

REGIONAL WORKFORCE ROADMAP

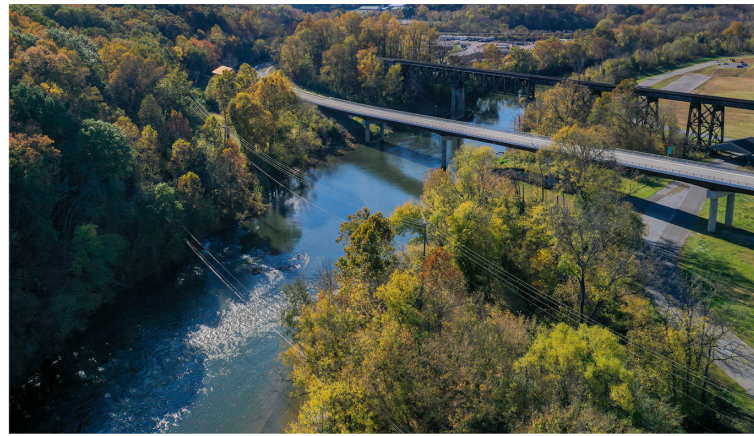


TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW	1
THE REGIONAL WORKFORCE ROADMAP	2
FOCUS AREA I: CAREER PATHWAYS	5
1. Pathway Design	5
2. Pathway Activation	8
3. Career Awareness & Perceptions	11
FOCUS AREA II: WORKFORCE ACCESS	14
4. Child Care	14
5. Transportation	17
6. Wrap-Around Services	20
APPENDIX A: IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS	24
APPENDIX B: COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES	32

OVERVIEW

Talent is the most important factor influencing a region's economic success and prosperity. Businesses across all sectors of the economy consider the depth and quality of a community's workforce among their top site selection criteria, and individuals whose education and training aligns with in-demand careers are more likely to find high-quality, living-wage jobs. The importance of talent has become even more apparent in recent years, as a combination of pandemic-related disruptions and long-term demographic trends (e.g., Baby Boomers reaching retirement age) created a national dialogue about labor shortages. While the prime workforce participation rate has since rebounded to pre-pandemic levels, workforce development remains a top competitive issue for regions of all sizes.

Leaders in the Lynchburg Region understand the importance of workforce development. Stakeholders have engaged in countless conversations in recent years to identify challenges and opportunities related to talent. The most important takeaway from these discussions, however, could not be more clear: **it is time for action**. But stakeholders in the Lynchburg Region understand that acting without a well-defined shared vision is unlikely to produce successful outcomes. In 2022, public, private, and nonprofit leaders came together to create a holistic Regional Economic Development Strategy designed to make the Lynchburg Region a more prosperous and successful place. This process revealed that stakeholders desired a separate strategic plan to take a deeper dive on issues of workforce development and provide guidance on aligning education and training programs with the needs of the region's employers.

This Regional Workforce Roadmap is a coordinated strategy to build a strong workforce in the Lynchburg Region in order to grow the local economy and help residents thrive. It includes a framework of high-level goals, objectives, and strategies to guide the collective actions of stakeholders in the coming years. The Roadmap process was made possible with the support of the Central Virginia Workforce Development Board (CVWDB) and the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance and guided by a diverse group of public, private, and nonprofit leaders who comprise the Workforce Target Advisory Group (TAG) underneath the umbrella of the Alliance.

ABOUT BROAD RIPPLE STRATEGIES

Broad Ripple Strategies represents nearly 30 years of experience crafting community, workforce, and economic development strategies that build consensus, drive investment, and get results. Our team has helped more than 65 clients develop nearly 100 strategies for community and economic development, talent and workforce sustainability, and quality of place. BRS' principals have worked everywhere from small towns and rural areas to major regions such as Austin, TX and Nashville, TN. BRS was the Lynchburg Region's partner in developing the Regional Economic Development Strategy, which was completed in 2022. Elsewhere in Virginia, our team has previously worked in Bristol, Halifax County, Hampton Roads, and Martinsville.

THE REGIONAL WORKFORCE ROADMAP

This Regional Workforce Roadmap is a coordinated strategy to build a strong workforce in the Lynchburg Region in order to grow the local economy and help residents thrive. The Roadmap was derived through a two-stage, six-month strategic planning process that concluded in May 2023. The process began with a fact-finding phase that synthesized pre-existing research, the latest quantitative data, and stakeholder input to identify the region's top competitive opportunities and challenges for workforce development. Crucially, this phase included robust input from employers, educators, and workforce development professionals gathered through small group exercises at the 2022 Workforce & Education Summit and a strategic planning workshop with the Workforce TAG. **Two remarkably consistent themes** emerged from these initial discussions.

First, stakeholders expressed a strong desire to **enhance "career pathways"** throughout the Lynchburg Region. This entails ensuring that education and training programs are supportive of high-quality, in-demand careers in key industries. It also involves improving perceptions of and access to these career pathways among the region's residents, especially students, parents, and educators and administrators. Implicit in this work is a need to strengthen relationships between the region's businesses and education and training providers.

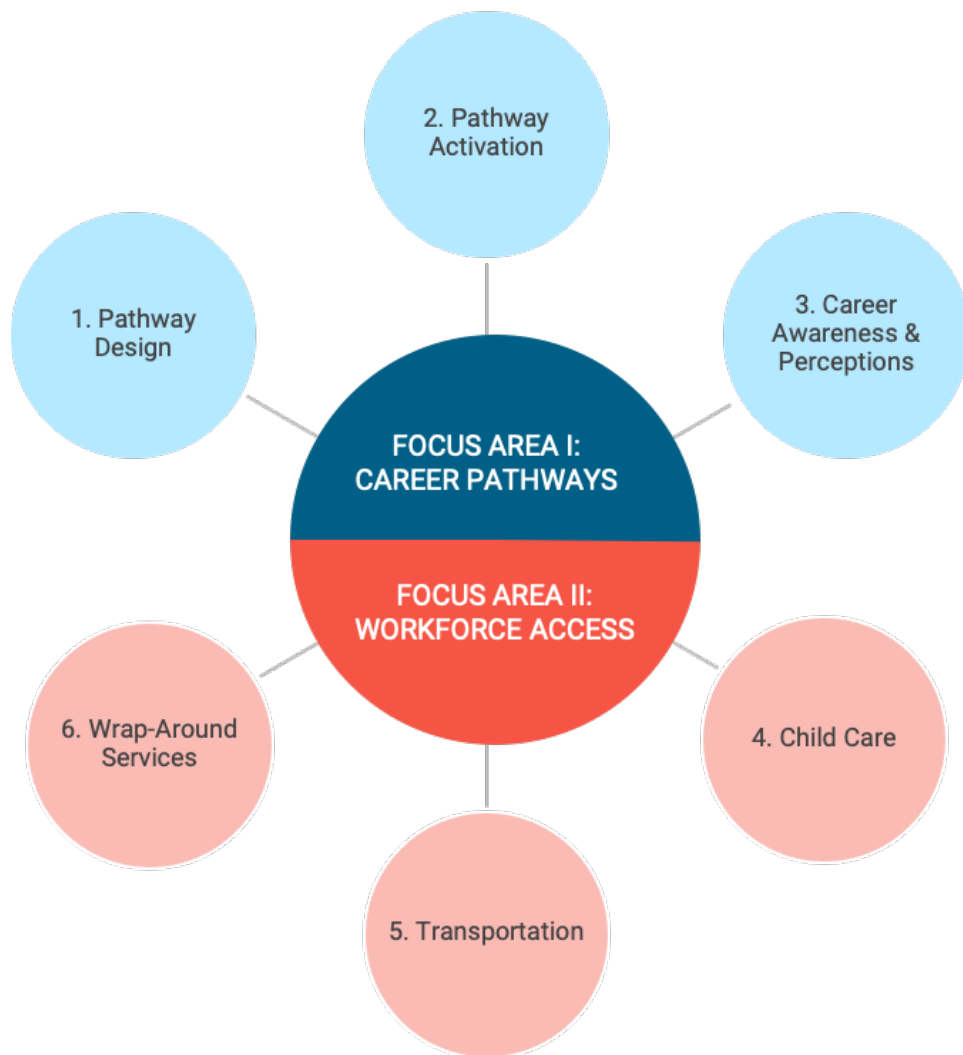
Second, stakeholders identified a need to **improve access to employment opportunities**. Input participants said that many would-be workers have difficulty finding or holding jobs due to factors such as limited childcare options and a lack of reliable transportation. Many other residents face challenges such as addiction and criminal records. Stakeholders said they would like to see partners in the region collaborate to align and strengthen efforts to assist these individuals. Doing so will require engaging a wide range of partners, including those that provide social and other "wraparound" services.

