Workforce Development/Talent Pipeline

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

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

Headers (project categories)

1. **Assessment of Employer Needs**
    - Formal upskilling to match industry needs;
    - Credentials

2. **Talent/job interface**
    - Establish Youth Entrepreneurship Clinics;
    - **Sector approach to work-based learning with sub-regional efforts to support career readiness and career options; (#1)**
    - **Career awareness (marketing) programs primarily directed to parents, counselors (K-12), and untapped workers, promoting opportunities within the region. Innovative and experiential tools (e.g. virtual reality) would be used to feature high-demand and emerging sector jobs (#2).**

3. **Promoting education-to-employment pipelines**
    - High school "Capstone" program;
    - Develop pathway to courses beyond high school if students not dual-enrolled;
    - Increase/modify trade-related training programs in high school for high demand field;
    - Conduct feasibility study with employers for LFCC to develop programs to support/scale-up/retain: Conveyor Systems Techs, Agri-technicians, Fork truck/Reach truck repair mechanics, Diesel Mechanics;
    - Establish co-op, mentorship, internship programs;
    - Encourage youth programs to identify and build skills sets (e.g. 4-H, FFA, Scouts) then roll into career path training;
    - Create higher ed and public school partnerships to educate K-12 on emerging/growing employment sectors;
    - "INVENTure" Days;
    - Create/promote career development programs throughout K-12;
    - K-12 alignment with career pathways (real jobs available upon graduation)

4. **Talent attraction and retention**

- Promote quality of life and location-based community assets (e.g. schools, broadband, recreation, housing);
- Develop programs or initiatives to address worker transportation challenges (e.g. public transportation connecting county to county or county to city) or access to higher ed institutes;
- Programs to address day care/child care needs of available workers (e.g. single parents), particularly those working in or pursuing employment in 24x7 operations;
- Programs to address "workforce housing" needs (moderate income levels);
- Initiatives targeting young professionals, especially JMU grads

5. **Other**
   - Online or tech-based training to enhance workforce readiness or support career changes;
   - "Second chance" programs for drug-related offenders;
   - Engage with community partners to address social issue

Site Development

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

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

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

Headers (project categories):

1. **Site Readiness Investigation**
   - Pursue public/private opportunities;
   - Streamline local/state regulations governing early grading permits

2. **Enhance visibility of existing sites**
   - Create marketing/education programs around importance of site preparation;
   - Purchase and use of regional fiscal impact model (LOCI) to assist in "making the case" for development projects;

- **Establishment of a regionwide RIFA (all Region 8 localities); all communities would participate (and benefit from revenues) and a long-term plan for development of multiple sites around the region would be created. (#1)**

3. **Complete general site improvements**
   - Consider opportunities with Front Royal/Warren Co. (water/sewer revenue sharing precedent has been established);
   - Clarke County/Berryville: 50 +/- acre site near the town;
   - **Establish a RIFA or other revenue-sharing agreement with Shenandoah County, Strasburg, Warren and Frederick counties for the North Shenandoah Industrial Park (~190 acres) (#3)**

4. **Create industrial megasite**
   - **Pursue development of 500+ acres adjacent to the Shenandoah Valley Airport: Existing authority already in place with 5 localities involved and land under public control; primary infrastructure needs are gas, water and sewer (#2)**

5. **Other**
   - Advocate for rezoning of property while allowing local land use (and associated taxation) to remain in place until development occurs; upgrades site readiness tier (Attorney General opinion to be forthcoming)
   - Educate elected officials on benefits of RIFAs: 30% of something is better than 100% of nothing

Start-up Ecosystems/Innovation/Commercialization

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

Headers (project categories):

1. **Advancement of integrated accelerators-incubators-entrepreneurial hubs**
   - **Collaborative Makerspace (prototype/scale-up) facility with associated services (e.g. ICAP assistance, university mentors, SBDC staff) and related equipment for entrepreneurs. Services might include development and execution of consistent methodologies and processes for start-ups; (#1)**
   - Cluster-specific accelerators (e.g. agricultural producers could share space for scaling up, such as breweries, cideries, or commercial kitchens for large-scale food products);
   - Regionwide assistance and funding for "proof of concept" development;

- Establishment of incubators in Winchester and Lexington
- Advanced manufacturing incubator to support early phase businesses and worker training

2. **Engagement of college & university business schools and professional service providers (to assist start-up companies from ideation through growth and scale-up)**
   - Designate/establish Entrepreneurial Centers of Excellence at each higher-ed institutions in the region;
   - Creation of Youth Entrepreneurship Programs

3. **Catalyze follow-on venture funding to go beyond initial risk capital sources**
   - Create a $10 million statewide GO Virginia seed fund for start-ups across the State

4. **Regional Entrepreneurial "Quarterback" (to provide coordinated services)**

5. **Other**
   - **Creation of the Virginia Center for Advanced Agriculture in Region 8: the region would be the expert hub for alignment of AI, Agriculture, and Robotics – particularly advanced agriculture systems for growing, harvesting, and production of ag products (i.e. "Agribotics"); (#2)**
   - Establishment of a Li-Fi (light-speed) manufacturing facility (in concert with technology development occurring in Region 9);
   - Launch a regional, professional E-Sports (gaming) team and arena;
   - Cannabis/industrial hemp center (research, growth and products manufacturing);
   - Support transition of apple orchards to cideries
   - Regionwide survey of local manufacturers to determine what services/support businesses are needed from small businesses

Scale-Ups

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

Headers (project categories):

1. **Access to capital**
   - Collaboration with Region 9 for "mature" access to capital (equity);
   - Programs to expand capital access beyond start-up;
   - Advisory services re: where is the money, preparing to seek money, connecting funding/financial providers with businesses;

- Undertake an inventory/assessment of existing capital programs/providers; educate/create awareness; review requirements and effectiveness of existing programs; identify gaps and best practices; develop new collaborative funding models;
- Create more early-stage at the State level to invest in companies (e.g. expansion of CIT GAP funds; designate smaller funding pool for customer discovery and allocate as milestones are achieved);
- Incentives to encourage creation of capital funds

2. **Business Mentoring**
   - Economic Gardening Program;
   - Peer-to-peer CEO roundtables;
   - Export assistance for new or early-stage companies, including market research on export opportunities and promotion of State export programs;
   - Youth entrepreneurship clinics;
   - Develop inventory of available business resources and educate/promote to businesses; develop technical programs or specialized resources to address gaps;
   - Increase access to support resources/funding to help with sustainability of existing businesses

3. **Supply Chain Enhancements**
   - **Create "food production pipeline" and vendor networks to connect small and large companies and suppliers across the region (and to other regions);**
   - Study micro-food manufacturers across the region and connect to producers;
   - Assisting producers in getting to larger markets;
   - Development of commercial kitchens shared between producers;
   - Connecting local food manufacturers with automated processes/automation services;
   - Creation of new transportation modes i.e. use of unmanned systems for product delivery

4. **Other**
   - VHS model for industry not just K-12 but untapped and beyond high schools;
   - Business outreach to and assessment of small/medium businesses to identify obstacles and barriers to growth;
   - "Smart Beginnings" program to strengthen existing companies with business management skills;
   - Conduct feasibility study with employers for LFCC to develop programs to support/scale-up/retain: Conveyor Systems Techs, Agri-technicians, Fork truck/Reach truck repair mechanics, Diesel Mechanics;
   - **Programs to address child care and transportation issues for workers and small business owners**