

REGIONAL TOUR REPORT

BUILD

VIRGINIA

Build Virginia Advisory Board
August 12, 2019

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Introduction

Virginia's recent ranking as America's *'Top State for Business in 2019'* is a direct result of Governor Ralph S. Northam's statewide workforce development prioritization. Thanks to the Governor's thoughtful investments in education and industry-recognized training programs, Virginia's workers and businesses alike are finding more success.

To remain a top state for business and maintain our world-class workforce, the Virginia workforce system continues to be driven by employer demand. Recognizing that thousands of high-paying, quality jobs are going unfilled in industries like construction, manufacturing, shipbuilding, and ship repair, Governor Ralph S. Northam responded with the Build Virginia initiative in June of 2018.

To best serve Virginians and develop the most relevant and effective initiative possible, a Build Virginia Advisory Board was established in the fall of 2018. The Advisory Board is comprised of a group of knowledgeable industry-leaders in the various skilled trades sectors.

An early meeting of the Advisory Board made clear that shortages in the skilled trades' workforce are being felt across industries and the state. In addressing this issue, the Board advised against applying a one-size-fits all solution, as each region has unique challenges. To address this issue, we initiated a Build Virginia Regional Tour to receive feedback from focus groups of regional experts.

Led by my office, the tour featured stakeholder meetings in nearly every region of Virginia. Meetings were hosted by local businesses, community colleges, and workforce training centers, with attendees ranging from industry leaders and employers, representatives of trade associations, leadership from both K-12 and higher education, and advocates for unique populations including persons with disabilities, veterans, and returning citizens.

With careful consideration of each region's communicated needs, the Board developed responses appropriate for both state and regional implementation. In this first Build Virginia report, we are proud to present thoughtful strategies to help connect job seekers and employers to the resources they need to thrive in Virginia's skilled trades economy. It is my hope that the Build Virginia initiative will contribute to Virginia's continued status as a top state in which to live, work, and do business in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Megan Healy".

Megan Healy, PhD
Chief Workforce Development Advisor
Office of Governor Ralph S. Northam

Build Virginia Advisory Board Members

Megan Healy
Chief Workforce Development Advisor
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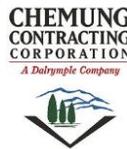
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Build Virginia Vision, Mission, and Goals

Build Virginia Vision: Virginia will be the leader in workforce for construction, trades, shipbuilding, advanced manufacturing and energy.

Build Virginia Mission: All Virginians will have the opportunity to have the right skills to meet the current and future needs of new or no-collar jobs in the construction, trades, shipbuilding, advanced manufacturing, and energy sectors.



During the inaugural Build Virginia Board Meeting in March 2019, the Advisory Board outlined three organizational goals, as listed below:

GOAL 1: Identify the demand of skilled workers in the Build Virginia sectors at the state and regional level.

- Evaluate current and projected labor market information on jobs in the Build Virginia sector. Disaggregate these jobs by region and level of education/certification
- Hold regional Build Virginia meetings to discuss local and regional labor market information with employers, to validate data and to examine shortages in the labor force
- Engage statewide trade associations and organizations to learn about their concerns in the labor shortages



GOAL 2: Develop and endorse pathways and programs that lead to needed careers.

- Evaluate data needs to inform education and workforce systems
- Develop new ways to recruit faculty in K-12 and community college system
- Create career ladders that show how skills and experience can transfer between industries
- Integrate foundational skills in all levels of training
- Decrease barriers for opportunities for youth exposure to these industries

- Create regional pre-employment training opportunities
- Increase the number of youth and adult registered apprenticeships in these fields

