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# COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

**NUMBER NINETY-SIX (2009)**

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### CREATING THE VIRGINIA CAREER PATHWAYS SYSTEM WORKING GROUP

#### **Importance of the Initiative**

Growing pressure from international competition and the rapid pace of technological change have led to an increasing demand for highly skilled workers to satisfy labor market needs. As the economic recession has taken hold, Virginia must strengthen the link between and among levels of education and training and workforce needs at the state level and at a regional level in order to remain competitive. By bolstering the public education and training systems and by strengthening the links between levels of education and training, state and regional policymakers can provide the lifeblood for thriving economies in Virginia.

Virginia as a whole is well positioned to succeed in the increasingly talent-driven global economy, but not all regions and people within the Commonwealth are prepared to share in the success. On average, Virginia has a highly educated workforce and a growing segment of industries highly reliant on the skills and talents of their workforces. However, the distribution of the educated populace and thriving economic sectors is geographically uneven.

On state and regional levels, many of the pieces are in place for Virginia to train workers and to meet labor market needs across Virginia, including building many comprehensive one-stop centers across the Commonwealth. However, in order to do so more effectively and efficiently, it is critical that all agencies that play a role in education, training, and economic development communicate with each other regularly and coordinate where appropriate. Virginia has an opportunity to streamline efforts by strengthening and formalizing this communication and coordination among agencies.

One important way to enable communication and coordination is through the development of a career pathways system and implementation of the recommendations laid out

in the Career Pathways Strategic Plan (December 2008). A career pathways system is a series of connected education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to secure employment within a specific industry or occupational sector and to advance over time to successively higher levels of education or employment in that sector. Each step on a career pathway is designed explicitly to prepare for the next level of employment and education. The career pathways system will provide the framework and program support for developing a high-skill workforce to support growing industries on the state, regional, and local levels. The system will necessarily draw from all aspects of workforce development – education, workforce training, and business and industry. All relevant state agencies and Cabinet secretaries will be actively engaged in the effort.

### **Virginia Career Pathways System Working Group**

Virginia's approach to career pathways needs to be systemic, responsive to business and labor market needs, and characterized by five basic elements: state leadership, reliable and consistent use of data, flexibility, sustainability, and visibility. The system must be guided by state policy and coordinated at state agency levels so there is a clear understanding of direction, roles and responsibilities, processes and allowable use of funding as well as regular and ongoing communication between and among agencies.

The Virginia Career Pathways Working Group will ensure commitment and participation by agencies central to education, training and workforce needs as well as coordination with other entities. The Working Group will coordinate with the Virginia Workforce Council to provide leadership and advocacy at the state level as appropriate.

### **Composition of the Working Group:**

Working Group members shall be appointed by their respective agency head or Cabinet Secretary. Recognizing the need for active participation by education and training agencies as well as business, industry, and employment agencies, Working Group membership shall include representatives from:

- Governor's Office
- Office of the Secretary of Education
- Office of the Secretary of Commerce and Trade
- The Chief Workforce Development Officer
- State Council of Higher Education for Virginia
- Virginia Community College System
- Virginia Department of Education
- Virginia Department of Labor and Industry
- Virginia Economic Development Partnership
- Department of Social Services
- Virginia Employment Commission
- Other agencies as decided upon by the Working Group and Career Pathways Lead

Additionally, an Advisory Group comprised of representatives from other agencies

impacted by the Career Pathways System will provide guidance and participate as necessary. The Advisory Group will assist the Career Pathways Working Group as needed with issues that relate to Advisory Group members' agencies. Advisory Group members will not be required to regularly participate in meetings, but may be called upon as needed. Advisory Group membership could include representatives from the following agencies:

- Department of Juvenile Justice
- Department of the Aging
- Department of Correctional Education
- Department of Business Assistance
- Department of Rehabilitative Services

### **Duties of the Working Group**

The Working Group will deliver on the five major recommendations of Virginia's career pathways strategic plan by establishing the means to:

- Encourage and facilitate the use of data to strengthen connections to business, inform program development, and measure success;
- Encourage transitions among education and employment systems, programs, and services while allowing for flexibility at regional and institutional levels;
- Expand the provision of supportive services—including advising and coaching—to increase retention and completion rates among Virginians enrolled in workforce training and education programs;
- Establish sustainability of Virginia's career pathways system as an interagency and business priority across all relevant agencies and key industries; and
- Establish state and regional leadership and an operational framework to support regional action.

The Working Group is also responsible for:

- Working with the Career Pathways Lead to create policy, guidelines, and performance and progress measurement systems for implementation of the state career pathways system.
- Coordinating across state agencies to create and support the implementation of the statewide career pathways system.
- Advising the Virginia Workforce Council on career pathways related issues that may require state policy, communications, and advocacy.
- Advising the Career Pathways Lead on implementation of the career pathways system.
- Undertaking communications efforts within their agencies to support the adoption of, technical assistance for and implementation of career pathways activities.

### **Working Group Leadership**

The Secretary of Education will Chair the Working Group. The Chair will be responsible for:

- Convening quarterly meetings of the Working Group.
- Providing strategic guidance for the Career Pathways Lead and the Working Group.
- Ensuring that the Governor and his Cabinet are apprised of activities of the Working Group.
- Promoting the policy goals of the Working Group with the Governor and his staff as well as members of the General Assembly.
- Liaising with other entities and stakeholders whose mission or interests align with the goals of the statewide career pathways system, including the Governor's Working Group on Early Childhood Initiatives, the P-16 Council, the Council on Virginia's Future, and the Virginia Workforce Council.

The Working Group will be assisted by the Career Pathways Lead (the Lead). The Lead shall be supported by all agencies represented on the Career Pathways Working Group through financial, in-kind, or other types of assistance for the role. The Lead's responsibilities will include:

- Ensuring all state level career pathways system efforts are implemented according to the direction and guidance provided by the Working Group.
- Working with the Working Group to ensure that the recommendations of the Career Pathways Strategic Plan are implemented in an appropriate and timely manner.
- Reporting progress, issues requiring action, and recommending action to the Working Group on a regular basis.
- Pursuing appropriate infrastructure and funding to support long-term sustainability of the statewide career pathways system.
- Convening a monthly conference call with agency staff supporting the work of the Working Group.

This Executive Order shall be effective upon its signing and shall remain in full force and effect until December 31, 2011, unless sooner amended or rescinded by further executive order.

Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia this 13th day of October 2009.

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Timothy M. Kaine, Governor

Attest:

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Secretary of the Commonwealth