12 million in state funding was awarded to expand two undergraduate programs, including one in hospitality and tourism management, recognizing tourism as a critical economic driver.
- Local Government Support – Pulaski County created a new position dedicated to sports tourism and entertainment, reflecting a growing emphasis on niche tourism markets such as outdoor recreation and event tourism.
- Comprehensive Planning Initiatives – Planning District Commissions (PDCs) have integrated tourism into regional economic development strategies, focusing on infrastructure improvements, marketing campaigns, and strategic partnerships to maximize tourism investments.

- **Economic Impact of Tourism and Hospitality**

Tourism spending in the Southwest Virginia - Blue Ridge Highlands region reached \$1.016 billion in 2023, reflecting a 9.3% increase from 2022 and a 31.7% increase from 2019. This growth highlights the region's continued recovery from the pandemic and its increasing appeal to visitors. The region accounted for 3.0% of total state tourism spending, underscoring its significance in Virginia's tourism economy.

- Strategic investments in attractions, hospitality, and infrastructure have fueled tourism growth, especially in Bristol City and Montgomery County.
- Counties along major transportation corridors (Wythe, Washington, Montgomery) continue to attract visitors, benefiting from interstate travel.
- Outdoor recreation and eco-tourism are key drivers of growth in rural areas such as Grayson and Giles, aligning with broader trends in nature-based tourism.

- **Top Localities by Visitor Spending (2023):**

- Montgomery County (\$279.6M) and Bristol City (\$157.4M) led the region, together accounting for over 40% of total regional visitor spending.
- Wythe County (\$146.3M) and Washington County (\$127.5M) also ranked among the highest, benefiting from their locations along major travel corridors.

- **Counties with the Highest Growth (2019-2023)**

- Bristol City saw a remarkable 124.7% increase in tourism spending, the highest in the region, suggesting strong investment in entertainment and hospitality.
- Grayson County (40.9%) and Wythe County (27.6%) also experienced significant growth, likely driven by outdoor recreation and interstate travel.

- **Workforce Development Skills and Training Needs**

*Technical Skills:*

- Food safety and handling certifications (e.g., ServSafe)
- Knowledge of reservation and point-of-sale (POS) systems
- Event planning and coordination skills
- Housekeeping and maintenance skills for accommodations
- Leadership and Management Skills (for supervisory roles)
- Knowledge of business operations and financial management
- Staff supervision and training

- Strategic planning and decision-making

### *Foundational Skills*

- Customer Service Skills
  - Ability to provide high-quality customer experiences
  - Strong interpersonal and communication skills
  - Conflict resolution and problem-solving abilities
- Digital Skills
  - Proficiency in hospitality management software (e.g., hotel property management systems)
  - Familiarity with online booking platforms and customer relationship management (CRM) tools
  - Digital marketing skills, including social media management and online reputation management
- Soft Skills
  - Time management and organizational skills
  - Teamwork and collaboration
  - Adaptability and flexibility in a fast-paced environment
  - Cultural competence to engage with diverse customer bases
- Employment Requirements in In-Demand Occupations

The following are some of the most in-demand occupations within the Hospitality and Tourism sector in our region, along with their respective employment requirements:

  - Hotel and Lodging Managers
    - Education: High school diploma or equivalent; some employers prefer post-secondary education in hospitality management
    - Skills: Leadership, financial management, customer service, and problem-solving
  - Food Service Managers
    - Education: High school diploma; certification in food safety is required
    - Skills: Inventory management, staff supervision, customer service, and conflict resolution
  - Chefs and Head Cooks
    - Education: Culinary training or apprenticeship programs
    - Skills: Food preparation, menu planning, kitchen management, and creativity
  - Travel Agents and Tour Guides
    - Education: High school diploma; certifications in travel planning can be beneficial
    - Skills: Communication, itinerary planning, customer service, and knowledge of local attractions
  - Front Desk Clerks and Receptionists
    - Education: High school diploma
    - Skills: Customer service, multitasking, and proficiency with reservation systems
- Challenges and Opportunities

The Hospitality and Tourism sector faces unique challenges, including seasonal fluctuations in demand, high employee turnover, and evolving customer expectations. However, the region's attractions, such as state parks, historical sites, a casino, and local festivals, present significant



opportunities for growth. To address the employment needs of this sector:

- Partnerships with Local Businesses – Strengthen collaboration with employers to ensure workforce training aligns with industry needs.
- Work-Based Learning Programs – Expand apprenticeships, internships, and on-the-job training to provide real-world experience.
- Advanced Certifications – Offer specialized certifications in hospitality management, digital marketing, and food safety to enhance worker credentials.
- Soft Skills Development – Incorporate customer service and communication training into workforce programs.
- Digital Literacy Training – Ensure workers are proficient in hospitality-specific software and digital marketing tools.

The Hospitality and Tourism sector in our region as a vital part of the local economy with significant potential for growth. By aligning workforce development efforts with the skills and knowledge required by employers, the region can ensure a steady pipeline of skilled workers ready to meet industry demands. This will not only support economic growth but also enhance the quality of services provided to visitors, thereby strengthening the region's reputation as a premier travel destination.

## LOCAL WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

*1.3 An analysis of the local workforce, including current labor force employment (and unemployment) data, information on labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce in the region, including individuals with barriers to employment.*

Understanding the current labor force is crucial to building and achieving our economic goals in the region. Virginia Tech's Center for Economic and Community Engagement (VT CECE) provides overview data about employment broken down by sectors to better understand underemployment in the 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 [here](#).

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area (NRMWRDA) had a civilian noninstitutionalized population of 306,503 in 2023, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics and Lightcast Data. This number is reflective of the total number of individuals that could participate in the workforce. NRMWRDA saw a labor force participation rate (LFP) of 62.0% in 2023, according to the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC). This compares to an LFP of 57.1% in 2019. LFP in NRMWRDA was lower than that of the State (66.4%) and Nation (62.5%) in 2023. The overall unemployment rate for the region was 3.9% during the year, representing approximately 6,600 individuals total, not accounting for discouraged or marginally attached workers. Workers aged between 45-54 accounted for the largest portion of the Region's workforce (14.7%). Approximately 7.9% of workforce participants were nearing retirement age (60-64) in 2023 and 23.4% of workforce participants were aged over 65 for the same year.

Several factors were correlated with higher and lower LFP in NRMWRDA including age, gender, poverty status, and disability status. LFP was highest among residents aged between 25-44; 79.4% of residents in this age cohort participated in the region's labor force in 2022. Labor force participation

was lower for residents aged 24 and under (49.5%) and for residents aged 45 and older (52.8%) for the same year. LFP was marginally higher for men aged between 20-64 (72.2%) compared to women in the same age group (67.1%) in 2022. Of note, women with children under 18 were more likely to participate in the workforce than women without children within the 20-64 age cohort. Residents who were disabled (38.3% LFP), living under the poverty line (33.2%), and/or attained less than a high school diploma (42.5%) were the least likely to participate in the Region's labor force in 2022. 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 NRMR WDA 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, 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 (NRMR WDA).

For instance, 10% of individuals aged over 25 did not have a high school diploma, 33% attained a high school diploma or equivalency, 30% had some college experience or an associate's degree, and the remaining 27% attained a bachelor's degree or higher in 2023. A greater proportion of workers in NRMR WDA 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 NRMR WDA, however, were less likely to have a bachelor's degree compared to the same geographies.

|                                                 | <b>NRMR WDA</b> | <b>Virginia</b> | <b>United States</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade                 | 3%              | 4%              | 5%                   |
| 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade to 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade | 7%              | 5%              | 6%                   |
| High School Diploma                             | 33%             | 24%             | 26%                  |
| Some College                                    | 20%             | 18%             | 19%                  |
| Associate's Degree                              | 10%             | 8%              | 9%                   |
| Bachelor's Degree                               | 15%             | 23%             | 21%                  |
| Graduate Degree or Higher                       | 12%             | 18%             | 14%                  |

### • The Secondary Educational System Pipeline

For the 2023-2024 school year, the NRMR WDA had 24 high schools serving 13,833 students in grades 9 to 12. The region held a 12:1 student to teacher ratio during the 2022-2023 school year from students in grades 8-12. Some students in the region may also participate in Virtual Virginia (VAVA) programming; these students are not included in the overall count of students served in the area. The latest four-year graduation rate (2023-2024) was 94.1%, which excludes high school equivalency completers. The dropout rate is 4.1%. Each school division in NRMR WDA offers CTE and dual enrollment programs.

2,998 students completed a total of 3,832 CTE programs during the 2023-2024 academic year. Popular programs included workplace readiness skills (2,198 completions) and W!SE Financial Literacy Certifications (522 completions). Many students also completed certifications for the

Microsoft Office Suite, including Word, Excel, and Powerpoint. Additionally, 3,905 high school students participated in a dual-enrollment program with a regional community college during the 2023-2024 academic year (25.5%). Each school division in NRMR WDA offered CTE and dual enrollment programs for the 2023-2024 academic year. We partner with organizations who provide yearly Career Expos for 8th grade students to connect with regional businesses to learn about them. We also provide virtual job fairs on [knowledgetowork.com](https://www.knowledgetowork.com) for high school seniors to learn about companies and occupations, giving these students an opportunity to talk directly to businesses.

- **Workforce Development**

In the secondary system, there were 3,567 students in the class of 2024 cohort in NRMR WDA. Approximately 94.1% of these students graduated on-time and 4.1% dropped out over the course of their secondary education. The majority (79.2%) of 2024 high school graduates in NRMR WDA had plans to continue their education.

|                                                                                    | <b>NRMR WDA</b> | <b>Virginia</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Completion Trends</b>                                                           |                 |                 |
| Cohort Size                                                                        | 3,567           | 98,624          |
| Completers – there’s more completers than there are in the cohort – is that right? | 3,586           | 92,619          |
| % Completers                                                                       | 94.6%           | 93.9%           |
| % On-Time Graduation                                                               | 94.1%           | 92.9%           |
| Dropout Rate                                                                       | 4.1%            | 4.5%            |
| <b>Postsecondary Plans</b>                                                         |                 |                 |
| Attending 2-Year College                                                           | 35.0%           | 19.4%           |
| Attending 4-Year College                                                           | 40.5%           | 49.1%           |
| Other Continuing Education Plans                                                   | 3.7%            | 6.2%            |
| Military                                                                           | 1.5%            | 2.73%           |
| Employment                                                                         | 16.9%           | 15.8%           |
| No Plans                                                                           | 2.3%            | 6.8%            |

Source: Virginia Department of Education

| <b>Division</b> | <b>H.S. Enrollment</b> | <b>CTE Completers</b> | <b>% CTE Completers</b> | <b>Dual Enrollment</b> | <b>% Dual Enrollment</b> |
|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Bland County    | 214                    | 37                    | 17.3%                   | 46                     | 21.5%                    |
| Bristol City    | 625                    | 65                    | 10.4%                   | 138                    | 22.1%                    |
| Carroll County  | 1,059                  | 207                   | 19.5%                   | 250                    | 23.6%                    |
| Floyd           | 541                    | 76                    | 14.0%                   | 145                    | 26.8%                    |
| Galax City      | 404                    | 58                    | 14.4%                   | 129                    | 32.0%                    |
| Giles           | 681                    | 124                   | 18.2%                   | 222                    | 32.6%                    |
| Grayson         | 457                    | 104                   | 22.8%                   | 130                    | 28.4%                    |
| Montgomery      | 3,034                  | 468                   | 15.4%                   | 1,066                  | 35.1%                    |

|              |        |       |       |      |       |
|--------------|--------|-------|-------|------|-------|
| Pulaski      | 1,191  | 223   | 18.7% | 282  | 23.7% |
| Radford City | 1,903  | 51    | 2.7%  | 149  | 7.8%  |
| Smyth        | 1,228  | 251   | 20.4% | 316  | 25.7% |
| Washington   | 2,171  | 410   | 18.9% | 453  | 20.9% |
| Wythe        | 1,191  | 252   | 21.2% | 258  | 21.7% |
| Totals       | 15,325 | 2,998 | 19.6% | 3905 | 25.5% |

#### • Barriers to Employment

Many individuals in our region face barriers to employment that limit their participation in the labor force. These barriers include lack of access to affordable childcare, reliable transportation, and opportunities for skill development. Additionally, individuals with criminal records, those experiencing long-term unemployment, and those with disabilities often face additional challenges in securing stable employment. Addressing these barriers is critical for improving the region's labor force participation and ensuring that more residents have the opportunity to engage in meaningful work.

Overall, our labor market is characterized by a mix of challenges and opportunities. We have a relatively low unemployment rate, but its labor force participation rate lags behind state and national averages. An aging population, higher poverty rates, and educational attainment levels below state and national benchmarks contribute to these trends. To strengthen the regional workforce, targeted strategies must focus on increasing labor force participation by addressing barriers to employment and providing residents with the education and skills needed to meet the evolving demands of local businesses.

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

*1.4 An analysis of the workforce development activities (including education and training) in the region to address the identified education and skill needs of the workforce and the employment needs of employers in the region.*

Developing the workforce in the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area is a collaborative effort involving numerous partners, including business and industry. We have developed innovative programs to meet the needs of both jobseekers and businesses, particularly in high-demand industries like healthcare, manufacturing, and construction/skilled trades.

However, continued efforts to expand reentry and recovery programs, increase business and community engagement, and address technical and foundational skills of jobseekers and workers will be critical to sustaining and enhancing our region's workforce. As the convenor of the workforce system, the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board plays a pivotal role in coordinating these efforts and ensuring that our region's workforce remains competitive and adaptable to future economic shifts. Our workforce system includes a wide network of organizations aimed at addressing both the skill needs of the workforce and the employment demands of local businesses, and we continue to face unique challenges and opportunities in workforce development.

#### Overview of Workforce Needs in our Region

The New River/Mount Rogers region encompasses both urban and rural areas, with diverse economic drivers, including Manufacturing, Healthcare, Transportation and Logistics, Construction and Skilled Trades, and Information Technology. Key workforce challenges include worker skill gaps, aging workforce in critical industries, barriers to employment for justice-involved individuals, employment challenges for individuals struggling with substance use disorder, digital literacy gaps in rural communities, and employability issues with our youth. Businesses in our region have expressed a need for workers with technical skills, foundational skills, and credentials, but at the same time, jobseekers often require upskilling or reskilling to meet these demands.

#### Existing Workforce Development Activities

Our region offers a wide array of education and training programs to meet workforce needs. These programs are delivered by community colleges, workforce partners, the workforce board, and private training providers, which include:

- New River Community College, Wytheville Community College, and Virginia Highlands Community College offer workforce credential programs, career and technical education (CTE), and short-term certifications in areas such as IT, healthcare, manufacturing, and skilled trades. These programs target the general public, displaced workers, and youth.
- Radford University provides degree programs and workforce development initiatives in areas such as healthcare, business, and IT. The university collaborates with local industries to ensure graduates meet business needs.
- Virginia Tech offers advanced research opportunities and workforce training programs in engineering, IT, agriculture, and business. The university works closely with regional businesses to develop a pipeline of highly skilled workers.
- Emory and Henry College focuses on healthcare and social services workforce development, offering degree programs that prepare students for roles in these critical sectors.
- Higher Education Center of Southwest Virginia provides access to degree programs, certifications, and workforce training in collaboration with multiple higher education institutions.
- The Healthcare Academy of Southwest Virginia offers training programs such as Personal Care Assistant (PCA) and Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), aiming to address healthcare workforce shortages by increasing the pipeline of trained healthcare workers.
- Center for Manufacturing Excellence of Southwest Virginia delivers advanced manufacturing training and credentials, working closely with regional manufacturers to ensure workforce alignment with industry needs.
- Other training providers such as: Tri-County Driving Academy, Smyth County Technical Center, Giles Tech, Southwest VA Criminal Justice Training Academy, and



New River Criminal Justice Training Academy offering programs that support our targeted industries and their “in-demand” occupations.

- GenEdge provides consulting and training services to enhance manufacturing processes and workforce capabilities, helping companies improve productivity and remain competitive in the global market.
- New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board plays a critical role in coordinating workforce development efforts and offers discretionary grants targeting at-risk youth, individuals with barriers to employment, justice-involved individuals, and those struggling with substance use disorder. We also collaborate with businesses to ensure training aligns with regional needs.
- New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Foundation supports the workforce initiatives of the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board and the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Consortium Board by providing financial resources, training, and partnerships to expand services in the region.
- Career and Technical Programs Offered by Local Public Schools provide high school students with hands-on training and credentials in fields such as automotive technology, welding, healthcare, and IT. These programs are critical for preparing students to enter the workforce directly after graduation or pursue further education in technical fields.
- Adult Education and Literacy Programs provide foundational skills, including GED® preparation, literacy improvement, and English language learning. These programs are essential for individuals who need to improve their basic skills to access further training and employment opportunities.

#### Business-Driven Initiatives

Several initiatives in our region aim to meet business needs by engaging businesses in the design and delivery of training programs:

- **Sector Partnerships**  
Our Sector Partnerships are driven by industry leaders. We function in a support capacity to address the workforce needs of the manufacturing, healthcare, and skilled trades industries in our region. These partnerships aim to close skills gaps, align training programs with business needs, and strengthen local economies by ensuring that businesses can find the skilled workers they need.
- **Work-Based Learning**
  - Work-Based Learning has always been a priority with WIOA Adult and Youth programs and has grown due to discretionary grant opportunities. We have partnered with businesses to help jobseekers develop practical skills, explore career paths, and gain hands-on experience in a workplace setting. Improved employment outcomes have resulted from these efforts.
- **Integrated Education and Training**

Working closely with businesses to develop industry-specific training programs, we have expanded programming in manufacturing, healthcare, and construction to address critical employment needs, focusing on the foundational and technical skill needs of these industries to create a pipeline of skilled workers.

#### Reentry and Second-Chance Employment Programs

To address barriers faced by justice-involved individuals, we have invested in reentry programs focused on education, credential attainment, and job placement. These programs include a partnership with the Virginia Department of Corrections, Bland and Marion Correctional Facilities, the New River Valley Regional Jail, and the Southwest Virginia Jail Authority. By providing pre and post release training and services, this initiative aims to increase public safety by reducing recidivism and supporting the individual's reintegration into society and transition into quality employment.

#### Opportunities for Growth

While our region has made significant strides, there are opportunities to further enhance workforce development:

- **Expand Reentry Programs:** Strengthen partnerships with correctional facilities to provide digital literacy, expand credentialing, and support job placement services.
- **Expand Recovery Efforts:** Strengthen partnerships to further develop a recovery ecosystem.
- **Increase Business Engagement:** Strengthen sector partnerships to ensure training programs align with evolving business needs.
- **Increase Community Engagement:** Strengthen partnerships with community agencies to reach unserved populations.
- **Improve Transportation Access:** Strengthen partnerships to address transportation barriers that limit access to training and jobs.
- **Improve Quality Childcare Access:** Strengthen partnerships to address childcare barriers that limit access to training and quality employment.
- **Develop Public Access Points:** Strengthen partnerships to reach rural populations.

### **STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND CAPACITY**

*1.5 An analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities identified in 1.4 and the capacity to provide these services.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board serves as a cornerstone in advancing the region's workforce ecosystem by fostering strategic partnerships, engaging communities, supporting businesses, and cultivating a skilled labor force. Through forward-thinking initiatives and discretionary grant programs, we have established a dynamic, customer-centered framework that delivers tangible outcomes for jobseekers and businesses alike.

#### Strengths of Workforce Development Activities

Our strengths lie in building robust partnerships across sectors, fostering deep community engagement, delivering tailored business support services, and providing a diverse array of education and training opportunities that empower individuals to succeed in today's evolving job market. These efforts create a responsive, adaptable system that meets both immediate and long-term workforce needs.

Despite funding constraints and systemic complexities, our leadership remains committed to delivering high-impact services that drive regional economic growth. By cultivating a culture of innovation, collaboration, and accountability, we ensure our continued role as a critical catalyst for workforce development and long-term economic success.

### *Partnership Development*

We demonstrate skill in building and sustaining strategic partnerships across the region, a critical component of effective workforce development. By leveraging discretionary grants, we have successfully engaged a diverse array of partners, including educational institutions, businesses, community organizations, and government agencies. This multifaceted engagement fosters a culture of collaboration that strengthens workforce services. Our Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs) and Business Solutions Teams (BSTs) exemplify best practices in cross-sector collaboration, providing structured frameworks for enhancing communication, resource-sharing, and joint problem-solving. These teams ensure that services are not only efficient but also tailored to the unique needs of both jobseekers and businesses. Our leadership in partnership development has earned us recognition as a regional leader in workforce innovation, enhancing both service delivery and outcomes for all stakeholders.

- **Sector Partnerships**

Since 2015 we have actively engaged in “sector strategies” to deepen our understanding of industry talent needs and to deepen our relationships with businesses in the Healthcare and Manufacturing industries. In the years between then and 2024 we have also focused on IT/Advanced Technologies and Construction/Skilled Trades. In 2024, we went a step further and began convening three Sector Partnerships: Construction/Skilled Trades, Healthcare & Human Services and Manufacturing/Logistics/Warehousing. These “workforce collaboratives” are bringing together industry specific businesses from our region along with the public agencies (education, economic development, and workforce development) and other organizations (chambers and industry organizations) that support that industry to develop strategies and implement programs to meet the talent needs of the industry. Though these partnerships are still developing, businesses are beginning to step up and lead the direction of the partnership.

- **Community Development**

Recognizing that workforce development is intrinsically linked to broader community well-being, we have taken proactive steps to address the social determinants of workforce success. Our leadership role in initiatives such as the Strong Accountable Care Community, Healthy Roots, regional Reentry Councils, the NRV Recovery Ecosystem, and projects funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Department of Labor underscores our commitment to holistic solutions. These initiatives target critical populations, including justice-involved individuals and those with substance use disorders, creating pathways for meaningful reentry and sustained employment. By partnering with non-traditional workforce entities—such as healthcare providers, housing organizations, and social services—we have broadened the scope of our impact. This comprehensive approach ensures that our workforce development efforts address both immediate employment needs and long-term community resilience, creating a more robust and inclusive regional economy.

- **Business Development**

Our business engagement strategies are driven by data-informed practices and cutting-edge technology. The implementation of the B2B Engage® Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system has revolutionized how we interact with businesses. This tool enables us to systematically track services, outcomes, and evolving business needs, ensuring that our engagement is both proactive and responsive. By centralizing data and streamlining communication, B2B Engage® enhances our ability to provide timely and relevant support to businesses, fostering stronger relationships and trust. Moreover, this system promotes a collaborative ecosystem among workforce partners, allowing for coordinated service delivery that aligns with regional economic priorities. Our focus on business development ensures that we remain agile in meeting the dynamic needs of the local labor market, thereby contributing to sustained economic growth.

- **Workforce Development**

The region's workforce development infrastructure is bolstered by a unique and dynamic network of educational institutions and training providers. Six higher education institutions, including three community colleges and three four-year universities, offer a diverse portfolio of programs that are meticulously tailored to address regional labor market demands. Notably, the newly established Center of Manufacturing Excellence provides specialized training that directly aligns with the needs of key industries in the area, such as advanced manufacturing and technology. Our partnerships with adult education providers and community-based literacy programs further enhance workforce readiness by addressing foundational skills gaps and providing comprehensive support to individuals facing employment barriers. Additionally, the availability of funding for postsecondary training and essential supportive services—such as childcare, transportation, and certification fees—removes critical obstacles that often hinder workforce participation. This holistic framework ensures that residents have access to the resources necessary to achieve sustainable employment and career advancement, thereby strengthening the regional economy and improving quality of life.

#### Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities

Our region continues to navigate challenges such as system integration, increasing awareness of available services, and ensuring alignment between educational program completions and real-time labor market demands. We address these challenges through a collective impact model that maximizes regional resources, strengthens cross-sector collaboration, and drives innovative, solution-oriented strategies to remove barriers.

- **Partnership Development**

Despite the presence of strong partnerships within the workforce system, a significant challenge lies in the lack of integrated communication, different performance metrics and data-sharing tools across agencies. Each partner organization operates its own distinct database, aligned with specific funding requirements and protocols. This siloed approach creates duplicative data entry processes and administrative burdens for staff, leading to inefficiencies that divert resources away from direct service delivery. Additionally, jobseekers often face redundant paperwork when accessing services from multiple partners, which can be a deterrent to their continued engagement. Although the referral portal implemented by the state was a step in the right direction, its primary function is to serve jobseekers rather than to foster seamless cross-agency collaboration. Emerging initiatives like Unite Us show promise in addressing communication gaps, but their current impact is limited without further investment. A robust, integrated data-

sharing infrastructure would not only reduce administrative redundancies but also improve service coordination and outcomes for jobseekers and businesses alike.

- **Community Development**

Awareness of the workforce system and its services remains a persistent challenge. While the We have made strides toward implementing a “no wrong door” approach, many individuals, businesses, and community stakeholders remain unaware of the full scope of services available through the workforce system. This lack of awareness limits participation and undermines the overall impact of workforce initiatives. Additionally, inconsistencies in how workforce agencies serve as entry points further contribute to fragmented service delivery. Not all agencies function as comprehensive hubs for accessing the broader system, creating confusion and missed opportunities for jobseekers and businesses. Our collective impact model aims to address these gaps, but achieving a fully integrated, community-focused approach will require sustained effort, enhanced outreach strategies, and stronger alignment with local economic development initiatives. Expanding public awareness campaigns and fostering deeper relationships with community organizations will be essential to building a more inclusive and accessible workforce system.

- **Business Development**

The implementation of the B2B Engage® system has led to notable improvements in business engagement. However, it also introduces operational challenges for workforce staff, particularly due to the need for dual data entry into both the B2B Engage® and Virginia Workforce Connection (VAWC) systems. This requirement significantly increases administrative workloads and detracts from staff’s ability to focus on delivering high-quality, personalized business services. The time spent on redundant data entry could be better utilized in building stronger relationships with businesses and understanding their evolving workforce needs. Although the benefits of the B2B Engage® system in terms of business engagement are evident, the lack of integration with the VAWC system remains a critical efficiency issue. Addressing this gap through system integration or automation solutions would reduce administrative burdens, enhance data accuracy, and enable staff to prioritize direct business support activities, ultimately leading to stronger business relationships and better job placement outcomes.

- **Workforce Development**

A significant misalignment exists between the outputs of workforce development programs and the labor market demands of the region. Popular educational programs, such as those in animal systems and liberal arts, produce more graduates than the local job market can absorb. Conversely, high-demand fields such as construction trades and manufacturing engineering are experiencing a shortage of qualified workers despite a large number of job openings. For instance, in 2021, there were only 19 completions in construction trades programs compared to 2,475 job openings, and manufacturing engineering technology programs saw only 27 completions despite 2,361 job openings. This disconnect between program completions and industry needs highlights the need for more targeted and responsive workforce development strategies. To address this issue, stronger collaboration with businesses and industry groups is essential to ensure that training programs align with current and future job market demands. Additionally, promoting career pathways in high-demand fields through targeted outreach and early career education initiatives can help shift enrollment patterns toward sectors with the greatest employment opportunities. By prioritizing alignment between educational programs and labor market needs,



the workforce system can better support both jobseekers and businesses, driving regional economic growth and reducing skills gaps.

#### Capacity to Provide These Services

We have consistently demonstrated visionary leadership in implementing a collective impact model to enhance regional workforce development. Since 2017, we have prioritized partner collaboration to effectively address the needs of jobseekers, businesses, and communities, creating a robust framework for regional economic growth.

The strategic use of discretionary funding has been a critical driver of our capacity-building efforts, enabling the continuation of high-impact leadership roles such as the Deputy Director and Business Services Coordinator. These positions have proven essential in managing complex discretionary grant programs and the creation of additional roles such as Work-based Learning Specialist, Client Support Specialist and Workforce System Navigators. These key positions facilitate Integrated Resource Teams, (IRTs), coordinate Business Solutions Teams, which collectively enhance service delivery and outcomes.

Our ability to manage projects and track outcomes is further bolstered by the implementation of advanced project management tools, including ProjectHub® and a customized CRM system developed in partnership with BusinessU, B2B Engage. These tools empower us to optimize resource allocation, track key performance indicators, and ensure transparency and accountability in all operations. Regular stakeholder and partner meetings foster continuous collaboration, reinforcing a culture of shared responsibility and information exchange.

Despite these successes, we continue to face systemic challenges, including inadequate public transportation infrastructure, digital inequities, and limited access to affordable childcare—all of which hinder workforce participation across the region. However, we have maintained an innovative, solution-focused approach, leveraging existing resources to address these barriers and achieve measurable impacts.

Our strengths lie in our strong leadership, strategic partnerships, and commitment to community engagement. By continuing to address systemic barriers through policy innovation, system integration, conduct targeted outreach, and align education and training programs with evolving industry demands, we are well-positioned to expand our impact and ensure sustainable workforce solutions for the region.

### **YOUTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

*1.6 Describe and assess the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local area including activities for youth with disabilities, which must include an identification of successful models of such activities.*

#### Youth Services and Program Delivery in the Region

The WIOA program operator delivers comprehensive youth services across all localities in the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board region. These services are strategically designed to address the diverse and evolving needs of our regional youth

population, with a particular focus on those facing significant barriers to education and employment. The WIOA Program Operator documents detailed eligibility criteria to ensure that services are accessible to all youth, with targeted programming aimed at those identified as most at risk. Individualized services offered through the WIOA youth program include but are not limited to development of an Individualized Service Strategy (ISS), work readiness and leadership development activities that addresses many of the soft-skills identified as necessary in all of our target industries, and extensive career exploration opportunities through a unique and hands-on career exploration camp highlighting the targeted and in-demand occupations in the region. In addition, WIOA staff work closely with discretionary grant staff to co-enroll participants and support the efforts in the region to enhance foundational skills, increase work based learning opportunities, and support integrated training models. These efforts are aligned with our overarching goal of strengthening the talent pipeline and fostering long-term economic mobility for youth in our communities.

To ensure program fidelity, the WIOA Compliance and Monitoring Coordinator conducts annual monitoring, reviewing a percentage of participant files for each Case Manager. This monitoring evaluates the availability and quality of services provided and assesses compliance with federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requirements. Following each review, written findings are provided to the WIOA Program Operator, with corrective actions required for any identified deficiencies. These evaluations are critical to maintaining program integrity and ensuring that all WIOA-mandated elements are delivered effectively.

In addition to traditional youth services, we operate a U.S. Department of Labor YouthBuild Construction Plus program, *Build Your Career*, utilizing an Integrated Education and Training (IET) model that offers career pathways in Construction, Manufacturing, and Healthcare. The IET model seamlessly integrates Foundational (academic and work readiness) and Occupational (career-specific) skills training, empowering participants to achieve measurable progress toward economic self-sufficiency through credential attainment and employment in high-demand local industries.

*Build Your Career* prioritizes a holistic, strengths-based approach to workforce development, intentionally aligning partners, services, and resources to address the unique challenges faced by disadvantaged youth. Through a rigorous screening process, known as Mental Toughness, applicants are evaluated for program suitability based on their demonstrated commitment, attitude, and aptitude. This pre-enrollment process ensures that suitable participants proceed to full program enrollment, increasing the likelihood of successful outcomes. Participants who complete Mental Toughness and demonstrate readiness are assessed for educational functioning levels as well as career interests and aptitudes before entering the full program.

To further support participants' success, all youth programs integrate comprehensive case management and wraparound supportive services throughout the entire program lifecycle, including a 12-month follow-up period. A Case Manager works closely with each participant to create a customized *Career & Services Plan* that identifies their motivations, learning styles, support systems, potential barriers, and availability for training. The plan also outlines back-up strategies to address obstacles that may arise during their journey, ensuring that participants remain on track to achieve their goals.

Foundational and Occupational Training Components

The program's Foundational and Occupational training components are delivered through a research-based hybrid model that combines in-person classroom instruction with technology-based learning for maximum flexibility. This approach accommodates participants who may have part-time employment or other obligations, ensuring equitable access to training opportunities.

The Foundational Training component includes academic instruction, leadership development, and community service. Participants engage in adult education programs aimed at improving basic skills and advancing toward a secondary credential (GED® or high school diploma), while also working toward earning the National Career Readiness Certificate. Foundational training is further enriched by the Conover curriculum, which focuses on essential soft skills, emotional intelligence, and life skills critical for workplace success. Participants complete modules in Personal Responsibility, Success Profiler, Anger Management, and Anxiety Management to develop greater self-awareness and emotional regulation.

Community service, branded as *Give Back Days*, is an integral part of Foundational Training by providing participants with opportunities to practice skills in real-world settings in addition to contributing to their community. Participants gain valuable hands-on experience through these community-based activities.

The Occupational Training component prepares participants for industry-recognized credentials in their chosen career pathways. Training options include:

- *Construction Pathway*: Participants complete the NCCER Core Introductory Craft Skills or the Home Builders Institute (HBI) Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate Training (PACT) program.
- *Healthcare Pathway*: Training is aligned with the Virginia Board of Nursing requirements for the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) credential.

These certifications align with local labor market demands, ensuring that participants are prepared to transition into meaningful employment or postsecondary training upon program completion.

Work experience is also offered through participation at the Habitat for Humanity building of a home. Other work-based learnings for participants in healthcare are also provided. These activities not only provide practical construction skills but also foster teamwork, leadership, and a sense of community responsibility—all essential qualities for workplace success.

- **Mental Toughness and Participant Intake Process**

Mental Toughness is a critical first step in the *Build Your Career* program. This intensive, pre-enrollment process is designed to assess an applicant's commitment, adaptability, and suitability for the program. Participants who successfully complete Mental Toughness, including the Empower Your Future curriculum, demonstrate the resilience and determination required to succeed in both training and employment. During this phase, applicants undergo a comprehensive assessment to determine their educational levels, career interests, and support needs.