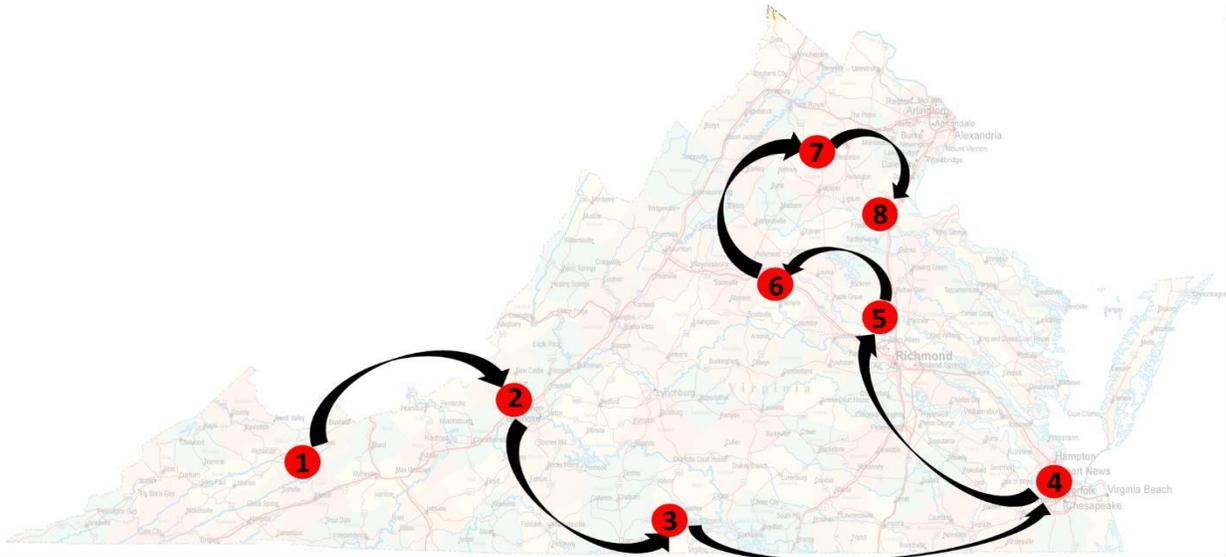
GOAL 3: Create and implement an outreach plan to attract new and future workers.

- Use new terminology
- Identify different stakeholder groups that need to be targeted
- School counselors: Explore scalable approaches to career exploration; integrated counseling for both parents and students at back to school night, career fairs and employer open houses
- Parents: Increase outreach to Parent Teacher Associations to promote job awareness and reduce stigma around the trades; increase services supporting the parents of at-risk students
- Students: Develop timely, accurate, and digestible labor market information for students in order to make informed career choices; create an online platform or social media page to highlight the possibilities and pathways available
- Veterans: Assist veterans to translate specialized skills into civilian employment; hold on-base career exploration events for returning service members
- Returning citizens: Find ways to engage those with criminal histories who remain a largely untapped labor pool in many communities; decrease barriers and challenges for returning citizens to re-enter the labor force



Approach to Analysis

To achieve Build Virginia's goals, the Governor's Chief Workforce Development Advisor and members of the Advisory Board hosted regional focus groups across the Commonwealth. Eight focus groups were conducted from April through May 2019, with nearly four hundred participants statewide. The purpose of these ninety-minute discussions was to better understand local workforce and economic needs. Representatives from multiple sectors, including public, private, non-profit, and education shared key insights and needs regarding their respective regions.



8 Focus groups

Tazewell - April 16, 2019	Ashland - May 10, 2019
Roanoke - April 29, 2019	Zion Crossroads - May 17, 2019
South Boston - April 30, 2019	Warrenton - May 20, 2019
Portsmouth - May 8, 2019	Fredericksburg - May 31, 2019

 Nearly **400** Participants

90 Minute sessions

Regional Tour Locations



Tazewell



Roanoke



South Boston



Portsmouth



Ashland



Zion Crossroads



Warrenton



Fredericksburg

Statewide Strategies and Solutions

Leveraging data and focus group feedback themes, the board aligned on five strategies and solutions that can be adopted regionally to meet the needs of Build Virginia's collective community:

1. **Validate high-demand regional job lists and requirements.** A key first step includes validation and awareness of regional high-demand jobs, as well as their respective competency and capability requirements. Without this information, regions will continue to see residents looking outside their immediate living area for jobs. Leveraging this data, the integrated Build Virginia contributors will work together to better map local jobs to available workers, and offer targeted training and development opportunities that better prepare them for these jobs.
2. **Identify existing and potential regional talent pools.** The goal of this strategy is to identify audiences in each region that would benefit from greater awareness of job openings and learning vehicles that will better prepare them for the open jobs. These populations include, but are not limited to, the existing workforce, unemployed workers, displaced workers, returning citizens, and those with disabilities. The team will also look at boosting educational opportunities for middle and high school students who are beginning the career thought process, but may not realize the tremendous opportunities in trade and technical careers.
3. **Expand existing and/or build new pathways and programs.** Once the audiences and job requirements are clear, the team will work across educational, business and nonprofit sectors to tailor training to meet unique regional needs. This includes enhancing the awareness and use of existing job search and training resources that are currently available (see Appendix for sample resource list). Local colleges and trade and technical schools will collaborate regionally, as well as tap into statewide opportunities such as DOLI-sponsored Apprenticeship

programs. Collaborating regionally will minimize duplication of effort and maximize collective success.

