



VIRGINIA
CAREER WORKS

CENTRAL REGION

Central Virginia Workforce Development Board
Business Outreach & Communications Plan
Working Draft
December 21, 2021

I. Purpose and Approach

The purpose of this Business Outreach & Communications Plan is to provide a guiding document for staff of the Central Virginia Workforce Development Board and the partners who make up our workforce system. As partners we are tasked with providing employment services to businesses and job seekers in a collaborative manner that avoids duplication. This document seeks to clarify the message we want to share with our constituents, the role each of us should play in sharing the message, and the methods we will utilize to communicate our message.

II. Target Audience

Outreach and communication activities outlined in this plan are intended to reach job seekers and employers in the Central Virginia Workforce Development Area.

We also strive to reach the following populations who are facing employment barriers:

- a. Individuals with limited English proficiency
- b. Individuals living with disabilities
- c. Individuals receiving public assistance
- d. Military veterans
- e. Older workers
- f. Refugees
- g. Ex-Offenders
- h. Individuals facing housing insecurity

The desired action for our target audience will be for each to view Virginia Career Works as a resource for employment services and contact us, through staff at the *Virginia Career Works Lynchburg Center*, to make use of our collective resources.

III. Overall Message

We want our target audience to view our local workforce system as a collaborative network of partners who provide valuable resources and support to job seekers and employers. To reinforce this objective, we will adopt the marketing slogan “Connecting You With Opportunity.” By incorporating this message in our marketing efforts, we intend to showcase *Virginia Career Works* as a true “one-stop” that can help job seekers learn about employment and training opportunities and connect businesses with the workers they need to fill their positions.

IV. Communication Goals and Objectives

As a workforce system, our mission is to actively engage job seekers and employers with information that makes them aware of the employment services we provide and encourages those constituents to make use of our resources. All communication and outreach activities should strive to fulfill this mission.

Utilizing the *Virginia Career Works – Central Region* brand, partner organizations who comprise the workforce system in the Central Virginia Workforce Development Area will present a unified message of collaboration to our target audience. Partners will identify themselves as a component of *Virginia Career Works – Central Region* and reinforce the message that the overall organization is a resource to assist businesses and job seekers.

We recognize that our partners will maintain a distinctive name and identity for their individual organizations, but the goal of each partner should be to promote the *Virginia Career Works – Central Region* brand and identify themselves as a component of the overall effort.

By working together and collaborating in our communication and outreach endeavors, we will fulfill the charge given to us under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), increase referrals from businesses and job seekers, and better serve our clients.

V. Communication Roles

Staff of the Central Virginia Workforce Development Board will take the lead in promoting the collective efforts of the workforce system and will identify opportunities for collaboration among partners. Collaborative marketing and outreach efforts will fall under the *Virginia Career Works – Central Region* brand and the role of partner organizations in those efforts will be identified under the umbrella of the larger effort. For example, in a collaboration with the Virginia Employment Commission, the VEC would be identified by name and listed as “a proud partner of *Virginia Career Works – Central Region*.”

Each partner in the workforce system has a role to play in promoting our integrated brand message of being “a collaborative network of organizations sharing one name and one mission.”

It will be the responsibility of the Business Engagement & Outreach Coordinator for the Central Virginia Workforce Development Board to develop and maintain a strategic voice for the brand, encourage collaboration among partners

for communication and outreach, and ensure that each partner is reenforcing the brand in a consistent way that reflects positively on the overall effort.

VI. Communication Tools, Methods, and Platforms

The Central Virginia Workforce Development Board and its partners will utilize a deliberate and diverse menu of communication channels to generate awareness of the organization and reach its target audience.

Communication channels utilized will include the following:

1. Social Media
2. Community/Hiring Events
3. Business Services Team
4. Paid Advertising
5. Earned Media
6. Business Engagement Visits
7. Email Newsletter
8. Dynamic Website
9. Video Production

The role each communications channel will play in disseminating our message is detailed in the paragraphs that follow.

Social Media

Social media offers the Central Virginia Workforce Development Board an opportunity to engage with the public, receive feedback, and expand awareness of the organization.

The Central Virginia Workforce Development Board will use social media to cultivate an identity for *Virginia Career Works – Central Region* as a resource for employment services. We want those who are not already familiar with *Virginia Career Works – Central Region* to learn about the organization through posts that highlight local job opportunities, hiring events, and services provided by partners of the local workforce system. We also want to use these channels to promote the availability of high-demand jobs, the training programs that exist to prepare individuals for in-demand careers, and the funding/support services available to help our target audience overcome barriers to employment.

Staff of the Central Virginia Workforce Development Board will strive to post content on social media at least 5 – 10 times per week on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram. Most frequently our content will highlight new employment opportunities in our workforce area that appeal to a wide range of job

seekers, which will reinforce the message that *Virginia Career Works* is an organization that can help you find a good job.