Following Mental Toughness, participants work with Case Managers to develop their Career & Services Plan, which serves as a roadmap for their training and career goals. This plan is based on Appreciative Inquiry and Motivational Interviewing techniques, following the principles established by Dr. Beverly Ford. By focusing on each participant's strengths and potential, the plan fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, empowering participants to overcome barriers and achieve

long-term success.

- **Leadership Development and Soft-Skills Training**

To build participants' leadership capabilities, the program incorporates leadership training from the Conover Success Profiler curriculum. Participants learn critical workplace competencies such as problem-solving, effective communication, teamwork, and decision-making—skills that are highly valued by businesses across all sectors.

Soft-skills development is reinforced through community service projects and workplace simulations. These activities help participants gain practical experience in conflict resolution, time management, and interpersonal interactions, preparing them to navigate the complexities of real-world employment.

- **Business Engagement and Transition to Employment**

The program's Business Services Coordinator plays a pivotal role in connecting participants with local businesses. Participants who complete their occupational training are assisted in transitioning to employment through job placement services, resume building, interview preparation, and networking opportunities. The coordinator also engages with local businesses to identify internship and apprenticeship opportunities that provide participants with valuable on-the-job experience. For participants interested in further education, the program facilitates seamless transitions to postsecondary training, ensuring that youth continue to advance along their career pathways. Through partnerships with local workforce preparation programs such as WIOA, TANF, SNAP E&T, and Adult Education, the *Build Your Career* program maximizes co-enrollments and resource alignment to provide holistic support for every participant.

Our commitment to empowering youth through the *Build Your Career* program is evident in the comprehensive approach taken to address both immediate and long-term needs. By integrating foundational and occupational skills training, rigorous case management, and strong community partnerships, the program equips participants with the tools they need to achieve economic self-sufficiency and contribute meaningfully to their communities. The program's focus on addressing barriers, fostering leadership, and providing in-demand credentials ensures that youth in the region are well-prepared to succeed in the workforce and achieve lasting career success.

#### Identification and Selection of Successful Providers of Youth Activities

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board follows a rigorous, transparent, and competitive procurement process to select a high-quality WIOA Program Operator, including those responsible for delivering youth services. This process ensures that the provider selected is capable of delivering comprehensive, innovative, results-driven programming to meet the diverse needs of our region's youth, with a focus on achieving WIOA performance outcomes and fostering long-term economic self-sufficiency.

To ensure equitable access to the bidding process and to attract a diverse pool of qualified providers, a Request for Proposal (RFP) is issued publicly and disseminated through multiple channels:

- The RFP is posted on our website, ensuring public access to all proposal-related documents and instructions.
- Email notifications are sent to a list of prospective bidders, including community organizations,

- educational institutions, and other service providers with experience in workforce development.
- Public notices are placed in the region's two largest newspapers to reach a broader audience and promote transparency.
- Social media outreach is utilized to further expand the visibility of the RFP, ensuring all interested and eligible organizations are aware of the opportunity.

As part of the procurement process, we host a Bidder's Conference to provide potential applicants with an opportunity to ask questions, seek clarification on RFP requirements, and better understand the expectations for delivering WIOA youth services. This conference helps ensure that all applicants are equipped with the necessary information to submit a comprehensive and competitive proposal.

#### Proposal Submission and Review Process

Upon receipt, each proposal is meticulously documented, including date, time, and method of submission, along with the bidder's name, to ensure transparency and accountability throughout the selection process.

A Proposal Review Team consisting of Workforce Board members and Chief Local Elected Officials is convened to evaluate all submissions. Each proposal is scored using a standardized evaluation rubric that assesses the following key criteria:

- Organizational capacity and experience in delivering youth workforce development services
- Program design and innovation, particularly in addressing barriers faced by at-risk youth
- Alignment with WIOA performance goals, including credential attainment, placement in employment or education, and skills gains
- Budget and fiscal accountability, ensuring efficient use of WIOA funds
- Commitment to a focus on serving the region's most vulnerable youth populations

The scores and recommendations from the Review Team are then presented to the Youth Committee for further review and deliberation. The Youth Committee carefully evaluates the proposals based on regional workforce needs, alignment with strategic priorities, and potential for achieving positive youth outcomes.

Following the Youth Committee's review, a formal recommendation is made to the Workforce Development Board and who then makes the recommendation to the Consortium Board. Each board final approval of contract award and amount. for each selected provider.

This comprehensive and collaborative selection process ensures that the WIOA Program Operator is selected based on merit, capacity, and demonstrated ability to achieve WIOA performance outcomes, ultimately benefiting the region's youth by connecting them to education, training, and employment opportunities.

By implementing this regionwide service model, we aim to strengthen its workforce system, increase program effectiveness, and achieve greater impact in improving outcomes for the individuals and communities it serves.

#### Strategies to Ensure Youth Receive Access to Activities

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board employs a comprehensive, collaborative approach to ensure that youth participants receive access to the full spectrum of WIOA-



mandated Fourteen Program Elements.

Program Element 1 – Tutoring, Study Skills Training, Instruction and Dropout Prevention

Program Element 2 – Alternative Secondary School and Dropout Recovery Services

Through direct service delivery, strategic partnerships, and continuous monitoring, we are committed to providing youth with meaningful opportunities that support academic achievement, career exploration, and long-term economic self-sufficiency. To meet the diverse needs of both in-school and out-of-school youth, Adult Education and partnerships with secondary and post-secondary providers ensure deliver tutoring and academic support for both in-school and out-of-school youth. Alternative secondary school offerings are made available through partnerships with local school systems, ensuring that youth who have disengaged from traditional education pathways have access to flexible options to complete their secondary education. The relationship between the Youth Program Operator with the board and the YouthBuild Program has also opened the opportunity for alternative high school diploma programs such as Penn Foster.

Program Element 3 – Paid and Unpaid Work Experiences and Career Pathways Development

We place a strong emphasis on work-based learning experiences that align with participants' career goals and training plans. The WIOA Program Operator is expected to provide summer work experiences, internships, and on-the-job training opportunities that are intentionally linked to each youth's career pathway. These experiences are carefully designed to build occupational skills, expose youth to in-demand industry sectors, and help them earn recognized postsecondary credentials that improve their employability and career prospects. The kick-off of our summer work experience is the Youth Career Camp, where youth have an opportunity to interact with a wide-range of in-demand occupations in the region and experience first-hand what training and employment to enter these fields will look like. This gives them an opportunity for career exploration prior to placing them in a paid-work experience and helps us be sure that we are taking their career goals into account before placement. In addition, camp addresses academic and soft-skills development including financial literacy, digital skilling, communication, and other foundational skills necessary for the youth to be successful in the work experience and in employment.

Program Element 4 – Occupational Skills Training

To support participants in developing job-specific skills, we collaborate with regional training providers to offer occupational skills training in industries identified through labor market analysis. These training programs focus on high-demand sectors, including healthcare, construction, advanced manufacturing, and information technology, ensuring that participants are prepared for jobs with strong local and regional growth potential.

Program Element 5 – Education Offered Concurrently with Workforce Preparation

Youth participants have an opportunity to enter one of three Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs that have been developed in the area that provide traditional classroom training concurrently with a paid work experience and foundational skill building. This integrated model for training prepares individuals for entrance into employment immediately upon completion of their coursework and licensing. The three integrated training models are offered by the Healthcare Academy of Southwest Virginia, the Center for Manufacturing Excellence, and through Home Builders Institute Pre-Apprenticeship Certification Training.

Program Element 6 – Leadership Development and Soft Skills Training

Leadership development is integrated into youth programming through community service projects, college tours, and experiential learning activities that build participants' confidence, communication skills, and sense of civic responsibility. These opportunities not only enhance participants' resumes through providing opportunities for networking and building professional relationships in the communities in which they live but also help them develop critical soft skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability—skills that are essential for long-term success in the workplace.

Soft skills training is conducted in person using the Workplace Excellence curriculum. All WIOA Youth staff are trained facilitators in this curriculum that covers topics such as oral and written communication, interpersonal skills necessary for getting along in the workplace, dependability, daily hygiene, and more. Soft skills training is enhanced through the use of Conover and WorkKeys® Assessments, which help participants identify and strengthen their workplace readiness competencies. Additionally, youth are provided with digital literacy and financial literacy training, which are essential for navigating today's workforce and achieving financial independence. These foundational skills are delivered through local partnerships with credit unions, Adult Education partners, and community-based programs like Literacy of the New River Valley, ensuring that participants have access to practical, hands-on learning opportunities.

#### Program Element 7 – Supportive Services and Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs)

We recognize that many youth face barriers to participation, including lack of transportation, housing instability, and mental health challenges. To address these barriers, we utilize Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs)—a collaborative model that brings together multiple organizations and agencies to coordinate wraparound supportive services. This team-based approach ensures that participants receive comprehensive support, addressing both immediate needs (e.g., housing, food security) and long-term barriers (e.g., mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment).

#### Program Element 8 – Adult Mentoring

While adult mentoring has historically been a challenge due to the geographic spread of the region and limited transportation options, we recognize the importance of providing mentors to youth and are actively working to expand mentorship opportunities. Recent efforts have focused on engaging chambers of commerce, service-learning clubs at colleges and universities, and local business leaders to connect youth with adult mentors who can provide guidance, encouragement, and career-related advice. This expanded approach to mentoring is a critical priority, particularly for youth who are most at risk of disengagement. The WIOA Program Operator is ~~expected to be~~ committed to strengthening mentorship connections, with the aim of enhancing participants' networks and support systems.

#### Program Element 9 – Follow-Up Services and Continuous Engagement

To ensure ongoing support and successful transitions to employment or further education, the WIOA Program Operator follows a robust follow-up action plans that keeps participants engaged throughout the 12-month follow-up period. Follow Up Clerks are specially trained staff that maintain regular contact with participants through various channels—such as phone calls, texts, emails, and in-person meetings—and provide continuous career information, job leads, and referrals to additional support services as needed.

#### Program Element 10 – Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling

Participants are ~~also~~ referred to Community Services Boards for comprehensive guidance and counseling, ensuring that their emotional and mental health needs are addressed. These referrals are

essential for youth dealing with trauma, substance use disorder, or other mental health challenges that require professional intervention and could impede their success.

#### Program Element 11 – Financial Literacy

Financial literacy education is a core component of our work readiness training and is delivered through a variety of methods, including Financial Empowerment programs and workshops led by local credit unions and through People Incorporated Financial Services (PIFS). These programs teach participants budgeting, credit management, and financial planning skills that are critical for achieving long-term financial stability. PIFS staff are certified credit counselors and can provide individual guidance to participants who need to improve their credit scores. This may include assistance with reading and interpreting their individual credit report as well as recommendations and guidance if there are items on their individual report that require a dispute. Additionally, Adult Education and Literacy partners provide financial literacy, further reinforcing these essential life skills.

#### Program Element 12 – Entrepreneurial Skills Training

Entrepreneurship is addressed during work readiness activities through the use of the Workplace Excellence Curriculum. Youth who express an interest in pursuing an entrepreneurial career pathway are referred to their local Small Business Development Centers.

We provide training through Metrix Learning to help individuals develop their entrepreneurship skills. The Metrix Learning Entrepreneurship Bundle is designed to equip individuals with essential skills for launching and managing successful ventures. This comprehensive program encompasses six key areas:

- *Professional Communication*: Courses focus on business etiquette, professional communication techniques for calls and written messages, and building rapport through collaboration and diplomacy.
- *Collaboration and Networking*: Training emphasizes developing strong professional networks, effective collaboration, and public speaking skills to enhance business relationships.
- *Business Planning and Relationship Building*: Participants learn to craft and implement business plans, engage with external stakeholders, and capture the attention of senior executives.
- *Business Ethics and Acumen*: Courses cover developing business ethics, acumen, and understanding key elements of business execution.
- *Leadership and Work Environment*: Training focuses on assessing leadership performance, establishing a positive work environment, and effectively communicating vision to employees.
- *Problem Solving*: Participants develop skills in defining problems, generating solutions, and implementing the right solutions to overcome business challenges.

Also through Metrix Learning, individuals can learn how to develop a business plan through its comprehensive e-learning platform. While specific course titles may vary, the platform provides training in areas essential for business planning, such as business operations, management, and professional development.

These courses are designed to equip aspiring entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills necessary to create effective business plans, covering topics like business planning and relationship building,

business ethics and acumen, and leadership and work environment.

By engaging with the Metrix Learning courses, individuals can gain a solid foundation in business planning, enhancing their ability to develop comprehensive and effective business plans for their entrepreneurial ventures.

This bundle is part of Metrix Learning's extensive online training platform, which provides access to over 7,000 courses across various industries. The platform is designed to support workforce development by offering flexible, self-paced learning opportunities that cater to the needs of aspiring entrepreneurs and professionals seeking to enhance their skills.

By completing the Entrepreneurship Bundle, individuals gain valuable insights and practical knowledge essential for navigating the complexities of starting and running a business, thereby enhancing their prospects for success in the entrepreneurial landscape.

#### Program Element 13 – Services that Provide Labor Market Information and Career Planning

At the intake stage and throughout participation in the WIOA Youth program, the WIOA Program Operator reviews local labor market information with participants to help them understand regional job trends and identify high-demand career pathways. Staff relate regional data to the CareerScope assessment and help youth make informed decisions about their career goals as they relate to their potential earnings and outlook for employment in their top areas of interest and aptitude. This labor market data is incorporated into each participant's Individual Service Strategy (ISS) ensuring that career goals are realistic, attainable, and aligned with local economic opportunities.

#### Program Element 14 – Post Secondary Preparation and Transition Activities

To further prepare youth for postsecondary education and training, the WIOA Program Operator uses WorkKeys® assessments, NorthStar Digital Literacy®, Conover, and other tools to help participants build critical academic, digital, and foundational skills. Partnerships with Job Corps and Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs through our discretionary grants provide additional pathways to postsecondary credentials and career advancement opportunities.

Through collaborative partnerships, comprehensive service delivery, and targeted support, the we are committed to ensuring that all youth participants have access to the full range of WIOA services. By addressing academic, occupational, and personal development needs, our strategies empower youth to overcome barriers, achieve their educational and career goals, and transition successfully into meaningful employment. Continuous monitoring and evaluation ensure that the WIOA Program Operator remains accountable for delivering high-quality services that support positive outcomes for youth across the region.

#### Developing Youth Service Strategies

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board is committed to delivering high-impact, youth-centered services that align with WIOA priorities and support youth in achieving educational and career success. The WIOA Youth Program is designed to prioritize out-of-school youth, meeting the federal mandate to allocate at least 75% of funds toward this population. In addition, the program ensures that at least 20% of funds are dedicated to work-based learning experiences, which serve as a critical pathway to employment and long-term self-sufficiency.

Our youth service strategies are built on a comprehensive framework of leveraged resources that supports participants' entry into and progression along career pathways. This framework emphasizes work-based learning, credential attainment, and supportive services to address barriers and facilitate successful transitions to education, training, and employment.

To achieve these goals, we have established strong partnerships with educational institutions, community-based organizations, and other youth-serving entities to ensure a coordinated, integrated service delivery model. These partnerships enhance the availability of wraparound support services, such as tutoring, mentoring, leadership development, and counseling, ensuring that youth receive holistic support throughout their journey.

Our youth service strategies are guided by the following core principles:

- *Work-Based Learning as a Core Component*: We emphasize hands-on, real-world learning experiences, including internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training opportunities, that allow youth to develop essential workplace skills and build their resumes while pursuing career pathways in high-demand industries.
- *Credential Attainment for Long-Term Success*: We ensure that youth participants have access to industry-recognized credentials that are aligned with regional labor market needs, improving their employability and earning potential. These credentials range from high school equivalency diplomas to occupational certifications in industries such as healthcare, construction, manufacturing, and information technology.
- *Integrated Service Delivery*: Through collaboration with regional partners, we ensure that youth have access to a seamless network of services that address their educational, emotional, and social needs. By leveraging resources from schools, community organizations, and workforce partners, we minimize service gaps and maximize outcomes for youth participants.
- *Career Pathway Development*: The program focuses on guiding youth along defined career pathways, ensuring that they gain progressive skills and experience that lead to sustainable employment opportunities. This includes a focus on high-growth industries identified through local labor market analysis.
- *Reducing Barriers to Participation*: Recognizing the unique challenges faced by at-risk and underserved youth populations, we are committed to providing access to services. Our strategies are designed to reduce barriers to participation, including addressing transportation, childcare, and financial literacy needs, ensuring that all youth can engage fully in their career pathways.

By implementing evidence-based practices and strengthening community partnerships, our youth service strategies are focused on helping young people build the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to succeed in both the workforce and life. This approach ensures that youth are prepared for in-demand careers and equipped with the tools to achieve long-term self-sufficiency and economic mobility.

#### Strategies to Identify, Recruit, and Retain Out-of-School Youth

Effectively identifying, recruiting, and retaining out-of-school youth requires a multi-faceted, intentional approach that addresses the unique challenges faced by this hard-to-reach population. The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce development Board's strategies are designed to meet youth



where they are, foster trusting relationships, and connect them to opportunities and supportive services that promote long-term success.

- **Identification and Recruitment**

Recruiting out-of-school youth presents unique challenges due to their disconnection from traditional support systems and distrust of formal programs. To overcome these barriers, we employ a community-centered, relationship-driven approach that leverages both direct outreach and partnerships to reach youth who are otherwise difficult to engage.

- **Word-of-Mouth Referrals**

One of the most effective recruitment methods is word-of-mouth referrals, particularly from current and former program participants. These referrals help build trust and credibility among youth who may be skeptical of traditional outreach efforts. To maximize the impact of this method, we use clear, youth-friendly messaging in our outreach materials that emphasize eligibility, available supports, and program goals. These materials are appropriately branded and placed in high-traffic locations frequented by youth, such as:

- Laundromats
- Local hangouts (e.g., coffee shops, parks, skateparks)
- Community centers
- Public libraries
- Food and clothing banks

Additionally, outreach materials are shared with local organizations and agencies that serve this population to broaden our reach.

- **Targeted Presentations and Partner Engagement**

When word-of-mouth referrals are not feasible—such as when launching a new program—we conduct targeted presentations to agencies and organizations that serve dropouts, unemployed youth, and low-income individuals. These presentations are conducted at Virginia Career Works centers, Departments of Social Services, Adult Education Programs, Drug Courts, Public Housing Offices, Churches, and other community-based organizations.

These presentations not only introduce youth to available services but also strengthen partnerships with key organizations. The use of Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs) and participation in regional Professional Development opportunities ensures that workforce partners remain engaged and aligned with our youth service goals.

- **Digital Outreach and Web Presence**

While in-person engagement is often the most effective recruitment method, digital outreach also plays an important role in our recruitment strategy. We maintain active web and social media presences, ensuring that program information is easily accessible to youth and their families. This includes:

- Regularly updated website content with clear instructions on how to access services
- Social media posts that highlight success stories, program milestones, and available resources
- Digital flyers and videos shared through online platforms

However, based on experience, we recognize that in-person meetings tend to be more successful in building trust and engagement than phone calls, emails, or social media outreach. Therefore, our digital efforts are used to complement and reinforce face-to-face outreach efforts.

- **Retention**

Retaining out-of-school youth in programs can be challenging due to the multiple barriers they face, including housing instability, lack of transportation, mental health challenges, and family responsibilities. To ensure consistent engagement and program completion, we prioritize relationship-building, supportive services, and milestone-based incentives.

- **Building Trust and Rapport**

The cornerstone of our retention strategy is developing and maintaining rapport with youth participants. Case managers and program staff focus on intentional trust-building, recognizing that many youth have negative past experiences with institutions and need consistent, personalized support to stay engaged.

We prioritize creating a safe and welcoming space where youth feel heard, valued, and supported. By addressing immediate needs and connecting participants to wraparound supportive services, staff can reduce barriers to participation and help youth overcome challenges that might otherwise lead to disengagement. Examples of supportive services provided include:

- Transportation assistance
- Mental health counseling referrals
- Substance use support
- Childcare assistance
- Housing resources

Through Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs), staff ensure that youth are connected to the appropriate services at the right time, helping them address challenges holistically.

- **Peer Support and Safe Spaces**

Providing a safe space for peer-to-peer support is a critical retention tool. Youth participants often feel isolated and benefit greatly from connecting with peers who are facing similar challenges. Peer support groups and group activities foster a sense of belonging, reduce feelings of isolation, and increase program retention.

These peer connections are further strengthened through community service projects, leadership activities, and work-based learning experiences that allow youth to support each other while building skills.

- **Milestone-Based Incentives**

Incentivizing participants to complete milestones and achieve their goals is another key strategy. We use incentives to celebrate progress and keep youth motivated throughout their participation. These incentives can include:

- Monetary Incentives for achieving attendance milestones
- Recognition events for completing training programs
- Certificates of achievement for credential attainment

By tying incentives to specific milestones, we encourage consistent engagement and positive behavior while helping youth see their own progress toward long-term success.

- Continuous Career and Educational Guidance

Retention efforts are further supported by providing ongoing career and educational guidance throughout the program. Case managers work with youth to develop and update Individualized Service Strategies (ISSs), ensuring that participants remain focused on their goals and receive support at every step of their journey.

Case managers also ensure that youth have clear post-program transition plans, connecting them to:

- Further education opportunities
- Employment services
- Apprenticeship programs
- Mentorship opportunities

Through a combination of relationship-building, community partnerships, and barrier reduction strategies, we have developed a comprehensive approach to identifying, recruiting, and retaining out-of-school youth. By meeting youth where they are, providing holistic support, and fostering trust and belonging, we ensure that youth participants remain engaged, motivated, and prepared for long-term success in both education and the workforce.

#### Policy Regarding Serving Youth Who Do Not Meet Income Eligibility Guidelines

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board is committed to ensuring that all youth seeking services are provided with appropriate referrals and support, even if they do not meet the income eligibility requirements for WIOA-funded youth programs. Our policy, as outlined in the Youth Services Policy posted on our website, states:

“Each eligible provider of a program of youth workforce activities shall ensure that an eligible applicant who does not meet the enrollment requirements of the particular program or who cannot be served shall be referred for further assessment, as necessary, and referred to appropriate programs to meet the basic skills and training needs of the applicant.”

*\*There is also an option to request a 5% income exception for a youth with a barrier but does not meet the need for income-based services though a written request, with documentation from the Executive Director.*

*\*Another option, if they are over 18, is to see if they meet Adult Priority of Service as an out of school youth who's only barrier is Basic Skills Deficient.*

In alignment with WIOA Section 129(c)(3)(B), we ensure that youth applicants who do not qualify for WIOA Youth enrollment are referred to alternative programs and community-based services that address their education, training, and supportive service needs. One of the primary referral options for non-eligible youth is the *Build Your Career YouthBuild* program we operate. This U.S. Department of Labor-funded YouthBuild initiative provides Integrated Education and Training (IET) opportunities in Construction and Healthcare, along with leadership development, community service, and wraparound supportive services. Youth desiring other career pathways can transition into

postsecondary education after completion of one of our training opportunities.

Youth who are referred to the *Build Your Career YouthBuild* program receive hands-on training, work experience, and opportunities to earn industry-recognized credentials, ensuring they remain on track toward career success, even if they are not eligible for WIOA Youth services. Additionally, the WIOA Program Operator is expected to refer youth to a broad network of partner organizations that provide no-cost or low-cost services in the areas of basic skills training, career counseling, mental health services, and supportive resources. These partners include:

- Virginia Career Works Centers
- Adult Education Programs
- Job Corps
- Local Departments of Social Services
- Community Colleges
- TANF and SNAP E&T Programs
- Community-Based Nonprofits

Our referral process involves:

- Sharing of information between WIOA Youth and Discretionary Grants, with consent, to reduce the burden on the applicant to provide information twice. Also, WIOA and *Build Your Career YouthBuild* aligned paperwork to reduce this barrier
- Conducting a comprehensive assessment of the youth's educational, career, and supportive service needs.
- Connecting youth to alternative programs, including YouthBuild, that align with their career pathways and training goals.
- Providing follow-up contact to ensure the youth successfully engaged with alternative programs and services.

The Integrated Resource Team (IRT) model is used for a seamless service delivery across our partner network, ensuring that youth receive wraparound support to address barriers such as transportation, housing instability, and mental health needs. By leveraging partnerships and alternative programs like *Build Your Career YouthBuild* and others, we ensure that no youth is left without access to resources. We are committed to equitable service delivery and to helping all youth—regardless of eligibility status—progress toward economic self-sufficiency through education, training, and meaningful employment opportunities.

#### Coordination Efforts: Partnerships, Business Engagement, and Integrated Resource Teams (IRT)

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board prioritizes collaborative partnerships and coordinated service delivery to ensure that youth participants have access to comprehensive resources and career pathways. Our coordination efforts involve our WIOA program operator, community-based organizations, educational institutions, human services agencies, registered apprenticeship programs, Job Corps, and local offices on youth to provide a seamless, integrated support system that addresses barriers to education, training, and employment.

Key to these coordination efforts is the implementation of the Integrated Resource Team (IRT) approach, a customer-centered best practice that brings together diversified service systems to coordinate services and leverage funding to meet the individual needs of youth participants. This

model promotes collaborative case management and helps ensure that no youth falls through the cracks as they progress through education and career pathways.

- Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs) and Collaborative Funding Agreements

The IRT approach originated from the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI), a U.S. Department of Labor project in which we participated. While the IRT model was initially designed to serve individuals with disabilities, it has proven to be highly effective for all participants facing barriers to employment. The customer-level coordination facilitated by IRTs ensures that each participant's unique needs are holistically addressed through diverse service partnerships. The IRT process involves assembling a team of service providers, educational institutions, human services agencies, and workforce partners who work together to:

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the participant's needs
- Develop a personalized service plan with clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- Coordinate and leverage resources to address barriers to education and employment and avoid duplication
- Provide ongoing support to help participants achieve sustainable employment outcomes

To support these efforts, we use tools such as the Collaborative Funding Agreement (CFA), developed through our US DOL America's Promise grant. The CFA outlines who is responsible for providing specific services and financial support to the participant and adapts over time as the participant's needs change. This living document ensures that all partners remain accountable and aligned in their service delivery efforts.

- Coordination with Job Corps, WIOA Youth Program Operator, Youth Opportunity Grants, and Registered Apprenticeship Programs. We maintain strong partnerships with Job Corps to connect eligible youth to vocational training, education, and career counseling services. Job Corps participants who have completed training are often referred back to local workforce programs to ensure continued support in securing employment or further education opportunities.

*\*We currently do not have a Youth Opportunity Grant in our region due to having YouthBuild.*

We also collaborate with registered apprenticeship programs to provide youth with hands-on, earn-and-learn opportunities in high-demand industries. These programs offer participants a clear pathway to employment by combining on-the-job training with classroom instruction, leading to industry-recognized credentials. By partnering with local businesses, we ensure that youth participants are connected to apprenticeships that align with regional labor market needs.

- Coordination with Community Colleges, Higher Education Institutions, and Human Services Agencies

We have established formal partnerships with community colleges and higher education institutions across the region to ensure that youth participants have access to postsecondary education opportunities. These partnerships facilitate:

- Dual enrollment opportunities
- Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs
- Financial aid and scholarship assistance
- Career counseling and academic advising



Through local human services agencies, we ensure that youth participants have access to critical wraparound supports such as:

- Housing assistance
- Transportation services
- Food security programs
- Mental health counseling
- Digital Connectivity

These agencies are often key partners in IRTs, providing holistic support that addresses both immediate and long-term barriers to employment.

- **Monthly Partner/Management Team Meetings**

To ensure ongoing communication and coordination among partners, we host monthly Partner/Management Team meetings. These meetings provide a forum for program and agency managers to:

- Share updates and best practices
- Collaborate on joint initiatives
- Identify gaps in services and develop solutions
- Strengthen relationships across agencies and programs

These meetings have been particularly valuable in fostering collaboration during times of disruption, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, when in-person meetings were limited. By leveraging virtual meeting technology, we have been able to maintain strong partnerships and promote regional coordination despite geographic constraints.

- **Outcomes of Coordination Efforts**

The impact of these coordination efforts is evident in the success of participants who have been connected to education, training, and employment opportunities through collaborative service delivery. By working closely with Job Corps, apprenticeship programs, community colleges, and human services agencies, we have been able to:

- Increase access to career pathways for youth
- Reduce barriers to participation through supportive services
- Improve employment and credential attainment outcomes
- Strengthen partnerships that enhance the quality of services available to youth

Through the IRT model, monthly partner meetings, and collaborative agreements, we ensure that youth receive the support they need to transition successfully into postsecondary education, apprenticeships, and meaningful employment.

### Efforts to Ensure Compliance with Child Labor and Safety Regulations

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all youth participants in WIOA-funded and discretionary grant programs by adhering to federal and state child labor and workplace safety regulations. These requirements are clearly outlined and enforced through our General Terms and Conditions for WIOA Program Operator Contracts, which are a mandatory component of all contracts for WIOA service delivery.

Specific provisions regarding compliance with child labor and safety regulations are included in Item 27(e) of the General Terms and Conditions document, ensuring that the WIOA Program Operator is contractually obligated to comply with applicable laws, including:

- The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which establishes minimum age requirements and limitations on working hours for youth
- Virginia child labor laws, which set additional guidelines for youth employment within the state
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations, which require businesses to provide safe and healthy working conditions

To ensure transparency and accountability, the General Terms and Conditions document is publicly posted on our website in the Policies section, allowing all stakeholders, including the WIOA Program Operator, youth participants, parents/guardians, and community partners, to access and review the safety and compliance requirements.

- **Program Operator Accountability and Monitoring**

We take proactive steps to ensure that the WIOA Program Operator fully understands and complies with child labor and safety regulations. These steps include:

- *Ongoing Monitoring and Oversight:* The WIOA Coordinator conducts regular monitoring of the WIOA Program Operator, including site visits and file reviews, to ensure that youth participants are working in safe environments and that all child labor laws are being followed. Any violations or concerns are immediately addressed through corrective action plans, with follow-up to ensure compliance.
- *Worksite Agreements:* For youth participants engaged in work-based learning experiences, Worksite Agreements are executed with business partners to ensure compliance with child labor and safety laws. These agreements outline the responsibilities of the business to provide a safe and appropriate work environment and specify prohibited activities for youth under the age of 18.
- *Incident Reporting and Response:* We have established an incident reporting protocol to address any workplace safety concerns involving youth participants. The WIOA Program Operator is required to report any safety incidents immediately, and we provide guidance and support to ensure appropriate resolution.

- **Education and Awareness for Youth Participants**

In addition to ensuring that the WIOA Program Operator and business partners comply with child labor and safety regulations, we also work to educate youth participants on their rights and responsibilities in the workplace. This includes:

- Orientation sessions for youth participants that cover workplace safety practices, child labor laws, and how to report safety concerns
- Distribution of youth-friendly materials from the U.S. Department of Labor and OSHA to help participants understand prohibited work activities and workplace protections
- Regular check-ins with Case Managers to ensure that participants feel safe and supported in their work environments

- **Commitment to Continuous Improvement**

We are committed to continuously improving our processes for ensuring compliance with child labor and safety regulations. By strengthening partnerships with business partners, our WIOA Program Operator, and community organizations, we aim to create a safe, supportive environment where youth can develop valuable workplace skills without compromising their health or safety.

Through clear policies, ongoing monitoring, and education and awareness efforts, we ensure that child labor and safety compliance remains a top priority in all youth programs and work-based learning experiences.

#### Pay-for-Performance

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board does not use Pay-for-Performance.

## **ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES**

*1.7 Describe and assess the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area.*

#### Access to and Delivery of Career Services

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board is committed to delivering comprehensive career services that empower Adult and Dislocated Worker (DLW) participants to achieve meaningful employment with family-sustaining wages. Through strategic partnerships, multiple access points, and innovative service delivery methods, participants can access basic, individualized, and follow-up services tailored to meet their specific career development needs. Our WIOA Program Operator delivers these services at Virginia Career Works centers and strategic community locations across the region, ensuring geographic coverage and equitable access. In addition to in-person services, participants can engage with virtual career services through multiple digital platforms, increasing flexibility and convenience for jobseekers. Our WIOA Program Operator delivers dislocated worker services, ensuring a consistent, high-quality service experience across the region.

Participants can access career services through all seven Virginia Works One-Stop centers as well as virtually. A visual diagram of the intake and service flow can be found in Section 5, which outlines the One-Stop Delivery System and participant pathways from intake through follow-up.

- **Career Services Overview**

Career services are categorized into three levels: Basic Services, Individualized Services, and Follow-up Services. Each level of service is designed to meet the participant's unique needs at different stages of their career journey, from initial outreach to sustained employment and post-program success.

- *Basic Career Services:* Basic Career Services are available to all jobseekers and serve as the foundation of the career services framework. These services are designed to provide participants with essential information, assessments, and resources to begin their career development process. Services include:
  - Outreach, intake, and orientation to provide participants with a clear understanding of the programs, tools, and resources available.

- Initial assessments to determine skill levels, aptitudes, and supportive service needs, ensuring a personalized service plan from the start.
  - Job search and placement assistance, including in-demand industry sector information and non-traditional employment opportunities.
  - Access to employment opportunities and labor market information to help participants make informed career decisions.
  - Information on eligible training providers, including performance data and program costs, to guide participants in selecting appropriate education and training programs.
  - Details on the local workforce system's performance, ensuring transparency and accountability in service delivery.
  - Referral to supportive services, such as transportation, childcare, housing assistance, and mental health services, to address barriers to participation.
  - UI claim filing assistance to provide participants with meaningful support in navigating unemployment benefits.
  - Eligibility determination for workforce partner programs and referrals to appropriate services.
  - Financial aid assistance for non-WIOA training programs, ensuring participants can access additional resources for education and career advancement.
- Individualized Career Services: Individualized Career Services are more intensive and are designed for participants who require personalized guidance and support to achieve their employment goals. These services are provided by trained Case Managers from WIOA Program Operators, who work closely with participants to develop customized career plans that address barriers to employment and provide targeted solutions. Key Individualized Career Services include:
- Comprehensive and specialized assessments to identify the participant's skill levels, strengths, and areas for development.
  - Development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP), outlining employment goals, achievement objectives, and the services needed to achieve career success.
  - Referrals to training programs, including occupational skills training, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training opportunities aligned with in-demand industries.
  - Career planning and individual counseling to support participants in making informed career decisions.
  - Referral to group counseling sessions and literacy programs that enhance employability skills.
  - Work experience opportunities, such as internships, transitional jobs, and registered apprenticeships that provide hands-on learning in real-world work environments.
  - Workforce preparation services, including resume building, interview skills training, communication skills, time management, and financial literacy education, to ensure participants are job-ready.
  - Case management services to provide ongoing support throughout the participant's career journey.
  - Job search, referral, and placement assistance to connect participants with local businesses.
  - Post-employment follow-up services to track progress and provide continuous

support, ensuring participants remain on track toward long-term success.