4. **Prioritize and pursue funding and legislation.** While much progress is being made through regional and statewide partnerships and resources, communities would benefit from additional funding. Grants and other funding sources can be used to grow mentoring and apprenticeship programs, build and launch outreach campaigns, and hire and train coaches and guidance counselors who are well versed in trade and technical career fields. There is also an opportunity to pursue changes in legislation, such as systemic barriers to employment.

5. **Establish and deliver an outreach campaign.** Raising awareness regarding what jobs are in demand locally, as well as training available to equip the workforce, was something that surfaced in every focus group. To bring the Build Virginia mission to life will require investing in the creation and distribution of outreach champions, materials, and events. These efforts will include sharing information regionally, including promoting jobs and job search resources, as well as providing access to timely, targeted training that prepares workers for high-demand jobs.

“As communities come together to share vital information and resources, a web of support and connectivity will be built to bridge regional job and capability gaps.”

Regional Insights and Recommendations - TAZEWELL



Event Date: April 16, 2019

Host Organization: The PBE Group

Address: 1459 Wittens Mill Road, North Tazewell, VA 24630

Tazewell Quick Win Recommendations			
 <p>Build foundational skills and confidence</p>	 <p>Plan outreach events to show what's possible</p>	 <p>Expedite path from certifications to jobs</p>	 <p>Increase signing days</p>

Key Theme: K-12 Outreach

Support for outreach to K-12 students was a clear theme in the Tazewell focus group. Participants described the general lack of awareness about technical careers that are available throughout the southwest region. One individual noted that high school graduates opted to work at lower paying jobs with less career advancement opportunities, simply due to a lack of awareness or access to better jobs. Suggestions to increase visibility and meet the needs of businesses and diverse student



groups included increased funding for co-op programs, apprenticeships, dual enrollment with CTE schools, etc., as well as adding “signing days.”

One participant detailed a success story out of Radford High School. Career coaches at this school partnered with community colleges to offer welding classes. Four students recently completed this program; two were hired right out of high school, and two entered community college.

Many Tazewell participants stressed the importance of building foundational skills in grades five through twelve, including self-confidence, perseverance, adaptability, initiative, self-esteem/confidence, and time management.



Key Theme: Culture Shift

Focus group participants were asked to discuss what Build Virginia is getting right and what it could do better in their communities. The stigma attached to technical careers was overwhelmingly the top priority across all focus groups. In Tazewell, this stigma has led to dropping enrollment in technical education amidst increasing cultural pressure to go the college route. It has also become one of the driving forces behind local residents leaving the area in search of different career opportunities.

Participants believe a cultural shift is possible, but add that it would require proactive action such as developing relationships with local businesses and building awareness and access to local job opportunities.

Representatives from The PBE Group expressed a desire to take students straight from passing advanced manufacturing certifications right into viable jobs. The PBE Group is also working with Southwest Virginia Community College to train operators.



A contributor explained how difficult it is to go to school while also holding down a job and paying bills for the family:

“Working adults are stuck in low-wage jobs...It’s a hole they never get out of. Let’s target them, and help them to not lose hope and not give up. This is an untapped market.”

Key Theme: Returning Citizens

Returning citizens was a topic of great discussion in this region. Many believed that the area could be doing more to support and utilize this unique population. For example, one participant offered a specific regional example: there are approximately 2,500 returning citizens in Tazewell. In order to get these individuals into the workforce, businesses could initiate talking to probation officers and engaging them in the process. There are also underutilized, low-cost re-entry education initiatives from grants that could be used to incent this.

“Prisons- Around here, you either work at one or are in one.”

“Help us gain access to businesses. If they can clarify what the demands are, we can adapt our vocational training to meet the need.”

The corrections system is one of the largest employers in this region. Participants employed within the system detailed their experiences of wanting to better prepare returning citizens for the workforce, but not having the direct line of communication to businesses to understand labor needs and their willingness to hire returning citizens.



Regional Insights and Recommendations - ROANOKE



Event Date: April 29, 2019

Host Organization: Virginia Western Community College (VWCC) - Fralin Center for Science and Health Professions

Address: 3094 Colonial Avenue SW, Roanoke, VA 24015

Roanoke Quick Win Recommendations

 <p>Offer more programs in regional prison facilities</p>	 <p>Educate about the workforce opportunity tax credit</p>	 <p>Increase internship offerings</p>	 <p>Train mentors</p>
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Key Theme: Returning Citizens

Participants in the Roanoke focus group recognized the untapped potential and value in returning citizens as viable members of the workforce, particularly in technical careers. However, they also acknowledged the paradoxical dilemma of hiring returning citizens. “Even the Department of Corrections won’t always hire felons,” said one participant. Developing methods to incent businesses



and reduce the risk of hiring returning citizens was mentioned as a top priority for this region.