Based on these themes, the **Workforce TAG confirmed a strategic framework** for the Regional Workforce Roadmap that is organized around two **Focus Areas: Career Pathways and Workforce Access**. Underneath each of these Focus Areas are three **Key Initiatives** (for a total of six) that correspond to specific issues or programs of work. The relationship between the Focus Areas and Key Initiatives is shown in the graphic on the following page.

The remainder of this document describes the six Key Initiatives in further detail, including an objective statement, overview discussion, and recommended strategic actions. Appendix A provides high-level guidance for implementing the Regional Workforce Roadmap, including a discussion of a potential coordinating framework as well as funding considerations and performance measures for each of the six Key Initiatives.

It is important to note that the Regional Workforce Roadmap is a **“high-level” document and is not intended as a detailed work plan for any organization or strategic effort.** In BRS’ experience, workforce development strategies that are overly prescriptive and “top-down” often fail to achieve the necessary buy-in from the practitioners and implementation partners who will execute these plans. Instead, the Roadmap represents the high-level initiatives, objectives, and strategies that will define the Lynchburg Region’s collaborative actions for workforce development in the coming years. **The employers, educators, workforce organizations, and other partners that constitute the Workforce TAG will be responsible for applying the appropriate tactical detail to these recommendations and ensuring their timely implementation. Put another way, this document is true to its name: a “Roadmap” for the workforce development journey that lies ahead.**

THE REGIONAL WORKFORCE ROADMAP STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER STRATEGIC PLANS AND ONGOING EFFORTS

Before proceeding to the Key Initiatives, it is important to note that there are numerous strategic plans and ongoing efforts that address various aspects of workforce development in the Lynchburg Region. This is by design, as activating any strategic plan can be likened to “jumping on a moving train.” Whenever possible, the Regional Workforce Roadmap seeks to acknowledge the work that is already underway. The Roadmap framework is designed to complement these efforts as opposed to duplicating work.

Given the short amount of time separating the planning processes and the significant overlap in the organizations and entities involved in their creation and implementation, it is especially useful to clarify the relationship between the Regional Workforce Roadmap and the Regional Economic Development Strategy.

The Regional Economic Development Strategy is organized around a framework consisting of four Goals, one of which is, “Goal I: Develop, Retain, and Attract a Talented Workforce.” Underneath Goal I are four Key Initiatives, which are as follows:

1. Align the Region’s Talent Pipeline
2. Grow and Promote the CTE Academy
3. Retain the Region’s College Graduates
4. Launch a Targeted Talent Marketing Campaign

The work of “1. Align the Region’s Talent Pipeline” is substantially complete. The Alliance and its partners have positioned the Workforce TAG as a coordinating entity, created a new staff position dedicated to talent, and supported the development of the Regional Workforce Roadmap. (A fourth strategic recommendation related to researching where the region’s college students live and work after graduation can be folded into “3. Retain the Region’s College Graduates.”)

The CTE Academy at Central Virginia Community College (CVCC) represents one of the region’s most important workforce development assets. Any work to maximize its potential will contribute both directly and indirectly to strengthening the region’s capacity to enact Career Pathways. Accordingly, “2. Grow and Promote the CTE Academy” can be connected directly to the second Key Initiative of the Regional Workforce Roadmap, “2. Pathway Activation.”

The remaining two Key Initiatives from the Strategy, “3. Retain the Region’s College Graduates” and “4. Launch a Targeted Talent Marketing Campaign” are focused primarily on talent retention and attraction as opposed to workforce development. Accordingly, these fall outside the scope of the Regional Workforce Roadmap and can serve as complementary efforts within a broader overall approach to talent.

FOCUS AREA I: Career Pathways

1. Pathway Design

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Establish an initial set of formal Career Pathways with “stackable” credentials to provide individuals with living wage job opportunities and strengthen the Lynchburg Region’s workforce.

DISCUSSION

The past decade-plus has seen a dramatic rise in the development of “Career Pathways” in states and regions around the country.¹ The concept of choosing a “career path” and pursuing educational opportunities that align with it is certainly not new. But educators, business leaders, and workforce development professionals have increasingly recognized the value in creating formal systems that enable individuals to progress through education and training steps to improve their employment prospects and meet crucial needs within a variety of high-demand industries.

There are many definitions for what constitutes a “Career Pathway,” including formal criteria outlined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014. A simple and accessible definition is provided by the Career Ladders Project, a local California nonprofit: “A Career Pathway is a series of structured and connected education programs and support services that enable students, often while they are working, to advance over time to better jobs and higher levels of education and training.” Career Pathways are typically thought of as consisting of “stackable” credentials, where each step can build on the previous and prepare individuals to progress to the next level of employment and/or education.²

Stakeholders expressed a strong desire to embrace the Career Pathways approach in the Lynchburg Region. The community has most of the necessary building blocks in place, and input participants said that an increased sense of collaboration among business, education, and workforce development partners (as evidenced by the Workforce TAG) has created new opportunities to “connect the dots.”

¹ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. “Career Pathway Systems.” Retrieved from: <https://cte.ed.gov/initiatives/career-pathways-systems>

² Career Ladders Project. “A Definition of Career Pathways.” Retrieved from: <http://www.careerladdersproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/defining-career-pathways-ccp.pdf>

The question is where to get started. Based on data analysis and stakeholder input, BRS has identified an initial set of proposed Career Pathways for Workforce TAG members to consider and evaluate. In developing these recommendations, BRS focused on identifying Career Pathways that met three criteria:

- Support occupations and industries that are now or are expected to be in high demand in the Lynchburg Region
- Connect to occupations that pay “entry-level” living wages and/or connect to relatively fast opportunities for advancement into well-paying careers
- Leverage existing education and training programs and assets in the Lynchburg Region

Based on these criteria and an analysis of industry and occupational data, BRS recommends establishing Career Pathways within **three broad categories:**

1. Manufacturing – Production
2. Manufacturing – Installation, Repair, and Maintenance
3. Health Care – Bedside Care

Manufacturing is the most important traded sector within the Lynchburg Region. Input participants said that the sector is already experiencing labor shortages, and data suggest that this could be further exacerbated in the coming decade by likely retirements. As opposed to communities that are highly specialized in one type of manufacturing (e.g., automotive), the Lynchburg Region’s manufacturing sector is diversified, with many different types of production processes. Accordingly, BRS recommends two “tracks” within the Manufacturing Pathway focused on imparting broad skills and training in general production activities and the installation, maintenance, and repair of manufacturing equipment, electrical and mechanical systems, etc.

Health Care is among the Lynchburg Region’s largest business sectors, and it is expected to grow in the coming decades as many local residents age. Data indicate that many of the Lynchburg Region’s biggest “demand gaps” between higher education credential production and business sector demand are in occupations that deal with “bedside” care such as licensed practical nurses (LPNs), certified nursing assistants (CNAs), medical assistants, and health aides. While some of these occupations do not always pay living wages right away, they can be important intermediate steps on the way to other in-demand occupations. Stakeholders in the health care sector also noted that mental and behavioral health professionals are also in high-demand and said it is worth exploring whether these fields could be incorporated into a potential Career Pathway related to health care service delivery.

There are undoubtedly additional industries and occupations that could benefit from a Career Pathway approach. But stakeholders agree that the region should **focus initially on a limited number of “verticals” to ensure that resources are not spread too thin.** As initial Career Pathways become successful, stakeholders can evaluate whether to expand the approach to other business sectors and careers.

STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES

1.1 – Convene key partners to guide Career Pathway development and implementation

- Per the recommendations of the Regional Economic Development Strategy, continue to position the Alliance’s Workforce TAG to guide Pathway development
- Ensure active participation from education and training providers (especially PK-12 school systems, CVCC, and other higher education partners) and a diverse set of employers in targeted Pathway sectors

Comparative Example #1: Talent Action Collaborative (Baton Rouge, LA)

1.2 – Confirm an initial set of targeted Career Pathways on which to focus

- With key partners assembled through the Workforce TAG, confirm the desire to formally establish the following Career Pathways Manufacturing – Production; Manufacturing – Installation, Maintenance, and Repair; and Health Care – Beside Care
- Determine whether mental and behavioral health occupations and training programs should be incorporated as part of the Health Care – Bedside Care pathway

Comparative Example #2: Manufacturing 2000 (Pittsburgh, PA Region)

Comparative Example #3: Inside Track (South Central Missouri)

1.3 – Formalize sequences of stackable credentials for each Career Pathway

- With comparative examples from other regions as a guide, identify a “ladder” of occupations within each pathway and the training and skills they require
- Identify key certificates, degrees, and other postsecondary credentials within each Pathway and inventory supportive programs within the Lynchburg Region
- Develop clear, public-facing messaging and graphics that communicate the design of each Pathway and the steps required to pursue it
- Ensure that the proposed Career Pathways have the correct “labels;” for instance, “Installation, Maintenance, and Repair” may be referred to as “Electrical and Mechanical Technologies” or similar to align with employer needs and worker perceptions
- In public-facing messaging, convey that Pathways do not represent a “binary option” between college or a trade but rather a potential continuum of opportunities
- Consider developing “brand” identities for Career Pathways to make them more memorable and impactful for prospective students and families

2. Pathway Activation

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Align and expand education and training programs, work-based learning opportunities, and supportive services to successfully launch and sustain Career Pathways.

DISCUSSION

While the preceding section discussed the design of Career Pathways for the Lynchburg Region, this Key Initiative is focused on strategic steps to put them into motion. By their nature, Career Pathways are collaborative efforts involving numerous public, private, and nonprofit partners. At the heart of the work is the instruction that students receive in classrooms and other learning environments. Accordingly, *alignment* is vital to successful implementation.

The first step is ensuring that the right business, education and training, and workforce development partners are “around the table” and engaged in the Career Pathways effort. As discussed in the Regional Economic Development Strategy, stakeholders in the Lynchburg Region have already built significant capacity in this regard with the creation of the Workforce TAG under the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance umbrella. This Key Initiative recommends that partners work through the Workforce TAG (with potential key membership additions if needed) to ensure that education and training programs and curriculums are providing students with the knowledge, skills, and credentials defined within each confirmed career pathway. This work should occur when the Career Pathways are in their “startup” phase and continue on a regular basis going forward to ensure that programs are running smoothly and delivering the desired results.

As stakeholders work to align programmatic capacity around Career Pathway needs, they will likely encounter gaps that must be addressed. While some of these gaps will become evident once the Career Pathway design phase is complete, stakeholders said that two issues will certainly require attention. The first is work-based learning – an approach that allows students to apply their training and skills in real-life work experiences such as internships. Input participants noted that there are already some strong work-based learning programs in the Lynchburg Region, including a public-led effort in Bedford County and programs for Lynchburg City Schools students run through nonprofits such as Beacon of Hope. But stakeholders said that all parties would benefit from a broader, regional approach to work-based learning that leverages relationships with employers to expand internships, apprenticeships, and summer learning opportunities. Best-practice Career Pathways also integrate support services for students, including career advising services and connections to needed social services. Stakeholders said that there is a need to enhance capacity in these areas.

Finally, stakeholders said they would like to see the continued growth of education and training capacity to support one or more proposed Career Pathways. The region currently has two specific opportunities to make progress in this area. The first is advancing recommendations in the Regional Economic Development Strategy to maximize the potential of the CTE Academy at CVCC. The second is an emerging plan to create the “Bedford Regional Metal Workforce Retention Center” at the former Winoa USA facility in Bedford to support the Lynchburg Region’s significant manufacturing strengths in metals and machinery. Stakeholders said they would like to see partners in the region continue to pursue these and other opportunities that may emerge in future years.

STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES

2.1 – Align education and training programs and curriculums around Career Pathways

- Through the Workforce TAG, ensure that curriculums of existing programs are aligned with Career Pathways and the needs of relevant industries in the Lynchburg Region
- Advocate at the state and local levels for increased funding to expand dual-enrollment programs and CTE program capacity in response to increasing enrollments in these areas
- Identify existing gaps in Career Pathway program availability and pursue opportunities to start new programs or expand existing offerings to meet needs
- Compile data to identify any “underutilized” program capacity and target marketing and outreach efforts (see Key Initiative #3) to promote these opportunities
- Encourage PK-12 schools to continue to emphasize social and “soft” skills as part of their overall curriculums to prepare students for success in college and/or careers

2.2 – Create built-in systems for monitoring progress and making needed adjustments

- Through the Workforce TAG, convene employers, educators, and other key partners on a regular basis (ideally quarterly) to evaluate performance and make needed adjustments
- Leverage findings from business retention and expansion (BRE) programs to stay current on employer needs
- If gaps are identified, work through a similar process as in Key Initiative #1 to develop new degree tracks and/or curricula
- Confirm and track metrics related to employer participation, credential completions, etc.

2.3 – Establish a coordinated regional approach to work-based learning

- Leverage the capacity and relationships of economic development organizations to encourage businesses throughout the region to create paid, Pathway-aligned internships and apprenticeships for high school and postsecondary students
- Continue to support existing work-based learning programs, including Beacon of Hope and the Bedford County Public Schools (BCPS) Career Internship Program
- Seek to create or expand work-based learning programs to all portions of the Lynchburg Region; this could entail creating programs similar to those of Bedford County in other jurisdictions and/or supporting nonprofit organizations to expand offerings

- Work with PK-12 school systems and businesses to create additional summer learning opportunities for high school students throughout the region
- Continue to connect CVCC and regional businesses to grow and enhance work-based learning opportunities
- Consistent with the recommendations of the Regional Economic Development Strategy, create a centralized portal to match high school and postsecondary students with work-based learning opportunities (the portal could also advertise full- and part-time jobs); integrate website as part of one-stop Career Pathways website (see Key Initiative #3)

Comparative Example #4: I.G.N.I.T.E. Student Jobs Website (West Alabama)

2.4 – Ensure support services are in place for students pursuing Career Pathways

- Per the Regional Economic Development Strategy, seek to expand “career navigator” positions throughout PK-12 school systems in the Lynchburg Region; ensure that all Career Pathway participants are engaged by a career navigator
- Continue to support organizations such as Beacon of Hope, IRON Lives, and the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lynchburg that help young people in the Lynchburg Region improve their academic and social skills
- Engage relevant nonprofits and “in-house” programs such as CVCC’s “Community Connections” to ensure that Career Pathway students are connected to community resources and other wrap-around services (see Key Initiative #6)

2.5 – Pursue opportunities to enhance CTE training throughout the region

- Continue to support existing CTE programs throughout the region, including those at PK-12 schools around the Lynchburg Region
- As recommended in Key Initiative #3 of the Regional Economic Development Strategy, continue efforts to maximize the potential of the CTE Academy at CVCC and build upon recent enrollment increases
- With the Bedford Economic Development Authority and other public and private partners, support the ongoing master planning process to transform the former Winoa USA facility into the “Bedford Regional Metal Workforce Retention Center” a training center supporting the region’s metal and machinery manufacturing sectors
- Work with partners on an ongoing basis to identify, evaluate, and pursue future opportunities for expanding CTE education in the Lynchburg Region

3. Career Awareness & Perceptions

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Engage students, parents, educators, and other audiences to increase awareness and improve perceptions of career opportunities and the Pathways needed to access them.

DISCUSSION

Designing and optimizing Career Pathways will align the Lynchburg Region's strong education and training assets with in-demand careers in top industries and expand opportunities for residents to prosper. But the success of a Career Pathway is dependent on enough individuals choosing to follow it. Accordingly, leaders in the Lynchburg Region understand the need to embrace a coordinated approach to promoting career opportunities to students, parents, educators, and other audiences.