- Follow-Up Services: Follow-up Services are a critical component of our commitment to long-term participant success. These services help ensure that participants remain engaged in the workforce and have access to resources and support even after they have completed their program participation. Follow-up includes:
  - Regular contact with the participant to determine if additional support is needed. For Adult and DLW participants, follow-up contact is made quarterly, while for Youth Discretionary Grants, contact is made monthly.
  - Connection to Case Managers or appropriate agencies when participants express challenges or concerns related to their employment situation, including issues with salary, reduced hours, job satisfaction, or workplace conflict.
  - Employment verification to confirm whether the participant is employed or enrolled in education or training programs.
  - Credential verification to ensure participants have achieved the certifications and credentials needed to advance in their career pathways.
  - Documentation of follow-up services in the internal tracking system to ensure accountability and transparency in service delivery.

Follow-up services are essential in identifying potential challenges early and providing timely interventions to ensure participants sustain employment and continue to progress along their career pathways.

- **Leveraging Virtual Platforms for Service Delivery**

We recognize the importance of flexibility and accessibility in today's workforce landscape. In addition to in-person services, participants have access to virtual career services through various digital platforms, ensuring that those with transportation, health, or time barriers can still access the full range of career services.

- **Outcome-Driven Service Delivery**

Our comprehensive approach to career services ensures that participants receive the support they need at every stage of their career journey. By offering basic, individualized, and follow-up services through in-person and virtual platforms, we ensure that participants are prepared to enter the workforce, sustain employment, and achieve long-term career success.

This integrated service delivery model aligns with WIOA priorities, ensures equitable access, and strengthens the region's talent pipeline, contributing to economic growth and workforce stability.

### Self-Sufficiency

Southwestern Virginia faces significant economic challenges, with 51% of households in 2018 living in poverty or classified as part of the "Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed" (ALICE) population. These individuals represent a critical segment of the regional workforce—they are employed, pay taxes, and contribute to the local economy—yet they struggle to meet basic needs due to low wages, rising costs of living, and limited access to career advancement opportunities. Recognizing the growing need to support working families who are economically vulnerable, we have developed policies to address self-sufficiency challenges and prioritize services for employed



individuals who fall within this income-constrained demographic.

Our Self-Sufficiency and Employed Worker Policy reflects our commitment to serving individuals who are earning above the Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL) but not exceeding 200% of the current guidelines. This policy ensures that adults who are employed but remain financially constrained are included as a priority service group for WIOA-funded career and training services.

The policy states:

“To better serve the total adult population in Area 2, the Workforce Development Board has determined that individuals who are a member of a family that is above the Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL) guidelines but not in excess of 200% of current guidelines may receive WIOA career services and training as an established priority service group. The Workforce Development Board will allow all adult participants, who are employed, to be determined eligible under this provision.”

This policy ensures that employed individuals who may not traditionally qualify for workforce services due to income thresholds can still access career services, upskilling opportunities, and supportive resources to help them achieve true economic self-sufficiency. By expanding eligibility criteria, we are working to reduce the financial strain on working families and provide a pathway to sustainable, family-sustaining employment.

- Addressing the Needs of the ALICE Population

The ALICE population faces unique challenges that traditional poverty measures do not capture. These individuals are often one emergency away from financial crisis, with limited access to savings and few opportunities for career advancement. Our Self-Sufficiency Policy aims to:

- Bridge the gap between employment and self-sufficiency by providing targeted workforce services to individuals who are working but still struggling to make ends meet.
- Expand access to training opportunities for low-wage and underemployed workers, helping them develop in-demand skills that align with regional labor market needs.
- Support economic mobility by ensuring working families have the tools, resources, and support they need to achieve long-term financial stability.

By focusing on self-sufficiency, we are helping to reduce the prevalence of the ALICE population in Southwestern Virginia, addressing workforce disparities, and enhancing the region’s overall economic resilience.

- Policy Impact and Alignment with WIOA Priorities

The Self-Sufficiency and Employed Worker Policy aligns with WIOA’s emphasis on serving priority populations and ensuring that workforce services are accessible to individuals facing barriers to economic self-sufficiency. By establishing a priority service group that includes employed individuals up to 200% of the LLSIL guidelines, we are:

- Addressing income disparities by providing career and training services to individuals who might otherwise be excluded from traditional workforce programs.
- Supporting upskilling opportunities for low-wage and underemployed workers, ensuring they can move into higher-paying jobs in in-demand industries.
- Reducing economic vulnerability by helping working families access the tools they need to achieve financial independence.

Through strategic policies and targeted service delivery, we are committed to empowering working families, reducing reliance on public assistance, and creating a more inclusive workforce system that promotes economic mobility for all.

Addressing self-sufficiency in Southwestern Virginia requires a multi-faceted approach that recognizes the needs of the ALICE population and expands access to career services and training opportunities for working individuals. Our Self-Sufficiency and Employed Worker Policy demonstrates a proactive commitment to supporting underemployed workers, reducing income inequality, and building a more resilient regional workforce. By investing in the success of working families, we are helping to strengthen the region's economy and ensure that all residents can achieve long-term economic stability.

- **Hard-to-Serve Populations Definition**

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board defines Hard-to-Serve populations as individuals with multiple barriers to training, employment, and self-sufficiency, requiring targeted interventions to achieve successful workforce outcomes. These individuals often face significant obstacles that hinder their ability to secure and sustain meaningful employment. Our definition includes individuals who meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Receiving public assistance
- TANF eligible or classified as low-income
- Basic skills deficient or lacking a high school diploma or GED®
- Justice-involved individuals (offenders)
- Individuals with a disability
- Individuals with a substance use disorder
- Homeless or housing insecure individuals
- Lack of reliable transportation
- Lack of access to safe and affordable childcare

These Hard-to-Serve populations are often the most economically vulnerable and require comprehensive, wraparound services to address both immediate and long-term barriers to education, training, and employment.

We are committed to ensuring that Priority of Service is provided to these populations, in accordance with WIOA requirements, to ensure equitable access to workforce programs and resources. The Priority of Services Policy is publicly posted on our website to ensure transparency and accountability in serving these individuals.

By identifying and prioritizing services for Hard-to-Serve populations, we seek to reduce disparities in workforce participation, increase access to training and career opportunities, and promote long-term economic self-sufficiency for those who face the greatest barriers to success.

## **SECTION 2: STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS**

### **STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS**

*2.1 Describe the local board's strategic vision and goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment).*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board envisions a thriving regional workforce ecosystem where businesses have access to skilled talent and residents can achieve meaningful employment and career advancement. By enhancing coordination and future-readiness, we will drive economic growth and ensure our region remains a leader in workforce excellence and community prosperity.

The following goals are designed to embody this vision, driving innovation, fostering transformative change, and ensuring sustainable impact across the region.

1. Equip the workforce for quality jobs in high-demand career pathways.
2. Support business growth and regional economic development.
3. Expand outreach and access to workforce resources.
4. Reduce barriers through collaboration and coordination.

### **SUPPORTING STRATEGIES IDENTIFIED IN THE VIRGINIA COMBINED STATE PLAN**

*2.2 Describe how the local board's strategic vision and goals will support the strategies identified in the Virginia Combined State Plan.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board's strategic vision and goals are directly aligned with the core strategies outlined in the Virginia Combined State Plan, supporting a cohesive, statewide approach to workforce development that promotes economic growth, talent development, and equitable access to opportunities. Our strategic vision and goals complement the state strategies by focusing on regional implementation and locally tailored solutions that address specific economic and workforce challenges in the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area.

- **Fostering Demand-Driven Workforce Solutions**

Our vision prioritizes the development of a demand-driven workforce system that is responsive to business needs in high-growth, in-demand industries such as healthcare, manufacturing, information technology, and construction.

Our goals include:

- Strengthening partnerships with local businesses to ensure that workforce programs are aligned with current and future labor market needs.
- Enhancing work-based learning opportunities, including internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training, to build a talent pipeline for regional businesses.
- Leveraging labor market data to inform program development and ensure jobseekers

are trained for high-demand occupations.

These efforts directly support the Virginia Combined State Plan's focus on business-driven solutions by ensuring that training and workforce services are aligned with real-world job demands in the region.

- **Aligning Workforce Programs to Improve Service Delivery and Outcomes**

Our goals emphasize the importance of collaborative service delivery through partnerships with workforce system and other partners. Our use of Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs) to coordinate services across multiple agencies ensures that jobseekers receive holistic support, addressing both training and supportive service needs. Key initiatives that align with the Virginia Combined State Plan include:

- Expanding virtual service delivery to ensure access to career services across the region, particularly for individuals in rural and remote areas.
- Implementing the One-Stop Delivery System, ensuring that all workforce programs are integrated and accessible through Virginia Career Works centers.
- Providing comprehensive case management and follow-up services to improve long-term outcomes for participants.

These actions align with the state's strategy to improve service coordination and reduce duplication, creating a more efficient, customer-focused workforce system.

- **Providing Access to Career Pathways and Credential Attainment**

Our strategic goals focus heavily on developing career pathways that lead to recognized credentials and family-sustaining wages. We collaborate with local community colleges, training providers, and businesses to offer integrated education and training programs that align with regional labor market demands. Key initiatives that support the Virginia Combined State Plan include:

- Building career pathways in high-demand sectors with a focus on progressive credential attainment.
- Supporting credential attainment through programs such as YouthBuild and WIOA-funded training services.
- Enhancing digital literacy and employability skills training to prepare individuals for 21st-century job demands.

These efforts directly align with the state's focus on providing career pathways, increasing credential attainment, and addressing skills gaps in the workforce.

- **Addressing Barriers to Employment for Hard-to-Serve Populations**

Our commitment to serving hard-to-serve populations aligns with the Virginia Combined State Plan's focus on serving vulnerable populations. Our Priority of Service Policy ensures that individuals with barriers to employment—including low-income individuals, justice-involved individuals, persons with disabilities, and the ALICE population—are able to access workforce services. Key initiatives include:

- Providing wraparound supportive services to address transportation, childcare, housing, and mental health needs.
- Utilizing the Integrated Resource Team (IRT) model to coordinate services across

agencies, ensuring that participants receive holistic support.

- Expanding access to virtual services to reduce geographic and transportation barriers for rural populations.

These efforts align with the state's focus on reducing barriers to employment and ensuring equitable access to workforce services.

- **Strengthening Business Engagement to Meet Regional Labor Market Needs**

Our goals emphasize business engagement as a key strategy to align workforce services with regional economic needs. We collaborate with local business and industry, economic development organizations, and business organizations (chambers and industry specific organizations) to ensure that workforce programs are responsive to business needs and address skills gaps in key industries. Key business engagement initiatives include:

- Business led Sector Partnerships in Construction/Skilled Trades, Healthcare & Human Services, and Manufacturing/Logistics/Warehousing
- Partnering with businesses to design work-based learning programs, including apprenticeships, internships, and transitional jobs.
- Using labor market data to identify emerging workforce needs and inform training program development.
- Engaging businesses with the One-Stop system through direct conversations around workforce and training needs during facility visits/tours and Workforce Exchange events.

These efforts align with the Virginia Combined State Plan's strategy to build stronger partnerships with businesses and strengthen the connection between workforce programs and regional economic development goals.

Our strategic vision and goals are fully aligned with the Virginia Combined State Plan, ensuring that local workforce strategies contribute to the statewide goals of economic growth, talent development, and equitable access to education and employment opportunities. Through demand-driven solutions, integrated service delivery, career pathways development, and business engagement, we are committed to building a resilient regional workforce that meets the needs of both jobseekers and businesses, supporting long-term economic stability and growth across our region.

## **ALIGNING RESOURCES**

*2.3 Taking into account the analyses described in 1.1 through 2.2, describe a strategy to work with the entities that carry out the core programs to align resources available to the local area to achieve the local board's strategic vision and goals.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board employs a Collective Impact strategy to effectively align resources and work with core and required partners to achieve the local board's strategic vision and goals. This strategy ensures that collaboration across multiple partners is not only encouraged but also embedded within the framework of regional workforce development. Below are key areas of focus within this strategy:



- Service Alignment

We have prioritized service alignment and collaboration with the principles of Collective Impact since 2016. This ongoing commitment has led to the creation of two pivotal tools: the *Eligibility at a Glance* (how to make referrals and partner roles and responsibilities) and the *Workforce Services Matrix* (Attachment K). These tools document available services within the region and help to mitigate duplication of efforts. Service alignment efforts are continually evolving through resource mapping activities that identify both traditional and non-traditional organizations that can contribute to workforce development goals.

Each new project introduced into the region incorporates elements of Collective Impact, ensuring that resources are effectively leveraged to meet the needs of both jobseekers and businesses. For instance, Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs) are central to jobseeker services, creating a coordinated approach to address individual needs. Business Solution Teams (BSTs) play a similar role in delivering services to businesses, ensuring alignment of resources to meet the region's economic demands.

- Referral Systems

A robust referral system is essential for achieving seamless service delivery across partners. We have established the Integrated Resource Team (IRT) process as a standard practice to serve all jobseekers, enhancing consistency in program referrals. Frontline staff gather detailed information about each individual and make referrals to appropriate organizations based on identified needs.

To facilitate these referrals, the *Eligibility at a Glance*, outlines specific referral processes and contact points for each partner. This tool is regularly updated to ensure accuracy and relevance. Additionally, we participate in the UniteUs Virginia and Northeast Tennessee initiative to enhance care coordination. UniteUs, a leading care coordination platform, enables healthcare and social services organizations to collaborate more effectively, recognizing that stable employment is a critical component of overall health and well-being.

- Information Sharing

Regular information sharing is crucial for maintaining alignment and fostering collaboration. We facilitate regional partner meetings, Integrated Resource Team sessions, and Business Solution Team meetings to provide a forum for exchanging updates and addressing shared challenges. These meetings ensure that partners remain informed about program changes, service availability, and regional needs.

- Training and Cross-Training

We are committed to building the capacity of regional partners through ongoing professional development and cross-training opportunities. These efforts ensure that frontline staff are well-equipped to navigate various workforce programs and provide high-quality services to jobseekers and businesses.

Regular professional development sessions are offered to workforce partners, including WIOA Titles and other stakeholders. These sessions ensure that a broad range of staff can benefit from training opportunities. Cross-training sessions occur during regularly scheduled Partner and Business Solution Team meetings, fostering a shared understanding of available programs and resources.

By employing a Collective Impact approach, we align resources with core and required partners to achieve our strategic vision and goals. Our focus on service alignment, referral systems, information sharing, and training ensures that resources are used effectively and efficiently to meet the needs of both jobseekers and businesses. This strategy positions us as a leader in regional workforce development, fostering collaboration and achieving measurable outcomes through a unified approach.

## **SECTOR STRATEGIES, CAREER PATHWAYS, AND CAREER READINESS**

*2.4 Describe the local board strategic plan designed to combine public and private resources to support sector strategies, career pathways, and career readiness skills development.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board envisions a thriving regional workforce ecosystem where businesses have access to skilled talent and residents can achieve meaningful employment and career advancement. By enhancing coordination and future-readiness, we will drive economic growth and ensure our region remains a leader in workforce excellence and community prosperity.

### Protocols for Planning Workforce Strategies that Anticipate Industry Needs

To remain responsive to the evolving demands of regional industries and ensure a future-ready workforce, our approach to workforce planning incorporates proactive strategies designed to anticipate both current and emerging industry needs. These strategies focus on building resilient, adaptable talent pipelines and fostering long-term economic growth through close collaboration with regional businesses. Key protocols include:

- **Business Services Coordinator**

A dedicated staff member serves as a Business Services Coordinator who, along with Business Solutions Teams, leads the coordination of business engagement activities and services, ensuring a seamless approach to business services, streamlining communication with businesses, assessing workforce needs, and coordinating tailored solutions. This role ensures ongoing relationship-building with regional businesses and helps align training programs with real-time labor market demands. This role is essential in ensuring that the workforce system aligns with the needs of regional businesses and jobseekers. Responsibilities include:

- *Providing Direct Business Services:* These include recruitment, screening, and referral to targeted jobs; presentations to business associations regarding workforce system services and labor market resources; coordination of special events for businesses; and providing customized labor market information.
- *Facilitating Business Access to Services:* The coordinator works closely with BST members and regional partners to ensure businesses can easily access workforce development services, including targeted recruitment systems that involve all BST partners.
- *Developing a Fee-for-Service Structure:* This includes creating a sustainable model to provide advanced services beyond those funded by grants.
- *Marketing Program Services:* The coordinator participates in the development of marketing materials, including brochures, and attends professional business groups to build relationships and market services.
- *Collecting and Distributing Labor Market Information:* By providing up-to-date, relevant labor market data, businesses can make informed decisions about hiring and

training needs.

The coordinator interacts with a variety of regional partners, including the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), Department of Social Services (DSS), K-12 Career and Technical Education (CTE) representatives, community colleges, Chambers of Commerce, and business associations.

- **Business Solutions Teams**

The four Business Solutions Teams (BSTs) positioned strategically throughout the region provide critical, direct services to businesses. These teams offer customized business services tailored to meet the specific needs of industries in the region.

- **Recruitment Services:**
  - Job Description Development
  - Job Postings
  - Candidate Screening & Job Matching
  - Job Fairs, Hiring Events, and Other Recruitment Events (both multi-company and company-specific)
  - Resume & Candidate Referrals
  - Work Experience & Intern Placement
  - Pre-Hire Assessments
- **Labor Market Information:**
  - *Wage Comparison Analysis*: Providing businesses with wage comparisons for similar jobs within the region and/or state.
  - *Industry/Occupation Demand Analysis*: Offering annual and projected demand data for specific industries or occupations to help businesses plan for future growth.
- **Consulting Services:**
  - Workforce Services Consultations
  - Job Fair & Hiring Event Development
  - Diversity Consultations & Workshops to help businesses recruit diverse candidate pools.
  - Customized Training Curriculum Development
  - Business Facility Tours
  - Connections to non-workforce resource providers, such as GenEdge, the Center for Manufacturing Excellence of SWVA, and legal advisors.
- **Training Services:**
  - On-the-Job Training (OJT) Placement & Funding Assistance
  - Incumbent Worker Training Assistance
  - Customized Trainings, Workshops, and Seminars
  - Assistance in finding appropriate training programs and providers

- **Targeted Funding to Support Businesses**

To fully support the needs of businesses in the region, we actively pursue discretionary grant funding to assist with workforce development efforts. These funds enable targeted skill

development, such as emerging worker training, employed worker training, on-the-job training, and job profiling to align business needs with training programs.

- *Job Profiling*: Through the American Council of Testing job profiling is a tool that helps businesses align the skills required for specific positions with training programs, ensuring that jobseekers are equipped with the exact competencies businesses need.

- **Maximizing Technology for Effective Communication**

We leverage B2B Engage®, a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, to track and measure business services and outcomes. This powerful tool helps us avoid duplication of effort and ensure a coordinated approach to business engagement.

**B2B Engage® Capabilities:**

- Tracks activities and services provided to businesses (including what services were provided, when, at what cost, and which partners were involved).
- Stores needs assessment information collected from businesses through various interactions, such as one-on-one meetings, job fairs, and general events.
- Measures business service activities to evaluate the impact of workforce services on regional industries.

**Needs of Incumbent and Underemployed Workers in the Region**

Our Strategic Plan includes efforts to meet the needs of employed (incumbent) and underemployed workers in the region. Employed worker training is a critical business service (and outreach) tactic. To support this activity, we use discretionary grant funds as well as WIOA Title 1 Adult and DLW, when available. The Business Services Coordinator is the contact for that activity and assists the business with requirements and the paperwork.

Many of the regional economic development representatives will reach out to the Business Services Coordinator and make a referral when they encounter a business that can benefit from this service. Our motto on this activity is *Upskill and Backfill* as in many cases a trained employed worker will get a promotion and create an opening for another worker. Once the relationship is built between the Business Services Coordinator and the company (through employed worker training) they will also seek out the Business Services Coordinator for talent search activities. With the constant changes in some industries, the need to retrain employees is even greater. For these incumbents, upskilling is necessary to simply retain their jobs.

In the spirit of the law, we have determined that there exists in our local area a sizeable group of individuals that lack economic self-sufficiency, commonly referred to as the ALICE population (previously mentioned). These underemployed individuals are a critical asset in being able to provide businesses with skilled talent. Our specialized training programs through discretionary grants, using an Integrated Education and Training model, are typically a good fit for this population because they build in flexibility and support in the program design.

**Development of Partners and Guidelines for Various Forms of On-the-Job Training**

A core pillar of our regional workforce strategy is the intentional development and alignment of partnerships to serve both businesses and jobseekers through robust work-based learning

opportunities. Recognizing that success in workforce development depends on collaboration, we have prioritized ongoing engagement with partners to align training efforts with evolving labor market needs. This alignment ensures that on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and other work-based learning models remain relevant, accessible, and responsive to the unique needs of our businesses.

Work-based learning opportunities are regularly discussed and shared at Partner and Business Solution Team meetings to ensure consistent, cross-organizational awareness of available programs. These meetings create an avenue for identifying gaps in training opportunities, improving referral processes, and streamlining business engagement strategies. A [Work-Based Learning Toolkit](#) was developed to assist businesses and workforce partners with implementation of WBL programs.

To further formalize these collaborative efforts, the use of Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs) and the Collaborative Funding Agreement provide structured methods for documenting, tracking, and leveraging shared resources across various partners. These frameworks not only enhance transparency and accountability but also serve as a blueprint for ensuring sustainable funding and resource-sharing practices.

Historically, apprenticeships have presented challenges in the region, particularly in securing business buy-in and streamlining processes for establishing new apprenticeship programs. To address these obstacles, we try to work collaboratively with our Virginia Works Apprenticeship Consultant to assist in developing targeted strategies to expand and simplify apprenticeship adoption. Our collaboration focuses on:

- Using our custom designed Work-Based Learning Toolkit that outline the process, benefits, and resources available for launching apprenticeships.
- Providing technical assistance to businesses interested in establishing industry-recognized apprenticeship programs.
- Leveraging federal and state resources to support apprenticeship-related costs, such as tuition, equipment, and wages.

Additionally, we are exploring industry-specific apprenticeship pathways in high-demand sectors to address critical skills gaps. The focus will be on customizing work-based learning solutions to meet both business needs and jobseeker capabilities, ensuring a pipeline of skilled workers for our region's most vital industries.

Our commitment to expanding on-the-job training opportunities also includes an emphasis on ensuring equitable access for traditionally underserved populations, including justice-involved individuals, youth, and individuals with disabilities. By leveraging existing partnerships with correctional facilities, educational institutions, and community-based organizations, we aim to create customized pathways to employment that meet the unique needs of these populations.

Ultimately, through coordinated efforts, process improvements, and resource sharing, we are building a sustainable infrastructure for work-based learning programs that not only addresses immediate labor market demands but also positions our region for long-term economic growth and workforce resiliency.

#### Standards and Metrics for Operational Delivery

Effective workforce development requires clear performance metrics and a sustainable funding



infrastructure to ensure long-term impact. We have developed key performance indicators (KPIs) that are integrated across all programs and initiatives to ensure accountability, transparency, and measurable outcomes. These metrics focus on value-driven outcomes that directly benefit the region's business community and jobseekers, including:

- Meaningful business engagement and service delivery.
- Meeting the needs of jobseekers with barriers to employment.
- Maximizing the return on investment of public funds brought to the region.

These KPIs guide strategic decision-making and ensure that all activities align with our mission, vision, and core values. They also inform resource allocation, ensuring that monetary and in-kind contributions—from both public and private sources—are leveraged to create a comprehensive and responsive workforce development system.

#### Alignment of Resources for Impact

All funds we source are strategically aligned to support four core programmatic elements:

- Jobseeker Services
- Business Services
- Outreach and System Development
- Administrative (Oversight/Management)

These elements are interconnected, as illustrated in Section 5 of the Strategic Plan, where the overlap between programmatic and administrative functions is visually represented. This overlap reflects the efficiency and value of an integrated workforce system, where business needs influence jobseeker services and vice versa. For example:

- Jobseeker programs are often tailored to address specific skill gaps identified by business partners.
- Outreach efforts aimed at increasing jobseeker participation also serve to strengthen relationships with businesses and community stakeholders.

Recognizing that Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds alone would not adequately address the region's diverse and evolving workforce challenges, we consistently seek additional funding sources to supplement and expand our efforts. Since 2017, we have brought into our region almost \$18,000,000 in discretionary grant funding to support workforce development initiatives, including expanding programming, piloting innovative initiatives, and addressing critical skill gaps in high-demand industries such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and skilled trades.

The Deputy Director will continue to play a pivotal role in these efforts, but we have begun re-organization to involve other key staff in these efforts to continue to secure discretionary and competitive funding opportunities from federal, state, local and private sources. These additional funds have allowed us to innovate and scale programs that address critical workforce needs, such as:

- Supporting the development of sector partnerships.
- Creating new integrated education and training programs.
- Offering work-based learning opportunities.
- Creating industry-specific credentialing pathways.

- Offering foundational and technical training for drop-out youth between the ages of 16 and 24.
- Supporting recovery programs for individuals with substance disorder.
- Supporting reentry programs for individuals who are justice-involved.

To further enhance financial sustainability and increase access to discretionary funding, we began exploring the development of a non-profit arm in 2022. This effort culminated in the establishment of the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Foundation in 2024, a critical step toward diversifying funding streams and creating new opportunities for public-private partnerships.

- Establishment of the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Foundation  
In 2024, we established the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Foundation, a non-profit arm of our organization, to diversify funding streams and increase access to private and philanthropic resources. The Foundation was created to:
  - Pursue private foundation grants, corporate sponsorships, and charitable contributions.
  - Expand discretionary funding opportunities.
  - Facilitate innovative public-private partnerships.

Our Foundation addresses the increasing demand for workforce services by enabling the region to provide flexible training offerings and pursue funding sources that were previously out of reach. This innovative approach allows us to leverage private-sector resources, create sustainable funding models, and reduce reliance on public funds. By doing so, we can respond quickly to emerging workforce needs and scale successful programs across the region.

Aligned with the core pillars of our Strategic Plan, the Foundation ensures that all financial resources—whether public or private—are directed toward achieving meaningful outcomes for both businesses and jobseekers. Its creation marks a significant milestone in our evolution as a workforce system, positioning us as a leader in workforce innovation and collaboration in Virginia and beyond.

- Looking Ahead: Building a Sustainable Workforce Ecosystem  
We will continue to prioritize resource alignment and accountability, using the Standards and Metrics for Operational Delivery as a guiding framework. With the support of federal, state, local, and private funding sources, we will remain focused on:
  - Expanding work-based learning opportunities, including apprenticeships.
  - Addressing critical skill gaps in high-demand industries.
  - Serving underserved, at-risk populations, including individuals with barriers to employment.
  - Leveraging public funds to generate new private investment in workforce development.

Through this integrated approach, we aim to create a sustainable, high-impact workforce ecosystem that drives economic growth, increases employment opportunities, and improves quality of life across the New River/Mount Rogers region.

### Alignment of Monetary and Other Resources to Support the Workforce Development System

We recognize that achieving a fully integrated and effective workforce system requires the strategic alignment of diverse financial resources and in-kind contributions. To sustain workforce initiatives, meet business demands, and support jobseekers—especially those with barriers to employment—we have adopted a multi-faceted approach to resource alignment that leverages public, private, and philanthropic funding streams.

This intentional alignment ensures that all available resources—whether monetary or in-kind—are maximized to deliver impactful workforce services across the region. The following outlines our resource alignment strategy and key approaches to ensuring efficient and effective use of funding:

- **Core Funding Streams**

We manage a variety of core funding sources to support the four key programmatic elements of our workforce development system:

- Jobseeker Services
- Business Services
- Outreach and System Development
- Administrative (Oversight/Management)

While federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds provide the foundation for workforce services, we recognize that WIOA funds alone are not sufficient to address the diverse and evolving needs of our region's workforce. Therefore, we have prioritized the pursuit of additional discretionary funding and the alignment of in-kind contributions to supplement WIOA funding.

- **In-Kind Contributions and Collaborative Resource Sharing**

In addition to monetary resources, in-kind contributions from partners and stakeholders play a critical role in supporting the workforce development system. These contributions include:

- Business-provided training facilities, equipment, and staff time.
- Community organizations providing wraparound services, such as housing assistance, transportation, and childcare.
- Educational institutions contributing classroom space, curriculum development, and instructors.

The Integrated Resource Teams, serve as a framework for resource sharing across partners. These teams ensure that all available resources are leveraged to meet the unique needs of jobseekers and businesses, creating a more efficient and holistic service delivery model.

Additionally, we use a Collaborative Funding Agreement to document and track shared resources, ensuring accountability and transparency in resource alignment.

- **Leveraging Funds for Maximum Impact**

Our approach to resource alignment focuses on leveraging public funds to attract additional private investment. This public-private funding model allows us to:

- Multiply the impact of public funds by aligning them with private-sector contributions.
- Create sustainable programming through diverse funding streams.
- Scale successful workforce initiatives across the region.

- **Strategic Resource Shifts and Adaptability**

We understand that workforce needs evolve over time, and therefore resource alignment must remain adaptable and responsive. The overlapping nature of our programmatic elements allows us to shift resources as needed to address emerging priorities. For example:

- Jobseeker Services funding can be adjusted to focus on specific populations (such as justice-involved individuals or youth) based on changing needs.
- Business Services resources can be reallocated to address skills gaps in high-demand industries as identified by our business partners.

This flexibility ensures that all available resources are used efficiently and that the workforce system remains nimble and responsive to both regional economic shifts and strategic priorities.

- **Accountability and Return on Investment (ROI)**

We are committed to accountability in resource management. We regularly track and report on the ROI of all public and private funds to ensure that resources are being used to drive positive outcomes for businesses, jobseekers, and the broader regional economy. This includes:

- Tracking job placements, wage gains, and credential attainment.
- Monitoring business engagement and satisfaction.
- Evaluating the long-term impact of workforce initiatives on regional economic growth.

By maintaining a data-driven approach to resource alignment, we ensure that every dollar spent contributes to achieving measurable, meaningful outcomes.

- **Building a Sustainable, Aligned Workforce System**

Our approach to aligning monetary and in-kind resources is a comprehensive, strategic process that leverages public and private funds to maximize impact. Through the establishment of the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Foundation, collaborative resource-sharing agreements, and data-driven accountability measures, we are long-term economic growth and opportunity. Our alignment strategy ensures that workforce services remain both effective and sustainable, empowering businesses, jobseekers, and community partners to succeed in a dynamic economic environment.

### Generation of New Sources of Funding to Support Workforce Development in the Region

We recognize that sustaining and expanding workforce services requires diversifying funding sources beyond traditional public funds. We have actively pursued innovative approaches to generate new sources of funding, ensuring that the workforce development system can adapt to changing regional needs and remain sustainable over time.

The establishment of the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Foundation in 2024 is a key milestone in our strategy to increase access to discretionary funding and reduce reliance on federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds. The Foundation serves as a dedicated non-profit entity focused on identifying, securing, and managing private-sector funds and philanthropic contributions to support workforce development initiatives across the region.

- **The Role of the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Foundation**

The creation of the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Foundation provides the region with a flexible, agile structure to pursue and manage new funding opportunities to support the work of the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board and the New

River/Mount Rogers Consortium Board. The Foundation enables us to expand beyond traditional public grants and leverage private-sector contributions to support key workforce initiatives. Key funding opportunities pursued by the Foundation include:

- Private foundation and other grant sources that support non-profit agencies.
- Revenue generated by foundation-sponsored training opportunities.
- Corporate sponsorships and donations.
- Charitable contributions from individuals and businesses.
- Public-private partnerships to fund specialized workforce programs.

Since its establishment, the Foundation has launched efforts to develop relationships with private funders, positioning the region to tap into new sources of financial support that were previously inaccessible.

- **Diversification of Funding Streams**

Our strategy to generate new funding sources focuses on diversifying funding streams to reduce reliance on WIOA and other public funds. By expanding funding beyond traditional government sources, we ensure that the workforce system remains resilient and adaptable to economic shifts and changing workforce needs. This diversified funding approach includes:

- Federal and state discretionary grants.
- Corporate investments in workforce training programs.
- Philanthropic and private foundation grants.
- Revenue generated through fee-based services and public-private partnerships.

For example, the Appalachian Regional Commission approved our Letter of Intent to apply for a *READY Grants to Grow* initiative for \$500,000 aimed at enhancing capacity within the Appalachian Region. Focus Areas to build capacity are at the individual, organizational, or community level, which includes staff training, strategic planning, expanding services, and launching community-led planning processes. Engaging with the *READY Grants to Grow* initiative presents a significant opportunity for us to enhance our foundation's capacity and contribute to sustainable economic development.

- **Generating Revenue Through Training Programs**

In addition to securing external funding, we are actively generating revenue by offering and providing training programs designed to enhance employability and help participants develop skills for employment. These fee-based training programs serve a dual purpose:

- *Meeting the Needs of Local Businesses:* By offering customized training solutions aligned with regional labor market needs, we help businesses address critical skills gaps and build a pipeline of qualified workers.
- *Providing Jobseekers with Credentials for Employment:* The training programs focus on equipping jobseekers and workers with in-demand skills and credentials that increase their employability and earning potential.