“Schools won’t let felons on campus job sites - how do we change that?”
“The law is gray - we need to distinguish between what’s law and what’s opinion when it comes to hiring felons.”



Key Theme: Transportation

Transportation has proven to be a key barrier to gaining and sustaining employment in this region. One participant noted that there are several companies in the area willing to pay interns, but many do not have reliable transportation to get to work. Funding for



various modes of transportation (i.e. carpools, shuttles, etc.) to get to training events would be of tremendous value in this region. One person even mentioned thinking outside of the box when it comes to getting people to work, such as offering “shared shifts.”

Key Theme: Incentives

This group placed heavy emphasis on incenting employers to hire unique populations (such as returning citizens and those with disabilities). Many agreed that providing education to employers about federal incentives such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and other tax credits would benefit both employers and employees.



Focus group participants toured Virginia Western Community College’s new Science, Technology, Engineering and Math building.

Regional Insights and Recommendations - SOUTH BOSTON



Event Date: April 30, 2019

Host Organization: Southern Virginia Higher Education Center (SVHEC)

Address: 820 Bruce Street, South Boston, VA 24592

South Boston Quick Win Recommendations

 <p>Break the mold of "college for all"</p>	 <p>Build a community strategic plan & portal housing key jobs</p>	 <p>Collaborate with businesses to understand industry needs</p>	 <p>Align public schools to labor needs</p>
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Key Theme: Returning Citizens

While some employers may be apprehensive to hire returning citizens, there have been companies that successfully hire and retain these employees in this region. Examples include auto repair shops, plumbing companies and other trade-focused jobs in this area. The need for funding of re-entry programs was echoed by many in the South Boston focus group, as this would encourage more businesses to seek out returning citizens.



Although there are clear successes in this area, challenges still remain, such as stigmas attached to trade jobs, and a lack of employers willing to hire returning citizens.

Key Theme: Cultural Shift

Breaking the mold of “college for all” was a central theme in this region. Participants indicated that, due to the stigma attached to technical jobs, parents and sometimes guidance counselors steer individuals away from such careers early on. They recognized the importance of starting the conversation early and providing alternative career paths to college. This requires not only engaging potential employees, but also shifting the mindset of parents and educating guidance counselors on the possibilities that exist beyond traditional education and career routes.

“We need to align businesses, apprenticeships, pathways, and incumbent worker training.”

Participants offered several ideas they thought would help: offering tuition, outreach, and transportation assistance; revamping the workforce academy at the high school level; incenting apprenticeship programs; offering incentives to instructors, training and resources; and providing better wireless service in rural areas.



Key Theme: Community Involvement

A common sentiment felt by many in the region is that employees, employers, and schools have been operating in silos, which has ultimately led to the lack of or slow speed in filling positions. Some suggested that focus groups, open houses, training, and career fairs would provide a platform to talk about the workforce issues, and connect businesses with potential employees. Insights gained during these discussions can then be mapped to career certification and education programs.

Key Theme: Communication & Awareness

Most agreed that opening the lines of communication and providing awareness on what opportunities exist begins with having the right people at the table. The participants felt launching Build Virginia provides a great platform to make this happen. They expressed that opening some of the meetings to the public (particularly in the more rural areas), holding regular meetings of regional stakeholders, and disseminating information on best practices would help expand awareness and action.



Regional Insights and Recommendations - PORTSMOUTH



Event Date: May 8, 2019

Host Organization: Tidewater Community College (TCC) Skilled Trades Academy

Address: 3303 Airline Boulevard, Portsmouth, VA 23701

Portsmouth Quick Win Recommendations

 <p>Build more parent participation into career development education and events</p>	 <p>Increase funding for summer intern programs, starting with high school</p>	 <p>Add more career and technical education (CTE) programs</p>	 <p>Review federal guidelines on restrictions, rules for hiring returning citizens</p>
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Key Theme: Veterans