Input participants said this work must have both near- and long-term time horizons. On one hand, many employers are faced with urgent worker shortages. For these firms, every individual who enters a relevant education and training program or work-based learning opportunity in the coming months and years is a win. On the other hand, stakeholders said that many residents have negative perceptions about careers in fields such as manufacturing and the trades, despite the fact that these jobs frequently offer living wages, strong benefits, and opportunities for advancement. The Lynchburg Region is not alone in this regard; in BRS' experience, virtually all communities with significant manufacturing employment report similar issues. But stakeholders are eager to meet these challenges head on, with efforts to promote careers – and the Pathways that can lead to them – to students (and their families) early in their educational journeys.

This Key Initiative is modeled after the highly successful outreach programming of West AlabamaWorks!, a regional workforce development initiative based in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Stakeholders in the Lynchburg Region are familiar with this organization from a past intercity visit and previous Workforce Summit where its chief executive was the keynote speaker. West AlabamaWork! was also featured in a case study developed as part of the research phase of the Regional Workforce Roadmap process. Many of the strategic activities on the following pages were inspired by this case study, with the specific scope and scale of programs tailored to the Lynchburg Region's needs and capacity.

The potential "audience" for this Key Initiative is broad and diverse. Additionally, stakeholders noted that many groups such as people of color, women and girls, and individuals for whom English is a second language are underrepresented in CTE programs and related careers. Accordingly, the Workforce TAG should engage a diverse network of partners and stakeholders to ensure that the messages and mediums designed to promote careers and Career Pathways will be effective in outreaching to these underrepresented groups and "meet people where they are."

STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES

3.1 – Create or designate a one-stop website to promote Career Pathway awareness

- Create or designate a website for providing information on Career Pathways and available resources for a variety of target audiences, including students, parents, educators, adults, and employers
- Assess the utilization and impact of the Virginia Career Works Central Region website – vcwcentralregion.com – and mobile application and its ability to support enhanced Career Pathways and outreach
- Consider options including upgrading the Virginia Career Works Central Region website (likely with a new URL) or creating a new “front door” site that provides links to existing resources from Virginia Career Works and other relevant organizations
- Integrate professionally produced videos highlighting career options and “success stories” for students, companies, etc.
- Consider leveraging or developing customized “branding” and graphics for specific Career Pathways to enhance visual appeal and memorability
- Incorporate the “work-based learning portal” proposed in Key Initiative #2

3.2 – Increase efforts to introduce PK-12 students of all ages to career opportunities

- Through the Workforce TAG, convene stakeholders from PK-12 schools, higher education institutions, local businesses, parent organizations, etc. to design programming
- Help PK-12 students identify career possibilities and understand their value and the work required to achieve them
- Leverage an existing program such as Partners in Education and seek to scale it throughout the region or identify a new model if desired
- Incorporate opportunities to discuss potential careers into PK-12 curricula beginning in elementary school through high school; utilize online and hands-on learning experiences, in-class presentations, off-site travel, etc.
- Ensure sufficient staff capacity is available to secure employer and PK-12 school participation and coordinate programming

3.3 – Continue the Worlds of Opportunity interactive career fair

- With the Alliance, CVWDB, and education and business partners, plan to hold another Worlds of Opportunity interactive career fair in 2024; if successful, continue the model on an annual basis

3.4– Advance efforts to create an “Educator Academy” focused on workforce

- Build upon previous efforts to expose PK-12 and postsecondary teachers, career advisors, and administrators to workplaces in the Lynchburg Region
- Create an in-depth education program for PK-12 and postsecondary educators modeled on the “Educator Workforce Academy” of West Alabama Works

- Invite cohorts of educators to participate in a six- or 12-month program consisting of facility visits, lunch and learns, etc. to highlight career opportunities in a variety of fields in the Lynchburg Region, particularly industries such as manufacturing that are connected to the proposed Career Pathways

3.5 – Promote Career Pathways to parents and parent groups

- Develop a multi-channel campaign including earned, social, and paid media to promote Career Pathways to parents in the Lynchburg Region
- Create a “speakers bureau” to promote Career Pathways and related career opportunities to parent organizations throughout the Lynchburg Region
- Consider arranging an annual event for leaders of parent organizations to visit workplaces such as manufacturing facilities and learn about career opportunities

3.6 – Proactively outreach to adults to promote Career Pathways

- With the CVWDB and potential nonprofit partners (e.g., HumanKind) seek to engage adults who may be interested in a Career Pathway or other workforce development program by “meeting them where they are”
- Encourage case managers and staff to travel throughout the Lynchburg Region (including rural areas) to interact with residents regarding career opportunities
- When feasible and necessary ensure services are available in English and Spanish
- Utilize text messaging to communicate with current and prospective clients in lieu of email to increase engagement

3.7– Help businesses adapt to changing employee needs and preferences

- Ensure that employers are able to regularly share their workforce needs and challenges through the Workforce TAG, BRE programs, Alliance functions, and other means; to the extent possible, seek to engage C-suite level decision makers
- Devote staff capacity to regularly liaise with employers respond to workforce needs in a timely fashion
- Leverage the Workforce & Education Summit event to inform and engage business leaders on opportunities and progress with respect to Career Pathways development; consider creating a special breakout session specifically geared toward C-suite executives and senior management
- Consistent with the Regional Economic Development Strategy, develop a toolkit or similar online knowledge base to assist businesses with workplace experience and employee retention in an evolving labor market; include guidance on schedule and work environment preferences of younger workers and provide employers with potential solutions for meeting them in the context of complex business operations such as health care and manufacturing
- Encourage employers to broaden scheduling practices (e.g., fixed shifts for single parents working at manufacturing facilities) to increase worker satisfaction and retention

FOCUS AREA II: Workforce Access

4. Child care

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Expand workforce opportunities for parents and improve long-term educational outcomes by increasing the supply of high-quality child care in the Lynchburg Region.

DISCUSSION

The important role that child care plays in a workforce development system is neatly summarized by the following passage from the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta:

“Quality childcare is a two-generational approach to economic opportunity that offers benefits to both working parents and their young children. It can boost work productivity for parents and serves as an effective intervention for improving kindergarten readiness and school success, particularly for children at risk of school failure.”³

In BRS’ experience, child care has become an increasingly salient topic in a wide variety of regions in recent years. When examining broad data trends, it is easy to see why this is the case, as employment in the child care industry declined significantly with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and has yet to fully recover.

Stakeholders in the Lynchburg Region identified child care as one of the community’s top competitive challenges impacting workforce development and individual and family outcomes. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that there are approximately 10,000 children in the Lynchburg Region in households with all parents working. According to Child Care Aware of Virginia, the region has licensed child care capacity for just 7,000 children, an implied shortfall of approximately 3,000 spots. Stakeholders said that finding quality, affordable child care is challenging for families across the socioeconomic spectrum, with burdens falling especially hard on lower income families. According to the Lynchburg Area Community Health Needs Assessment completed in 2021, there are waiting lists for the region’s Head Start programs available to low-income families. Stakeholders also said that the biggest child care needs in the Lynchburg Region are in rural communities, many of which lack significant formal capacity.

Fortunately, partners in the Lynchburg Region are already at work seeking to meet these challenges head on. Stakeholders have been convening through Bright Beginnings Central Virginia (BBCV), an initiative serving the Lynchburg Region footprint and housed in the United Way of Central Virginia. According to its website, BBCV serves as a “facilitator of conversation and action” that brings community members together to build a collaborative, early childhood education system.