The revenue generated from these training programs is reinvested into the workforce development system, supporting the delivery of essential services and expanding outreach efforts to underserved populations. Examples of revenue-generating training programs include:

- Skilled Trades and pre-apprenticeship training.
- Employability training for individuals with barriers to employment.
- Healthcare credentialing programs to address regional shortages of healthcare workers.
- Manufacturing certifications aligned with business needs.



- Information technology (IT) certifications to prepare jobseekers for high-demand careers in the tech sector.

This approach not only diversifies funding streams but also creates a self-sustaining model that ensures workforce services can continue to grow and adapt to regional needs.

- **In-Kind Contributions and Resource Sharing**

In addition to generating monetary funding, we also actively pursue in-kind contributions from partners. These contributions play a vital role in reducing program costs and increasing the capacity of workforce programs. Examples of in-kind contributions include:

- Training facilities and equipment provided by businesses.
- Classroom space and instructional staff from local colleges and training providers.
- Wraparound services (e.g., childcare, transportation, housing assistance) from community partners.

These in-kind contributions are critical in ensuring that workforce development services are comprehensive and accessible to jobseekers with barriers to employment.

- **Accountability and Long-Term Impact**

We are committed to tracking and reporting on the return on investment (ROI) of all funds generated, ensuring that new funding sources are used effectively to achieve measurable outcomes. Key accountability measures include:

- Tracking the number of job placements, credential attainments, and wage increases.
- Monitoring business engagement and satisfaction.
- Evaluating the long-term impact of new funding sources on regional economic growth.

By ensuring transparency and accountability, we can demonstrate the value of private-sector contributions and attract additional investment in the workforce system.

- **Looking Ahead: Expanding the Foundation's Impact**

We will continue to scale efforts to generate sustainable funding sources that support regional workforce priorities. Planned efforts include:

- Expanding outreach to regional and national foundations and corporate sponsors.
- Developing fee-based services that generate revenue for reinvestment in workforce programs.
- Enhancing public-private partnerships to support sector-based workforce initiatives.

By focusing on innovative funding solutions, we are building a sustainable, adaptable workforce system that can respond to emerging workforce challenges and drive long-term economic growth.

## **SECTION 3: LOCAL AREA PARTNERSHIPS AND INVESTMENT STRATEGIES**

### **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM**

|                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>3.1</b> <i>Provide a description of the workforce development system in the local area.</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

In the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area, we have a comprehensive and integrated Workforce System designed to prepare an educated and skilled workforce that meets the evolving needs of businesses. The WIOA Titles, which serve as the foundation for workforce services and programs, are central to this system. These core programs are enhanced by a diverse array of additional regional initiatives and services, all aimed at improving employment outcomes, promoting self-sufficiency, and supporting economic development.

- **Title I: Workforce Development Activities**

This title focuses on providing employment and training services to adults, dislocated workers, and youth. It aims to increase access to employment opportunities, improve workforce skills, and promote career pathways that lead to sustainable employment. Programs under this title offer a wide range of services, including job search assistance, skills training, career counseling, and support services.

- Overseen by the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board
- Program Operator: People Incorporated (through a competitive bid process)

**WIOA Title I, Subtitle C: Job Corps**

Provides residential education and job training programs for at-risk youth ages of 16 and 24 to prepare them for successful careers.

- Blue Ridge Job Corps

- **Title II: Adult Education and Literacy**

This title supports programs that help individuals improve their literacy, numeracy, and English language skills. These services are critical for individuals seeking to enhance their educational attainment and increase their employability. Adult education programs also assist individuals in obtaining a high school equivalency credential and transitioning to postsecondary education or training.

- Mount Rogers Regional Adult Education
- New River Community College Regional Adult Education

**Additional Provider (Non-profit/Community-based organization)**

- Literacy of the New River Valley

- **Title III: Wagner-Peyser Employment Services**

This title focuses on providing jobseekers with access to employment opportunities through job matching, placement services, and labor market information. The Wagner-Peyser Act, which is part of Title III, ensures that employment services are available through One-Stop Career Centers, connecting jobseekers with businesses and providing critical support to both parties.

- Virginia Department of Workforce and Advancement (VaWorks)

- **Title IV: Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

This title provides services to individuals with disabilities to help them achieve meaningful employment and independence. Vocational rehabilitation programs offer a variety of supports, including career counseling, skills training, assistive technology, and job placement services. The goal is to help individuals with disabilities overcome barriers to employment and fully participate in the workforce.

- Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services
- Department for the Blind and Visually Impaired

- Community College Workforce Development Training Programs

New River, Wytheville, and Virginia Highlands community colleges offer a variety of workforce training programs designed to equip individuals with the skills needed for in-demand careers. All three colleges offer FastForward short-term training courses aimed at preparing students for careers in high-demand jobs. These programs are designed to be completed in six to twelve weeks, with financial assistance available.

- New River Community College's workforce training programs include:
  - Commercial Driver's License (CDL) – Class A
  - Pharmacy Technician
  - Medical Assistant
  - Nurse Aide (Certified Nursing Assistant)
  - Lean Six Sigma Yellow Belt & Green Belt
  - Manufacturing Technician (MT)/Manufacturing Specialist (MS)
  - OSHA 10/OSHA 30
  - Trades License Renewal Courses (for professionals such as plumbers, electricians, HVAC mechanics, and gas fitters)
  - Building Contractor Training
- Wytheville Community College's workforce training programs include:
  - Automotive Service Technology
  - Welding (GMAW; GTAW; FCAW; SMAW)
  - Commercial Truck Driving Class A
  - Power Line Worker
  - Heavy Equipment Operator
  - Industrial Maintenance
  - Off-Road Diesel Tech
- Virginia Highlands Community College's workforce training programs include:
  - Certified Billing and Coding Specialist
  - Commercial Driver's License
  - Certified Nurse Assistant
  - Phlebotomy Technician
  - Certified Fiber Optics Technician
  - NCCER Heavy Equipment Operator
  - Six Sigma Yellow Belt & Green Belt
  - OSHA Safety Training

- Title V of the Older Americans Act: Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

Provides low-income, unemployed individuals aged 55 and older with paid, part-time community service positions and job training opportunities to help them transition to unsubsidized employment.

- Virginia Department of Workforce Development and Advancement (VaWorks)

- *Registered Apprenticeship Program*: This program combines on-the-job training with related technical instruction, allowing participants to earn while they learn. Businesses can customize apprenticeship programs to meet specific industry needs, fostering a skilled workforce tailored to their operations.
- *Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)*: Supporting workers impacted by foreign trade through training and job placement services.
- *Wagner-Peyser Employment Services (ES)*: Connecting jobseekers with businesses through job matching and placement services.
- *Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG)*: Providing tailored employment services to veterans, including disabled and recently separated veterans.
- *Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers*: Offering specialized services to support the unique employment needs of migrant and seasonal agricultural workers.

- Programs administered by the Virginia Employment Commission:

- *Unemployment Insurance (UI)*: Providing temporary financial assistance to individuals who have lost their jobs.

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) authorized under Part A of Title IV of the Social Security Act.

Offering financial assistance and employment services to low-income families.

- Local Departments of Social Services

- Programs Offered by the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board.

We are dedicated to enhancing workforce services by targeting strategies that help emerging and transitioning populations, including those facing barriers to employment, gain the knowledge, skills, and credentials needed to succeed in the modern workforce. These efforts ensure that businesses can access the skilled talent they need to thrive in a dynamic labor market. By securing discretionary grants and developing innovative programs, we address regional workforce needs while supporting economic growth and adaptability. Through targeted programs, we create a robust and adaptable Workforce System that addresses critical talent shortages and removing barriers to employment for vulnerable populations. Key initiatives include:

- Youth development programs, such as *YouthBuild* (US DOL), which equips young people with leadership skills and industry-recognized credentials
- Pre- and post-release training and services offered through *Pathway Home 5* (US DOL), which supports justice-involved individuals as they transition back into the workforce—helping to reduce recidivism and increase public safety.
- Addressing the needs of individuals with substance use disorder through support from the Appalachian Regional Commission, recognizing that access to employment and

supportive services plays a critical role in promoting long-term recovery and economic stability.

- Programs to support disadvantaged and underrepresented populations through support of Health Resources and Services Administration and other federal and local funding opportunities by offering training opportunities, career counseling, and supportive services to help them enter/reenter the workforce.
- Programs that provide training to equip jobseekers and workers through the Appalachian Regional Commission with skills needed in high-demand industries, facilitating re-employment opportunities for those displaced by the coal industry's downturn.

- Support Provided by the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Foundation.

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Foundation is a charitable organization dedicated to supporting the initiatives of the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board (WDB) and the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area Consortium Board (CB). The Foundation focuses on meeting the needs of jobseekers by providing occupational skills training, personal development opportunities, and comprehensive supportive services to enhance employment success.

- Mission and Focus:

The Foundation is committed to assisting individuals from at-risk, disadvantaged, and underrepresented populations, including:

- Youth aged 16 to 24 without a high school diploma or marketable skills.
    - Individuals in recovery from substance use disorders.
    - Formerly incarcerated individuals reintegrating into the community.
    - Individuals living in poverty striving for better opportunities.

By enabling access to meaningful employment that offers family-sustaining wages and opportunities for advancement, the Foundation plays a pivotal role in transforming lives and communities.

- Support and Services:

Through financial contributions, the Foundation provides participants with assistance for:

- Travel expenses related to training.
    - Credentialing fees.
    - Childcare expenses.
    - Food and emergency housing.

These supports are aimed at facilitating the attainment and retention of employment. Notably, 100% of donations to the Foundation are allocated directly to participant support, with no funds used for operational costs.

- Leadership:

The Foundation is led by a dedicated team, including:

- Chair: Mike Miller, CEO, Avolant LLC.
    - Vice Chair: Thad Austin, HR Officer, Albany Industries.
    - Treasurer: Adam Kidd, Treasurer, Bland County.



Members of the Foundation Board are from diverse sectors, including local government, social services, and private industry, ensuring a comprehensive approach to workforce development.

By focusing on empowering individuals through employment, the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Foundation contributes significantly to the economic vitality and social well-being of the region.

#### Strategic Approach to Workforce Development System Alignment

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board collaborates closely with core program partners, community-based organizations, education and training providers, and businesses to align services in a manner that prepares a highly skilled workforce. We operate under a collective impact model, leveraging the expertise of diverse partners to create a seamless, integrated service delivery system that meets both the immediate and long-term needs of the regional workforce.

This alignment is guided by a set of core principles designed to enhance service delivery, maximize resource utilization, and achieve measurable outcomes for both jobseekers and businesses.

#### Core Guiding Principles for System Alignment:

- **Customer-Focused Service Delivery**

We recognize that businesses and jobseekers are the primary customers of the workforce system. Meeting their evolving needs is central to every interaction, service, and strategic initiative.

- *Unified Customer Approach:* All workforce system partners treat every individual seeking services as a shared customer, ensuring that no one is turned away without a solution or referral.
- *Continuous Feedback Loop:* We actively seek input from both jobseekers and businesses to adjust service delivery strategies in real-time, enhancing responsiveness and ensuring continuous improvement.

Anticipated outcome is a workforce system that delivers timely, relevant services to jobseekers and businesses, resulting in higher satisfaction rates and improved employment outcomes.

- **Functional Integration of Service Delivery**

The workforce system is designed to operate as a fully integrated network, with partners working collaboratively to maximize resources and deliver seamless services across the region.

- *Seamless Access:* The “no wrong door” approach ensures that customers are efficiently connected to the right services regardless of their entry point.
- *Shared Management Practices:* Workforce system partners collaborate on functional supervision to ensure streamlined operations, reduce duplication of efforts, and improve service delivery outcomes.

Anticipated outcome is a fully integrated workforce system where customers receive holistic, coordinated support tailored to their needs.

- **Commitment to Partnership and Collaborative Leadership**

A strong local workforce system depends on the commitment and synergy of its partners. We

foster a culture of collaboration to ensure alignment across all service providers.

- **Workforce System Partner Team:** Comprised of representatives from workforce system partners to address system challenges and opportunities. Key Objectives:
  - Develop and implement integrated service delivery strategies.
  - Create coordinated marketing and outreach plans to increase system visibility.
  - Enhance communication and accountability across all partners.

Anticipated outcome is a high-functioning partnership network that continually adapts to meet regional workforce needs.

- **Professional Development and Capacity Building**

We are committed to fostering high-performance centers with staff who are passionate about delivering quality services.

- *Continuous Learning Culture:* Partners collaborate to provide ongoing professional development for staff, ensuring they remain up-to-date on industry trends, best practices, and emerging technologies.
- *Leadership Development:* Future workforce leaders are cultivated through cross-training and mentorship opportunities.

Anticipated outcome is a workforce system staffed by highly skilled professionals equipped to handle complex workforce challenges.

- **Consensus Management for Decision-Making**

We emphasize consensus-driven decision-making to promote trust, ownership, and alignment among partners.

- *Collaborative Governance:* All partners participate in decision-making processes at various organizational levels, ensuring transparency and alignment of goals.
- *Trust Building:* Partners work together to foster a culture of mutual respect and shared responsibility, promoting long-term sustainability of the workforce system.

Anticipated outcome is a governance structure that supports equitable, transparent decision-making and enhances long-term system sustainability.

- **Coordinated Referral Process**

We prioritize seamless referrals across partner organizations to maximize resource utilization and ensure customers receive comprehensive support.

- *Common Intake Procedures:* Partners use shared intake and data-sharing protocols to reduce duplication and ensure consistent service delivery.
- *Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs):* The use of IRTs facilitates cross-program referrals and co-enrollment, ensuring customers receive all services they qualify for.

Anticipated outcome is a streamlined referral process that improves service accessibility and customer outcomes.

- **Co-Enrollment of Participants for Resource Maximization**

We promote co-enrollment strategies to optimize resource use and improve customer outcomes.

- Leveraging Resources: Federal, state, and local programs collaborate to co-enroll eligible participants, ensuring that customers can access a range of services without unnecessary barriers.
- Collaborative Funding Agreements: IRTs use funding agreements to document service provision and ensure transparency in cost allocation.

Anticipated outcome is an increased efficiency in resource utilization, resulting in better employment outcomes for jobseekers and higher return on investment for workforce programs.

- **Coordination with Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs)**

We maintain strong partnerships with Chief Local Elected Officials to ensure alignment between regional workforce strategies and local economic development priorities.

- *Cross-Board Engagement*: The Chairs of both boards attend each other's meetings to foster ongoing collaboration.
- *Annual Joint Planning*: Both boards and their executive committees meet annually to ensure joint decision-making and strategic alignment.

Anticipated outcome is a unified regional workforce strategy that reflects the priorities of both workforce and economic development leaders.

By adhering to these guiding principles, we aim to create a workforce system that is responsive, efficient, and capable of meeting the dynamic needs of businesses and jobseekers in the region. We remain committed to continuous improvement and collaborative leadership to drive positive workforce outcomes and regional economic growth.

#### Coordination and Interactions with Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs)

Collaboration and information sharing between the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area Consortium Board and the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board have been core practices since 2010. This partnership is essential to ensuring that workforce strategies remain aligned with regional economic development priorities and the evolving needs of the community.

The CLEOs play a critical governance role by appointing members to the Workforce Board, approving key policies and providing local oversight of workforce programs and services. In return, the Workforce Board keeps the Consortium Board well-informed of workforce initiatives, performance outcomes, and opportunities for regional innovation.

- **Key Coordination Mechanisms and Governance Practices**

- *Mutual Board Representation and Reporting*

To maintain transparency and foster a two-way exchange of information, the Chair of each board attends and provides updates at the other's meetings. This ongoing dialogue ensures that both boards are fully informed of regional workforce priorities, challenges, and successes.

- The Consortium Board receives regular updates on workforce system performance, fiscal accountability, and the implementation of strategic initiatives.
- The Workforce Board benefits from input and feedback from CLEOs regarding

local economic development goals and emerging community needs.

- *Joint Participation on Key Committees*

Members of both boards actively participate in the Workforce Development Board's Strategic Planning Committee and One-Stop Operations Committee. This structure ensures that both boards have an equal voice in shaping the region's workforce strategies and service delivery models.

- Strategic Planning Committee: Collaboratively develops long-term goals to strengthen workforce alignment with economic development strategies.
- One-Stop Operations Committee: Ensures that the region's workforce centers are delivering high-quality, integrated services to both jobseekers and businesses.

- *Two Annual Joint Meetings*

To reinforce collaboration and promote joint decision-making, the two boards come together each December for a formal Annual Joint Meeting. This meeting is an opportunity to:

- Review regional workforce performance metrics and outcomes.
- Identify shared priorities and emerging workforce trends.
- Develop coordinated responses to state and federal workforce policies.
- Discuss funding allocations and approve strategic initiatives for the coming year.

- *Executive Committee Collaboration*

In addition to the annual joint meeting, the Executive Committees of both boards meet at least once annually to address critical governance matters and ensure strategic alignment. These joint meetings facilitate:

- Proactive Problem-Solving: Addressing emerging challenges and identifying opportunities for regional workforce innovations.
- Collaborative Decision-Making: Ensuring that policies and initiatives are developed with input from both boards to achieve maximum impact.

### Strengthening Regional Governance and Accountability

Both boards are committed to fostering a culture of shared governance, accountability, and transparency to ensure the workforce system delivers results that meet the region's needs. This partnership prioritizes:

- *Data-Driven Decision-Making*: Regular sharing of performance data and labor market intelligence to guide policy development and funding decisions.
- *Policy Alignment*: Ensuring that local workforce strategies align with state and federal workforce policies while remaining responsive to the unique needs of the region.
- *Continuous Improvement*: Both boards actively seek feedback from businesses, jobseekers, and community partners to inform their decision-making and improve service delivery.

- *The Value of a Unified Regional Voice*

The collaboration between the two boards provides a unified regional voice that strengthens advocacy efforts at the state and federal levels. By working together, the two boards ensure that

the region's workforce needs are effectively communicated to policymakers, funding agencies, and other key stakeholders. This partnership has allowed the region to:

- Secure funding for innovative workforce programs.
- Expand access to training and credentialing opportunities for residents.
- Respond quickly to changing economic conditions and workforce demands.

Together, both boards demonstrate a commitment to regional collaboration, shared leadership, and continuous improvement, ensuring that the New River/Mount Rogers workforce system remains a model of effective governance and impactful service delivery.

- **Outcomes of Strong Coordination and Interaction**

The ongoing collaboration between both boards has led to several key outcomes:

- *Increased Accountability*: Clear lines of communication and shared governance have improved oversight and accountability for workforce programs.
- *Stronger Regional Alignment*: Joint strategic planning efforts have ensured that workforce initiatives align with regional economic development priorities.
- *Enhanced Service Delivery*: Collaborative governance has led to more efficient and integrated services for businesses and jobseekers across the region.

By continuing to foster a strong partnership between the boards, the region is well-positioned to adapt to future workforce challenges and opportunities, ensuring that the local workforce system remains responsive, resilient, and effective.

## **STRATEGIES AND SERVICES**

|                                                                                          |
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| <b>3.2</b> <i>Describe strategies and services that will be used in the local area..</i> |
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The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board is committed to building a business-driven workforce system that aligns with the needs of businesses across all industries, with a particular focus on small businesses and in-demand sectors and occupations. We employ a variety of strategies and services to facilitate business engagement, support the local workforce system, and strengthen coordination with economic development and Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs. The following strategies are key to achieving these objectives:

### Facilitating Business Engagement in Workforce Development Programs

We take a proactive approach to business engagement by fostering long-term partnerships with businesses and industry groups throughout the region. These efforts ensure that businesses play a central role in shaping workforce programs, creating a talent pipeline that meets their current and future needs. Key strategies for business engagement include:

- *Sector Partnerships*: We are the convener of three business led sector partnerships. Sector partnerships are workforce collaborative made up of companies, from the same/similar industry, with education, workforce development, economic development and community organizations that focus on key issues related to the target industry in their natural labor market region
- *Business Engagement through Business Services Teams*: Our Business Services Team works directly with businesses to understand their workforce challenges and offer tailored solutions. This team provides recruitment assistance, training support, labor market information, and access to grant opportunities that help businesses upskill their



workforce and improve retention. Our BSTs include a variety of partner organizations including those that are not workforce-focused. That allows the BSTs to assist businesses with non-workforce needs as well allowing for a more holistic approach to business engagement.

- *Targeted Outreach to Small Businesses and In-Demand Sectors:* Recognizing that small businesses are the backbone of the local economy, we prioritize outreach to small and mid-sized businesses to connect them with workforce programs. Additionally, we target in-demand sectors such as manufacturing, healthcare, information technology, and skilled trades to ensure workforce strategies align with regional labor market needs.
- *Customized Business Solutions:* We provide customized workforce solutions through programs such as Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), On-the-Job Training (OJT), Registered Apprenticeships, and Work-Based Learning (WBL) opportunities. These programs help businesses reduce training costs and improve workforce readiness.
- *Workshops & Summits:* We host a variety of workshops throughout the year and one annual Business Symposium (with additional workshops) on topics relevant to current business needs.

Anticipated outcome is an increased business participation in workforce programs, improved alignment between business needs and workforce services, and stronger business partnerships across the region.

#### Supporting a Local Workforce Development System that Meets the Needs of Businesses

We strive to create a responsive, efficient, and high-performing workforce system that provides seamless access to services for both businesses and jobseekers. Key strategies to support the local workforce system include:

- *Integrated Service Delivery Model:* We use an integrated One-Stop service delivery model, where partners collaborate to provide comprehensive services to businesses and jobseekers. This model ensures businesses can access recruitment assistance, training programs, and workforce support in one place.
- *Talent Pipeline Development:* We work closely with education and training providers to develop career pathways and sector-based training programs that address current and future workforce needs. These efforts are focused on building a sustainable talent pipeline that aligns with local economic priorities.
- *Business-First Service Culture:* The One-Stop system is committed to providing business-centered services, ensuring that the needs of businesses remain at the forefront of all workforce initiatives. This includes rapid response services to address layoffs and customized recruitment assistance to help businesses find the right talent.

Anticipated outcome is a workforce system that is aligned with business needs, resulting in stronger economic growth and improved employment outcomes for the region.

#### Better Coordinating Workforce Development Programs and Economic Development

We recognize that workforce development and economic development are deeply interconnected, and coordination between these two areas is essential for regional prosperity. We work closely with local and regional economic development organizations (EDOs) to align strategies, reduce duplication, and maximize impact. Key strategies for coordination with economic development include:

- *Joint Strategic Planning with Economic Development Partners:* We collaborate with local EDOs to ensure that workforce strategies align with economic development priorities. This includes working together to identify in-demand industries, target emerging sectors, and align training programs to meet the needs of growing businesses.
- *Shared Labor Market Intelligence:* Along with economic development partners, we share labor market information (LMI) to guide business attraction, retention, and expansion efforts. By providing real-time data on skills gaps, occupational demand, and wage trends, we help economic developers make data-driven decisions.
- *Collaborative Business Engagement:* Along with economic development partners, we conduct joint business outreach efforts, ensuring that businesses receive consistent messaging and coordinated support from both workforce and economic development entities.

Anticipated outcome is a strengthened collaboration between workforce and economic development partners, leading to more efficient use of resources, better service delivery, and improved business engagement.

#### Strengthening Linkages Between the One-Stop Delivery System and Unemployment Insurance (UI) Programs

We are committed to seamlessly integrating UI services with the One-Stop delivery system to provide comprehensive support to jobseekers and businesses. VaWorks is in four of our six centers and provide “meaningful UI” services in each of those centers. Through referrals we aim to reduce the duration of unemployment, connect UI claimants to training opportunities, and help businesses fill vacancies more quickly. Key strategies for strengthening linkages with UI programs include:

- The One-Stop system provides targeted reemployment services to individuals receiving UI benefits. This includes skills assessments, career counseling, and referrals to training programs to help UI claimants return to work faster.
- Rapid Response Services for Businesses  
We offer Rapid Response services to businesses experiencing layoffs or closures. These services help businesses manage workforce transitions and provide impacted workers with immediate access to UI services, reemployment support, and training programs.

Anticipated outcome is a faster reemployment for UI claimants, reduced unemployment rates, and improved connections between businesses and jobseekers.

We employ a comprehensive set of strategies to facilitate business engagement, support a responsive workforce development system, coordinate with economic development partners, and strengthen linkages with UI programs. These efforts are designed to create a seamless, business-driven workforce system that meets the needs of both businesses and jobseekers, driving regional economic growth and sustainable workforce development.

#### **SERVICE PRIORITY**

*3.3 Describe how the direction given by the Governor and the local board to the one-stop operator to ensure priority for adult career and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board ensures that the One-Stop Operator and workforce system partners prioritize adult career and training services for recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, in accordance with the direction provided by the Governor and state policy guidelines under WIOA Title I.

Our policies and practices are designed to ensure that these priority groups receive equitable access to services, targeted outreach, and customized support to overcome barriers to employment and achieve sustainable career outcomes. We provide ongoing guidance, monitoring, and technical assistance to the One-Stop Operator to ensure that priority of service is effectively implemented and continuously improved.

- **Strategies to Ensure Priority of Service**

With our One-Stop Operator, we use a multi-faceted approach to ensure that priority populations are identified, engaged, and served effectively. These strategies include:

- **Targeted Outreach and Recruitment of Priority Populations**

To ensure priority populations are aware of the services available to them, the One-Stop Operator works with community-based organizations, public assistance agencies, and education partners to conduct targeted outreach and identify eligible individuals. Key outreach strategies include:

- *Collaboration with Public Assistance Programs:*
  - Partner with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Medicaid agencies to identify and refer recipients of public assistance to workforce services.
- *Partnerships with Community-Based Organizations:*
  - Work closely with nonprofits, faith-based organizations, housing authorities, and food banks to connect low-income individuals to One-Stop services.
- *Partnerships with Adult Education and Literacy for Basic Skills Deficient Individuals:*
  - Partner with Adult Education and Literacy Programs to identify individuals who are basic skills deficient and refer them for career and training services.

Anticipated outcome is increased engagement with priority populations through strategic partnerships and targeted outreach.

- **Common Intake and Assessment Process to Identify Priority Populations**

The One-Stop system uses a common intake process that includes eligibility screening and skills assessments to quickly identify individuals who qualify for priority of service. During the intake process, staff will:

- **Verify Public Assistance Status:**
  - Identify individuals receiving TANF, SNAP, Medicaid, or other public benefits as part of the intake process.
  - Assess Income Levels:
- Conduct income-based eligibility assessments to determine whether individuals meet the criteria for low-income status.
- Identify Basic Skills Deficiencies:
- Administer basic skills assessments (such as TABE) to determine if individuals fall

below established literacy and numeracy levels.

Anticipated outcome is accurate identification of priority populations during the intake process, ensuring that eligible individuals are fast-tracked to services.

- **Priority of Service in Program Enrollment and Training Opportunities**

The One-Stop Operator ensures that priority populations receive first consideration for enrollment in career services, training programs, and supportive services. Staff are trained to ensure that priority status is applied consistently across all WIOA-funded programs. Key practices include:

- Enrollment Prioritization: Priority populations are given first access to WIOA-funded training programs, including occupational skills training, on-the-job training (OJT), work-based learning, and apprenticeships.
- Case Management and Individualized Service Plans: Each priority participant receives individualized career counseling and a customized service plan to address their unique barriers to employment.
- Supportive Services: Priority populations have access to supportive services such as transportation assistance, childcare, and work-related expenses to help them successfully complete their training programs.

Anticipated outcome is priority populations receiving timely and targeted services that address their unique needs, improving their chances of securing and retaining employment.

- **Staff Training and Continuous Improvement**

We provide ongoing training and technical assistance to One-Stop staff to ensure they fully understand and implement priority of service policies. Training topics include:

- Understanding Priority Populations:
  - Ensuring staff can identify and engage priority populations during intake and service delivery.
- Applying Priority of Service Policies:
  - Training staff on how to apply priority of service rules consistently and how to document priority status in case files and reporting systems.
- Cultural Competency and Trauma-Informed Care:
  - Ensuring staff are equipped to serve vulnerable populations with empathy, respect, and cultural sensitivity.

Anticipated outcome is a workforce system that consistently applies priority of service policies, ensuring equitable access for all eligible individuals.

- **Monitoring and Accountability**

We conduct regular monitoring and performance reviews to ensure the One-Stop Operator is effectively implementing priority of service policies. Key monitoring practices include:

- Case File Reviews:
  - Ensure that priority status is documented in participant case files and that eligible individuals are receiving appropriate services.
- Performance Tracking:
  - Track enrollment, completion, and employment outcomes for priority

- populations to ensure services are resulting in positive outcomes.
- Continuous Improvement:
    - Use data and feedback to identify gaps in service delivery and implement corrective actions to improve the effectiveness of priority services.

Anticipated outcome is continuous improvement in service delivery, resulting in higher engagement, retention, and success rates for priority populations.

We are committed to ensuring that priority populations—recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient—receive equitable access to career and training services. Through targeted outreach, streamlined intake processes, prioritized enrollment, and continuous staff training, we ensure that these individuals have the support they need to overcome barriers to employment and achieve long-term career success.

We will continue to monitor and improve its priority of service policies, ensuring that the workforce system remains equitable, responsive, and effective in meeting the needs of the region's most vulnerable populations.

## **COORDINATION WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

*3.4 Describe how the local board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with economic development activities carried out in the region in which the local area is located (or planning region) and promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board works in close partnership with regional economic development organizations (EDOs), chambers of commerce, local governments, and business associations to ensure that workforce investment activities are aligned with regional economic growth strategies. By fostering collaborative partnerships and implementing entrepreneurial support initiatives, we play a critical role in supporting business creation, retention, and expansion, while also promoting entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services. This coordinated approach ensures that workforce and economic development efforts are fully integrated to drive regional prosperity, job creation, and talent development.

- *Coordination with Economic Development Partners:* We coordinate workforce investment activities with regional economic development organizations (EDOs) through a formalized partnership framework that ensures ongoing collaboration, data sharing, and joint planning. Key strategies for coordination include:
- *Joint Economic and Workforce Planning:* We collaborate with local and regional EDOs to align workforce strategies with regional economic development priorities. This includes participating in regional economic development planning sessions and ensuring that workforce programs are designed to support business recruitment, retention, and expansion efforts.
- *Shared Labor Market Data and Analysis:* We work with EDOs to provide real-time labor market information (LMI), including skills gap analyses, wage trends, and occupational demand forecasts, to inform economic development strategies. This data is used to ensure workforce training programs are targeted to in-demand industries and emerging sectors in the



region.

- *Business Retention and Expansion Support*: We support business retention and expansion efforts by providing rapid response services, upskilling programs for incumbent workers, and customized recruitment services to help businesses retain talent and grow their operations.

Anticipated outcome is stronger alignment between workforce and economic development efforts, resulting in greater economic resilience, job growth, and workforce readiness.

- **Promoting Entrepreneurial Skills Training and Microenterprise Services**

Recognizing the importance of entrepreneurship and small businesses in driving regional economic growth, We partner with economic development organizations, small business development centers (SBDCs), and community colleges to provide entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services to jobseekers, aspiring entrepreneurs, and small business owners.

Key initiatives include:

- *Entrepreneurial Skills Training Programs*: We support entrepreneurial skills training programs that help individuals develop the skills necessary to start and grow their own businesses. These programs include business planning workshops, financial literacy courses, and marketing training.
- *Partnerships*: We partner with the Virginia SBDC Network, local chambers of commerce, and community colleges to deliver entrepreneurship programs that focus on business startup basics, accessing capital, and navigating local regulations.
- *Target Populations*: Entrepreneurial training programs are particularly promoted to dislocated workers, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and youth who are interested in self-employment opportunities.
- *Microenterprise Support Services*: We work with partners to offer microenterprise services, including access to microloans, mentorship, and business coaching. These services are designed to help small business owners and entrepreneurs access the resources they need to succeed.
- *Business Incubators and Co-Working Spaces*: We partner with local business incubators and co-working spaces to provide affordable office space, networking opportunities, and shared business resources to entrepreneurs and small business owners.
- *Workforce as a Catalyst for Small Business Growth*: We help entrepreneurs access talent by providing recruitment support, on-the-job training (OJT) programs, and work-based learning opportunities to help them build their workforce.

Anticipated outcome is an increased entrepreneurial activity and small business growth, contributing to regional job creation and economic diversification.

- **Sector Strategies that include Sector Partnerships to Support Regional Economic Development**

Our sector strategy approach ensures that workforce investment activities are targeted to high-growth industries and in-demand occupations that align with regional economic development priorities. Key sectors in the region include:

- Manufacturing, Logistics, and Warehousing
- Healthcare and Human Services
- Construction and Skilled Trades
- Agri-business
- Energy & Utilities

- IT/Advanced Technology

Currently we are convening three Sector Partnerships (Manufacturing, Logistics, & Warehousing, Healthcare & Human Services and Construction & Skilled Trades). For Economic Developers the Sector Partnerships are a place for focused work with existing key industries on talent and other questions related to competitiveness; a meaningful venue for working with workforce development and education; a framework for organizing the strategies needed to support critical industries; and a tool to truly understand the strengths and opportunities of existing industry in a region that can inform retention, growth and attraction strategies. Anticipated outcome is a stronger regional talent pipeline that supports business growth and economic competitiveness.

- Collaborative Business Engagement Efforts

With our economic development partners, we conduct joint business engagement efforts to ensure that businesses have seamless access to both workforce and economic development services. Key collaborative business engagement activities include:

- *Joint business Visits and Roundtables*: Along with economic development partners, we conduct joint business visits to better understand workforce needs and provide coordinated solutions. Business roundtables are regularly held to ensure businesses have a platform to provide feedback and influence workforce programs.
- *Shared Business Services Teams*: Our Business Services Team works closely with economic development staff to provide comprehensive services to businesses, including recruitment support, incumbent worker training, and access to workforce grants.