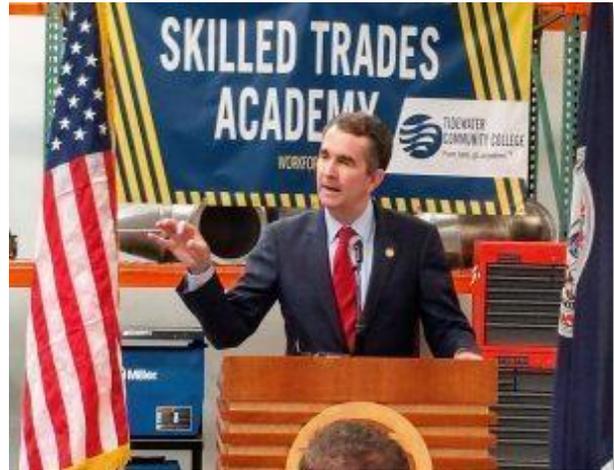
Home to the world's largest naval base, Norfolk and the Hampton Roads area are heavily focused on one of its unique populations - veterans. Participants would like to see more leveraging of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), which provides information, tools, and training to ensure service members and their spouses are prepared for the next step in civilian life.



“Connect better with transitioning military, and help them find jobs.”

Key Theme: K -12 Outreach

Engaging in K-12 Outreach was conveyed as a top priority for the Hampton Roads region. Many expressed that reaching students at an earlier age and getting them excited about technical careers was key. This may include educating parents and guidance counselors on the career paths and opportunities available, increasing funding for CTE and apprentice programs, and hosting “day in the life” high school events. They also suggested adding more scholarships to the mix, and building broader communication pipelines and events.



Key Issue: Communication

Increasing awareness of initiatives like Build Virginia proved to be key in this region. Participants offered several ideas for accomplishing this, including but not limited to:

- Pulling together various groups (businesses, educators, government, non-profit community and faith-based organizations) for more focus groups and integrative problem solving
- More communication highlighting industry needs and regional job openings
- Promoting and leveraging the efforts of existing organizations
- Highlighting holistic career path options
- Educating the public on how to access and use job and workforce development resources in their respective regions



“Let's help returning citizens get their life back.”

There are several laws and clauses in state contracts which may create barriers for returning citizens in the workforce, particularly on bases and hospitals, both of which are large employers in the Hampton Roads region.

Governor Northam signs bill HB2020

Bill HB2020 calls for Virginia's Community Colleges, in consultation with the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry, to develop and deliver uniform instruction for registered apprenticeships in high-demand areas that include roofing, sheet metal, pipefitting, pipe laying, HVAC, welding, electrical and maritime trades. This bill was signed into law at the Portsmouth tour event on May 8, 2019.



Regional Insights and Recommendations - ASHLAND



Event Date: May 10, 2019

Host Organization: Specialty's Our Name Metal Fab

Address: 11206 Hopson Road, Ashland, VA 23005

Ashland Quick Win Recommendations

 <p>Upskill existing workers</p>	 <p>Focus training on welders, fabricators, mechanics, and technicians</p>	 <p>Help define career pathways</p>	 <p>Build recognition programs for businesses and localities</p>
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Key Theme: Community Partnerships

Representatives in Ashland discussed the importance of expanding cross-industry partnerships at the regional level. This type of collaboration would lead to better awareness of events and programs, and create more influencers of industries and



organizations. Participants felt that community partnerships would expedite the process of connecting workers with local businesses.

Key Theme: Training

The Ashland participants emphasized that training directly impacts the quality and quantity of the region’s skilled workforce. They view two areas as vital: upskill existing workers and increasing the breadth of training offered at the high school level. Upskilling existing workers includes initiatives such as hiring instructors for local businesses to train new workers, accelerating the process to obtain licenses, and increasing on-the-job (OJT) training/paid work experience. The need to boost soft skills and enrichment training, such as personal finance or interviewing skills, was also mentioned. A need was expressed to expand training for high school students, though all acknowledged safety barriers would need to be overcome for any on-the-job aspects of the training.



Additional suggestions included increasing basic soft skills training, shipyard apprenticeships, incubator/training classes, and CTE training and programming. Providing incentives to schools to increase the number of students transitioning from high school into the skilled trades sector was also mentioned. One participant stated, “They need to fund programs to foster trades and equip more skilled employees.”

“People need jobs and pay right now.”

Many jobs require potential candidates to complete specialized training prior to receiving an offer of employment. This participant suggested offering employees jobs first, and paying them to train for the position. Reversing the standard process potentially could increase hiring and employee retention.