The desired outcome of these outreach efforts is to have anyone who sees the *Virginia Career Works* logo to immediately identify the brand as a resource that can help them find work or, in the case of businesses, as a place where they can advertise employment opportunities and find workers to fill their positions. Our goal is to build an audience of job seekers and employers who are interested in the content we're sharing. Once a sizeable audience is in place on the four social media platforms we intend to target, we will have a wider opportunity to share information about the programs and services we offer. These outreach efforts should eventually expand the pool of job seekers who come to us and our network of partners for assistance.

Participation in Community/Hiring Events

Participation in community events elevates the visibility of our organization and provides us with an opportunity to engage with potential clients.

Staff of the Central Virginia Workforce Development Board will identify opportunities for the *Virginia Career Works – Central Region* name to be featured at events that align with our overall mission and provide the greatest opportunity to engage with businesses and job seekers. The workforce board's Executive Director and Business Engagement & Outreach Coordinator will staff events and serve as ambassadors for the organization and will invite partners to participate in such events when they are available and interested in taking part.

The workforce system will make every effort to frequently host free Hiring Events, Job Fairs, and similar activities that allow job seekers to interact with one or more employers. Targeted Hiring Events featuring one employer will be hosted multiple times each month at the workforce area's one-stop center, while Job Fairs featuring multiple employers will be held at least twice each year, pursuant to health and safety guidelines that might be in place at the time such events would be held.

Libraries will serve as a key partner in our community outreach efforts. Workforce board staff will offer information sessions and workshops at libraries on a regular basis. Board staff will also maintain "access points" inside at least four libraries across the workforce region. Access points will feature marketing materials that promote Virginia Career Works and the availability of services along with a computer workstation, where users can access the Virginia Career Works website, view our orientation video and complete our initial intake form to be evaluated for services, and search for jobs using the Virginia Workforce Connection portal.

Business Services Team

As the convener of our local workforce system, staff of the Central Virginia Workforce Development Board is tasked with bringing together partner agencies to serve business customers. A “Business Services Team” is one way agency representatives work collaboratively and leverage resources to assist employers.

The Business Services Team in the Central Virginia Workforce Development Area consists of representatives from the following organizations:

1. Workforce Board Executive Staff (Executive Director, Business Engagement & Outreach Coordinator)
2. Virginia Employment Commission
3. Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services
4. Adult and Career Education (ACE) of Central Virginia
5. Virginia Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI)
6. Old Dominion JobCorps Center
7. Title I (HumanKind)
8. Central Virginia Community College
9. Local Economic Development*
10. Regional Economic Development (Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance)
11. State Economic Development (Virginia Economic Development Partnership)

Members of this team will meet once each month to share information, foster collaboration, and ensure the delivery of services is not duplicative. At least once each quarter, the team will invite an individual business to speak with the group in a confidential setting. Each employer served will be reminded of the confidential nature of the service and encouraged to share unique challenges and operational issues. At the conclusion of each meeting, members of the team will recommend short and long-term solutions to address the needs identified by the employer. The employer who participated in the meeting will receive recommendations in a follow-up report approximately one week after the meeting.

Paid Advertising

Paid advertising allows the Central Virginia Workforce Development Board to elevate awareness of its programming in the local community and share tailored messages with targeted groups.

When funding allows, board staff will pursue paid advertising to promote specific events, programs, and services. Whenever possible, board staff will

collaborate with its WIOA partners on paid advertising opportunities, to both maximize monetary resources and encourage the promotion of individual agencies under the banner of *Virginia Career Works - Central Region*.

One example of collaborative advertising would be a campaign of television commercials promoting adult education that prompts interested viewers to visit the *Virginia Career Works – Central Region* website for more information. Once on the website, the viewer would be directed to fill out a WIOA intake/orientation form.

The goal of collaborative advertising will be to generate referrals that benefit all WIOA partners, while connecting job seekers to all available services for which they might be eligible.

Earned Media

News articles, mentions, and stories about *Virginia Career Works – Central Region* and its partners, featured by broadcasters and printed in publications throughout the workforce region, reflect positively on the efforts of our workforce system and elevate awareness of our programs and services.

Workforce board staff will cultivate relationships with local journalists that result in earned media. The board's Executive Director and Business Engagement & Outreach Coordinator will pursue efforts to educate journalists about the workforce system and contact these individuals whenever the board and its partners engage in positive activities around the community.

By maintaining regular contact and good relationships with print, radio, and television journalists, board staff will seek to be viewed as “subject matter experts” on topics related to employment, hiring, and other workforce-related matters. The goal will be to have our workforce system viewed as a “top of mind resource” when reporters write stories that align with our work.

Business Engagement Visits

Regular visits with business constituents in our region allow board staff to promote the services of our workforce system and learn about the needs of employers, which will ultimately inform and shape our work.

The board's Executive Director and Business Engagement & Outreach Coordinator will conduct in-person or virtual visits as often as possible with hiring managers, human resources professionals, and other business leaders.