Anticipated outcome is improved business engagement, stronger partnerships with businesses, and more effective service delivery.

- Leveraging Workforce and Economic Development Resources

We ensure that workforce and economic development resources are maximized and aligned to reduce duplication of efforts and improve outcomes. Key resource alignment strategies include:

- *Leveraging State and Federal Grants*: Along with economic development partners, we collaborate to secure state and federal funding for workforce and economic development initiatives, ensuring that the region has the resources needed to support business growth and job creation.
- *Pooling Resources for Small Business Support*: Workforce and economic development partners work together to pool resources and provide technical assistance, mentorship, and access to capital for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Anticipated outcome is more efficient use of resources, leading to enhanced service delivery and greater regional impact.

We play a key role in coordinating workforce investment activities with economic development efforts across the region, ensuring that workforce strategies are aligned with regional economic goals. By promoting entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services, we help foster a culture of innovation and small business growth, contributing to economic diversification, job creation, and long-term prosperity for the region.

Through targeted partnerships, sector strategies, and joint business engagement efforts, we are committed to driving regional economic growth and supporting the development of a resilient, adaptable workforce.

## **COORDINATION WITH SECONDARY AND POSTSECONDARY PROGRAMS**

*3.5 Describe how the local board coordinates education and workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board collaborates closely with secondary schools, community colleges, universities, and career and technical education (CTE) providers to ensure that education and workforce programs are aligned to meet the current and future demands of the regional labor market. This coordination helps create seamless pathways from education to employment, reduces duplication of services, and ensures that students and jobseekers are equipped with the skills and credentials needed for in-demand careers.

Our education partnerships are focused on developing career pathways, expanding work-based learning opportunities, and aligning training programs with business needs.

- **Partnerships with Secondary Education Programs**

We work with local school divisions, high schools, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs to ensure that students are prepared for postsecondary education and careers in high-demand industries. Key coordination strategies include:

- *Sector Partnerships:* Currently we are convening three Sector Partnerships (Manufacturing, Logistics, & Warehousing, Healthcare & Human Services and Construction & Skilled Trades). For Educators, the sector partnerships are a vehicle to identify, build and refine curriculum, programs and credentials that are wanted and needed by businesses and the only way to truly create industry-driven career pathway systems.
- *Career Lattice/Pathway Development:* Through our Sectors Partnerships, we collaborate with secondary schools to develop and promote career pathways in advanced manufacturing/logistics/distribution, Healthcare & Human Services and Construction/Skilled Trades. These pathways provide clear, structured routes from high school to postsecondary education and employment.
- *Member of many CTE Advisory Councils:* We attend meetings and provide additional LMI data when requested.
- *Career Exploration and Counseling Services:* We support career exploration programs in high schools, including career fairs, business visits, and industry tours, to expose students to local job opportunities and in-demand careers. One-Stop staff and Business Services Teams participate in these events to provide career counseling and workforce services.

Anticipated outcome is increased alignment between secondary education programs and regional workforce needs, ensuring students are better prepared for postsecondary education and careers.

- **Coordination with Postsecondary Education Programs**

We partner with community colleges, universities, and other postsecondary training providers to ensure that education and workforce programs are aligned with regional economic development priorities. Key coordination strategies include:

- *Aligning Training Programs with Business Needs:* We work with postsecondary institutions to align training programs and credentials with local labor market demands. This includes customizing curriculum based on business input to ensure students graduate with industry-recognized certifications and credentials. Key Postsecondary Partners:
  - New River Community College
  - Wytheville Community College
  - Virginia Highlands Community College
  - Radford University
  - Virginia Tech
  - Emory and Henry
  - Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center
- *Co-Enrollment in Workforce and Education Programs:* We promote co-enrollment opportunities between workforce programs and postsecondary education programs to ensure students can access both academic instruction and workforce services without duplication. For example: Students enrolled in community college programs may also receive career counseling, supportive services, and job placement assistance through the One-Stop system.
- *Credit for Prior Learning and Industry Credentials:* We work with postsecondary partners to ensure that students and jobseekers can earn college credit for prior learning experiences and industry-recognized credentials. This helps students complete degree programs faster and reduce educational costs.
- *Sector Partnerships:* Currently we are convening three Sector Partnerships (Manufacturing, Logistics, & Warehousing, Healthcare & Human Services and Construction & Skilled Trades). For Educators, the sector partnerships are a vehicle to identify, build and refine curriculum, programs and credentials that are wanted and needed by businesses and the only way to truly create industry-driven career pathway systems.
- *Career Lattice/Pathway Development:* Through our Sectors Partnerships, we collaborate with secondary schools to develop and promote career pathways in advanced manufacturing/logistics/distribution, Healthcare & Human Services and Construction/Skilled Trades. These pathways provide clear, structured routes from high school to postsecondary education and employment.
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Anticipated outcome is better alignment between postsecondary education programs and workforce needs, resulting in higher job placement rates and more responsive training programs.

- **Joint Planning and Governance Structures**

We engage in joint planning efforts with education partners to coordinate strategies and avoid duplication of services. These joint efforts include:

- *Participation on Advisory Committees:* We serve on postsecondary advisory committees, including community college program advisory boards, to ensure that education programs remain relevant to business needs.
- *Shared Governance and Planning Efforts:* We work with education partners to align regional plans and initiatives, ensuring that workforce and education strategies are coordinated and mutually reinforcing.
- *Braiding of Resources:* We collaborate with education partners to leverage multiple funding sources, including WIOA funds, state grants, and private-sector investments, to

maximize resources and avoid duplication.

Anticipated outcome is more efficient use of resources and greater alignment between workforce and education initiatives.

- **Expanding Access to Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeships**

We actively promote work-based learning opportunities in collaboration with secondary and postsecondary education partners to help students gain hands-on experience and transition into the workforce. A Work-Based Learning Toolkit was developed to help promote the use of WBL throughout the region. Key initiatives include:

- *Registered Apprenticeships*: We work with postsecondary institutions to integrate Registered Apprenticeships into academic programs, allowing students to earn credentials and gain work experience simultaneously.
- *Internships and Externships*: We partner with businesses and education providers to offer internship and externship opportunities for students in high-demand fields.
- *OJT*
- *Incumbent Worker Training*
- *Pre-Apprenticeship Programs*: We support the use of pre-apprenticeship programs, providing students with foundational skills and a direct pathway into Registered Apprenticeships. Anticipated outcome is increased access to work-based learning opportunities, helping students and jobseekers gain practical skills and improve employment outcomes.

- **Avoiding Duplication of Services**

We coordinate closely with secondary and postsecondary education programs to ensure that workforce and education activities are aligned, services are enhanced, and duplication is avoided. By fostering strong partnerships, integrating service delivery, and promoting work-based learning opportunities, we ensure that students and jobseekers are prepared to meet the demands of the regional labor market and that businesses have access to a skilled, competitive workforce. These efforts result in seamless education-to-career pathways, improved employment outcomes, and stronger regional economic growth.

## **COORDINATION WITH COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
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| <i>3.6 Describe how the local board will collaborate on local workforce investment activities with the community colleges in their area in the planning and delivery of workforce and training services</i> |
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The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board collaborates with community colleges across the region to plan, coordinate, and deliver workforce and training services that address the current and future needs of local businesses and jobseekers. These partnerships ensure that education and workforce programs are aligned with labor market demand, and they promote seamless pathways from education to employment.

Given that Virginia's community colleges receive significant state funding through programs such as FastForward and G3 (Get a Skill, Get a Job, Give Back) to reduce or eliminate tuition costs for workforce training programs, our focus has shifted from tuition support to facilitating business engagement, promoting program awareness, and ensuring alignment with regional workforce needs. Our community college partners include:

- New River Community College
- Wytheville Community College



- Virginia Highlands Community College

These institutions play a critical role in training the region's workforce by offering short-term credentialing programs, apprenticeships, and customized training solutions to meet business demand.

- Alignment of Education and Workforce Strategies

We work closely with community colleges to ensure that workforce programs are aligned with regional economic development priorities and business needs. This alignment helps ensure that students and jobseekers are prepared to enter high-demand occupations in industries such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, IT, and skilled trades. Key coordination strategies include:

- *Regional Workforce Planning Sessions*: We participate in regional workforce planning sessions with community colleges to ensure that training programs are responsive to labor market trends and aligned with in-demand career pathways.
- *Program Advisory Committees*: We serve on CTE advisory committees to provide business feedback and labor market insights that help shape training programs and curricula.
- *Shared Labor Market Data*: We provide real-time labor market information (LMI) to community colleges to guide program development and enrollment decisions. This ensures that training programs are targeted to high-growth sectors and address regional skills gaps.

Anticipated outcome is enhanced alignment between community college programs and regional workforce needs, ensuring that students and jobseekers have the skills and credentials required by local businesses.

- Most of the Community Colleges in the region have some sort of free tuition for graduating seniors heading to the community. This is in support of foundations and localities. These programs do require some sort of community service.
- Wytheville Community College and the WIOA Youth Program partner to bring a [Youth Career Camp](#) prior to summer work experience.

- Coordination of Workforce Training Services

While community colleges receive substantial state funding through FastForward and G3 programs to cover tuition costs for workforce training, we play a vital role in coordinating workforce services and business engagement efforts to maximize the impact of these programs. Key coordination strategies include:

- *Sector Partnerships*: Currently we are convening three Sector Partnerships (Manufacturing, Logistics, & Warehousing, Healthcare & Human Services and Construction & Skilled Trades). For Educators, the sector partnerships are a vehicle to identify, build and refine curriculum, programs and credentials that are wanted and needed by businesses and the only way to truly create industry-driven career pathway systems.
- *Promoting FastForward and G3 Programs*: We work with community colleges to promote FastForward and G3 programs to jobseekers, businesses, and community partners. This includes integrating career counseling and job placement services through the One-Stop system to connect individuals with no-cost or low-cost credentialing programs.

- *Customized Training for Businesses:* We collaborate with community colleges to deliver customized training programs for local businesses, particularly in advanced manufacturing, healthcare, IT, and other in-demand industries.

Anticipated outcomes include increased business engagement and participation in workforce training programs, ensuring that community college programs remain responsive to industry needs.

- **Expanding Work-Based Learning Opportunities**

We partner with community colleges to expand work-based learning opportunities, such as apprenticeships, internships, co-ops, and pre-apprenticeships, to provide students with hands-on experience and businesses with a skilled talent pipeline. Key initiatives include:

- *Registered Apprenticeships:* We support the integration of Registered Apprenticeships into community college programs, allowing students to earn wages while gaining industry-recognized credentials.
- *Pre-Apprenticeship and Internship Programs:* We partner with community colleges to promote pre-apprenticeship and internship programs that help students gain practical experience and make direct connections with local businesses.

Anticipated outcome is increased access to work-based learning opportunities, helping students transition from education to employment more effectively.

- **Addressing Barriers to Employment through Supportive Services**

While tuition assistance is covered by state-funded programs such as FastForward and G3, we collaborate with community colleges to provide additional supportive services to help students and jobseekers overcome non-financial barriers to employment. Key supportive services include:

- *Career Counseling and Job Placement Assistance:* We work with community colleges to provide career counseling, resume assistance, and job placement services through the One-Stop system to help students transition into the workforce.
- *Supportive Services for At-Risk Populations:* We coordinate with community colleges to offer wraparound services, such as transportation assistance, childcare, and access to technology, to help at-risk students complete their training programs.

Anticipated outcome is improved program completion rates and employment outcomes for students facing barriers to success.

- **Avoiding Duplication of Services**

To ensure efficient use of resources and avoid duplication of services, we collaborate with community colleges to streamline service delivery and maximize the impact of available funding. Key strategies to avoid duplication include:

- *Co-Enrollment in Programs:* We encourage co-enrollment in workforce and community college programs, allowing participants to access both academic instruction and workforce services without duplicating efforts.
- *Data Sharing and Referral Networks:* Along with community colleges, we maintain data-sharing agreements on co-enrolled student/participants and referral networks to ensure that participants receive the right services at the right time.

Anticipated outcome is a more efficient use of resources, resulting in greater impact for students, jobseekers, and businesses.

Our collaboration with community colleges ensures that workforce training programs are aligned with regional economic needs and accessible to all jobseekers. With tuition assistance provided through state-funded programs such as FastForward and G3, we focus on coordinating workforce services, promoting business engagement, and addressing barriers to employment. By fostering strong partnerships and expanding work-based learning opportunities, we help create seamless pathways from education to employment, ensuring that students, jobseekers, and businesses benefit from a skilled and competitive workforce that drives regional economic growth.

## **COORDINATION OF TRANSPORTATION AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES**

*3.7 Describe how the local board will coordinate workforce investment activities in the local area with the provision of transportation, including public transportation, and other appropriate supportive services in the local area.*

Access to reliable transportation is one of the greatest barriers to employment in the New River/Mount Rogers region, particularly in rural areas where public transportation options are limited or nonexistent. The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board recognizes that transportation challenges can prevent jobseekers from accessing training programs, workforce services, and employment opportunities. Therefore, we prioritize creative solutions and collaborative partnerships to help individuals overcome transportation barriers and access critical supportive services.

- **Addressing the Lack of Public Transportation**

The region does not have a robust public transportation system, which presents a significant barrier for jobseekers, especially those in remote or rural areas. To address this gap, we collaborate with local governments, community organizations, and businesses to implement alternative transportation solutions and supportive services. Key strategies to address the lack of public transportation include:

- *Carpooling and Ride-Share Programs:* We promote ride-share and carpooling programs through business partnerships and community-based organizations to help individuals get to work and training sites.
- *Access to Driver's Education and Licensing Assistance:* For individuals who lack a valid driver's license, we partner with community colleges and nonprofit organizations to offer driver's education programs and assistance with licensing fees. These services are particularly important for youth, low-income individuals, and returning citizens.

Anticipated outcome is increased access to employment and training opportunities through creative transportation solutions tailored to the needs of a rural region.

- **Providing Supportive Services to Address Transportation Barriers**

We offer supportive services to help jobseekers overcome transportation challenges and other barriers to employment. These services are provided through WIOA Title I funds and in collaboration with One-Stop partners. Key supportive services include:

- *Gas Cards and Transportation Vouchers:* We provide gas cards and transportation vouchers to eligible participants who need assistance traveling to training programs, job interviews, and employment sites.
- *Vehicle Repairs and Maintenance Assistance:* We partner with local nonprofits and community organizations to offer vehicle repair assistance programs, ensuring that individuals with access to a vehicle can maintain reliable transportation.

- *Assistance with Vehicle Purchases:* In some cases, we collaborate with community organizations that provide low-interest loans or vehicle donation programs to help eligible individuals purchase a reliable vehicle.
- *Virtual Service Delivery:* To reduce the need for in-person travel, we have expanded virtual service delivery options, allowing jobseekers to access career counseling, job training, and supportive services online.

Anticipated outcome is reduced transportation barriers for jobseekers, resulting in higher program participation and employment retention rates.

- **Partnering with Community and Faith Based Organizations** We coordinate with local nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and human service agencies to ensure that jobseekers have access to transportation assistance and other supportive services. Key partnerships include:
  - *Local Human Services Agencies:* We work with local Departments of Social Services to connect jobseekers with transportation assistance programs and financial support for transportation-related expenses.
  - *Faith-Based Organizations and Nonprofits:* We partner with churches and nonprofit organizations that provide volunteer transportation services for individuals without access to a vehicle.
  - *Community Action Agencies:* We collaborate with community action agencies to offer wraparound services that address transportation, housing, childcare, and other critical needs.

Anticipated outcome is stronger partnerships with community organizations, ensuring comprehensive support for jobseekers facing transportation challenges.

Anticipated outcome is enhanced transportation solutions, helping workers access and retain employment.

- **Coordination with One-Stop Partners**  
We coordinate with One-Stop partners to ensure that transportation assistance and supportive services are available to all WIOA participants. Key coordination strategies include:
  - *Integrated Service Delivery:* One-Stop staff work with jobseekers to assess transportation needs and connect them with available resources.
  - *Referral System:* We maintain a referral system to ensure that participants are referred to community partners that can provide transportation assistance and supportive services.

Anticipated outcome is improved service delivery through the One-Stop system, ensuring that transportation assistance is part of a comprehensive support plan.

While our region lacks public transportation infrastructure, we take a proactive approach to addressing transportation barriers by partnering with community organizations and One-Stop partners to provide alternative solutions and supportive services. Through gas cards, ride-share programs, vehicle repair assistance, and virtual service delivery, we ensure that jobseekers can access training programs and employment opportunities, ultimately improving workforce participation and retention. We remain committed to continuously identifying innovative transportation solutions to meet the needs of jobseekers and businesses in this largely rural region.

## COORDINATION WITH STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

*3.8 Describe the plans and strategies for, and assurances concerning, maximizing coordination of services provided by the State employment service under the Wagner-Peyser Act and services provided in the local area through the one-stop delivery system, to improve service delivery and avoid duplication of services.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board is committed to maximizing coordination between the State employment service under the Wagner-Peyser Act and the One-Stop delivery system to provide a seamless, customer-centered service experience for jobseekers and businesses. Through shared planning, integrated service delivery models, and continuous communication, we ensure that Wagner-Peyser services and WIOA-funded services are aligned and complementary, avoiding duplication of efforts while enhancing service quality and efficiency.

The Virginia Department for Workforce and Advancement (VaWorks) is a key One-Stop partner in delivering Wagner-Peyser services, including job search assistance, labor market information, and business services. We work closely with VaWorks to coordinate service delivery and ensure that Wagner-Peyser staff are fully integrated into the One-Stop service model.

- **Integrated Service Delivery Model**

We have adopted an integrated service delivery model to ensure that Wagner-Peyser services are fully coordinated with other One-Stop services. Under this model, Wagner-Peyser staff work alongside WIOA-funded staff to provide a comprehensive set of workforce services to jobseekers and businesses. Key components of the integrated service delivery model include:

- *Shared Intake and Assessment Process:* We have implemented a common intake process across the One-Stop system, ensuring that jobseekers are streamlined into the appropriate services regardless of their point of entry. This approach avoids duplicative intake processes and ensures consistent data collection and service planning.
- *Cross-Training of Staff:* Wagner-Peyser staff and WIOA-funded staff participate in cross-training to ensure that all staff members are knowledgeable about available services and can make appropriate referrals across programs. This enhances service coordination and improves the customer experience.
- *Co-Enrollment in Programs:* We promote co-enrollment of jobseekers in Wagner-Peyser and WIOA programs to ensure that individuals receive all the services they are eligible for without unnecessary duplication.

Anticipated outcome is a seamless, customer-centered service delivery system that reduces service duplication and ensures jobseekers receive comprehensive support.

- **Collaborative Planning and Communication**

With VaWorks, we engage in collaborative planning efforts to ensure that Wagner-Peyser services are fully aligned with local workforce strategies. Key collaborative planning activities include:

- *Joint Strategic Planning:* Along with VaWorks, we participate in joint strategic planning sessions to ensure that Wagner-Peyser services and WIOA services are aligned with the



region's workforce needs and economic development goals.

- *Regular Partner Meetings:* We facilitate monthly One-Stop partner meetings, including VaWorks staff, to discuss service coordination, program updates, and emerging workforce trends. These meetings ensure ongoing communication and alignment of services.
- *Data Sharing and Performance Tracking:* Along with VaWorks, we share data and performance metrics to monitor service delivery outcomes and identify areas for improvement. This includes tracking job placements, business engagement, and participant outcomes across programs.

Anticipated outcome is improved coordination and communication between Wagner-Peyser and WIOA services, resulting in better service delivery and higher customer satisfaction.

- **Reducing Duplication of Services**

We have implemented specific strategies to ensure that services provided under Wagner-Peyser and WIOA are complementary rather than duplicative. These strategies focus on streamlining service delivery and enhancing the efficiency of the One-Stop system. Key strategies to reduce duplication include:

- *Integrated Customer Flow:* We have established an integrated customer flow process within the One-Stop centers to ensure that jobseekers receive coordinated services from Wagner-Peyser and WIOA staff without redundancy. Jobseekers are assessed once and referred to the appropriate services based on their needs.
- *Coordinated business Services:* We work with VaWorks to coordinate business outreach and engagement efforts, ensuring that businesses receive consistent messaging and streamlined access to recruitment, job posting, and labor market information services.
- *Unified Outreach and Marketing:* We collaborate with VaWorks on outreach and marketing efforts to ensure that jobseekers and businesses receive consistent information about the services available through the One-Stop system. This unified approach reduces confusion and overlap in service promotion.

Anticipated outcome is more efficient service delivery, ensuring that jobseekers and businesses receive the right services at the right time without duplicative efforts.

- **Ensuring Continuous Improvement**

We are committed to continuous improvement in service coordination between Wagner-Peyser and WIOA services. We regularly monitor performance, gathers feedback from customers, and implements process improvements to enhance service delivery. Key continuous improvement practices include:

- *Customer Satisfaction Surveys:* We collect customer feedback to identify gaps in service delivery and make necessary adjustments to improve coordination and customer experience.
- *Process Mapping and Reviews:* We conduct process mapping exercises to identify overlaps and inefficiencies in service delivery. This allows for targeted process improvements to reduce duplication and streamline service coordination.
- *Staff Training and Professional Development:* We provide ongoing training and professional development for Wagner-Peyser and WIOA staff to ensure they remain up-

to-date on policies, programs, and best practices for integrated service delivery.

Anticipated outcome is a high-performing workforce system that is continuously improving to meet the needs of jobseekers and businesses.

- **Assurances for Compliance and Coordination**

We provide the following assurances regarding the coordination of Wagner-Peyser services and One-Stop services:

- We will continue to work collaboratively with the Virginia Department for Workforce and Advancement (VaWorks) to ensure that Wagner-Peyser services are fully integrated into the One-Stop system.
- We will monitor and evaluate service delivery to ensure that coordination is effective and that service duplication is minimized.
- We will provide ongoing training and technical assistance to ensure that Wagner-Peyser staff and One-Stop staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities in the integrated service delivery model.

We are committed to maximizing coordination between the State employment service under the Wagner-Peyser Act and the One-Stop delivery system to ensure seamless, efficient, and effective service delivery. By implementing an integrated service delivery model, promoting joint planning and communication, and focusing on continuous improvement, we ensure that jobseekers and businesses receive comprehensive, high-quality services without duplication of efforts. This approach ensures that the One-Stop system remains customer-centered, efficient, and responsive to the needs of the regional workforce and businesses.

## **COORDINATION WITH ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY**

*3.9 Describe how the local board will coordinate workforce investment activities in the local area with the provision of adult education and literacy activities, including a description of how the local board will carry out the review of local applications.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board collaborates closely with adult education and literacy providers to ensure that adult learners have access to the education and training they need to achieve self-sufficiency and succeed in the workforce. We work with local Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) providers, including those funded under Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), to align adult education services with workforce development programs, ensuring that participants can transition seamlessly into employment or postsecondary education.

We also play a key role in reviewing and providing feedback on local Title II applications to ensure that adult education programs align with local workforce priorities and support regional economic goals.

### **Coordination with Adult Education and Literacy Providers**

We work in partnership with local Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) providers to ensure that education and workforce services are aligned and mutually reinforcing. These partnerships focus on integrating basic skills education, digital literacy, and workforce preparation activities into

career pathways and training programs. Key coordination strategies include:

- *Shared Planning and Goal Alignment*: We engage in joint planning sessions with AEL providers to ensure that adult education services are aligned with regional workforce priorities. This includes coordinating efforts to address basic skills deficiencies, digital literacy needs, and workforce readiness for adult learners.
- *Referral and Co-Enrollment Processes*: With adult education providers, we maintain referral processes to ensure that individuals in need of basic skills instruction or high school equivalency programs are referred to appropriate AEL services. Likewise, AEL participants are referred to One-Stop centers for workforce services and co-enrollment opportunities in WIOA-funded programs.
- *Integrated Education and Training (IET) Programs*: We support the development of Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs in partnership with AEL providers. These programs combine adult education instruction with occupational skills training, allowing participants to earn industry-recognized credentials while improving their basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- *Digital Literacy and Workplace Readiness Training*: We collaborate with AEL providers to ensure that digital literacy and workplace readiness skills are incorporated into adult education curricula, preparing participants for 21st-century jobs.

Anticipated outcome is adult learners gaining the foundational skills needed to succeed in training programs and employment, contributing to better workforce outcomes and regional economic growth.

- **Supporting Career Pathways for Adult Learners**

With our Adult Education and Literacy partners, we work together to create career pathways that provide clear, structured routes from basic education to employment. Key strategies include:

- *Bridge Programs*: We support the creation of bridge programs that help adult learners transition from basic education programs to postsecondary education or workforce training. These programs address basic skills gaps while providing career counseling and job placement services.
- *High School Equivalency and GED® Programs*: We coordinate with AEL providers to ensure that individuals without a high school diploma have access to GED® preparation and testing services. Participants in these programs are also connected to career services, job training programs, and supportive services through the One-Stop system.

Anticipated outcome is adult learners successfully transitioning into the workforce, earning credentials and gaining sustainable employment.

- **Process for Reviewing Local Title II Applications**

We play a critical role in reviewing and providing feedback on local Title II applications submitted by adult education providers. Our review process ensures that adult education programs are aligned with regional workforce goals and meet the needs of both businesses and adult learners. The review process includes the following steps:

- *Notification and Guidance*: We receive notification from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) regarding the local Title II application process. We provide guidance to AEL providers on regional workforce priorities to ensure that their applications reflect local labor market needs.
- *Application Review Committee*: We convene an Application Review Committee

composed of Board members, staff, and workforce system partners to review Title II applications. The committee evaluates applications based on alignment with the regional workforce plan, coordination with workforce services, and the ability to serve priority populations.

- *Evaluation Criteria:* The committee uses specific criteria to evaluate applications, including:
  - Alignment with regional workforce goals and in-demand industries.
  - Inclusion of Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs.
  - Plans to serve individuals with basic skills deficiencies and English language learners.
  - Coordination with One-Stop partners and referral processes.
- *Feedback and Recommendations:* After completing the review, we provide formal feedback and recommendations to the VDOE on each application. The feedback focuses on strengthening coordination, improving program design, and ensuring alignment with regional workforce needs.

Anticipated outcome is Title II-funded adult education programs are better aligned with local workforce priorities, ensuring that adult learners receive the education and training they need to succeed in the workforce.

- **Continuous Improvement and Ongoing Collaboration**

We are committed to continuous improvement in coordination with adult education providers. With AEL partners, we engage in ongoing communication and collaboration to ensure that adult education programs remain responsive to workforce needs. Key continuous improvement strategies include:

- *Regular Partner Meetings:* We facilitate regular meetings with AEL providers to discuss service coordination, program performance, and emerging needs.
- *Performance Tracking and Data Sharing:* With AEL providers, we share data on participant outcomes to ensure that adult education programs are effective in helping individuals transition to training and employment.
- *Joint Professional Development:* We collaborate with AEL providers to offer joint professional development opportunities for One-Stop and AEL staff, ensuring they are equipped to provide integrated services.

Anticipated outcome is stronger partnerships with adult education providers, resulting in improved service delivery and better outcomes for adult learners.

We work closely with local adult education and literacy providers to ensure that adult learners receive the education and training they need to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Through coordinated service delivery, career pathways development, and a structured review process for local Title II applications, we ensure that adult education programs are aligned with regional workforce priorities and support the transition from basic education to employment. These efforts contribute to a more skilled and competitive workforce, improving employment outcomes and promoting regional economic growth.

## **COORDINATION WITH BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY**

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|--------------------------------------|
| 3.10 <i>Describe the local plan.</i> |
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### Business Engagement Policies and Protocols

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board recognizes that strong business engagement is critical to the success of regional workforce development efforts. To ensure consistent and effective communication with businesses, we have established policies and protocols that all regional workforce development entities follow when engaging businesses. These policies promote a coordinated, business-first approach that avoids duplication of outreach efforts and ensures businesses have seamless access to workforce services. Key business engagement policies include:

- *No Wrong Door Approach*: Workforce partners across the region, including One-Stop staff, Business Services Teams, and economic development partners, coordinate to provide businesses with a single point of contact (business choice) for accessing all workforce services. This ensures consistent messaging and streamlined service delivery for businesses. **Attached is the Business Service Plan.**
- *Unified Business Services Team Protocol*: The Business Services Team (BST), comprised of representatives from WIOA programs, Wagner-Peyser staff, community colleges, economic development agencies, and other partners, operates as a cohesive unit to engage with businesses. The team uses shared tools and resources, including labor market data, CRM systems, and feedback mechanisms, to track business interactions and ensure efficient service delivery.
- *Business-Centered Service Delivery*: Our policies require that all business engagement efforts be customer-driven, focusing on understanding and addressing specific workforce challenges businesses are experiencing. This includes providing customized solutions, such as recruitment assistance, training programs, and upskilling opportunities.
- *Consistent Data Collection and Reporting*: All workforce entities are required to use common data collection and reporting tools to track business engagement activities and measure outcomes. This helps ensure that businesses receive coordinated services and that workforce programs remain responsive to business needs. Note: Although the VDWA is collecting the business services data from all programs, but it's not shared with the local areas.

### Business Involvement in Workforce Development Activities

We are committed to actively involving businesses in the design, development, and evaluation of workforce programs to ensure that training programs meet current and future labor market demands. Businesses play a key role in identifying skills gaps, shaping curricula, and participating in workforce initiatives. Key strategies to involve businesses include:

- *Sector Partnerships*: We convening Sector Partnerships to engage businesses within key industries and ensure that workforce programs are tailored to industry-specific needs. Businesses help guide the development of career pathways, credentialing programs, and apprenticeship opportunities.
- *Business Engagement in Program Design*: Businesses are involved in the development of new training programs by providing feedback on curricula, participating in mock interviews, hosting internships, and offering real-world insights into the skills required in their industries.
- *Job Fairs and Hiring Events*: We work with businesses to plan and host job fairs, hiring events, and recruitment initiatives that provide direct access to talent pools. These events are tailored to specific sectors and geographic areas based on business demand.

Anticipated outcomes include business-driven workforce development activities that align training programs with business needs and improve job placement outcomes.

### Activities to Address Specific Workforce Needs of Businesses

We undertake targeted activities to address the specific workforce challenges businesses are facing, including recruitment, retention, upskilling, and succession planning. These activities are designed to help businesses remain competitive in a rapidly changing labor market. Key activities include:



- *Customized Training Solutions:* We work with businesses to develop customized training programs that address skills gaps and upskill incumbent workers. These programs are offered in partnership with community colleges and training providers and include on-the-job training (OJT), incumbent worker training (IWT), and apprenticeship programs.
- *Work-Based Learning Opportunities:* To help businesses build their talent pipeline, we promote work-based learning opportunities, including internships, co-ops, apprenticeships, and pre-apprenticeships. These programs provide hands-on training while helping businesses assess and retain top talent.
- *Talent Recruitment and Job Matching Services:* We offer recruitment support services to help businesses connect with qualified jobseekers. This includes job posting assistance, talent pipeline development, and pre-screening services through the One-Stop system. There are other recruitment services that we can provide such as recruiting plan development, job description updating and development, assistance with new hire orientation programs.
- *Rapid Response Services:* We provide rapid response services to businesses facing layoffs or closures, helping them manage workforce transitions and connect affected workers to new job opportunities.
- *Incumbent Worker Training Programs:* We work with businesses to offer incumbent worker training programs, which help businesses retain skilled employees and improve productivity by upskilling their current workforce.
- *Labor Market Information and Data Sharing:* We provide labor market information (LMI) to businesses, including wage data, occupational demand, and emerging workforce trends, to help them make informed hiring and training decisions.

#### Continuous Business Feedback Loop

We maintain a continuous feedback loop with businesses to ensure that workforce programs remain responsive to evolving business needs.

- *Business Satisfaction Surveys:* We conduct business satisfaction surveys after all business events to gather feedback and identify areas for improvement.
- *Post-Engagement Follow-Up:* After engaging with a business, the Business Services Team conducts follow-up meetings to assess the impact of services provided and identify additional workforce needs.

Anticipated outcome is stronger business partnerships and more responsive workforce programs that meet the needs of both businesses and jobseekers.

We are committed to engaging businesses in meaningful ways to ensure that workforce development programs remain relevant and effective. Through policies and protocols that promote coordinated engagement, active business involvement in program design, and targeted activities to address specific workforce needs, we ensure that businesses in the region have access to the talent they need to thrive. These efforts contribute to a stronger regional economy, improved job placement outcomes, and a skilled and adaptable workforce capable of meeting current and future labor market demands.

## **SECTION 4: PROGRAM DESIGN AND EVALUATION**

### **EXPANDING ACCESS**

*4.1 Describe how the local board, working with the entities carrying out core programs, will expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board, in partnership with entities delivering core WIOA programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, Adult Education and Literacy, and Vocational Rehabilitation), is committed to expanding access to workforce services for eligible individuals, with a particular focus on individuals with barriers to employment. We strive to ensure that all residents in the region, including those in rural and underserved communities, have equitable access to employment opportunities, education, training, and supportive services that lead to self-sufficiency and career advancement.

Our approach to expanding access is multi-faceted, focusing on targeted outreach, integrated service delivery, partnerships with community organizations, and innovative service solutions to reduce barriers and assist vulnerable populations.