Regional Insights and Recommendations - ZION CROSSROADS

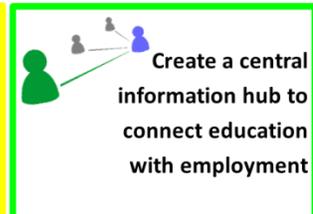


Event Date: May 17, 2019

Host Organization: Faulconer Construction Company

Address: 8350 Three Notch Road, Louisa, VA 23093

Zion Crossroads Quick Win Recommendations



Key Theme: Multiple Modes of Training

As with other locales, the Zion Crossroads focus group noted training as a top priority. They recommended focusing on training areas most essential for the region and delivering it through multiple methods. This could include classroom and hands-on learning experiences for operators, electricians, technical trades, commercial drivers, masonry, machinists, and welders.



Key Theme: Collaboration

This focus group believed that collaboration could provide resources and improve regional connectivity and agility. Examples included creating and promoting cross-industry partnerships, offering more high-touch collaboration events, and including primary and secondary decision makers in key outreach events.



Key Theme: Communication

Participants suggested enhancing communication outreach by doing the following at the regional and statewide level:

- Proactively planning and promoting focus groups and meetings to increase employer participation
- Creating a resource map to enhance awareness and understanding
- Increasing communication efforts, particularly in well-established organizations such as veteran groups, and local Parent Teacher Associations (PTA)
- Growing and adapting the voice and skills of guidance counselors and career coaches, to ensure trade and technical careers are well represented



Regional Insights and Recommendations - WARRENTON



Event Date: May 20, 2019

Host Organization: Lord Fairfax Community College - Vint Hill

Address: 4151 Weeks Drive, Warrenton, VA 20187

Warrenton Quick Win Recommendations

 <p>Mandate trades and technical career training for guidance counselors</p>	 <p>Teach employable skills to people willing to be trained</p>	 <p>Offer training/education for trade instructors</p>	 <p>Add incentives to educate students on multiple education and career options</p>
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Key Theme: Awareness and Alignment

The need for awareness, alignment, and consistency was conveyed by many, especially those who were directly connected to the community colleges. They expressed that including job seekers in these conversations would provide more precision in the direction they should move in.



Additional suggestions included:

- Advertise and market Build Virginia to build community engagement
- Credential awareness
- Offer more information about area training opportunities that match local business needs
- Offer more networking opportunities on a regular basis
- Centralize information online - create a “one stop shop” website
- Increase awareness about the GI Bill for veterans
- Create more vocational school communication materials and outlets



Key Theme: Training

As with most regions, Northern Virginia recognized the need to focus on training, predominantly for high school students and unique populations (i.e. “Suits for Success” program for returning citizens, as one example).



“Do more to serve those who are working three jobs and still can’t make ends meet.”

Hiring additional career counselors, educating people about jobs and career paths, and offering more apprenticeships was also mentioned.

Key Theme: Funding

A common theme among participants in this region was the availability of funding for technical training and programming. However, many believed that shifting mindsets through outreach and packaging and sharing success stories would facilitate interest. Showing the impact of all career routes - trades, college, military, etc. - and their inherent impacts on student debt is key.



“Offer and market more accommodations for those with disabilities.”

Regarding recruiting from unique populations, such as individuals with disabilities, one participant suggested partnering with the Department of Aging and Rehabilitation Services (DARS) to assist with transitions and discovering what is possible.



Regional Insights and Recommendations - FREDERICKSBURG



Event Date: May 31, 2019

Host Organization: Germanna Community College - Fredericksburg Center for Advanced Technology

Address: 1325 Central Park Boulevard, Fredericksburg, VA 22401

Fredericksburg Quick Win Recommendations

 <p>Designate Build VA regional consultants</p>	 <p>Reform K-12 curriculum (more content related to tech and trades)</p>	 <p>Market to local school systems</p>	 <p>Offer more funding for apprenticeship programs</p>
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Key Theme: K-12 and Technical School Outreach

Many representatives who participated in this focus group had direct access to the community college and observed the immediate connections to public and technical schools. They noted that it was necessary to link industries with schools, which could include helping schools map career pathways and hosting more job fairs for high school students. They also reinforced the need to better align elementary and technical school curriculum with industry and job needs.



Key Theme: Community Partnerships

Participants expressed how challenging it was in their region to compete with higher paying jobs in neighboring regions (i.e. DC Metro Area). One participant noted, “Our biggest export regionally is employees.” They suggested incenting employers to help with retention, and increasing salaries overall, especially teacher pay. Several people shared that engaging members of the community is essential for job and workforce success. Recommendations included:

- Assistance with (and more incentives) to start apprenticeship programs
- Networking events to spark connectivity and boost collaboration
- More engagement with trade associations
- Linking the unemployment page to trade opportunities

“Help people overcome language barriers”

Participants mentioned that English was not the first language of a large percentage of potential employees in this region. Offering basic skills and English as a Second Language (ESL) opportunities would better prepare these individuals for the workforce.