³ Birken, Brittany. “Dollars and Sense: Affordability of Childcare.” *Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta*. Retrieved from: <https://www.atlantafed.org/community-development/publications/partners-update/2020/covid-19-publications/200604-dollars-and-sense-affordability-of-childcare>

Stakeholders said the BBCV initiative is well-positioned to continue convening and leading on issues related to child care in the Lynchburg Region. Another recent success story is the establishment of a new Early Head Start program in 2021. The program provides support for parents and free, full-time child care for infants and toddlers from lower-income households in Amherst, Bedford, and Lynchburg. The center is hosted at Bedford Christian Church, which invested approximately \$70,000 to upgrade its existing facility to accommodate the new use. As of 2021, the program was expected to accommodate 16 children.⁴

Stakeholders said they would like to see these types of efforts continue, but noted that the scale of the issue will mean that local efforts will primarily make small yet impactful differences on the margin. A best-practice strategic approach should entail advocacy work for enhanced funding and support for child care, pre-kindergarten, and other early childhood education programs with the aim of making systemic improvements. National employment trends also help illustrate that the child care shortage is itself a workforce development problem. A successful response will entail providing assistance and encouragement for individuals to enter the labor pool for child care services. Any incentive structures must be carefully designed to create *new* capacity as opposed to simply reallocating or repositioning existing resources. The strategic approach outlined in this section represents a blended, realistic approach to expanding child care capacity in the region.

STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES

4.1 – Advocate for enhanced public funding of child care and early childhood education

- Partner with other regions and localities to advocate at the state level
- Evaluate potential local funding streams for expanding 3K and 4K programs and before- and after-school care

4.2 – Promote a network of services to support new in-home child care providers

- Leverage existing resources from Child Care VA and the Virginia Department of Education to develop a simplified “toolkit” to help providers in the Lynchburg Region navigate certification and regulatory processes for opening a licensed child care facility
- Leverage the Early Childhood Development Certificate program at CVCC to prepare prospective operators for employment in a child care setting
- Leverage the new Center for Entrepreneurship (C.Entr), the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and other resources to provide technical assistance to aspiring providers
- Create a specialized “microgrant” fund for providers to fund requisite training and/or physical improvements to homes

Comparative Example #5: Duluth 1200 Fund (Duluth, MN)

⁴ Alachnowicz, Michael. “HumanKind establishes first Early Head Start program in Bedford County.” *WDBJ*. May 3, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.wdbj7.com/2021/05/04/humankind-establishes-first-early-head-start-program-in-bedford-county/>

4.3 – Continue to encourage faith-based and similar community-based options

- Seek to activate underutilized physical spaces and built-in community connections similar to the approach pursued by the Bedford Christian Church and HumanKind in establishing an Early Head Start program in Bedford
- Leverage entrepreneurial and economic development staff expertise to assist interested organizations with technical assistance

4.4 – Create new child care capacity at CVCC

- Work with college leadership to create an on-site child care center to create benefits for employees and lower barriers for students
- Pursue a federal Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) Program grant and other public and private funding to support the operation

4.5 – Work with larger employers on potential on-site facilities and/or pooled capacity

- Leverage Alliance relationships to gauge interest and match interested firms with potential operators
- Work with employers utilizing shift work and similar schedules to explore options for expanding child care capacity out of “conventional” business hours

Comparative Example #6: MTM Child Care Program (Huntsville-Madison County, AL)

5. Transportation

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Expand commuting options for all workers in the Lynchburg Region and help individuals without access to reliable transportation access job and training opportunities.

DISCUSSION

Along with childcare, transportation was the issue that stakeholders cited as one of the most common barriers to workforce participation. Input participants shared anecdotes of Lynchburg Region residents who are willing and able to work but have had difficulty securing and/or maintaining employment due to a lack of reliable transportation. Stakeholders said this is a common issue for lower-income residents who do not have consistent access to a private vehicle and is an especially large challenge in rural areas of the region with limited or no alternatives.

According to 2021 estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 83 percent of workers in the Lynchburg Region commute to work in a car, truck, or van. While commutes to work constitute just a fraction of daily trips, this figure illustrates the degree to which the region is currently auto-dependent. Like many communities in the United States, the Lynchburg Region has a built environment with relatively low population densities, jobs spread out wide geographic area, and infrastructure that is not always conducive to “active transportation” modes such as walking and biking, even over short distances.

While auto dependence is not new in the Lynchburg region or the nation, sharp price increases since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic have made vehicle ownership more challenging for many current and prospective workers, particularly those in lower income households. The Center for Neighborhood Technology estimates that the typical household in the Central Virginia Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) footprint has annual auto ownership costs of nearly \$11,000, with transportation costs consuming roughly 26 percent of total income. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that as of 2021, more than 5,300 households in the Lynchburg Region did not have access to a vehicle.

The fundamental transportation challenges that many Lynchburg Region residents face cannot reasonably be addressed through a strategic initiative for workforce development. But partners in the region can adopt a multi-faceted approach, seeking to expand transportation in smaller ways that can add up to make a meaningful impact on workforce availability and outcomes for individuals and families.

STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES

5.1 – Encourage utilization of existing transportation assistance resources

- Leverage resources from RIDE Solutions, the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Agency for Central Virginia, including carpool matching services and the Guaranteed RIDE Home program to serve as a backup for transit and active transportation commuters
- Connect individuals with resources from Drive-To-Work, a Virginia nonprofit providing legal assistance for low income or previously incarcerated persons to restore driving privileges

5.2 – Support active transportation in areas with high population and job densities

- Consistent with the Downtown 2040 Master Plan, the Training Center Redevelopment Plan, the Regional Economic Development Strategy, and other documents, prioritize investments that enhance bicycle, pedestrian, and accessibility infrastructure
- Encourage employers and education and training providers to provide on-site facilities such as bike storage, showers, and so on to encourage active transportation modes
- In urbanized portions of the region, support long-term efforts to encourage land use and development patterns that are conducive to transit use and active transportation

5.3 – Pursue funding to expand GLTC coverage, frequency, and operating hours

- Advocate for and seek funding to support and expand GLTC operations, including more frequent headways and extended service hours within the City of Lynchburg
- Consider adopting “pulse” scheduling models at Kemper Station to ease transfers at key times of day
- Consistent with the 2022 Microtransit Feasibility Study, support the rollout of a GLTC microtransit program that blends on-demand transportation with fixed-route service
- Implement a unified transit pass program as prescribed in the Lynchburg Regional Connectivity Study

5.4 – Create a regional solution to assist people who need a ride to school or work

- Convene businesses, education and training providers, and transportation and planning stakeholders to evaluate options for increasing transportation options for workers and students, particularly those without vehicle access and/or in rural areas
- Evaluate options presented in the 2021 regional vanpool feasibility study and engage partners such as MoveUP, a Lynchburg-based initiative seeking to increase options for on-demand transportation and connect individuals who need a ride with drivers
- Evaluate the feasibility of using MoveUP or a similar platform to pair employees in need of a ride to work with employees willing to offer a ride on a short-term basis; could include employer-provided incentives for individuals who provide rides to coworkers
- Seek “turnkey” provider(s) to launch initial services and scale up as needed
- With the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance and local economic development partners, work with employers to raise awareness about the program(s) and secure adoption and utilization; evaluate the progress of the program and scale up as warranted

5.5 – Expand access to affordable vehicle loans for lower-income workers

- Expand programming to offer access to affordable vehicle loans (and financial education) to low-income working individuals
- Evaluate the feasibility of expanding HumanKind’s “Ways to Work” program and/or creating additional capacity to complement it
- Work with potential funding partners to expand the capital pool available to support subsidized loans
- Evaluate the feasibility of supplementing existing programs with assistance for lower-income workers who have an emergency vehicle maintenance need preventing them from getting to work; could entail providing financial assistance such as a small low- or no-interest loan

6. Wrap-Around Services

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Improve the resourcing, coordination, and visibility of wrap-around services to help residents in the Lynchburg Region meet basic personal needs and start, advance, and sustain careers.

DISCUSSION

Well-defined Career Pathways provide individuals with opportunities to upgrade their knowledge and skills and advance to better jobs over time. But regardless of where one is on their journey, “real life” does not stop, and many people face significant challenges that impact their ability to learn and work. Accordingly, best-practice workforce development efforts seek to integrate “wrap-around services” designed to address these issues.

The term *wrap-around services* is used in many different contexts with different meanings. For the purposes of this Regional Workforce Roadmap, it refers to programs and support that help individuals (and their families) meet basic personal needs so that they are able to start, advance, and sustain careers.