- **Identifying and Engaging Individuals with Barriers to Employment**

We prioritize outreach and engagement to individuals with barriers to employment, including:

- Low-income individuals
- Individuals with disabilities
- English language learners
- Returning citizens (formerly incarcerated individuals)
- Older workers
- Youth with limited work experience
- Homeless individuals
- Single parents
- Individuals without a high school diploma
- Residents of rural communities

We collaborate with One-Stop partners, community-based organizations, and local government agencies to identify and engage these populations, ensuring they are aware of the services available through the workforce system. Key outreach strategies include:

- *Partnerships with Social Services Agencies:* We work with Departments of Social Services (DSS) to identify individuals receiving public assistance and refer them to workforce programs.
- *Collaboration with Community Organizations:* We partner with nonprofits, faith-based organizations, housing authorities, and food banks to connect underserved individuals with One-Stop services.
- *Business Partnerships for Targeted Hiring:* We work with businesses to develop hiring programs focused on individuals with barriers to employment, including second-chance hiring initiatives for returning citizens and customized training programs for individuals with disabilities.

Anticipated outcome is increased awareness and participation in workforce programs by targeted populations.

- **Providing Comprehensive Employment, Training, and Education Services**

In partnership with core program entities, we ensure that comprehensive employment, training, and education services are accessible to all eligible individuals, particularly those with barriers to employment. The following services are offered through the One-Stop system:

- *Career Counseling and Job Placement Assistance*: We provide career counseling, resume building, interview preparation, and job placement services to help individuals navigate the job market and secure employment.
- *Skills Assessments and Training Programs*: Jobseekers are provided with skills assessments and connected to training programs, including occupational skills training, apprenticeships, and short-term credentialing programs through FastForward and G3 initiatives.
- *Integrated Education and Training (IET)*: We support IET programs that combine basic skills instruction with occupational training, allowing individuals to improve their literacy and numeracy skills while earning industry-recognized credentials.
- *Work-Based Learning Opportunities*: We promote work-based learning opportunities, including on-the-job training (OJT), internships, co-ops, and apprenticeships, to help individuals gain hands-on experience and transition into the workforce.

Anticipated outcome is increased participation in training and education programs, leading to improved employment outcomes for individuals with barriers to employment.

- **Expanding Access to Supportive Services**

We recognize that many individuals face non-financial barriers that can prevent them from participating in workforce programs or retaining employment. To address these barriers, we offer a wide range of supportive services in partnership with core programs and community organizations. Key supportive services include:

- *Transportation Assistance*: Given the lack of public transportation in the region, we provide gas cards, ride-share options, and vehicle repair assistance to help individuals access training and employment opportunities.
- *Childcare Assistance*: We collaborate with local childcare providers and social services agencies to help participants cover childcare expenses, ensuring they can attend training programs and work.
- *Housing Assistance*: Through partnerships with housing authorities and community organizations, we help individuals access temporary or permanent housing solutions.
- *Work-Related Expenses*: We provide support for work-related expenses, including uniforms, tools, and certification fees, to ensure individuals have the necessary resources to succeed in the workplace.

Anticipated outcome is reduced barriers to participation in workforce programs, resulting in higher completion and job retention rates.

- **Leveraging Partnerships to Expand Access**

We work closely with core program partners and community organizations to expand access to services and maximize the impact of available resources. Key partnerships include:

- *Virginia Employment Commission (VEC)*: Providing Wagner-Peyser services, including job search assistance, labor market information, and unemployment insurance support.
- *Adult Education and Literacy Providers*: Offering basic skills instruction, high school

equivalency programs, and English language acquisition services.

- *Vocational Rehabilitation Services*: Partnering with Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) to support individuals with disabilities through vocational assessments, job coaching, and workplace accommodations.
- *Community Colleges and Training Providers*: Collaborating with community colleges and other training providers to offer short-term credentialing programs and career pathways.

Anticipated outcome is stronger partnerships and better coordination of services, ensuring all individuals have access to comprehensive workforce programs.

- **Continuous Improvement and Accountability**

We are committed to continuous improvement in expanding access to services for individuals with barriers to employment. We regularly monitor performance, gathers feedback from participants, and implements improvements to ensure that workforce services are effective, equitable, and inclusive. Continuous improvement strategies include:

- *Customer Satisfaction Surveys*: Collecting feedback from participants to identify gaps in service delivery and improve the customer experience.
- *Data Tracking and Performance Reviews*: Using data and performance metrics to track participant outcomes, ensuring that services are resulting in meaningful employment gains.
- *Staff Training and Development*: Providing ongoing training for One-Stop staff to ensure they are equipped to serve diverse populations and address the unique needs of individuals with barriers to employment.

Anticipated outcome is a high-performing workforce system that is continuously improving to meet the needs of all individuals in the region.

In collaboration with core program partners, we are committed to expanding access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly those with barriers to employment. By focusing on targeted outreach, comprehensive service delivery, supportive services, and continuous improvement, we ensure that all residents in the region can achieve economic self-sufficiency and career success.

## **CAREER PATHWAYS**

*4.2 Describe how the local board will facilitate the development of career pathways, consistent with the Career Pathways Definitions, to improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable).*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board is committed to facilitating the development of career pathways that provide individuals with clear, structured routes to employment and career advancement in in-demand industries. Career pathways are designed to help individuals improve their skills, earn industry-recognized credentials, and advance along a career ladder, leading to sustainable employment and economic self-sufficiency.

By collaborating with educational institutions, training providers, businesses, and community

organizations, we ensure that career pathways are accessible, aligned with local labor market needs, and lead to postsecondary credentials that are industry-recognized, portable, and stackable.

○ Key Elements of Career Pathways Development

Our career pathways strategy is based on the following key elements, which align with the Career Pathways Definitions outlined by the U.S. Department of Labor:

- *Business Input:* Career Lattices for Healthcare, IT, Manufacturing and Skilled Trades have been developed with input from businesses in those sectors. Refinement of those lattices takes place in the Sector Partnerships. [Link to the lattices.](#)
- *Clear Pathways to In-Demand Occupations:* Career pathways are designed to lead individuals into high-demand occupations in sectors such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, information technology, skilled trades, and logistics.
- *Integrated Education and Training (IET):* We promote Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs that combine basic skills instruction with occupational training, allowing individuals to earn credentials while improving their foundational skills.
- *Industry-Recognized Credentials:* All career pathways are designed to lead to postsecondary credentials that are recognized by businesses, portable across regions and industries, and stackable to allow for career progression.
- *Supportive Services:* We ensure that supportive services such as transportation, childcare, and financial assistance are available to remove barriers and help participants complete their training programs.

Anticipated outcome is a comprehensive system of career pathways that provides clear, achievable routes to career advancement for individuals at all skill levels.

○ Collaboration with Key Partners in Career Pathways Development

We work closely with key partners to develop and implement career pathways that align with local workforce needs and industry demands. Key partners include:

- *Community Colleges and Training Providers:* We collaborate with community colleges and other training providers to develop short-term credentialing programs and career pathways in high-demand sectors.
- *Adult Education and Literacy Providers:* We partner with adult education providers to ensure that individuals with basic skills deficiencies can enter career pathways programs and earn credentials while improving their literacy and numeracy skills.
- *Sector Partnerships and other Business & Industry Groups:* We work through our Sector Partnerships and with businesses and industry groups to ensure that career pathways programs are aligned with current and future workforce needs and lead to credentials that are valued by businesses.

Anticipated outcome is strong partnerships that ensure career pathways are responsive to regional workforce needs and lead to meaningful employment opportunities.

○ Developing Career Pathways in High-Demand Sectors

- *Targeted Industries and In-Demand Occupations:* Based on information/input from the GoVirginia Growth and Diversification Plans for Regions 1 & 2, the Regional Economic Development Organization's (Mount Rogers Partnership and Onward NRV the list of targeted industries and instructions for accessing VOEE's In-Demand Occupation



Dashboard can be found here: <https://vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/job-seeker-tools/>

We have prioritized the development of career pathways in key industries that are critical to the regional economy. Each pathway is designed to provide entry points for individuals at all skill levels and opportunities for advancement through stackable credentials.

Key industry pathways include:

- Healthcare Career Pathway:
  - Entry-Level Roles: Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Medical Assistant
  - Mid-Level Roles: Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)
  - Advanced Roles: Registered Nurse (RN), Paramedic, Healthcare Administrator

Credentials include:

- CNA Certification
- LPN License
- RN License

- Advanced Manufacturing Career Pathway:

- Entry-Level Roles: Production Worker, Machine Operator
- Mid-Level Roles: CNC Operator, Industrial Maintenance Technician
- Advanced Roles: Manufacturing Engineer, Plant Manager

Credentials include:

- OSHA 10 Certification
- CNC Machining Certification
- Industrial Maintenance Certificate

- Information Technology (IT) Career Pathway:

- Entry-Level Roles: IT Support Specialist, Help Desk Technician
- Mid-Level Roles: Network Administrator, Cybersecurity Analyst
- Advanced Roles: IT Manager, Software Developer

Credentials include:

- CompTIA A+ Certification
- Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA)
- Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP)

Anticipated outcome is robust career pathways that provide entry points, stackable credentials, and advancement opportunities in high-demand industries.

- Improving Access to Postsecondary Credentials

We are committed to ensuring that all individuals, particularly those with barriers to employment, have equitable access to postsecondary credentials through career pathways programs. Key strategies to improve access include:

- *Promoting FastForward and G3 Programs:* We work with community colleges to promote FastForward and G3 (Get a Skill, Get a Job, Give Back) programs, which offer tuition-free credentialing opportunities in high-demand fields.
- *Targeted Outreach to Underserved Populations:* We conduct targeted outreach to low-

income individuals, individuals with disabilities, and English language learners to ensure they are aware of career pathways programs and credentialing opportunities.

- *Virtual and Hybrid Learning Options:* We support virtual and hybrid learning options to improve access to training programs for individuals in rural areas or those with transportation challenges.

Anticipated outcome is increased access to postsecondary credentials, particularly for individuals with barriers to employment, leading to better job placement and career advancement outcomes.

#### ○ Ensuring Stackable and Portable Credentials

We ensure that career pathways programs lead to credentials that are stackable and portable, allowing individuals to build their skills and advance in their careers over time. Key features of stackable and portable credentials include:

- *Stackable Credentials:* Individuals can earn multiple credentials within a career pathway, each building on the last, allowing them to advance to higher-level roles.
- *Portable Credentials:* Credentials earned through career pathways programs are recognized by businesses across industries and regions, ensuring that individuals can take their skills with them wherever they go.

Anticipated outcome is career pathways programs that lead to stackable and portable credentials, providing individuals with ongoing opportunities for career growth and mobility.

We are dedicated to facilitating the development of career pathways that improve access to postsecondary credentials and advance economic mobility for individuals in the region. By collaborating with key partners, aligning pathways with local labor market needs, and ensuring credentials are stackable and portable, we ensure that individuals have the skills and credentials needed to succeed in high-demand careers and contribute to the region's economic growth.

## CO-ENROLLMENT

*4.3 Describe how the local board will utilize co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs to maximize efficiencies and use of resources.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board is committed to maximizing efficiencies and leveraging resources through the strategic use of co-enrollment in core programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). By co-enrolling participants in multiple programs, we ensure that jobseekers and businesses receive comprehensive, coordinated services, leading to better outcomes and more efficient use of workforce system resources. Co-enrollment is particularly effective in serving individuals with barriers to employment, allowing them to access a broader range of services, including career counseling, training, supportive services, and job placement assistance.

### 1. Core Programs Utilized for Co-Enrollment

We encourage and support the practice of co-enrollment across core WIOA programs to leverage available resources and provide holistic services to participants through our IRTs. These programs include:

- WIOA Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs: Providing career services, occupational training, and supportive services to eligible individuals.

- WIOA Title II – Adult Education and Literacy: Offering basic skills instruction, GED preparation, and English language acquisition services.
- WIOA Title III – Wagner-Peyser Employment Services: Providing job search assistance, labor market information, and Business engagement services.
- WIOA Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation Services: Assisting individuals with disabilities in achieving employment goals through vocational assessments, job coaching, and workplace accommodations.

Note: The region has made great strides in the practice of co-enrollments, although the lack of a shared data system and different performance measures continues to hamper this effort. The use of the Eligibility at a Glance is one way that partners in the workforce system can promote co-enrollments.

Co-enrollment ensures that participants receive the services they need from multiple programs simultaneously, without duplication of efforts or gaps in service delivery.

#### ○ Co-Enrollment Strategies to Maximize Efficiencies

We employ specific strategies to promote co-enrollment, ensuring that participants receive comprehensive services while maximizing the use of available resources. Key co-enrollment strategies include:

- *Collaborative Case Management*: Co-enrolled participants benefit from collaborative case management, where staff from multiple programs work together to coordinate services and track progress. This approach reduces duplicative case management efforts and ensures that participants receive seamless support.
- *Cross-Training of Staff*: One-Stop staff are cross-trained on core program eligibility and services, allowing them to identify co-enrollment opportunities and make appropriate referrals. This ensures that participants are co-enrolled in the right programs without delays or barriers.
- *Use of Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs)*: We use Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs) to coordinate services for co-enrolled participants, particularly those with complex needs. IRTs bring together staff from multiple programs to develop a collaborative service plan that leverages all available resources.

Anticipated outcome is improved service coordination and more efficient use of resources, ensuring that participants receive the full range of services needed to achieve their career goals.

#### ○ Benefits of Co-Enrollment for Jobseekers and Businesses

Co-enrollment provides significant benefits to both jobseekers and businesses by streamlining service delivery and reducing duplication.

For Jobseekers:

- *Access to Comprehensive Services*: Participants receive career counseling, training, supportive services, and job placement assistance from multiple programs simultaneously.
- *Reduced Barriers to Employment*: Co-enrollment ensures that individuals with barriers to employment can access supportive services (e.g., transportation, childcare, housing assistance) alongside training and job placement services.
- *Faster Pathways to Employment*: Coordinated services help participants transition into employment more quickly, reducing the time they spend in the workforce system.

For Businesses:

- Streamlined Talent Pipeline: Co-enrollment ensures that jobseekers are better prepared and equipped with the skills and credentials needed by businesses.
- Customized Solutions: Businesses benefit from customized training solutions that leverage multiple funding streams, reducing the cost of training new hires.

Anticipated outcome is better outcomes for jobseekers and businesses, resulting in stronger regional economic growth.

○ Reducing Duplication and Enhancing Service Delivery

By promoting co-enrollment, we reduce duplication of services and ensure that resources are used efficiently across core programs. Steps taken to reduce duplication include:

- *Common Referral Process*: We have implemented a common referral process to ensure that participants are referred to all applicable programs during their initial intake, reducing the need for multiple assessments or follow-up appointments. Note that we created the *Eligibility at a Glance* to help with referrals.
- *Performance Tracking and Reporting*: We track co-enrollment rates and outcomes to ensure that services are being delivered efficiently and that participants are achieving their career goals for all Board program participants.

Anticipated outcome is more efficient service delivery and better use of resources, resulting in cost savings and improved participant outcomes.

- Example of Co-Enrollment in Practice: A jobseeker enters the One-Stop center seeking assistance with job placement. During the initial intake and assessment, staff identify that the individual is:
  - Unemployed and eligible for Wagner-Peyser services
  - In need of upskilling through WIOA Title I training funds
  - Basic skills deficient and eligible for adult education services
  - A person with a disability, making them eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation services

The participant is co-enrolled in all applicable programs and receives:

- Job search assistance and labor market information through Wagner-Peyser
- Occupational training through WIOA Title I
- Basic skills instruction through Adult Education
- Workplace accommodations and job coaching through Vocational Rehabilitation

By co-enrolling in multiple programs, the participant receives comprehensive support that addresses all of their needs, resulting in faster employment and improved career outcomes.

Our co-enrollment strategies ensure that participants receive comprehensive, coordinated services while maximizing the use of available resources. Through integrated intake, collaborative case management, and cross-trained staff, we reduce duplication of services and improve service delivery. By leveraging the strengths of each core program, we help individuals achieve their career goals more efficiently and ensure that businesses have access to a well-prepared workforce, contributing to regional economic growth and long-term success for both jobseekers and businesses.

## ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

### *4.4 Describe one-stop delivery system in the local area.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board oversees the one-stop delivery system in the region to ensure that jobseekers, workers, and businesses have seamless access to employment, training, and supportive services. The system is designed to provide comprehensive, high-quality services, promote continuous improvement, ensure accessibility for individuals with disabilities, and align services across all partners to meet local labor market needs.

The Virginia Workforce Centers (One-Stop Centers) are central to the delivery of integrated workforce services, offering in-person and virtual access to employment assistance, training opportunities, and supportive services.

#### Continuous Improvement of Eligible Providers of Services

We are committed to continuous improvement of service providers to ensure they meet the employment needs of businesses, workers, and jobseekers in the region. We use a data-driven approach to monitor provider performance, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that training and services are aligned with local labor market demands. Key continuous improvement strategies include:

- *Regular Performance Reviews:* We conduct quarterly performance reviews of eligible training providers and one-stop partners to ensure they are meeting employment, retention, and credential attainment goals.
- *Customer Satisfaction Surveys:* We collect feedback from jobseekers, workers, and businesses to identify gaps in service delivery and implement improvements.
- *Technical Assistance and Training:* We provide ongoing technical assistance and training to one-stop staff and service providers to ensure they remain up-to-date on best practices and regulatory requirements.

Anticipated outcome is high-performing service providers that are responsive to the needs of local businesses and jobseekers.

#### Facilitating Access to Services, Including in Remote Areas

We recognize the importance of ensuring access to services for individuals in remote and rural areas of the region. To achieve this, we have implemented technology-enabled solutions and outreach strategies to expand access to workforce services. Key access strategies include:

- *Virtual Services Platform:* We are working to secure services in local access points such as public libraries that assist jobseekers in accessing career counseling, job search assistance, workshops, and training programs online.
- *Mobile Workforce Services:* We are working to offer mobile workforce services, bringing workforce programs and services directly to remote communities through outreach events.
- *Outreach to Underserved Communities:* We collaborate with community-based organizations to reach individuals in rural and underserved areas, ensuring they are aware of available services.



Anticipated outcome is improved access to workforce services for individuals in remote and rural areas.

#### Compliance with WIOA Section 188 and the ADA

We ensure that one-stop centers and partner programs comply with WIOA Section 188 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide physical and programmatic accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Key accessibility strategies include:

- *Physical Accessibility*: All Virginia Workforce Centers meet ADA requirements for physical accessibility, including accessible entrances, restrooms, and workstations.
- *Programmatic Accessibility*: We ensure that workforce programs and services are accessible to individuals with disabilities, including providing assistive technology, adaptive materials, and alternative formats.
- *Staff Training*: We provide ongoing training to one-stop staff and partners on how to serve individuals with disabilities, including disability awareness training and use of assistive technology.

Anticipated outcome is accessible workforce services that meet the needs of all individuals, including those with disabilities.

#### Roles and Resource Contributions of One-Stop Partners

Our one-stop delivery system is supported by core and optional partners, each contributing resources, expertise, and services to ensure a comprehensive service delivery model.

Core Partners include:

- Title I – Workforce Development Programs
  - *Adult Program*: Focuses on helping adults obtain employment and training services, particularly those with barriers to employment.
  - *Dislocated Worker Program*: Assists workers who have been laid off or are at risk of job loss due to closures or economic conditions.
  - *Youth Program*: Provides education, training, and employment services to out-of-school youth (ages 16-24) and in-school youth (ages 14-21).
- Title II – Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA)
  - Supports adult education, literacy, numeracy, and English language learning for individuals lacking high school diplomas or the equivalent. Services also include preparation for postsecondary education and employment.
- Title III – Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Services
  - Provides job search assistance, labor exchange services, career counseling, and other employment-related services through American Job Centers (AJCs). Services are universally accessible to all job seekers.
- Title IV – Rehabilitation Act Programs
  - Administered by State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies, these programs help individuals with disabilities prepare for, obtain, and retain employment. This includes customized employment strategies, workplace accommodations, and support services.

Anticipated outcome is more efficient service delivery and improved participant outcomes through better data sharing and case management.

#### Services Provided by Each Partner

Each one-stop partner provides services mandated by federal and state law to support jobseekers, workers, and businesses. The current MOU is found [here](#). On page 8 is a table of partners and their programs.

#### One-Stop Operator

Our One-Stop Operator is People Incorporated.

#### Comprehensive Virginia Workforce Center Locations and Co-location Strategies

We oversee one comprehensive Virginia Workforce Center in Wytheville Virginia. There are five other Workforce Centers in the region and all centers have are co-located with other programs that support jobseekers and businesses. Listing of Centers is found [here](#).

Our one-stop delivery system is designed to provide comprehensive, accessible, and efficient workforce services. Through continuous improvement efforts, technology integration, and strong partnerships, we ensure that jobseekers and businesses have seamless access to the resources they need to achieve economic success.

### **INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS**

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>4.5 Describe the policy, process, and criteria for issuing individual training accounts (ITAs) including any limitations on ITA amounts.</i> |
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The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board has established a comprehensive policy and process for issuing Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to support eligible individuals in obtaining industry-recognized credentials and postsecondary education that lead to employment in high-demand occupations. Our ITA policy is designed to ensure that training funds are used efficiently and effectively, focusing on occupations that align with the region's workforce needs.

The ITA process includes eligibility determination, career planning, selection of training providers, and ongoing monitoring to ensure successful outcomes. We also establishes limitations on ITA amounts to ensure equitable distribution of training funds and maximize the impact of available resources.

- **Policy for Issuing ITAs**

Our policy for ITAs ensures that training funds are directed toward programs that provide participants with the skills and credentials needed to secure employment in in-demand industries. ITAs are issued to eligible participants through WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs to cover the cost of approved training programs offered by eligible training providers. Key Policy Elements:

- *Training Must Lead to Employment in In-Demand Occupations:* ITAs are only approved for training programs that lead to employment in occupations identified on the local and regional in-demand occupations list.

- *Training Providers Must Be on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)*: ITAs can only be used to pay for training programs offered by providers listed on Virginia's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).
- *Participants Must Demonstrate Financial Need*: ITAs are issued to participants who lack the financial resources to pay for training and meet the eligibility requirements of the WIOA program.
- *Supportive Services May Be Available*: In addition to ITAs, participants may be eligible for supportive services to cover transportation, childcare, and other costs associated with training.

Anticipated outcome is training funds being used efficiently to support participants in obtaining credentials that align with local labor market needs.

#### • Process for Issuing ITAs

We follow a structured process to ensure that ITAs are issued appropriately and that participants are enrolled in programs that meet their career goals.

- *Step 1: Eligibility Determination*: Participants must meet the eligibility criteria for WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, or Youth programs. Eligibility is determined during the initial intake and assessment process at the One-Stop center.
- *Step 2: Career Planning and Individual Employment Plan (IEP)*: Participants work with a career counselor to develop an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) that outlines their career goals, skills assessment, and training needs. The IEP must demonstrate that the selected training program is necessary to achieve the participant's employment goals.
- *Step 3: Selection of Approved Training Program*: Participants select a training program from the Virginia Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). The selected program must:
  - Be aligned with in-demand occupations in the region.
  - Lead to an industry-recognized credential or certification.
  - Be offered by an approved training provider.
- *Step 4: ITA Approval*: The career counselor reviews the IEP and training program selection to ensure that all requirements are met. Once approved, an ITA is issued to cover the cost of tuition, books, and required fees.
- *Step 5: Ongoing Monitoring and Support*: The participant's progress is monitored throughout the training program to ensure they are on track to complete the program and earn the credential. Career counselors provide ongoing support and guidance to help participants overcome any barriers.

Anticipated outcome is participants are enrolled in appropriate training programs that support their career goals and lead to sustainable employment.

#### • Criteria for Issuing ITAs

We use the following criteria to determine ITA eligibility and approval:

| Criteria                | Requirement                                                                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Participant Eligibility | Must be eligible for WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, or Youth programs.     |
| Training Program        | Must be listed on the Virginia ETPL and lead to an industry-recognized credential. |

| Criteria              | Requirement                                                                                            |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| In-Demand Occupation  | Training must lead to employment in an in-demand occupation within the local or regional labor market. |
| Financial Need        | Participants must demonstrate financial need for training assistance.                                  |
| Career Plan Alignment | The selected training program must align with the participant's Individual Employment Plan (IEP).      |

Anticipated outcome is consistent and fair issuance of ITAs, ensuring that resources are directed toward high-impact training programs.

- **Limitations on ITA Amounts**

To ensure equitable distribution of funds and maximize the impact of available resources, we have established limitations on ITA amounts. Key Limitations:

- *Maximum ITA Amount:* ITAs are limited to \$5,000 per participant per program year. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis with approval from us.
- *Lifetime Limit:* Participants may receive a maximum of \$10,000 in ITA funds over their lifetime.
- *Cost Sharing:* Participants are encouraged to explore additional funding sources, such as Pell Grants, scholarships, and business-sponsored tuition assistance, to reduce reliance on ITA funds.

Anticipated outcome is training funds are distributed equitably, ensuring that more participants have access to training opportunities.

- **Ensuring Alignment with Local Labor Market Needs**

We ensure that ITA-funded training programs are aligned with local labor market needs by maintaining a current in-demand occupations list and regularly reviewing regional labor market data. The listing of Targeted Industries and how to access the VOEE's In-Demand Dashboard can be found [here](#):

Key Strategies:

- *Business Engagement:* Through our Sector Partnerships and other business/industry organizations we ensure that training programs meet current workforce needs and lead to employment opportunities.

Anticipated outcome is ITA funds are directed toward training programs that provide participants with the skills needed to secure employment in the local economy.

Our policy, process, and criteria for issuing Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) ensure that eligible individuals receive the training they need to achieve sustainable employment in high-demand occupations. By setting clear limitations on ITA amounts, facilitating access to approved training programs, and ensuring alignment with local labor market needs, we maximize the use of available resources and improves outcomes for both jobseekers and businesses in the region.

## CUSTOMER CHOICE IN TRAINING

*4.6 If training contracts are used, describe processes utilized by the local board to ensure customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of how the training services are to be provided.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board is committed to ensuring customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of whether Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) or training contracts are utilized. We recognize that empowering participants to make informed choices about their career pathways and training options is a core principle of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and essential to achieving positive employment outcomes.

When training contracts are used, we have processes in place to ensure that participants maintain the freedom to select training programs that align with their individual career goals, while also ensuring that training services meet local labor market demands and business needs.

- **Use of Training Contracts by the Local Board**

While we primarily uses Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to fund training programs, training contracts may be utilized in specific circumstances, as allowed under WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(G). These circumstances include:

- *On-the-Job Training (OJT)*: Contracts with businesses to provide hands-on training for participants while they earn a wage.
- *Incumbent Worker Training*: Contracts to provide upskilling opportunities for existing employees to help businesses remain competitive and retain talent.
- *Customized Training*: Contracts with businesses or groups of businesses to provide specialized training tailored to the specific needs of a business or industry.
- *Pre-Apprenticeships and Apprenticeships*: Contracts to support registered apprenticeship programs or pre-apprenticeship opportunities that combine classroom instruction with on-the-job learning.

These contract-based training programs are designed to address specific workforce needs while maintaining customer choice through transparent processes and informed decision-making.

- **Ensuring Customer Choice in Training Contracts**

We ensure that customer choice is preserved in contract-based training programs through the following policies and processes:

- *Providing Informed Choice through Career Counseling*: All participants are provided with comprehensive career counseling to ensure they make informed decisions about their training options. Participants are given detailed information on training providers, program outcomes, credentials earned, and employment prospects, empowering them to make informed choices. Career counselors work closely with participants to:
  - Assess their skills, interests, and career goals.
  - Provide labor market information on in-demand occupations and potential career pathways.
  - Discuss available training options, including both ITA-funded programs and contract-based training opportunities.

- **Offering a Range of Training Options**

We ensure that participants have access to a wide range of training options, regardless of whether



ITAs or contracts are used. This includes:

- Access to the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL):  
Participants can choose from training programs listed on the ETPL, which includes industry-recognized, stackable credentials in high-demand fields.
- Customized Training Options:  
Participants can choose to participate in customized training programs developed through training contracts with businesses. These programs are designed to lead to direct employment opportunities upon completion.
- Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Pathways:  
Participants are given the option to pursue pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs that provide structured, hands-on learning and paid work experience.

- Ensuring Transparency in Training Contracts

We ensure that all training contracts are transparent and provide clear information on:

- Training objectives and skills to be gained.
- Credentials earned upon completion.
- Employment opportunities available to participants after training.
- Participant rights to choose among available training options.

Participants are made aware that contract-based training programs are one option among many and that they are free to choose the training program that best aligns with their career goals.

- Customer Choice in Business-Based Training Programs

In business-based training programs such as On-the-Job Training (OJT), Incumbent Worker Training, and Customized Training, participants are given detailed information about the business, job requirements, and training plan before committing to the program. This ensures that participants fully understand their options and can make an informed decision.

Participants are also encouraged to explore multiple opportunities and choose the business and training program that best aligns with their career goals.

- Compliance with WIOA Guidelines on Customer Choice

Our policies for contract-based training programs comply with WIOA's requirements to ensure customer choice in the selection of training providers and programs. We adhere to the following principles:

- Transparency and Informed Decision-Making:  
Participants are provided with comprehensive information on all available training options, including contract-based programs.
- Participant-Centered Service Delivery:  
We prioritize participant needs and goals, ensuring that training programs are aligned with individual career plans.
- Equal Access to Training Programs:  
All participants, including those in rural or underserved areas and those with barriers to employment, have equal access to training opportunities.

Our policy and process for training contracts ensures that customer choice is maintained in the selection of training programs. Through transparent communication, comprehensive career counseling, and a wide range of training options, we empower participants to make informed

decisions about their career pathways. By adhering to WIOA guidelines and prioritizing participant needs, we ensure that training services are effective, efficient, and aligned with local labor market demands.

## IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS

*4.7 Describe process utilized by the local board to ensure that training provided is linked to in- demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area, or in another area to which a participant is willing to relocate.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board is committed to ensuring that all training provided through the one-stop system is directly linked to in-demand industry sectors and occupations in the local area or in another area to which a participant is willing to relocate. We take a data-driven approach to ensure that training programs align with local labor market needs, focusing on high-demand careers that provide sustainable wages and long-term career growth opportunities.

We use a variety of data tools, partnerships, and business engagement strategies to ensure that training investments are effective and responsive to the current and future workforce needs of the region.

- **Data Tools to Identify Targeted Industries and In-Demand Occupations**

We leverage statewide and regional workforce data tools to ensure that training programs are aligned with high-demand occupations. These tools provide real-time labor market information (LMI) to guide decision-making and ensure training relevance. Key Data Tools:

- *Virginia Office of Education Economics (VOEE) High Demand Dashboard:* We use the VOEE High Demand Dashboard to identify in-demand occupations and projected growth industries in the region. This tool provides up-to-date labor market insights, including wage data, job openings, and industry trends, ensuring that training programs are targeted to meet business demand.
- *Regional Workforce Data Tableau Site:* We host a Regional Workforce Data Tableau site on its website, providing accessible and interactive labor market data to jobseekers, businesses, and training providers. The Tableau site includes local industry trends, occupation projections, and wage data, helping to inform career planning and training investments.
- *Virginia Tech's Center for Economic and Community Engagement Quarterly Reports:* We partner with Virginia Tech's Center for Economic and Community Engagement to produce quarterly workforce reports that provide detailed analysis of regional labor market conditions. These reports include sector-specific insights, emerging trends, and skill demand projections, which are posted on our website for public access.

Anticipated outcome is training programs are aligned with local labor market needs, ensuring that participants are prepared for in-demand careers that offer sustainable wages and growth opportunities.

- **Business Engagement to Validate In-Demand Occupations**

We work closely with local businesses and industry groups to validate in-demand occupations and ensure that training programs are responsive to business needs. Key Business Engagement Strategies:

- *Sector Partnerships*: We convene sector-specific businesses to provide direct feedback on workforce needs, skills gaps, and emerging trends. These partnerships ensure that training programs are aligned with real-world job demands.
- *Business Surveys and Roundtables*: We conduct business surveys and hosts roundtable discussions to gather qualitative insights on hiring needs and industry trends. This feedback is used to validate labor market data and ensure that training investments are effective.
- *Customized Training*: Through Incumbent Worker Training we partner with businesses to develop customized training programs that address specific workforce needs in high-demand sectors such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, IT, and skilled trades.

Anticipated outcome is business input ensures that training programs remain relevant and that participants are equipped with the skills businesses are actively seeking.

- **Aligning Training Programs with High-Demand Occupations**

We ensure that training providers on the Virginia Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) offer programs aligned with high-demand occupations. We conduct regular reviews of training programs to ensure they continue to meet regional workforce needs. Steps to Align Training with High-Demand Occupations:

- *Targeted Industries*: We review the Diversifications Plans of GoVA Regions 1 & 2, plans of Onward NRV and Mount Rogers Regional Partnership as well as individual locality plans to set our Targeted Industry List.
- *Reviewing Labor Market Data*: We regularly review labor market data from the VOEE Dashboard, Tableau site, and Virginia Tech reports to identify high-demand occupations that are in targeted industries within our the region.
- *Validating Data with Business Input*: Labor market data is validated through business engagement activities, ensuring that training investments are aligned with real-world needs.
- *Approving Training Programs on the ETPL*: Only training programs that lead to employment in high-demand occupations are approved for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). Programs must also lead to industry-recognized credentials.

Anticipated outcome is training programs are continuously aligned with local and regional workforce needs, ensuring that participants are prepared for in-demand careers.

- **Continuous Improvement and Transparency**

We are committed to continuous improvement in ensuring that training investments are aligned with high-demand occupations. We maintain transparency by making workforce data available to the public through its website. Key Continuous Improvement Strategies:

- *Quarterly Data Updates*: We update our Regional Workforce Data Tableau site and posts Virginia Tech's quarterly workforce reports to provide real-time insights into regional workforce trends.
- *Business Feedback Loops*: We maintain continuous feedback loops with businesses to ensure that training programs remain responsive to changing workforce needs.

Anticipated outcome is training programs remain relevant and responsive, helping participants achieve sustainable employment in high-demand careers.

We use a data-driven approach to ensure that training programs are linked to in-demand industry

sectors and occupations. By leveraging tools such as the VOEE High Demand Dashboard, the Regional Workforce Data Tableau site, and quarterly reports from Virginia Tech's Center for Economic and Community Engagement, we ensure that training investments are aligned with regional workforce needs.