Local reporters were on-site at the Fredericksburg focus group to capture relevant regional insights.

skilled-trades training initiative comes to germanna

Germanna part of Virginia initiative to build up skilled-trades workforce

By ADELE UPHAUS-CONNER THE FREE LANCE-STAR May 31, 2019

Virginia's construction and manufacturing companies have a desperate need for workers, but are struggling to find the skilled employees they require.

"There is a mismatch between skills and available jobs," said Tracey Sloan, a program manager for the Virginia Department of Transportation and a member of the Build Virginia advisory board.

Build Virginia is an initiative of Gov. Ralph Northam. Introduced in June last year, it seeks to connect workers throughout the state with training and employment opportunities in the skilled trades, with a focus on shipbuilding, construction and advanced manufacturing.

"Jobs of the future are neither blue collar nor white collar but new collar," Northam said in a press release about the initiative.

Members of the Build Virginia advisory board and Megan Healy, Northam's chief adviser for workforce development, have been holding regional meetings throughout the state to discuss the skilled trade workforce landscape. The regional meetings began in April in southwest Virginia and concluded Friday with the eighth and final meeting hosted by Germanna Community College at its Center for Advanced Technology in Fredericksburg's Central Park.

The meetings have brought together skilled trades employers, current and potential employees, training providers, educators, parents and students.

"We've found that people living in the same locality sometimes don't even know about the opportunities nearby," Sloan said. "We heard from a man in Tazewell who had spent two decades working at Walmart. He didn't know that one mile down the road was an advanced manufacturing plant where he could make a better salary, with benefits."



At Friday's regional meeting, Healy told audience members that the unemployment level in Virginia is at 2.9 percent.

"We're hearing from employers that there is a huge worker shortage and every day it's getting worse," she said.

Build Virginia's three main goals are to identify the demand for skilled workers at the state and local level, develop and endorse pathways that lead to career and business success and create and implement an outreach plan to attract new, midcareer and future workers.

Meeting attendees broke into small groups to discuss in more detail the region's employment needs, the barriers that keep them from being met and possible solutions.

One common topic was the need to remove the stigma around careers in the trades.

"Construction is not a last resort," said Ed Dalrymple, a Build Virginia advisory board member and president of Cedar Mountain Stone quarry in Rapidan.

"Making the trades cool again," as Sloan described it, involves educating students as young as elementary-age, as well as parents and high school guidance counselors, that entering the trades is a viable option.

Other possible solutions to solve the workforce problem discussed at the meeting involve increasing apprenticeship programs, reaching out to special populations such as veterans and felons re-entering society, providing support and transportation to single parents and teaching "soft skills" such as manners, independence and timeliness in trade school.

At least one group noted that most employees in the Fredericksburg region travel out of the area to Quantico, Northern Virginia or Richmond for work.

Healy said the advisory board will compile the results of the regional meetings and release a report in August that will provide budget and policy recommendations for the General Assembly to discuss in January.



Appendix

The following organizations were identified as useful for the Build Virginia effort:

Advanced Technical Center: The Advanced Technology Center (ATC) is a partnership between the Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS), the City of Virginia Beach and Tidewater Community College (TCC). Programs offered are cutting edge and designed to prepare students not only for existing careers, but also those that will be emerging in the coming decades. Students who complete programs at the ATC have the unique opportunity to continue their education in college, enter the job market, join the military, or pursue any pathway to success that they choose. <https://advancedtechnologycenter.vbschools.com/>

Career Tech Academy: A well-trained workforce is critical to a sustainable and profitable future. Career Tech Academy (CTA) is a hands-on training program available to high school students from Charlotte, Halifax, & Mecklenburg Counties. Students may earn community college credit, the Career Studies Certificate, and other industry certifications in information technology or mechatronics. Students travel offsite for half of a school day and earn dual enrollment credit through hands-on training with certified instructors. <https://www.svhec.org/cta>

Chamber of Commerce: The Chamber's mission is to be the leading non-partisan business advocacy organization that works in the legislative, regulatory, civic and judicial arenas at the state and federal level to be a force for long-term economic growth in the Commonwealth. <https://www.vachamber.com/about/mission-vision/>