During these “Business Engagement Visits,” board staff will emphasize the resources provided by all WIOA partners and promote this menu of services under the banner of *Virginia Career Works*.

Information gathered during Business Engagement Visits will be shared with the regional Business Services Team during monthly meetings and earlier via email if needs identified by employers are time sensitive.

Email Newsletter

A newsletter distributed by email will provide the board and its partners with an opportunity to disseminate timely information about our activities with identified constituents.

The board’s Business Engagement & Outreach Coordinator will work with partners to cultivate information that can be distributed in a quarterly newsletter. This publication will be sent out via email to partner staff, journalists, local government leaders, and contacts developed during Business Engagement Visits.

The goal of these newsletters will be to spread awareness about workforce system activities, increase communication among those who participate in the workforce system, and generate positive publicity in local media.

Dynamic Website

The *Virginia Career Works – Central Region* website serves as a digital clearinghouse of information about our workforce board and its WIOA partners and provides opportunities for clients to connect with workforce system representatives.

Staff of the Central Virginia Workforce Development Board will maintain a website that reflects positively on the overall efforts of our workforce system and provides updated information related to WIOA partner services. The website will feature an opportunity for individuals to complete the intake and orientation process for WIOA services. Partner staff will be educated on the existence of the website and encouraged to send clients to the “orientation page” for intake and evaluation of eligibility for services.

Workforce board staff will also use the website and digital products, such as mobile applications and social media, to promote high-demand occupations and the availability of career training in the region. Staff will work closely with educators and employers to identify high-demand occupations, training programs, and funding opportunities that deserve recognition on the *Virginia Career Works – Central Region* website.

Video Production

Videos are an engaging tool that can be used to promote activities of the workforce system and messages related to the availability of career pathways in our region.

The Central Virginia Workforce Development Board purchased video production equipment in 2020, using funds provided through the *Go Virginia Region 2 Talent Collaborative* grant. Workforce board staff will utilize this equipment to produce videos that can be featured on social media, the *Virginia Career Works – Central Region* website, the *Virginia Career Works – Central Region* YouTube channel, local television, and board meetings.

The board's production equipment has already been used to create a library of soft skills training videos on topics such as resume writing, interviewing, and success in the workplace. Board staff will expand the library of available resources to include "Career Pathway" videos that highlight high-demand occupations in areas such as manufacturing and healthcare.

Once five or more "Career Pathway" videos have been produced, board staff will bring together content in a 30-minute special that could be offered to local television stations as Educational/Informational (E/I) programming. Television stations licensed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) are required to air at least 156 hours annually of core E/I programs, including at least 26 hours per quarter of regularly scheduled weekly programs. Television stations in our region currently meet this requirement by airing E/I programming that was produced on a national level. Board staff will seek to partner with a local television station who can air our locally produced E/I program promoting Career Pathways at low or no cost to the board.

VII. Metrics

To evaluate the success of communications and outreach activities, staff of the Central Virginia Workforce Development Board will track and monitor communications, community outreach, and social media activity. Data will be made available to the Operations and Performance Committee of the Central Virginia Workforce Development Board during quarterly meetings.

The following datapoints will be charted by the Business Engagement & Outreach Coordinator:

A. Communications

1. Number of media placements
 2. Subscribers to *Virginia Career Works Central Region* email newsletter
 3. Number of incoming media calls and interview requests
 4. Number of videos and paid advertisements produced by staff
- B. Community Outreach
1. Number of hiring events hosted
 2. Number of community events attended
 3. Number of informational presentations given
 4. Number of Business Engagement Visits
- C. Social Media
1. Number of followers and likes on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram
 2. Engagement scores on social media posts
 3. Views and shares of videos and other shared content
 4. Number of comments and questions posed by users

To measure success and encourage continuous improvement, an increase of 5 - 10% in all measured data points will be sought on an annual basis.

VIII. Conclusion

Through all the activities and initiatives outlined in this document, the Central Virginia Workforce Development Board and its staff seek to carry out the board's strategic priorities, as detailed below and identified in the board's 2021 – 2024 Local Plan:

1. Increase and strengthen coordination and collaboration among all the organizations involved in the delivery of workforce services.
2. Develop initiatives to quickly retrain and retool people who have lost jobs that may not return.
3. Create a collective impact strategy to influence access to broadband for learning, work, business growth, and customer engagement across the region.
4. Create more robust and comprehensive marketing channels to build awareness of all the workforce services available to expand the WDB's reach.

This document also seeks to help the board fulfill the intent and purpose of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), to better align the workforce

development system with education, training, and economic development initiatives and to create a collective response to labor market challenges.

By carrying out this Business Outreach and Communications plan as outlined, board staff will encourage collaboration among the WIOA partners, increase awareness of services offered by our workforce system, and promote the availability of high-demand career pathways in Central Virginia.