Through business engagement, continuous data analysis, and transparent reporting, we provide participants with the skills and credentials needed to succeed in high-demand careers, both locally and in other areas to which they may choose to relocate.

## **RAPID RESPONSE**

### *4.8 Describe how rapid response activities are coordinated and carried out in the local area.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board coordinates rapid response activities in partnership with the Virginia Department of Workforce and Advancement (VaWorks) and local workforce system partners to provide immediate, proactive assistance to businesses and workers impacted by layoffs, business closures, and economic disruptions. The goal of rapid response services is to mitigate the impact of job losses on workers, businesses, and the community, ensuring that affected employees can transition quickly to new employment or training opportunities.

Our rapid response strategy focuses on early intervention, coordinated service delivery, and seamless access to workforce programs and resources.

- **Rapid Response Coordination Process**

In partnership with the Region's Rapid Response Coordinator, we coordinate rapid response activities through a multi-agency approach to ensure that workers impacted by layoffs or closures receive comprehensive support services.

- Step 1: Notification of Layoff or Closure
  - Virginia Department of Workforce and Advancement (VaWorks) or local partners notify us of a pending layoff or business closure through the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) system or other sources.
  - We also monitor local economic conditions and business trends to identify potential layoffs or closures early and take proactive steps.
- Step 2: Business Contact and Initial Assessment
  - Upon notification, our Rapid Response Team contacts the business to gather details about the layoff or closure, including:
    - ❖ Number of affected employees
    - ❖ Occupations impacted
    - ❖ Timeline for layoffs
    - ❖ Severance or transition plans (if any)
  - The team conducts an initial assessment to identify the needs of both the business and the affected workers.
- Step 3: Developing a Customized Rapid Response Plan
  - The Rapid Response Team works with the business to develop a customized service plan that addresses the specific needs of the affected workforce. This plan may include:
    - ❖ On-site or virtual employee information sessions
    - ❖ Job fairs and hiring events
    - ❖ Career counseling and job placement services

- ❖ Access to unemployment insurance (UI) benefits
- ❖ Training and retraining opportunities
- Step 4: Delivery of Rapid Response Services
  - The Rapid Response Team, in collaboration with One-Stop partners, delivers on-site or virtual services to affected employees. These services include:
    - ❖ Career counseling
    - ❖ Job search assistance
    - ❖ Resume and interview workshops
    - ❖ Unemployment insurance guidance
    - ❖ Information on available training programs
    - ❖ Supportive services (transportation, childcare, etc.)

Anticipated outcome is affected employees receive timely, comprehensive services to help them transition into new employment opportunities or training programs.

• Partnerships for Rapid Response Activities

We coordinate rapid response activities through strong partnerships with state and local agencies, businesses, and community organizations to ensure that comprehensive services are delivered to affected workers. Key partners include:

| Partner                                            | Role in Rapid Response                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board | Oversees regional coordination and ensures DLW services are provided, and coordinates hiring events. |
| Department of Workforce and Advancement (VaWorks)  | Employs the Rapid Response Coordinator and provides labor market information.                        |
| Virginia Employment Commission (VEC)               | Provides unemployment insurance (UI) services                                                        |
| One-Stop Career Centers                            | Provide career counseling, job search assistance, and training services.                             |
| Adult Education Providers                          | Offer basic skills instruction, GED preparation, and literacy services to affected workers.          |
| Community Colleges                                 | Provide training programs, credentialing opportunities, and upskilling options.                      |
| Local Economic Development Organizations           | Collaborate on business retention efforts and retraining strategies for impacted industries.         |
| Community-Based Organizations                      | Provide supportive services such as housing assistance, transportation, and childcare.               |

Anticipated outcome is a coordinated, multi-agency approach that ensures affected workers receive comprehensive support.

• Early Intervention and Layoff Aversion Strategies

We focus on early intervention and layoff aversion strategies to prevent job losses whenever possible. Key layoff aversion strategies include:

- *Business Retention and Expansion Programs:* We work with economic development agencies to identify businesses at risk and provide support services to help them remain competitive.



- *Customized Incumbent Worker Training (IWT)*: We offer incumbent worker training programs to help upskill current employees, allowing businesses to retain their workforce and remain competitive.

Anticipated outcome is proactive layoff aversion strategies that help prevent job losses and reduce the impact on the local economy.

- **Use of Technology to Deliver Rapid Response Services**

We use technology-based solutions to ensure that rapid response services are accessible to all affected workers, including those in remote or rural areas. Key technology solutions include:

- *Job Matching Platforms*: We use platforms like the Virginia Workforce Connection to help affected workers connect with local businesses and secure new job opportunities.

Anticipated outcome is improved access to rapid response services, ensuring that all affected workers receive the support they need.

- **Ongoing Monitoring and Follow-Up**

We ensure that rapid response activities are monitored and evaluated to measure their effectiveness and ensure continuous improvement. Follow-up services include:

- *Tracking Employment Outcomes*: We track the employment status of affected workers to ensure they have successfully transitioned into new jobs or training programs.
- *Post-Layoff Support*: We provide ongoing career counseling and supportive services to help workers remain employed or complete their training programs.

Anticipated outcome is continuous improvement of rapid response services, ensuring better outcomes for affected workers and businesses.

Our rapid response process is designed to provide timely, proactive support to businesses and workers impacted by layoffs or closures. Through strong partnerships, early intervention strategies, and the use of technology, we ensure that affected employees receive comprehensive services to transition into new employment or training opportunities as quickly as possible. By focusing on early intervention, layoff aversion, and seamless service delivery, we help to reduce the impact of job losses on the local economy and ensure that workers have the resources they need to achieve long-term success.

## **SECTION 5: COMPLIANCE**

### **OVERSIGHT, MONITORING, AND CORRECTIVE ACTION**

*5.1 Describe how the local board meets its responsibilities for oversight, monitoring, and corrective action for WIOA Title I programs.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board fulfills its responsibilities for oversight, monitoring, and corrective action of WIOA Title I programs by implementing a comprehensive monitoring system that ensures compliance with federal, state, and local requirements, effective program management, and continuous improvement of service delivery. Our oversight process encompasses both fiscal and programmatic monitoring to ensure that services meet the needs of participants and businesses, align with local labor market needs, and adhere to all WIOA regulations and performance standards.

Our monitoring framework is centered on four key objectives: Compliance, Program Management, Performance, and Ongoing Evaluation. This framework ensures that service providers operate efficiently, achieve desired outcomes, and continuously improve service delivery to meet the needs of jobseekers and businesses.

- **Compliance Monitoring**

Compliance monitoring is conducted to ensure that program activities and expenditures are allowable, meet spending thresholds, and align with federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies. We ensure compliance through the following activities:

- *Annual Compliance Reviews*: We conduct annual on-site reviews of WIOA program operators to verify that expenditures are allowable, participant eligibility requirements are met, and service delivery practices align with WIOA regulations.
- *Fiscal Auditing*: Our Fiscal Agent contracts with an outside agency to conduct a yearly audit of financial documentation, including invoices, contracts, and budgets, to ensure that WIOA funds are used appropriately and that spending thresholds are not exceeded.
- *Documentation Reviews*: We evaluate participant files to ensure that eligibility documentation, case notes, and service plans are properly recorded and meet state and federal requirements.

Anticipated outcome is assurance that all programs operate within regulatory guidelines and that funding is used appropriately to serve participants.

- **Program Management Monitoring**

Program management monitoring involves an in-depth review of service delivery practices to ensure that employment and training services are effective and meet the needs of diverse populations, particularly those with barriers to employment. We review the following program elements during program management monitoring:

- *Participant Assessments and Service Plans*: We evaluate how participant skills, interests, and barriers are assessed and how assessment results are used to create individualized employment and training plans.
- *Service Delivery Methods*: We ensure that participants receive appropriate services, including career counseling, occupational training, and supportive services, based on their individual needs and goals.
- *Coordination with One-Stop Partners*: We monitor how service providers collaborate

with required and additional partners to deliver integrated services across multiple programs.

Anticipated outcome is assurance that all programs deliver effective, customer-centered services and that participants have access to the resources they need to achieve positive outcomes.

- **Performance Monitoring**

Performance monitoring is conducted throughout the year to ensure that minimum performance levels are being met and to identify potential issues that may impact program outcomes. We monitor key performance indicators, including:

- *Employment Outcomes*: We track job placement rates, retention rates, and average wages to ensure that participants achieve sustainable employment after program completion.
- *Credential Attainment*: We review the number of participants earning industry-recognized credentials to ensure that training programs are aligned with labor market needs and result in relevant certifications.
- *Measurable Skills Gains*: We monitor skills gains to ensure that participants are making progress toward their career goals during their participation in WIOA programs.

We use Virginia Workforce Connection (the state's case management system) to receive regular performance reports from WIOA operators and uses this data to identify trends, gaps, and areas for improvement.

Anticipated outcome is an improved ability to meet negotiated performance goals and ensures continuous improvement in service delivery.

- **Ongoing Evaluation and Continuous Improvement**

Our ongoing evaluation process compares planned service levels and spending to actual outcomes, ensuring that performance goals are met and resources are used efficiently. Key evaluation activities include:

- *Quarterly Reviews*: We conduct quarterly reviews of spending levels, participant enrollments, and program outcomes to ensure that service providers remain on track to meet their contractual obligations.
- *Corrective Action Plans*: When deficiencies are identified, We work with service providers to develop corrective action plans that outline specific steps to address performance issues. Progress is monitored to ensure that corrective actions are implemented effectively.
- *Continuous Improvement Activities*: We use monitoring results to identify technical assistance and staff training needs and to promote best practices across the one-stop system.

Anticipated outcome is assurance that programs remain effective, efficient, and responsive to the needs of jobseekers and businesses.

- **Corrective Action and Technical Assistance**

When monitoring activities identify deficiencies or areas for improvement, we implement corrective action measures to bring service providers into compliance and improve overall performance. The corrective action process includes:

- *Issuing a Corrective Action Notice*: We issue a formal notice to the service provider,

- outlining the specific deficiencies identified during monitoring.
- *Developing a Corrective Action Plan*: The service provider is required to submit a corrective action plan that outlines steps to address the deficiencies and improve performance.
- *Providing Technical Assistance*: We offer technical assistance and training to help service providers address deficiencies and implement best practices.
- *Follow-Up Monitoring*: We conduct follow-up reviews to ensure that corrective actions have been implemented and that deficiencies have been resolved.

Anticipated outcome is continuous improvement in service delivery and maintains compliance with WIOA requirements.

- **Key Areas of Focus for Monitoring**

Our monitoring process includes a focus on ensuring that service provider staff understand the following:

- Operating systems to document participant progress, track services and expenditures, and report outcomes.
- The design of the local one-stop system and the importance of collaborating with partners to streamline service delivery.
- WIOA's overarching goals, including increased access to employment, training, and supportive services, particularly for individuals with barriers to employment.
- Outcome: Ensures that service providers are well-equipped to deliver effective, compliant services that meet the needs of jobseekers and businesses.

Our monitoring and oversight process ensures that WIOA Title I programs are delivered in a compliant, efficient, and effective manner. By focusing on compliance, program management, performance, and ongoing evaluation, we ensure that service providers meet the needs of local businesses, workers, and jobseekers. Through corrective actions and continuous improvement efforts, we promote high-quality service delivery and helps achieve positive outcomes for all participants.

## **SUNSHINE PROVISIONS**

*5.2 Describe how the local board conducts business in accordance with the Sunshine Provisions of WIOA staffing plans for the local board.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board conducts all business in accordance with the Sunshine Provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to ensure transparency, accountability, and public engagement in the decision-making process. We are committed to open communication with the public, partners, and stakeholders by making meeting schedules, agendas, minutes, and other key documents publicly available.

Additionally, our staffing plans and hiring processes adhere to fair and equitable hiring practices, ensuring that job vacancies are widely advertised, evaluated consistently, and filled by qualified individuals who are best suited to advance our mission.

- **Compliance with Sunshine Provisions of WIOA**

We take the following steps to ensure full compliance with the Sunshine Provisions by promoting open and transparent governance:

- *Public Meeting Notices and Accessibility:* The schedules for both the Workforce Board and the Consortium Board meetings are posted on our website well in advance to ensure public accessibility. Meeting dates, times, and locations are publicly available to encourage broad participation.
- *Publication of Meeting Packets and Minutes:* A few days before each meeting, the full meeting packet—including the agenda, supporting documents, and reports—is posted on our website. Following the meeting, minutes are published on the website to provide a detailed record of discussions and decisions.
- *Public Comment Periods:* All meetings are open to the public, and each meeting includes a designated public comment period. Members of the public are invited to share their feedback during this time, and no prior sign-up is required. This inclusive approach ensures that stakeholder input is valued and considered in our decision-making process.
- *Virtual Meeting Accessibility:* In recognition of the need for flexibility and increased accessibility, some meetings are conducted virtually. For virtual meetings, meeting information—including the meeting link, times, and instructions for public comment—is posted on the website and shared via email with regional partners. This ensures that all interested parties can participate, regardless of their location.
- *Social Media and Email Notifications:* We use Facebook and email notifications to inform regional partners, including chambers of commerce, educational institutions, and other workforce partners, about upcoming meetings. This outreach ensures that key stakeholders are aware of Board activities and have the opportunity to engage in workforce development efforts.
- *Meeting Information Access:* Meeting schedules, packets, and minutes can be accessed via the following links:
  - New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area Consortium Board:  
[Consortium Board - NRMRWDB](#)
  - New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board:  
[Workforce Development Board - NRMRWDB](#)

Anticipated outcome is transparency and accountability in our governance processes, promoting public trust and engagement.

- **Staffing Plans and Hiring Process**

Our staffing plans and hiring processes are designed to ensure transparency, fairness, and consistency in recruiting and selecting employees who will help advance our mission of providing high-quality workforce services to the region.

We follow structured hiring protocols to ensure that job vacancies are advertised widely, evaluations are conducted fairly, and candidates are selected based on merit. Key Steps in the Hiring Process:

- *Posting Job Vacancies:* All job vacancies are posted on the Virginia Workforce Connection (VWC) system, ensuring that positions are widely advertised to a diverse pool of candidates. Additional outreach is conducted through local job boards, social media, and partner networks to maximize exposure.
- *Application Review and Evaluation:* Resumes and applications are evaluated using a pre-set evaluation criterion by an evaluation team, which may include staff and board members. This process ensures that all applicants are assessed consistently and that bias is minimized.
- *Interview Process:* Selected candidates are invited to participate in a panel interview



with multiple evaluators. To ensure fairness and consistency, the same set of questions is asked of each candidate, and responses are evaluated using a standardized scoring system.

- *Final Selection and Onboarding:* The final selection is based on the candidate's qualifications, experience, and alignment with our mission. Once hired, new employees receive onboarding and training to ensure they are well-equipped to perform their roles and understand our policies and procedures.

Anticipated outcome is a hiring process that uses fair and equitable staffing practices, resulting in a highly qualified workforce that supports the region's workforce development goals.

- **Promoting Transparency and Accountability**

Our commitment to transparency and accountability extends beyond compliance with the Sunshine Provisions to include ongoing efforts to promote public trust and engage stakeholders in the region's workforce development efforts. Key transparency initiatives include:

- *Public Reporting of Performance Data:* We publish performance data and reports on our website to keep stakeholders informed about program outcomes and Board activities.
- *Stakeholder Engagement:* We actively seek input from regional partners, businesses, community organizations, and the general public to ensure that workforce programs remain responsive to local needs.
- *Continuous Improvement:* We conduct regular reviews of our governance practices to identify areas for improvement and ensure that it remains compliant with federal and state regulations.

Anticipated outcome is ongoing accountability and transparency, ensuring that stakeholders are informed and engaged in the region's workforce development efforts.

We conduct business in full compliance with the Sunshine Provisions of WIOA, ensuring that all meetings are open to the public and that key information is readily accessible to stakeholders and the community. Through transparent governance practices and equitable hiring processes, we promote public trust, accountability, and engagement, ensuring that it remains responsive to the workforce needs of the New River/Mount Rogers region.

## **TIMELY EXPENDITURE OF WIOA FUNDS**

|                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>5.3 Describe the methods and strategies used to ensure timely expenditure of WIOA funds.</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board use a comprehensive financial management system to ensure that WIOA funds are expended in a timely, efficient, and compliant manner. We work closely with its Fiscal Agent, Program Operators, and Elected Officials to maintain continuous oversight of WIOA expenditures and identify potential issues early to implement corrective actions if needed.

Our financial oversight process includes regular financial reporting, cash management strategies, leveraging of additional funding sources, and ongoing performance monitoring to ensure that all WIOA funds are utilized effectively to achieve maximum impact for jobseekers, businesses, and the local community.

- **Financial Oversight by the Workforce Board and Consortium Board**

To ensure timely expenditure of WIOA funds, both boards conduct regular reviews of financial reports at their scheduled meetings. These reviews ensure that both Boards have up-to-date information on expenditures, obligations, and available balances. Key Oversight Activities Include:

- *Financial Reporting at Board Meetings:* Both boards receive detailed financial reports at each regular meeting, including budget vs. actual spending reports, cash flow summaries, and projections of future expenditures.
- *Identification of Potential Spending Issues:* During these reviews, any projected underspending or overspending is identified, and we are given the opportunity to implement corrective actions to ensure that funds are spent within the required timeframes.
- *Proactive Financial Adjustments:* If spending patterns indicate a risk of underspending, we work with Program Operators to adjust service delivery strategies, increase enrollments, or modify fund allocations to ensure that funds are utilized effectively.

Anticipated outcome is continuous oversight and proactive management of funds to prevent underspending or non-compliance with spending deadlines.

- **Role of the Fiscal Agent in Cash Management**

The New River Valley Regional Commission serves as our Fiscal Agent, ensuring that all financial transactions related to WIOA programs are processed accurately and efficiently. Key Responsibilities of the Fiscal Agent:

- *Monthly Payment Processing:* The Fiscal Agent prepares and distributes checks twice a month, on the 15th and last day of each month, ensuring that all WIOA-related expenses are paid in a timely manner.
- *Reimbursement-Based Payments to Program Operators:* Program Operators are paid on a reimbursement basis. This process involves submitting monthly requests for payment, which are reviewed and approved before funds are requested from the State.
- *Cash Payment Schedule Management:* The Fiscal Agent requests funds from the State using the Cash Payment Schedule, ensuring that funds are available to cover approved expenses without delays.

Anticipated outcome is a cash management process ensures that WIOA funds are distributed efficiently, minimizing the risk of delayed payments or disruptions in service delivery.

- **Leveraging WIOA Funds with Other Resources**

We ask Program Operators to leverage WIOA funds with other Federal, State, and local funding sources to ensure that maximum resources are available to serve jobseekers and businesses. Key Strategies for Leveraging Resources:

- **Partnering with Local Organizations:**  
We work with local partners, such as community colleges, economic development agencies, and social service providers, to coordinate funding and reduce duplication of services.
- **Pursuing Non-WIOA Grants:**  
We continually apply for non-WIOA grants to supplement WIOA funding and increase the availability of services. These additional funds allow us to expand training opportunities, offer more supportive services, and address emerging workforce needs.

Anticipated outcome is a maximized impact of WIOA funds by leveraging additional resources, ensuring that participants receive comprehensive support and that funding is used efficiently.

- **Continuous Monitoring and Corrective Action**

We conduct ongoing monitoring and evaluation of Program Operators to ensure that WIOA funds are being spent appropriately and that programs are achieving their intended outcomes.

Key Monitoring Activities Include:

- *Annual Monitoring of Program Operators:* We conduct annual on-site monitoring visits to review Program Operators' financial records, participant files, and service delivery practices. This review ensures that funds are being spent in accordance with WIOA requirements and that services are being delivered effectively.
- *Performance Tracking through Virginia Workforce Connection:* We use the Virginia Workforce Connection (VWC) system to track performance metrics for WIOA operators in real-time, allowing for early identification of potential issues.
- *Corrective Action Plans:* If deficiencies or spending issues are identified, we work with the Program Operator to develop a Corrective Action Plan. These plans outline specific steps the operator will take to address the issue and ensure compliance moving forward.
- *Technical Assistance and Training:* We provide technical assistance and training to Program Operators to help them address deficiencies, improve financial management practices, and achieve performance goals.

Anticipated outcome is timely corrective actions ensure that funding is spent efficiently and that Program Operators remain compliant with WIOA regulations.

- **Proactive Strategies to Ensure Timely Expenditure**

We implement proactive strategies to ensure that WIOA funds are expended within required timeframes and that underspending risks are minimized. Proactive Strategies Include:

- *Tracking Monthly Expenditures:* We track monthly expenditures to ensure that funds are being spent at the expected rate. This tracking allows us to adjust spending plans if necessary.
- *Encouraging Program Operator Enrollment:* We encourage Program Operators to increase participant enrollments if spending levels are below projections. This ensures that more individuals benefit from WIOA-funded services and that funds are fully utilized.
- *Promoting High-Demand Training Programs:* We work with Program Operators to promote high-demand training programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials and employment in in-demand occupations. This helps ensure that training funds are used effectively to achieve positive outcomes.

Anticipated outcome proactive financial management strategies ensure that funds are spent within required timeframes and that WIOA programs remain effective and impactful.

We use robust financial oversight processes, cash management practices, resource leveraging strategies, and continuous monitoring to ensure that WIOA funds are expended in a timely and compliant manner. Through regular financial reporting, proactive corrective actions, and ongoing evaluation, we ensure that WIOA funds are used efficiently to support workforce development goals and meet the needs of jobseekers and businesses in the region.

## **BROKERAGE OF ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH SERVICES**

*5.4 Describe the process for neutral brokerage of adult, dislocated worker, and youth services. Identify the competitive process and criteria (such as targeted services, leverage of funds, etc.) used to award funds to sub-recipients/contractors of WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services, state the names of contracted organizations, and the duration of each contract.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board is committed to ensuring that the provision of WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services is conducted through a neutral, transparent, and competitive procurement process. We use a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, approved by the Workforce Development Board and the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area Consortium Board (NRMRDACB), to select sub-recipients and contractors for WIOA services, as well as for the One-Stop Operator.

The neutral brokerage process ensures that all eligible service providers have an equal opportunity to submit proposals and that funding decisions are made based on objective criteria, ensuring effective and equitable service delivery across the region.

- **Competitive Procurement Process for Awarding WIOA Contracts**

We follow a rigorous, multi-step competitive procurement process to solicit, evaluate, and award contracts for the delivery of WIOA Title I services. This process ensures that all contracts are awarded in a fair and unbiased manner, in compliance with WIOA regulations and local procurement policies.

- **Step 1: Development of the Request for Proposals (RFP) Package**

The process begins with the development of the RFP package, which includes detailed instructions, evaluation criteria, and program requirements for prospective bidders. The RFP package is reviewed and approved by both the Workforce Development Board and the Consortium Board before being released. Key elements of the RFP package include:

- Program requirements for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services
- Budget guidelines
- Proposal evaluation criteria
- Contract terms and conditions

- **Step 2: Notification and Bidder's Conference:** The RFP process is publicly advertised to ensure that all interested and qualified organizations have the opportunity to submit a proposal. Notifications are sent to all potential bidders on our bidder list, and advertisements are placed in local newspapers for a minimum of three consecutive days. A non-mandatory bidder's conference is held to review the RFP package in detail, provide clarifications, and answer questions from prospective bidders. Those unable to attend the conference may request the RFP package through phone, email, fax, mail, or in person. Timeline for the RFP Process:

- 30 days prior to the bidder's conference: Notification letters are sent to all potential bidders.
    - Bidder's conference date: The RFP package is distributed, reviewed, and discussed.
    - 30-day proposal period: Prospective bidders are given at least 30 days to complete and submit their proposals.

- **Step 3: Proposal Submission and Evaluation:** Once all proposals are received, they are reviewed by an evaluation panel composed of Workforce Development Board and Consortium Board members who have no vested interest in the outcome of the

procurement process. The evaluation panel uses a standardized scoring system based on the Proposal Evaluation Criteria outlined in the RFP package. Key criteria for evaluation include:

- Targeted services and populations served
- Program design and delivery
- Capacity to leverage additional funds
- Performance outcomes
- Cost-effectiveness
- Partnerships and community engagement

The proposals are scored, and average scores are calculated to rank the submissions. The highest-ranking proposer is then invited to enter into contract negotiations.

- **Contract Negotiation and Award Process**

Once the proposal evaluation is complete, we begin contract negotiations with the highest-ranked proposer. The goal of the negotiation process is to finalize a contract that ensures high-quality service delivery, compliance with WIOA requirements, and efficient use of funds.

If an acceptable contract cannot be negotiated with the highest-ranking proposer, we will initiate negotiations with the second highest-ranking proposer. This process continues until a satisfactory agreement is reached. All proposed contracts and funding levels resulting from the procurement process are subject to final approval by both the Workforce Development Board and the Consortium Board.

- **Criteria for Awarding Funds to Contractors**

We use specific evaluation criteria to ensure that contracts are awarded to the most qualified providers who can deliver effective and innovative workforce services. The Proposal Evaluation Criteria are outlined in the RFP package and include the following key factors:

| Criteria                    | Description                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Program Design and Approach | How well the proposer's program design meets the needs of target populations.                                             |
| Targeted Services           | How effectively the proposer targets services to priority populations, including individuals with barriers to employment. |
| Leverage of Funds           | The proposer's ability to leverage additional Federal, State, or local funds to enhance service delivery.                 |
| Organizational Capacity     | The proposer's demonstrated ability to manage workforce programs and achieve performance outcomes.                        |
| Performance History         | Past performance in delivering workforce services, including employment outcomes and credential attainment rates.         |

Copies of the Proposal Evaluation Criteria sheets for **Program Year 2023** are provided in **Attachment F**.

#### 4. Current Contracted Organizations and Contract Duration

The following organization was awarded contracts for WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth services, and One-Stop Operator for Program Years 23 and 2024: People Incorporated of Virginia

- **Ensuring Neutral Brokerage and Accountability**



We ensure neutral brokerage by maintaining a fair and unbiased competitive procurement process that promotes accountability, transparency, and the selection of high-quality service providers. Accountability Measures Include:

- Annual monitoring of service providers to ensure compliance with contract terms and performance standards.
- Regular financial and programmatic reporting to us to ensure funds are spent appropriately and services are delivered effectively.
- Corrective action plans for any providers who fail to meet performance expectations.

Our neutral brokerage process ensures that WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services are delivered by qualified providers through a transparent, competitive procurement process. Our commitment to accountability, continuous improvement, and effective service delivery ensures that participants receive high-quality workforce services that align with regional labor market needs.

## **DISBURSAL OF GRANT FUNDS**

### ***5.5 Identify the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds.***

The New River Valley Regional Commission (NRVRC) serves as the contracted Fiscal Agent for both boards. As the Fiscal Agent, the NRVRC is responsible for the management, disbursement, and reporting of WIOA grant funds to ensure compliance with federal, state, and local financial requirements.

This contractual arrangement is reviewed annually by the Consortium Board to ensure that fiscal responsibilities are being met effectively and that all parties remain in agreement. Upon mutual agreement, a new contract is drafted, reviewed, and approved by the NRMWDACB to continue the partnership for the next program year. Responsibilities of the New River Valley Regional Commission as Fiscal Agent include the following:

- *Accounts Payable*: The NRVRC disburses funds to program operators, vendors, and service providers in accordance with approved contracts and invoices. All payments are processed on a bi-monthly schedule to ensure timely and accurate distribution of funds.
- *Payroll Functions*: The NRVRC manages payroll processing for our staff and ensures that all payroll obligations are met, including tax withholdings, benefit contributions, and compliance with federal and state payroll regulations.
- *Grant Fund Management*: The NRVRC ensures that all grant funds received from the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) are accurately accounted for and disbursed in a timely manner. The Fiscal Agent submits Cash Payment Schedules to the State and ensures that funds are available to cover approved expenditures.
- *Financial Reporting*: The NRVRC provides regular financial reports to us, including budget vs. actual reports, cash flow statements, and expenditure summaries. These reports enable us to track spending, identify trends, and address any potential fiscal issues proactively.
- *Compliance and Accountability*: The NRVRC ensures that all financial transactions comply with WIOA regulations, federal Uniform Guidance (2 CFR Part 200), State policies, and local procedures. The Fiscal Agent works closely with auditors to ensure that financial records meet all audit requirements.

## Annual Contract Review and Approval Process

The contract between the NRMRDACB and the New River Valley Regional Commission is reviewed annually to ensure that the Fiscal Agent continues to meet performance expectations and that fiscal management remains compliant and effective. The annual contract review process includes:

- *Performance Evaluation*: The NRMRDACB conducts a review of the NRVRC's performance as Fiscal Agent, including an evaluation of financial reporting accuracy, timeliness of fund disbursement, and compliance with fiscal policies.
  - *Contract Renewal Decision*: If both parties agree to continue the partnership, a new contract is drafted for the upcoming program year. The contract outlines the scope of responsibilities, payment terms, and compliance requirements for the Fiscal Agent.
  - *Approval by the Consortium Board*: The new contract is presented to the NRMRDACB for formal approval. Once approved, the contract is executed, and the NRVRC continues to serve as the Fiscal Agent for the next program year.
- **Fiscal Accountability and Transparency**  
The NRVRC, as Fiscal Agent, ensures fiscal accountability and transparency in the management of WIOA funds by implementing internal controls, segregation of duties, and regular financial reporting. Key accountability measures include:
    - Monthly reconciliation of accounts to ensure accurate tracking of expenditures and available balances.
    - Submission of required financial reports to the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) and state and federal agencies.
    - Annual audits conducted by an independent auditor to ensure compliance with WIOA and Uniform Guidance requirements.

The New River Valley Regional Commission plays a critical role in ensuring the timely and accurate disbursement of WIOA grant funds for the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area. Through strong financial management practices, regular reporting, and compliance with all applicable regulations, the NRVRC helps ensure that WIOA funds are used effectively to support workforce development goals in the region.

The annual contract review process between the NRMRDACB and the NRVRC reinforces our commitment to fiscal accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement in the management of public funds.

## LEVERAGE WIOA FUNDS

*5.6 Describe the strategy used by the local board to leverage WIOA funds with other federal, state, local, and philanthropic resources.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board and the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area Consortium Board have long recognized that WIA/WIOA funding alone is not sufficient to fully address the workforce development needs of the region. To achieve greater impact and expand service capacity, we have adopted a comprehensive strategy to leverage WIOA funds with other federal, state, local, and philanthropic resources, ensuring a broader range of programs, services, and initiatives that meet the needs of both jobseekers and businesses.

Our leveraging strategy focuses on collaborative partnerships, multi-jurisdictional projects, and innovative funding approaches that enhance regional workforce development efforts and support our mission and vision.

- **Key Elements of our Leveraging Strategy**

Our funding strategy focuses on four core programmatic elements to ensure that leveraged resources are aligned with the region's strategic goals and provide maximum value to jobseekers, businesses, and workforce partners:

| Programmatic Element                  | Description                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Jobseeker Services                    | Services focused on skills development, career counseling, and training to help individuals achieve sustainable employment. |
| Business Services                     | Services designed to support local businesses, including recruitment, customized training, and incumbent worker training.   |
| Outreach and System Development       | Efforts to raise awareness of workforce programs and strengthen partnerships across the region.                             |
| Administrative (Oversight/Management) | Ensures fiscal accountability, compliance, and continuous improvement of workforce programs.                                |

The overlap between these programmatic elements allows us to integrate resources and services, ensuring that business needs inform jobseeker services and that system development efforts enhance both business and jobseeker outcomes.

- **Leveraging Resources Through Regional Partnerships**

We recognize that collaboration and partnership are essential to expanding the reach of WIOA funds. We have established strong partnerships with One-Stop Partners, local governments, community colleges, economic development agencies, and philanthropic organizations to leverage additional funding and expand workforce services. Key partnerships include:

- *Virginia Community College System (VCCS)*: Collaborating with FastForward and G3 programs to provide tuition-free credentialing for in-demand careers.
- *Virginia Employment Commission (VEC)*: Partnering to provide labor market information, job search assistance, and unemployment services.
- *Economic Development Organizations*: Aligning with regional economic development strategies to ensure training programs meet business needs and attract new businesses to the region.
- *Local Governments and Chambers of Commerce*: Leveraging local funding to support workforce initiatives that address unique community needs.
- *Community-Based Organizations and Philanthropic Foundations*: Pursuing grants and donations to support specialized programs, such as reentry services for returning citizens, youth apprenticeships, and wraparound supportive services.

Our focus on partnerships and alignment ensures that resources are used efficiently, duplication of services is minimized, and funding gaps are addressed.

- **Participation in Multi-Workforce Area Projects**

Since 2009, we have actively participated in multi-workforce area projects, recognizing that regional collaboration is essential to addressing shared workforce challenges and maximizing

resources across jurisdictional boundaries. Examples of regional projects include:

- *Participation in grant-funded activities*
- *Sector Strategies Initiatives*: Collaborating with neighboring workforce boards to develop regional career pathways in high-demand industries such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and information technology.
- *Regional Business Services Teams*: Coordinating with business services representatives across multiple workforce areas to provide seamless support to regional businesses and share best practices.

These collaborative efforts allow us to pool resources, share expertise, and scale successful workforce programs to benefit the entire region.

- **Use of the Partner Matrix to Braid Funding and Minimize Duplication**

To optimize resource allocation and limit duplication of services, we developed a Partner Matrix, which is regularly updated to identify what services are provided by each partner organization. The Partner Matrix serves as a valuable tool to:

- Identify gaps in service delivery and address them through collaborative efforts.
- Encourage resource sharing and braiding of funds across multiple partners and programs.
- Minimize duplication of services, ensuring that workforce programs remain efficient and effective.

The Partner Matrix also helps us to align services with the needs of both businesses and jobseekers, ensuring that resources are directed where they are most needed.