Career Readiness Certificate/ Work Keys: The Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) is based on WorkKeys® Assessments, part of ACT's Work Readiness System assessment system developed by ACT, an international leader in assessments, research, and solutions in education and workforce development for over 50 years. ACT WorkKeys® is a job skills assessment system that helps employers select, hire, train, develop, and retain a high-performance workforce. The series of tests measures foundational and soft skills and offers specialized assessments to target institutional needs. The Commonwealth of Virginia is implementing ACT's Work Ready Communities (www.workreadycommunities.com) through a local or regional economic development approach. The Certified Work Ready Community program works in concert with the National Career Readiness Certificate and serves as a validating tool that a community has a skilled labor force for targeting industries. <http://www.vccs.edu/workforce/career-readiness-certificate/>

Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC): This organization advises and makes recommendations and advises the City Council on matters related to economic development which include but are not limited to economic development incentives, current business climate, business attraction and retention, marketing opportunities, and other issues that may promote economic development.

FastForward: FastForward is a high-demand program helping Virginians get the jobs they want and the salaries they need. FastForward programs include short-term training courses offered through Virginia's Community Colleges to help fast-track career growth.

<https://www.fastforwardva.org>

Good Samaritan Law: This law is addressed in the § 8.01-225 code of Virginia, specifically addressing persons rendering emergency care, obstetrical services exempt from liability.

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title8.01/chapter3/section8.01-225/>

Mission Tomorrow: Mission Tomorrow is the Richmond region's interactive career exploration event for students. <https://www.chamberrva.com/programs/mission-tomorrow/>

Skill Source: The mission of the SkillSource Center is to advance an integrated, highly responsive workforce investment system that gives businesses and job seekers the tools they need to stay competitive in today's global marketplace. Skill Source provides job seekers with the skills training, self-exploration tools, and job search resources that put rewarding, sustaining careers well within their reach.

Transition Assistance Program (TAP): This program provides information, tools, and training to ensure Service members and their spouses are prepared for the next step in civilian life. This may include pursuing additional education, finding a job in the public or private sector, or starting a business. <https://www.military.com/military-transition/transition-assistance-programoverview.html>

Virginia Bonding Program: Every year, approximately 13,000 returning citizens are released from Virginia prisons. One of the biggest challenges they face is re-entering the job market. The national Federal Bonding Program provides fidelity bonds for "at-risk," hard-to-place job seekers. Our state's version is the Virginia Bonding Program. The bonds cover the first six months of employment at no cost to the job applicant or the employer.

<https://vadoc.virginia.gov/general-public/virginia-bonding-program/>

Virginia Career Works: Virginia Career Works is about access, trust, support, and innovation with the vision of meaningful work and a successful career for every Virginian. Their mission is to advance economic stability and growth by preparing and connecting people who want to work with employers who need to hire through its training providers and network of professional partners. Virginia Career Works is Virginia's vital link between meaningful employment and growing businesses, changing lives and advancing economic prosperity.

<https://virginiacareerworks.com/>

Virginia Employment Commission (VEC): The VEC is a Virginia state agency whose vision is to be Virginia's first choice for workforce services. The mission of the agency is to promote economic growth and stability by delivering and coordinating workforce services, including job placement, temporary income support, workforce information, and transition and training services. <http://www.vec.virginia.gov/about>

Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP): The VEDP was created by the Virginia General Assembly in 1995 to encourage, stimulate, and support development and expansion of the Commonwealth's economy. To accomplish these objectives, VEDP focuses on business recruitment, expansion, and international trade. They have offices in Virginia, Germany, Japan, and South Korea. <https://www.vedp.org>

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA): This landmark legislation was enacted to strengthen and improve our nation's public workforce system and help get Americans, including youth and those with significant barriers to employment, into high-quality jobs and careers. The act also helps employers hire and retain skilled workers. For more information, see <https://www.doleta.gov/wioa/>

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC): A federal tax credit incentive that congress provides to private-sector businesses for hiring individuals from any of ten target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment. The objective of this program is to enable the targeted employees to gradually move from economic dependency into self-sufficiency as they earn a steady income and become contributing taxpayers, while the participating employers are able to reduce their federal income tax liability.

<http://www.vec.virginia.gov/employers/incentives/work-opportunity-tax-credit>

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https://www.fredericksburg.com/news/local/germanna-part-of-virginia-initiative-to-build-up-skilled-trades/article_cfb182d-ecbf-56b5-ae1b-4a2f00931bde.html



“Build Virginia is about training our citizens for promising careers that will contribute to positive growth for them, their families, and the Commonwealth.”

– Virginia Governor, Ralph S. Northam