There are numerous public agencies, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and foundations that provide wrap-around services in the Lynchburg Region. These entities address a range of issues: financial literacy, food and housing insecurity, substance abuse, and so on. Stakeholders generally praised the work of these providers but identified opportunities to improve the *resourcing*, *coordination*, and *visibility* of wrap-around services in the Lynchburg Region. This Key Initiative recommends strategies to make such enhancements.

Addressing the full range of funding issues related to wrap-around services is beyond the scope of this or any other strategic plan. But partners in the Lynchburg Region have an opportunity to improve the resourcing climate through enhanced advocacy efforts and, potentially, new shared grant-writing capacity. Stakeholders also said that increased integration of wrap-around services providers into workforce development conversations will also make an impact, particularly in areas of need such as “re-entry” services for incarcerated and recently incarcerated individuals.

Input participants also noted an opportunity to better “meet people where they are” when it comes to wrap-around services. For instance, a job-seeker facing barriers to employment who reaches out to Virginia Career Works will be connected to a comprehensive workforce development system that engages a variety of partners including HumanKind, CVWDB’s local operator. But stakeholders said that an individual who is currently employed but struggling with an issue (e.g., housing or transportation) may not be aware that these and other resources are available. This Key Initiative proposes building capacity in workplaces to connect employees to wrap-around services in a dignified manner in order to remain employed and advance their careers.

STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES

6.1 – Connect wrap-around service and workforce development conversations

- Ensure that wrap-around service providers are represented in workforce development conversations when necessary and appropriate
- Build awareness among regional employers about services available

6.2 – Advocate for continued and enhanced public funding of key wrap-around services

- Work with elected officials and other key stakeholders to communicate the value and economic impact of wrap-around services that lower barriers to workforce participation, support student achievement, etc.
- Continue to engage public-sector entities that fund and support wrap-around services and related needs; for example, network with the Central Virginia Planning District Commission on affordable housing initiatives and other relevant issues

6.3 – Evaluate a “community grant writer” position for workforce development

- Work with partners to determine the feasibility of designating or creating “pooled” staff capacity to help wrap-around service providers apply for and win competitive public and philanthropic grants from outside the Lynchburg Region
- Consider housing the position in an organization with support infrastructure (HR, administration, etc.) and a strong community focus, with buy-in from and for the benefit of other nonprofits that lack sophisticated in-house grant-writing capabilities

6.4 – Support and amplify “re-entry” programming for incarcerated individuals

- Work with the Blue Ridge Re-Entry Council and other nonprofit partners such as the Lynchburg Community Action Group (LynCAG) to support ongoing work and expand resources as needed
- Engage the Virginia Department of Corrections, local law enforcement agencies, local courts, and other relevant legal system partners to participate in program design and implementation
- Identify employers currently or willing to hire formerly incarcerated individuals and build a “business case” for hiring, including success stories and metrics
- Strengthen connections between employers and service providers such as Park View Mission, Lynchburg Community Action Group, etc.
- Explore opportunities to leverage opioid settlement funding to help individuals in recovery access training and employment opportunities

6.5 – Create a network of liaisons to connect employees and students to resources

- Utilize existing employer resources and create new capacity to offer workers assistance with accessing wrap-around services, thereby benefiting individuals (and their families) and assisting businesses with worker employee retention
- Could leverage a national network such as the Employer Resource Network or similar
- Develop customized messaging to ensure the confidentiality of services and avoiding any perceptions that utilization of the program will not jeopardize their current employment
- Maximize resources by “pooling” liaisons across multiple companies; would likely need to identify a high-capacity nonprofit organization to staff and operate the program
- Engage individuals and organizations with strong network connections and trust to raise awareness of available resources within various geographies and/or social and cultural contexts

Comparative Example #7: Employer Resource Network (Johnson County, IN)

APPENDIX A:

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

This Regional Workforce Roadmap establishes a set of workforce development priorities for partners in the Lynchburg Region to pursue in the coming years in order to grow the local economy and help residents thrive. As discussed in the Introduction section, the Roadmap is a “high-level” document and is not intended as a detailed work plan for any organization or strategic effort. The partners that comprise the Workforce TAG will be responsible for applying the appropriate tactical detail to the Roadmap recommendations and ensuring their timely implementation. The Implementation Guidelines presented in this document are intended to assist partners in the Lynchburg Region as they translate this vision into reality over the course of the next five years.

IMPLEMENTATION COORDINATION

As is the case with the Regional Economic Development Strategy, activating the Regional Workforce Roadmap must be a team effort. Workforce development is an inherently collaborative process involving education and training providers, employers, public agencies, social service providers, and so on. Activating the Roadmap will require many partners committing time, personnel and resources in support of strategic priorities.

But while the Regional Workforce Roadmap is not a strategy for any single organization, successful implementation will require centralized capacity to coordinate activities and communicate progress. The Roadmap framework has been developed with this need in mind.

The Career Pathways Focus Area will require business and education partners to work in close alignment. The Workforce TAG that created the Roadmap includes key representatives from these sectors and has been positioned as the lead group for coordinating activities among talent pipeline partners. It is also housed within the Alliance, which as the organization representing the region’s business community is well-positioned to serve the lead convenor and facilitator in this space.

The Workforce Access focus area will also include a role for businesses and education and training providers, but success will be dependent on aligning various workforce development partners, social service providers, nonprofits, and so on around a set of shared priorities. While the Workforce TAG can be engaged as a “sounding board,” implementation would likely be best coordinated by a collective impact organization and/or nonprofit with a focus on social well-being. The right entity for this work may differ by Key Initiative. For instance, Bright Beginnings Central Virginia (BBCV) and the United Way of Central Virginia are well suited to lead strategic implementation for the Child Care Key Initiative but would likely be less capable of supporting activities related to Transportation. Ultimately, all implementation roles must be confirmed by the board leadership or oversight structure of each organization or entity.

BUILDING MOMENTUM FOR THE REGIONAL WORKFORCE ROADMAP

Successful communities never stop planning, but they also do not allow the conversations that take place around a strategic planning process to prevent them from taking *action*. The Regional Workforce Roadmap process has generated significant enthusiasm among the educators, business leaders, workforce development professionals, and other key stakeholders who comprise the Workforce TAG. The challenge now becomes spreading that enthusiasm across a wider network and securing formal buy-in from the many partner organizations and entities that will play a role in building a stronger workforce in the Lynchburg Region.

Workforce TAG members are aware of the work that lies ahead. A portion of the discussion at the May 16 meeting focused on the need to build support for the Roadmap among education and training providers, businesses, nonprofits, and so on. On the online survey, respondents were asked, “What is the first thing or (or first few things) that we will need to do to build momentum for the Regional Workforce Roadmap?” Nearly all of the comments in response focused on communications and securing buy-in.

Accordingly, BRS recommends that partners in the Lynchburg Region develop a targeted, “internal” rollout plan to build support for the Regional Workforce Roadmap. This will likely entail convening a small working group of key staff and volunteers to develop strategies for communicating the benefits of the roadmap and secure buy-in from implementation partners. The resulting work product need not be complicated – a simple PowerPoint presentation for engaging potential partner organizations and a “one-pager” or executive summary handout to quickly convey the framework and its desired outcomes.

The messaging for this internal campaign should communicate the momentum that differentiates this work from other previous discussions around workforce development that have occurred in the Lynchburg Region in recent years. But building broad support will also require demonstrating actual results. As such, the Workforce TAG and staff should devote significant time and energy in their initial discussions to identifying “early wins” that can be completed or fully operationalized quickly and/or that can be advanced by partner organizations that are already on board with strategic implementation of the Roadmap. Partners may wish to consider identifying tasks that can be completed in advance of the 2023 Workforce & Education Summit, which could then be utilized as a springboard for communicating progress and momentum to the broader public.

Finally, the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance may wish to consider renaming or “rebranding” the Workforce TAG. While the name is consistent with other Target Advisory Groups under the Alliance umbrella, some stakeholders shared feedback that the name may be less clear and impactful to individuals outside the organization. These stakeholders said they would like to see a different identity adopted for the group that more clearly communicates its mission around establishing Career Pathways and advancing workforce development.

POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

Activating the Regional Workforce Roadmap will require a coordinated approach with public, private, and nonprofit partners committing time, personnel, and resources in support of strategic implementation. This section includes a list of potential implementation partners for each Key Initiative. **These lists are a starting point and should not be viewed as final or definitive.** As partners in the Lynchburg Region convene through the Workforce TAG and otherwise to begin the implementation of the Roadmap, initial meetings should include conversations about whether key stakeholders or organizations are missing from the table. Ultimately, all organizational roles must be confirmed by the board leadership or oversight structure of each organization or entity.

1. Pathway Design

- Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance
- CVWDB
- Employers
- Higher education institutions
- PK-12 schools
- Nonprofits engaged in talent pipeline development (e.g., Beacon of Hope)

2. Pathway Activation

- Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance
- Beacon of Hope
- Bedford Economic Development Authority
- Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lynchburg
- CVCC and all other higher education institutions
- CVWDB
- Employers
- Lynchburg Community Action Group (training programs)
- Nonprofits engaged in work-based learning and support services for students
- PK-12 schools including CTE programs / academies

3. Career Awareness & Perceptions

- Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance (convening and staffing Workforce TAG)
- Beacon of Hope
- CVWDB (and service partners such as HumanKind)
- Employers
- Higher education institutions
- Interfaith Outreach Association
- Partners in Education
- PK-12 schools

4. Child Care

- Bright Beginnings Central Virginia (BBCV) / The United Way of Central Virginia
- C.Entr, SBDC, and other entrepreneurial ecosystem partners
- Central Virginia Foundation for Economic Education and Improvement Inc.
- CVWDB
- Childcare providers
- CVCC
- Early childhood education providers such as PK-12 schools and Head Start programs
- External partners such as Child Care Aware
- Employers
- Faith-based and community organizations
- Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance (advocacy and connections to employers)
- Nonprofits such as HumanKind SHARE Greater Lynchburg, the YMCA of Central Virginia

5. Transportation

- Central Virginia Planning District Commission
- CVWDB
- Drive-To-Work
- Employers
- Greater Lynchburg Transit Co.
- HumanKind
- Local economic development organizations (connections to employers)
- Local governments
- Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance (advocacy and connections to employers)
- MoveUP
- RIDE Solutions
- Virginia Department of Transportation

6. Wrap-Around Services

- Major coordinating partners such as Share Greater Lynchburg, the United Way, etc.
- All other wrap-around service providers
- Blue Ridge Re-Entry Council
- CVCC
- CVPDC
- CVWDB and HumanKind
- Employers
- Interfaith Outreach Association
- Law enforcement agencies
- Legacy Education Center
- LynCAG
- Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance
- Potential external partners
- Private staffing agencies
- Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)
- Virginia Department of Corrections
- WIOA Title I program

FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

The Regional Workforce Roadmap is an ambitious program of work that will require financial resources to implement. To the extent possible, partners in the Lynchburg Region should leverage existing staff and organizational capacity to implement the six Key Initiatives. The Roadmap was also designed with the Lynchburg Region's existing capacity in mind, with many recommendations able to "plug in" to the staff and financial capacity of various key implementation partners. BRS has further prepared a high-level snapshot of "funding considerations" for each of the six Key Initiatives that outline potential costs, funding sources, and opportunities for synergies.

1. Pathway Design

The costs associated with the actual instruction and administration of education and training systems is enormous. But this Key Initiative deals entirely with the design of a Career Pathways structure for the Lynchburg Region. These activities will require meaningful time commitments on the part of business leaders, education administrators, and Alliance and CVWDB staff among others; this may in turn necessitate an adjustment of resources within organizational budgets. Otherwise, actual costs associated with this Key Initiative will be minimal.

2. Pathway Activation

Funding needs for the recommendations within this Key Initiative are varied. The work of coordinating partners to ensure alignment around Career Pathways will require significant staff time commitments from education and training providers and coordinating partners such as the Alliance. While the actual instruction that students receive in education and training programs requires significant resources, every effort should be made to accommodate needed adjustments to program offerings and curriculums within existing budgets. That said, there will likely be programmatic gaps identified as Pathways are designed and implemented, and programmatic expansions to CTE Academy programs will also require new resources. (The Regional Economic Development Strategy implementation budget includes some support for enhanced marketing.) Partners should be prepared to advocate for enhanced public funding and/or pursue competitive grants and other private and philanthropic dollars to meet these needs.

Work-based learning opportunities can be funded primarily by the companies offering internships and other on-the-job experiences; a key factor in the success of this recommendation will be receiving buy-in from companies regarding the near- and long-term benefits of a robust regional approach to work-based learning. Finally, activating a new facility such as the Bedford Regional Metal Workforce Retention Center will require securing significant public investment from state and federal partners.

3. Career Awareness & Perceptions

This Key Initiative is primarily a significant undertaking that will require significant staff time to administer, coordinate, and execute. For instance, feedback from Alliance stakeholders indicated that coordinating just one of the activities on the preceding pages – the 2019 Worlds of Opportunity event – required hundreds of staff hours to manage. Partners in the Lynchburg Region should evaluate whether sufficient staff capacity exists to advance this program of work. In the event that more capacity is needed, partners should first consider opportunities to reposition or more efficiently allocate existing funds before seeking new revenue opportunities. To achieve the outcomes described in section 3.1 including an online work-based learning portal, consideration should be given to building on existing resources, such as the Virginia Career Works Central Region website and mobile application.

4. Child Care

Early education is best funded by the state and federal governments, though there may be opportunities to allocate local funding in support of expanded early childhood education and child care capacity. Expanding support for in-home child care providers can leverage existing entrepreneurial resources such as C.Entr, the SBDC, and the 140 Fund revolving loan fund; additional public, grant, and philanthropic monies could be developed to fund a special-purpose grant program.

5. Transportation

As previously noted, addressing transportation issues is typically a cost-intensive proposition. Enhancements such as active transportation infrastructure and transit operations require significant public funding. Partners in the Lynchburg Region should seek state and federal resources to cover capital and operating expenditures whenever possible, though local funds will also be required. Other programmatic expansions could be resourced through a mixture of public, private, grant, and philanthropic funds. For instance, a vanpool program could be funded by a mixture of employee and employer contributions, with potential support from a competitive grant and/or philanthropic gift.

6. Wrap-Around Services

Wrap-around services are resource intensive and are funded through a variety of government, private, nonprofit, and philanthropic sources. A portion of the work in this Key Initiative entails advocating for continued funding of these services when relevant and potentially expanding the capacity of local providers to seek competitive grants from outside the Lynchburg Region. The proposed "re-entry" initiative would primarily require additional staff time and could be accommodated within existing capacity and/or funded through new grants or other monies. Establishing a network of liaisons to connect employees to wrap-around services would represent a new program that would require significant financial commitments from public and/or private sources; some costs could be covered with support from participating companies.

POTENTIAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES

BRS recommends that partners in the Lynchburg Region establish, track, and report a set of implementation metrics related to the Regional Workforce Roadmap. This section contains two tables with recommended performance measures, one for each of the Roadmap’s Focus Areas.

Most of the proposed measures must be tracked locally and are typically things that can be directly influenced through successful implementation. Some proposed metrics are derived from government or proprietary sources and are typically influenced by innumerable factors beyond the control of any organization or community. For instance, the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in school would likely be influenced by state and federal funding levels. Accordingly, BRS recommends that stakeholders keep such metrics in the appropriate perspective and use them primarily to determine whether progress is being achieved relative to broader state and national trends.

POTENTIAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES – FOCUS AREA I: CAREER PATHWAYS

Key Initiative / Performance Measure	Potential Data Source(s)
Key Initiative 1: Pathway Design	
Completed formalization of Career Pathways	Alliance
Number of business and education partners engaged on Workforce TAG	Alliance
Key Initiative 2: Pathway Activation	
Growth in available “seats” and enrollment in Pathway-aligned programs	Alliance & partners
Number of businesses offering work-based learning opportunities	Alliance
Number of internships and apprenticeships advertised on central website	TBD
Growth in postsecondary credential awards in Pathway-aligned programs	NCES or CVCC, etc.
Key Initiative 3: Career Awareness & Perceptions	
Website metrics including unique visitors, internships posted, etc.	TBD
Number of students engaged through classroom visits, WOO, etc.	Alliance
Number of companies engaged in classroom visits, WOO, etc.	Alliance
Number of educators participating in Academy	Alliance
Short- and long-term increase in Career Pathway entries and completions	Alliance & partners

POTENTIAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES – FOCUS AREA II: WORKFORCE ACCESS

Key Initiative / Performance Measure	Potential Data Source(s)
Key Initiative 4: Child Care	
Number of licensed child care spots per capita	CCAoVA or United Way
Employment in child care business sectors and occupations	BLS or proprietary
Number of providers receiving startup assistance	United Way or similar
Percentage change in Pre-K enrollment (school districts)	PK-12 districts
Percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in school	Census ACS
Key Initiative 5: Transportation	
New linear miles of bike/ped infrastructure and user counts	CVPDC & local govts.
Transit service enhancements and change in ridership	GTLC
Number of employers and employees participating in a vanpool program	TBD
Number of individuals assisted through auto loan program	HumanKind or similar
Key Initiative 6: Wrap-Around Services	
Number of companies participating in ERG	TBD
Number of individuals connected to services through ERG	TBD
Number of individuals working through re-entry and opioid programs	Blue Ridge Re-Entry Council
Long-term improvements in employee retention tracked through BRE	Alliance & partners

APPENDIX B: COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

#1: Talent Action Collaborative (Baton Rouge, LA)

<https://brac.org/tac/>

The Talent Action Collaborative (TAC) is a partnership between the Baton Rouge Area Chamber (BRAC) and East Baton Rouge Parish Schools designed to align K-12 education with the needs of business and industry. This initiative allows business and industry to steer education to the specific industry needs while training their future employees and ensuring Louisiana's talent retention. The network aims to close the disconnect between workforce and education by being business-led, industry-specific, and solution-oriented. The TAG is focused on five high-wage, high-demand sectors: Construction and Manufacturing; Med and Pre-Med; Liberal Arts and Management; Technology; and Transportation, Automotive, and Logistics.

The Collaborative is coordinated by three action teams: CEOs for Education, Strategic Operations Team, and the Five Commissions.

Comprised of 25 top area CEOs and executives representing this cross-section of sectors, the CEOs for Education task force convenes quarterly with the Superintendent of East Baton Rouge Parish Schools, Louisiana State Superintendent of Education, Commissioner of Higher Education, college chancellors, and university presidents to identify opportunities in talent pipeline to design systems and advocate for future workforce needs. Each CEO designates a representative to the Strategic Operations Committee.

The Strategic Operations Committee is comprised of practitioners in workforce development and career training, including human resources managers, talent recruiters, provosts, and heads of workforce development. They meet monthly to guide career pathways, programming, key performance indicators, and partnerships. The Committee interfaces on implementation with education senior staff, including members of the East Baton Rouge Parish School System such as the chief academic officer, assistant superintendent of curriculum, and executive director at EBR Career and Technical Education Center.

Fifteen to 20 experts in each of the five targeted sectors were recruited to guide the needs of each industry's future workforce programs. These experts have backgrounds in human resources, workforce training and development, and career training. Each month, the commissions meet to influence, create and change career education programs for K-12 and higher education, specific to their industry's needs. Each commission guides the creation of sector-specific career pathways, soft skills programs, and workplace experiential learning or internships, aligned with colleges and universities.

Joining the Talent Action Collaborative is based on investor level and invitations from business leaders already part of the group.

#2: Manufacturing 2000 (Pittsburgh, PA Region)

<https://www.ncsquared.com/manufacturing2000/>

Established in 1999, New Century Careers (NCC) is a nonprofit manufacturer and technical skills development organization serving the Southwestern Pennsylvania region through access to technical training opportunities while helping employers find and develop skilled technicians. New Century Careers collaborates with 130 local manufacturers, four local Workforce Investment Boards in nine counties, programs through Operation Next, PA CareerLink and EmployHER, and many support organizations to promote opportunities in manufacturing to potential workers.

Representatives from Steel Center Area Vocational-Technical School, the Institute for Economic Transformation at Duquesne University, and executives representing 17 manufacturers partnered to create the Manufacturing 2000 (M2K) training program. M2K is NCC's PA State Registered Pre-apprenticeship Machinist Training Program. The program supplies area manufacturers with employees to replace their aging workforce and strengthens Southwestern Pennsylvania's economy. M2K classes are offered at New Century Careers' training space on Pittsburgh's South Side and at Eastern Westmoreland Career and Technology Center in Latrobe. The program provides three levels of training up to 600 hours. The sessions include hands-on experience as well as special classes focused on professional development and resume writing.

#3: Inside Track (South Central Missouri)

<https://www.ozarkshealthcare.com/careers/inside-track-career-pathways/>

Inside Track is a program supported by the Healthcare Workforce Consortium (HWC) of south central Missouri comprised of Ozarks Healthcare, South Central Career Center, Missouri State University-West Plains, Howell County, Missouri. The program connects post-secondary students (traditional and non-traditional) to training programs through local universities, colleges, and other training opportunities.

A Careers Pathway Coordinator finds candidates for available local positions and navigates them through the education process and pathway. The final step for the candidates is entering the local healthcare workforce. Program participants are supported with scholarships and tuition reimbursement.

The Inside Track Career Pathways Program supports not only clinical healthcare positions but a full breadth of career opportunities including business and non-degree/certificate positions.

#4: I.G.N.I.T.E. Student Jobs Website (West Alabama)

<https://www.wawstudentjobs.com/>

West AlabamaWorks! is a “network of interconnected providers of workforce services, including all of the governmental, educational, and private sector components that train, prepare, and match job seekers with employers” for a nine-county region in West Alabama centered around Tuscaloosa. The organization is recognized as a national best practice for workforce development. In May 2022, West AlabamaWorks! And the Tuscaloosa County Commission partnered to launch a jobs portal called “I.G.N.I.T.E Student Jobs.” The website is intended to serve as a one-stop resource to connect West Alabama employers looking for students to fill their open positions with job seekers between the ages of 14 and 18. The website lists opportunities for after-school jobs, co-op jobs, apprenticeships, and summer learning opportunities. Listings on the website include employer names and addresses, job titles, job type (e.g., full time, part time, etc.), expected pay, and the age ranges the employer is opening to hiring.

#5: Duluth 1200 Fund (Duluth, MN)

<https://1200fund.com/>

The Duluth 1200 Fund provides incentive loans for business expansions and relocations within the City of Duluth. Bank participation and business owner equity are both required to be part of the financial package supporting a business's growth. A loan from the Duluth 1200 Fund is intended to address a gap in the financial package, not replace business owner equity contributions or traditional bank lending. The Fund offers Childcare Loan Programs that provide gap financing for licensed Duluth childcare providers who are starting up or expanding within Duluth city limits. Loan amounts range from a minimum of \$10,000 to a maximum of \$100,000. The term of the loan can last up to 17 years.

#6: MTM Child Care Program (Huntsville-Madison County, AL)

<https://hsvchamber.org/mazda-toyota-manufacturing-and-tootris-partner-to-provide-child-care-assistance/>

Mazda Toyota Manufacturing (MTM), a joint venture partnership between Mazda Motor Corporation and Toyota Motor Corporation located in Huntsville, is leveraging a new partnership to find child care solutions for its workforce. Through an agreement with TOOTRiS, an on-demand child care platform, MTM is providing child care assistance to its employees, including contributing towards the cost of care. The platform also enables parents to find slots for temporary care, drop-ins, and non-traditional work schedules. TOOTRiS and MTM were originally connected via assistance from the Huntsville-Madison County Chamber of Commerce.

#7: Employer Resource Network (Johnson County, IN)

<https://www.jccf.org/ern>

The Johnson County Community Foundation (JCCF) launched an Employer Resource Network for local companies that places success coaches in the workplaces of participating companies. The success coach is a confidential resource that employees can access as a conduit to community resources including reliable transportation, workplace conflict, childcare, housing challenges, family challenges, etc. While the focus is on entry-level and low-wage employees, the services will be available to all who work for ERN member companies. Several Johnson County companies partnered with us to participate in this initiative.