- **Pursuing Non-WIOA Grants and Funding Opportunities**

We actively pursue non-WIOA grants and funding opportunities to expand workforce services and address emerging needs in the region. Recent examples of non-WIOA funding include:

- *Reentry Services Grants*: Supporting job training and employment services for returning citizens to help them reintegrate into the workforce.
- *Youth Apprenticeship Grants*: Providing work-based learning opportunities for young people, particularly those with barriers to employment.
- *Incumbent Worker Training Grants*: Helping local businesses upskill their existing workforce, ensuring they remain competitive in a changing economy. By pursuing diverse funding sources, we can offer a wider range of services and increase the impact of WIOA programs.

- **Integration of Leveraged Resources into Workforce Services**

We ensure that leveraged resources are fully integrated into the region's workforce development system to maximize impact and support long-term sustainability. Key Integration Strategies Include:

- *Braiding Funds*: We work with partners to braid funding streams, ensuring that programs are fully funded and that participants receive comprehensive support services.
- *Aligning Services with Business Needs*: Leveraged resources are used to develop training programs that address specific skills gaps identified by local businesses, ensuring that jobseekers are prepared for in-demand careers.
- *Expanding Supportive Services*: We use leveraged funds to provide critical supportive services—such as transportation, childcare, and housing assistance—that help remove

barriers to employment for jobseekers.

Our strategy to leverage WIOA funds with other federal, state, local, and philanthropic resources ensures that the region’s workforce development system remains robust, comprehensive, and responsive to the needs of both jobseekers and businesses. Through collaborative partnerships, multi-area projects, and innovative funding approaches, we maximizes the impact of WIOA funds and provides enhanced services that support regional economic growth and workforce success.

By braiding resources, minimizing duplication, and aligning services with business needs, we create a sustainable and adaptable workforce system that continues to meet the evolving needs of the region.

## NEGOTIATED LOCAL LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE

*5.7 Indicate the negotiated local levels of performance for the federal measures.*

| <b>WIOA Title I Performance - LWDA 02</b> | <b>LWDA Final Goals PY 24 &amp; 25</b> |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>Adult</b>                              |                                        |
| Employment 2nd Quarter after Exit         | <b>85.0%</b>                           |
| Employment 4th Quarter after Exit         | <b>86.5%</b>                           |
| Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit    | <b>\$7,800.00</b>                      |
| Credential Attainment within 1 year       | <b>78.0%</b>                           |
| Measurable Skills Gain                    | <b>70.0%</b>                           |
| <b>Dislocated Workers</b>                 |                                        |
| Employment 2nd Quarter after Exit         | <b>82.0%</b>                           |
| Employment 4th Quarter after Exit         | <b>87.8%</b>                           |
| Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit    | <b>\$7,804.28</b>                      |
| Credential Attainment within 1 year       | <b>79.47%</b>                          |
| Measurable Skills Gain                    | <b>65.00%</b>                          |
| <b>Youth</b>                              |                                        |
| Employment 2nd Quarter after Exit         | <b>78.59%</b>                          |
| Employment 4th Quarter after Exit         | <b>80.0%</b>                           |
| Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit    | <b>\$4,700.00</b>                      |
| Credential Attainment within 1 year       | <b>60.0%</b>                           |
| Measurable Skills Gain                    | <b>65.0%</b>                           |

## MEASURE PERFORMANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS

*5.8 Describe indicators used by the local board to measure performance and effectiveness of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), contracted service providers and the one-stop*



*delivery system, in the local area.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board use a multi-faceted performance evaluation framework to ensure the effective management and delivery of WIOA Title I programs across the region. This framework includes clear performance indicators to evaluate the Fiscal Agent, Program Operators, and the One-Stop Delivery System, ensuring fiscal accountability, quality service delivery, and alignment with local workforce needs.

The performance evaluation process is guided by regular reviews, compliance monitoring, and continuous improvement practices, ensuring that all partners and service providers remain responsive to the needs of jobseekers and businesses.

- **Fiscal Agent: Performance and Accountability Measures**

The New River Valley Regional Commission (NRVRC) serves as the Fiscal Agent, and performance is measured based on timeliness, accuracy, and compliance in managing and disbursing WIOA funds. Key Indicators to Measure Fiscal Agent Performance:

| Indicator                              | Description                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Timeliness of Fund Disbursement        | Ensures that all WIOA-related payments are processed and disbursed on schedule, with checks distributed bi-monthly on the 15th and last day of the month. |
| Accuracy of Financial Reporting        | The Fiscal Agent must provide accurate and comprehensive financial reports to the NRMWDACB Finance Committee for review and approval.                     |
| Compliance with Cash Payment Schedules | The Fiscal Agent ensures that program operators are reimbursed after funds are requested from the State through the Cash Payment Schedule process.        |
| Annual Contract Review                 | The Fiscal Agent Agreement is reviewed annually by the Consortium Board to ensure continued performance and accountability.                               |

The Fiscal Agent sends regular expenditure reports to us for review and oversight, ensuring transparency and fiscal accountability. If any issues arise, we can take corrective actions to address deficiencies and ensure compliance.

- **Program Operators: Performance Indicators and Evaluation Process**

We evaluate the performance of its WIOA Title I Program Operators to ensure they deliver high-quality services that align with regional workforce needs. People Incorporated of Virginia currently serves as the One-Stop Operator, as well as the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Program Operator for the region. Key Performance Indicators for Program Operators:

| Indicator                          | Description                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Enrollment and Participation Rates | Tracks the number of participants enrolled in WIOA programs and ensures they meet target goals for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services. |
| Credential Attainment Rates        | Measures the percentage of participants who complete training programs and earn industry-recognized credentials.                                 |
| Employment Outcomes                | Tracks the number of participants who achieve unsubsidized employment after completing program services.                                         |
| Co-Enrollment and                  | Evaluates the Program Operator's ability to leverage other funding                                                                               |

| Indicator           | Description                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Braided Funding     | sources, such as TANF, SNAP, and philanthropic funds, to enhance services and outcomes.                                                       |
| Business Engagement | Measures the number of businesses engaged and the services provided to businesses, such as customized training, job fairs, and hiring events. |

The Program Operator’s ability to leverage WIOA funds to provide additional services—such as TANF programs, transportation assistance through the Cars program, and small business loans—is a key factor in our evaluation process. We also assesses the quality of workshops and support services provided to jobseekers and businesses. Monitoring and Evaluation Process:

- Annual Monitoring: We conduct annual on-site monitoring visits to review program policies, participant files, and financial records.
- Quarterly Performance Reviews: We review quarterly performance reports from the Virginia Workforce Connection system to track progress toward performance goals.
- Corrective Action Plans: If any deficiencies are identified, we work with the Program Operator to develop and implement Corrective Action Plans.

• One-Stop Delivery System: Performance and Effectiveness

The One-Stop Delivery System in the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area covers over 4,300 square miles and includes both physical entry points and virtual services through our website. We evaluate the effectiveness of the One-Stop Delivery System based on accessibility, service integration, and customer outcomes. Key Performance Indicators for the One-Stop Delivery System:

| Indicator                           | Description                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Accessibility and Service Coverage  | Ensures that jobseekers and businesses have equitable access to One-Stop services, both in-person and virtually.       |
| No Wrong Door Approach              | Evaluates how well the One-Stop centers provide seamless access to basic career services across multiple entry points. |
| Service Integration and Alignment   | Tracks the coordination between One-Stop partners to minimize duplication and leverage resources.                      |
| Business and Jobseeker Satisfaction | Measures customer satisfaction levels to ensure positive experiences for both businesses and jobseekers.               |
| Co-Enrollment and Resource Braiding | Evaluates the effectiveness of co-enrollment strategies to maximize service delivery and funding utilization.          |

• System Alignment and Partner Engagement:

We have facilitated “system alignment” discussions among WIOA Title partners, 13 Departments of Social Services, and three Community Colleges to ensure that services are coordinated and resources are leveraged.

We have also developed a **Partner Matrix** to map available services and reduce duplication, ensuring that partners work together to provide comprehensive services to jobseekers and businesses.

• Staff Roles Supporting Performance Management

To further enhance the effectiveness of the One-Stop Delivery System, we have created dedicated staff positions funded through discretionary grants to support intake, co-enrollment,

resource braiding, business engagement, outreach and community engagement. Key Staff Positions:

- *Program Coordinators:*
  - Work directly with jobseekers and partners to ensure smooth referrals and co-enrollments through Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs).
  - Facilitate ongoing communication between partners to ensure alignment of programs and policies that impact jobseekers.
- *Business Services Coordinator:*
  - Serves as the primary point of contact for the four Business Solutions Teams across the region.
  - Works to engage businesses and communicate their workforce needs to partner career counselors and jobseeker support staff.
- *Compliance and Monitoring Coordinator (shared position with other LWDAs)*
  - Works to ensure compliance with federal and state policies and procedures
- *Community Engagement Coordinator/Work-base Learning Specialist:*
  - Serves as the point person at many community events
  - Works to inform partners, individuals, organizations and companies about workforce development programs in the region
  - Works to increase work-base learning opportunities in the region
- *Client Support Specialist:*
  - Serves as the entry point for individuals interested in receiving job seeker services,
  - Makes referrals into other programs as needed.
  - Performs follow-up services for discretionary grant participants

These roles help ensure continuous improvement, align service delivery, and foster collaboration among workforce partners.

We use a comprehensive set of performance indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of the Fiscal Agent, Program Operators, and the One-Stop Delivery System. Through regular monitoring, performance reviews, and corrective action plans, we ensure that services remain aligned with WIOA goals and meet the needs of jobseekers and businesses in the region.

By fostering collaborative partnerships, leveraging discretionary funding, and aligning services with regional workforce priorities, we continue to promote a customer-focused and results-driven workforce system that delivers measurable outcomes for the community.

## **REPLICATED COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS**

*5.9 Provide a description of any replicated cooperative agreements with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration, and coordination.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board are committed to ensuring that the VA Career Works system provides equitable access to employment, training, and supportive services for all individuals, including individuals with disabilities and other individuals with barriers to employment. To achieve this goal, we have established replicated cooperative agreements and collaborative efforts with One-Stop system partners to promote cross-training of

staff, technical assistance, information sharing, and collaborative business engagement strategies. The primary cooperative agreement is the One-Stop System Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), executed between the VA Career Works system partners, the Workforce Development Board, and the Consortium Board. The MOU outlines roles, responsibilities, and commitments to ensure seamless service delivery, accessibility, and continuous improvement of services for individuals with disabilities and other individuals in need.

- The [One-Stop System Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU)

The One-Stop System MOU confirms the understanding between all parties regarding the operation and management of the VA Career Works Centers and workforce system in the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area (NRMW WDA). The MOU is updated and executed every three years and includes specific provisions to enhance services for individuals with disabilities and other vulnerable populations. Key provisions of the MOU include:

- *Commitment to Accessibility:* The MOU ensures that all physical and virtual services provided through the VA Career Works system are fully accessible to individuals with disabilities, in compliance with WIOA Section 188 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- *Cross-Training of Staff:* The MOU includes a commitment to cross-training One-Stop staff on disability awareness, assistive technology, and effective service strategies for individuals with disabilities. This training ensures that frontline staff are equipped to address the unique needs of individuals with disabilities and connect them to appropriate resources and services.
- *Service Integration and Resource Sharing:* The MOU promotes service integration by encouraging partners to share resources, data, and best practices to better serve individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities, veterans, returning citizens, and low-income individuals.

Anticipated outcome is increased coordination and seamless service delivery across One-Stop partners to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equitable access to employment and training services.

- Cross-Training of Staff and Technical Assistance

With One-Stop partners, we conduct regular cross-training sessions to ensure that staff are equipped to provide inclusive and accessible services. Cross-training focuses on disability awareness, use of assistive technology, and best practices for serving individuals with disabilities. Key cross-training and technical assistance activities include

- *Disability Awareness Training:* Staff receive training on how to effectively engage individuals with disabilities, including understanding invisible disabilities, communication best practices, and providing accommodations.
- *Assistive Technology Training:* Staff are trained on the use of assistive technology and adaptive equipment available at the VA Career Works Centers, such as screen readers, speech-to-text software, and accessible workstations.
- *Service Coordination with Vocational Rehabilitation (DARS):* The Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) provides technical assistance and ongoing support to ensure that services for individuals with disabilities are fully integrated within the One-Stop system.

Anticipated outcome is frontline staff have the knowledge and tools to provide effective, inclusive services to individuals with disabilities, ensuring equitable access to employment and

training opportunities.

- **Cooperative Efforts with Businesses to Promote Inclusive Hiring**

We work with local businesses to promote inclusive hiring practices and create employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities and other individuals with barriers to employment.

Key Business Engagement Strategies Include:

- *Business Awareness Campaigns*: We conduct outreach and education campaigns to raise business awareness about the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities and how to create inclusive workplaces.
- *Customized Business Training*: We offer customized training for businesses on ADA compliance, reasonable accommodations, and inclusive workplace practices.
- *Collaboration with DARS Business Services Team*: We collaborate with the DARS Business Services Team to connect businesses with resources to support inclusive hiring, such as tax incentives, assistive technology, and on-the-job training programs.

Anticipated outcome is increased business engagement and more inclusive hiring practices, resulting in greater employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

- **Information Sharing and System Alignment**

We are committed to sharing information and aligning services across the One-Stop partners to ensure seamless service delivery for individuals with disabilities and other vulnerable populations.

Key Information Sharing and Alignment Activities Include:

- *Partner Matrix*: We maintain a Partner Matrix that maps the services provided by each partner organization, ensuring that partners are aware of available resources and can coordinate services effectively.
- *Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs)*: We promote the use of Integrated Resource Teams to coordinate services for individuals with multiple barriers to employment, including disabilities. The IRT approach ensures that all available resources are leveraged to support participant success.
- *Data Sharing Agreements*: We have established data-sharing agreements with key partners to facilitate the exchange of participant information, ensuring that services are coordinated and duplication of efforts is minimized.

Anticipated outcome is enhanced coordination and collaboration across One-Stop partners, resulting in more comprehensive and efficient service delivery.

- **Continuous Improvement and Feedback Mechanisms**

We are committed to continuous improvement in the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and other individuals with barriers to employment. We regularly seek feedback from partners, staff, businesses, and participants to identify areas for improvement and implement best practices. Continuous Improvement Strategies Include:

- *Regular Partner Meetings*: We host regular meetings with One-Stop partners to discuss service delivery challenges and identify opportunities for improvement.
- *Participant Surveys*: We collect feedback from participants to assess satisfaction levels and identify unmet needs.
- *Technical Assistance Requests*: Partners can request technical assistance from us to address specific service delivery challenges and improve accessibility.

Anticipated outcome is ongoing improvements in service delivery, ensuring that individuals with



disabilities and other vulnerable populations receive high-quality, inclusive services.

We have established replicated cooperative agreements and collaborative efforts to enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and other individuals with barriers to employment. Through the One-Stop System MOU, cross-training of staff, technical assistance, business engagement, and information sharing, we ensure that all individuals have equitable access to employment, training, and supportive services. These efforts demonstrate our commitment to inclusivity, accessibility, and continuous improvement in workforce service delivery.

## **HIGH- PERFORMING BOARD**

|                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>5.10 Describe the actions the local board will take towards becoming or remaining a high-performing board.</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board is committed to maintaining its status as a high-performing board by continuously improving its governance, strategic focus, and stakeholder engagement efforts. We aim to foster a culture of leadership, accountability, and trust, ensuring that its members bring diverse expertise and perspectives to address regional workforce needs.

A high-performing board balances strategic oversight with active engagement, enabling us to lead workforce development efforts that promote economic growth and improve the quality of life in the region.

- **Strategic Role and Focus**

As the local workforce development board, we understand our role as the region’s convener of workforce development initiatives and facilitator of economic growth. We are focused on ensuring that workforce system partners work collaboratively to provide seamless, effective services to jobseekers and businesses. Key Actions to Enhance Strategic Focus:

- **Regular Partner Updates:**  
At each board meeting, workforce system partners provide updates on their programs, services, and challenges. These updates ensure that we remain well-informed and can address emerging issues in a timely manner.
- **Special Workforce Program Reviews:**  
We review special workforce initiatives led by staff to ensure that projects remain aligned with regional priorities and address critical workforce needs.
- **Business-Led Committees:**  
We ensure that business representatives serve as chairs of all committees, reinforcing the “business-led” structure and ensuring that the needs of regional businesses remain at the forefront of decision-making.

Anticipated outcome is continued facilitation and coordination of workforce initiatives that drive regional economic growth and improve the standard of living for residents.

- **Increasing Board Member Engagement and Knowledge**

A high-performing board requires engaged, knowledgeable members who are committed to our mission and vision. We emphasize ongoing education and engagement to ensure that members can effectively contribute to decision-making and support regional workforce efforts. Key

### Engagement Strategies:

- *Guest Speakers:* We will continue to invite guest speakers to present on emerging workforce trends, industry needs, and best practices. This provides members with valuable insights to inform decision-making.
- *Board Orientation for New Members:* Every new board member is invited to attend a comprehensive orientation to learn about the workforce system, our role and responsibilities, and committee structures.
- *Committee Participation:* Every board member is encouraged to serve on at least one committee, ensuring active participation and diverse input in our work.
- *Encouraging Feedback and Input:* Our Chair will continue to encourage all members to voice their opinions during and after meetings to foster open dialogue and collaborative decision-making.

Anticipated outcome is increased engagement and knowledge, ensuring that board members are well-informed and actively contribute to regional workforce strategies.

### • Strengthening Board Leadership

Effective leadership is essential to a high-performing board. The Chair plays a critical role in setting our tone and direction, ensuring that meetings are productive, and fostering a culture of accountability and collaboration. Key Leadership Actions:

- *Active Chairs and Vice-Chairs:* We will continue to select strong leaders to serve as Chair and Vice-Chairs, ensuring that leadership responsibilities are shared and that future leadership transitions are smooth.
- *Succession Planning:* Our two Vice-Chairs have the opportunity to lead meetings and committees, preparing them to potentially step into the Chair role when needed.
- *Strategic Planning Leadership:* Our Chair leads the Strategic Planning Committee, ensuring that our vision and goals remain aligned with regional priorities.

Anticipated outcome is strong leadership ensures that we remain focused, effective, and responsive to regional workforce needs.

### • Building a Balanced, Diverse Team

We recognize that a diverse and balanced board is essential to its effectiveness. We that members bring varied perspectives and expertise from different industries, sectors, and backgrounds. Key Actions to Maintain a Balanced Board:

- *Appointment of Business Representatives:* Business representatives are nominated by localities and must come from industries critical to the local economy. This ensures that we have broad representation from key sectors.
- *Diverse Representation:* We strive to maintain diverse representation, including large businesses, small businesses, woman-owned businesses, and minority-owned businesses. This diversity ensures that all voices are heard and that workforce programs remain inclusive and equitable.

Anticipated outcome is a balanced, diverse team ensures that we can address a wide range of workforce challenges and develop strategies that meet the needs of all stakeholders.

### • Fostering a Culture of Trust and Respect

A high-performing board functions as a team, with mutual respect and open communication as core values. We prioritize candid discussions, constructive feedback, and collaborative decision-

making to foster a culture of trust and respect. Key Actions to Build Trust and Respect:

- *Open Discussions*: We encourage open discussions during meetings, allowing all members to share their perspectives and ideas.
- *Important Votes Held in Full Board Meetings*: All important decisions are made in full board meetings, ensuring transparency and that all members have a voice in critical matters.
- *Committee Involvement*: Every member has the opportunity to serve on a committee of their choice, ensuring that all members are actively involved in our work.

Anticipated outcome is a culture of trust and respect ensures that we functions as a cohesive team, capable of making informed, impactful decisions.

- **Strengthening the Partnership with the Consortium Board (CLEOs)**

The partnership between the Workforce Development Board and Consortium Board is a critical component of the region's workforce governance structure. The two Boards work together to ensure alignment, accountability, and effective service delivery. Key Partnership Activities Include:

- *Mutual Attendance at Board Meetings*: The Chairs of both Boards attend each other's meetings to provide updates and maintain alignment.
- *Joint Executive Committee Meetings*: The Executive Committees of both Boards meet at least once a year to discuss critical regional issues.
- *Biannual Joint Meetings*: The boards hold joint meetings twice a year to review contracts, funding awards, and the Strategic Plan.
- *Exploration of a Non-Profit Arm*: We will evaluate the feasibility of developing a non-profit arm to support additional workforce development initiatives through philanthropic and grant funding.

Anticipated outcome is partnership between the two boards ensures alignment of goals, efficient service delivery, and enhanced regional impact.

- **Continuous Improvement and Measuring Impact**

We understand that meeting performance metrics alone is not enough to define success. We are committed to measuring the broader impact of its programs through Return on Investment (ROI) reports and continuous improvement efforts. Key Actions for Measuring Impact:

- *Annual Return on Investment (ROI) Reports*: We will continue to commission annual ROI reports to evaluate the impact of workforce programs on the regional economy and individuals' lives.
- *Feedback and Evaluation*: We will seek feedback from stakeholders and participants to identify areas for improvement and implement best practices.

Anticipated outcome is meeting performance metrics and making a meaningful impact on the lives of jobseekers, businesses, and communities.

We are committed to remaining a high-performing board by focusing on strategic leadership, member engagement, collaboration, and continuous improvement. Through strong partnerships, diverse representation, and data-driven decision-making, we will continue to positively impact the regional workforce system, promote economic growth, and improve the quality of life for individuals and businesses across the New River/Mount Rogers region.

## LOCAL PLAN INPUT

*5.11 Describe the process for getting input into the development of the local plan and providing public comment opportunity prior to submission. Be sure to address how members of the public, including representatives of business, labor organizations, and education were given an opportunity to provide comments on the local plan. If any comments received that represent disagreement with the plan were received, please include those comments here.*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board is committed to ensuring that the development of the local plan is a transparent and inclusive process that reflects the needs and priorities of the region's businesses, workforce partners, education providers, labor organizations, and community members. We employ a multi-step process to gather stakeholder input and provide opportunities for public comment prior to the submission of the local plan. The local plan was developed with guidance and input from a wide range of stakeholders, including board members, staff, regional partners, community organizations, and the general public. The process is overseen by the Strategic Planning Committee, which ensures that all feedback is considered and that the plan aligns with regional workforce priorities and WIOA requirements.

### • Stakeholder Engagement in the Development of the Local Plan

The Strategic Planning Committee plays a central role in the development of the local plan. The Committee is made up of board members from both boards and are responsible for developing and overseeing all strategic plans. Key Steps in the Plan Development Process:

- *Strategic Planning Committee Meetings:* The Strategic Planning Committee held multiple meetings to review the current strategic plan, reflect on our mission and vision, and identify regional workforce priorities. These meetings provided a forum for in-depth discussions on how to align our work with regional economic development efforts and statewide workforce goals.
- *Review of Regional Initiatives and Data:* The Committee reviewed existing regional initiatives, labor market data, and state and federal workforce priorities to ensure that the local plan reflects the needs of the region's businesses and jobseekers.
- *Input from Regional Partners:* Regional workforce partners—including representatives from business, education, economic development, and community-based organizations—were invited to provide feedback and insights on the draft plan to ensure that it addresses local workforce needs and priorities.

Anticipated outcome is the stakeholder engagement process helping to shape the strategic direction of the local plan and identify key priorities to guide our work.

### • Public Comment Process for the Local Plan

We provided opportunities for members of the public, businesses, labor organizations, and education providers to review and comment on the draft local plan before its submission.

Public Comment Process Steps:

- *Posting of the Draft Local Plan:* The Draft Local Plan was posted on our website, providing easy access for stakeholders and the general public to review the document.
- *Email Notification to Regional Partners:* An email blast was sent to regional workforce partners—including business leaders, education providers, economic development organizations, and community-based organizations—inviting them to review and

comment on the draft plan.

- *Public Notice in Regional Newspapers:* We placed public notices in the two largest newspapers in the region, informing the public of the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft local plan. Copies of the public notices can be found in Attachment I.
- *Submission of Comments:* Members of the public and stakeholders were encouraged to submit comments via email, mail, or through our website. All comments were collected and reviewed by the Strategic Planning Committee.

Anticipated outcome is the public comment process ensured transparency and allowed for broad input from stakeholders and the general public.

- **Addressing Public Comments and Incorporating Feedback**

We remain committed to considering all feedback received during the public comment period and incorporating relevant suggestions into the final local plan. We also ensure that any comments representing disagreement with the plan are acknowledged and addressed.

- *Review and Consideration of Comments:* The Strategic Planning Committee reviewed all comments submitted during the public comment period to determine whether changes to the draft plan were necessary. Comments were analyzed for relevance, alignment with workforce priorities, and potential impact on our work.
- *Addressing Disagreement:* If any comments representing disagreement with the plan were received, they were discussed by the Committee to ensure that all perspectives were considered. We are committed to transparency in its decision-making process and will include any comments representing disagreement with the plan in the final submission.

Anticipated outcome is the review and incorporation of public comments ensure that the final local plan reflects the input of stakeholders and the community and addresses regional workforce needs.

- **Ongoing Communication and Public Engagement**

We recognize that public engagement is an ongoing process. Beyond the development and submission of the local plan, we are committed to continuing communication with stakeholders and the public to ensure transparency and accountability. Ongoing Engagement Strategies:

- *Public Access to Board Meetings:* Both the Workforce Board and Consortium Board meetings are open to the public, with opportunities for public comment provided at each meeting.
- *Updates on our website:* We maintain a dedicated section on its website for strategic planning documents, public notices, and opportunities for public input.
- *Regular Communication with Regional Partners:* We regularly communicate with regional partners through email updates, newsletters, and public meetings to ensure that stakeholders remain informed about workforce initiatives and opportunities to provide input.

Anticipated outcome is ongoing communication and engagement efforts ensure that we remains responsive to the needs of the community and continuously improves its workforce strategies.

Public Comment Period ran from February 8, 2025 to March 10, 2025.

Our process for gathering stakeholder input and providing public comment opportunities is



designed to promote transparency, inclusivity, and collaboration. Through stakeholder engagement, public outreach, and ongoing communication, we ensure that the local plan reflects regional workforce priorities and addresses the needs of businesses, jobseekers, and the community. By providing opportunities for public comment, we ensure that all voices are heard and that the final plan is comprehensive, inclusive, and aligned with WIOA requirements.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### *5.12 Describe professional staff development strategies*

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board recognizes that continuous professional development is critical to the success of the workforce system. By investing in ongoing staff training and development, we ensure that staff, partners, and stakeholders remain current on workforce policies, best practices, and labor market trends, enabling them to provide high-quality services to both jobseekers and businesses. These professional development efforts not only enhance the skills and knowledge of the workforce system's staff but also foster collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement across the VA Career Works Centers in the region.

- **Ongoing Professional Development Series for Staff and Partners**

We sponsor a monthly professional development series, offered free of charge to all staff and partners. These interactive sessions cover a wide range of topics, including technical training, soft skills development, policy updates, and emerging trends in workforce development. Key Features of the Monthly Professional Development Series:

- *Diverse Topics:* Sessions have covered Adverse Childhood Experiences, Labor Market Information, Family-Centered Coaching, Equal Opportunity Provisions, and other critical topics relevant to the workforce system.
- *High Participation Rates:* These sessions are well-attended, with upwards of 40 participants per session, demonstrating the value and impact of this ongoing professional development initiative.
- *Collaborative Learning Environment:* The sessions provide opportunities for staff and partners to share best practices, build relationships, and engage in problem-solving discussions that enhance service delivery.

Anticipated outcome is the monthly professional development series has proven to be a win-win for staff, partners, and the broader workforce system, fostering a culture of continuous learning and collaboration.

- **Regional Partner Training to Improve Collaboration and Service Delivery**

We prioritize regional partner training to build relationships, improve understanding of policies and programs, and promote the sharing of best practices. Key Benefits of Regional Partner Training:

- *Enhanced Policy Understanding:* Training sessions help partners and staff stay up-to-date on WIOA policies, Virginia Workforce Letters (VWLs), and local workforce system requirements.
- *Relationship Building:* These sessions provide partners with opportunities to network, collaborate, and problem-solve together, strengthening the regional workforce system.
- *Sharing of Best Practices:* Regional partner training encourages the sharing of innovative solutions and successful strategies that can be replicated across the region to

improve service delivery.

Anticipated outcome is regional partner training builds stronger relationships, improves service coordination, and increases the overall effectiveness of the workforce system.

- Onboarding and Continuous Training for WIOA Title I Program Staff

Our WIOA Title I Program Operators ensures that all new staff receive comprehensive onboarding and training to ensure consistent, high-quality service delivery. Onboarding Process for New Staff:

- *Four Days of Initial Classroom Training:* New staff receive a minimum of four days of classroom training covering WIOA eligibility requirements, assessment procedures, development of individual employment plans, labor market information, data entry into the Virginia Workforce Connection (VaWC) system, and case management best practices.
- *Shadowing Senior Staff Members:* New hires spend significant time shadowing experienced staff members to learn intake procedures, client interactions, job development strategies, and general service provision.
- *Certification and Ongoing Training:* Staff are certified to administer the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and ACT WorkKeys® assessments. All WIOA Title I staff are encouraged to complete the Certified Workforce Development Professional (CWDP) certification to further enhance their skills and credentials.
- *Continuous Training for Existing Staff*
- *Regular Training Sessions:* The Program Operators provide ongoing training throughout the year to ensure that staff remain up-to-date on policy changes, service delivery improvements, and emerging best practices. Specialized Topics Covered:

- ?
- ?
- ?

Anticipated outcome is onboarding and continuous training programs ensure that staff are well-equipped to provide high-quality services, comply with WIOA requirements, and meet the needs of jobseekers and businesses.

- Use of National and Local Training Resources

We leverage national and local training resources to provide additional professional development opportunities for staff and partners. Key Training Resources Include:

- *Workforce GPS:* A national online learning platform that offers webinars, toolkits, and resources on workforce development best practices.
- *National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP):* We participate in NAWDP webinars to gain insights on national workforce trends and innovative solutions.
- *Local Training Providers:* We partner with local training providers such as Workforce 180, Fred Pryor Seminars, and Dale Carnegie to offer in-person and virtual training sessions on a variety of topics.

Anticipated outcome is ensuring that staff and partners have access to diverse learning opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge.

- **Performance Evaluation and Goal Setting**

We conduct annual performance evaluations for all staff members to ensure accountability and continuous improvement. Key Components of the Performance Evaluation Process:

- **Goal Setting:**  
Professional development goals are discussed during annual evaluations, and staff are encouraged to pursue training opportunities that align with their career goals.
- **Progress Monitoring:**  
We monitor progress toward professional development goals throughout the year and provides support and resources to help staff achieve their goals.

Anticipated outcome is regular performance evaluations and goal setting ensure that staff remain motivated to pursue professional development and contribute to our overall success.

- **VCW Center Certification and ADA Compliance**

We ensure that all Virginia Career Works (VCW) Centers in the region are certified and ADA-compliant, ensuring that staff are trained to meet the needs of all customers. VCW Center Certification Process:

- *Certification by the Virginia Board of Workforce Development:* Our seven VCW Centers are certified based on state guidelines to ensure that centers meet high standards of service delivery.
- *ADA Compliance Reviews:* We completed a recent EEO review by the Commonwealth's EO Officer with no findings and has partnered with the Appalachian Independence Center to conduct physical ADA compliance reviews.

Anticipated outcome is center certification and ADA compliance efforts ensure that staff are prepared to provide inclusive, accessible services to all customers.

Our professional staff development strategies are designed to promote continuous learning, enhance service delivery, and build a high-performing workforce system. Through monthly training sessions, onboarding programs, national training resources, and performance evaluations, we ensures that staff and partners remain knowledgeable and prepared to meet the evolving needs of the workforce system.

By maintaining VCW Center certifications and ensuring ADA compliance, we demonstrates our commitment to providing accessible, high-quality services to all jobseekers and businesses in the region. These ongoing professional development efforts strengthen the region's workforce system and support economic growth across the New River/Mount Rogers region.

### **Statement of Compliance, Plan Signatures, & Fiscal Agent Designation**

*We hereby certify that this local plan was developed in accordance with the State guidelines, and that local board activities will be conducted in accordance with this plan and the provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, its attendant regulations and the applicable state laws and policies. We further certify that the plan was developed by the local workforce development board in partnership with the Chief Elected Officials, and with the benefit of an open and inclusive plan development process and the required 30-day public comment period.*

|                                    |                                                            |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Local Area Name/#</i>           | <i>New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area/2</i> |
| <i>Local Plan Point of Contact</i> |                                                            |
| <i>Address</i>                     |                                                            |
| <i>Phone/Email</i>                 |                                                            |

|                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                               |
| <i>Mike Miller, Chair, New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board</i> |

|                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                              |
| <i>Mary Biggs, Chair, New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area Consortium Board</i> |

*The Chief Local Elected Officials designate the follow entity as the fiscal agent:*

New River Valley Regional Commission  
Kevin Byrd, Executive Director  
New River Valley Regional Commission  
(P) 540-639-9313 (x212) | (C) 540-808-8891  
kbyrd@nrvc.org  
6580 Valley Center Drive, Suite 124  
Radford, VA 24141

## **LOCAL PLAN REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS**

Please provide the links to the documents listed below in the boxes marked “Click here to enter text.” If such links are not available, please include copies of the documents with your submission.

1. Current Chief Elected Official Consortium Agreement.
2. Current Chief Elected Official LWBD Agreement,
3. Current LWBD organizational chart.
  - Identify board oversight and program administration
4. Copies of executed cooperative agreements between the LWBD or other local entities and the local office of the Virginia agency/unit administering programs carried out under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with businesses, and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration, and coordination
  - Cooperative agreements as defined in WIOA section 107(d)(11))
  - Other local entities described in section 101(a)(11)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11)(B))
5. LWDB Policies: provide the link to all policies on the LWDB website