

Region 2000



Workforce Development Strategy

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Project Overview

Project Overview

In the United States, employers and job seekers are confronting several challenges in the New Economy. Although the nation's economy may have been in a slight downturn, tight labor markets remain a central characteristic of the marketplace, as employers are continually challenged to hire highly skilled and productive workers. Even with moderate unemployment rates, employers can have difficulty finding workers that simply meet their specific requirements, leaving certain jobs vacant for extended periods of time. Furthermore, qualified workers are able to demand higher wages and benefits from prospective employers. While higher wages benefit a region's workers and the overall economy, these wages, along with the vacancies and additional effort required to find qualified labor, can have a negative impact on specific businesses.

The decline of the traditional manufacturing base and the concurrent growth of information, technology, and service-based businesses has resulted in large pockets of the labor force that lack essential skills needed in this changing economy. These individuals may be willing to work, but their lack of training renders them virtually unemployable at wages comparable to their previous jobs. In fact, less than 15% of employment is available to "unskilled workers." Also, the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that a full 42% of all jobs will require a two or four year degree by 2010.

Additionally, the full effects on the national economy of the tragic events of September 11th are still uncertain. Economists agree that these events contributed to the economic slowdown in 2000. The manufacturing sector in Virginia lost 25,000 jobs in 2001.

All of these developments emphasize the need for regions to be acutely aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their workforce. A workforce's characteristics and qualities play an important role in the type of businesses a region can support. For regional development strategies to be successful, economic and workforce developers must know the realities that exist in their area. Without this thorough and factual information, programs and projects can be implemented that have little chance of success because they do not account for the unique traits of the local labor force.

Region 2000 saw these changes on the horizon and decided a Comprehensive Regional Community Workforce Audit was needed to examine the area's existing workforce and its capacity to meet the needs of the New Economy, and to recommend a process to enable the Region to successfully assess its workforce quality on a regular basis. Directed by a Steering Committee representative of educational, governmental, business, and civic interests within the community, this effort is intended to focus on strategies to empower the Region to position all of its communities to achieve a successful future.

In September 2001, Region 2000 hired *Market Street Services, Inc.*, a national community and economic development consulting firm located in Atlanta, Georgia, to facilitate and guide the Region through this process. It includes both statistical analysis and business community input. As the Region's workforce strategic plan takes shape,

Region 2000 and the Steering Committee will decide “how” the Region will execute the strategies identified and outlined in the plan.

The process for creating the strategic plan for Region 2000 involves five components:

- I. **Workforce Profile** – addressed the realities in the regional workforce – its strengths and weaknesses in terms of its capacity to meet the needs of current and future economic realities. The Profile evaluated the region on its labor supply and regional employment structure.
- II. **Comparative Workforce Climate Analysis** – utilized the business climate factors that are related to the workforce and compared Region 2000 on these factors to four selected comparison communities (one each in Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee). These factors are playing a greater role in business decisions, including expansions and relocations. The analysis focused on assessing how Region 2000 compares to the other regions on its current and future workforce.
- III. **Workforce Quality Study** – provided anecdotal information to validate and confirm the statistical data found in the *Workforce Profile* through a series of interviews and focus groups to gauge the perspectives of, and situations currently experienced by, employers in the region as well as business and community leaders. Input from these individuals included information on the quality of the workforce and applicant pool, including basic employee skills, employee productivity, turnover, absenteeism and work ethic. Input from key members of the community also provided a broad perspective of the workforce and workforce resources in the Region. While this was not intended to be a comprehensive survey, it did provide insight into the workforce and training issues that face many of the Region’s employers.
- IV. **Regional Workforce Assessment Tool** – provides the ability to anticipate workforce trends, effectively meet the needs of the Region’s existing industry, and remain competitive in the recruitment of new business. *Market Street* worked with Central Virginia Industries to expand its existing Wage and Benefit Survey and blend it with the *Workforce Quality Study* results. The *Tool* supplies Region 2000 with the quantitative workforce data and analysis needed by the Region’s existing and potential employers, local governments, and economic development professionals. The result is a regularly completed analysis of the Region’s workforce issues that benefits both the public and private sectors.
- V. **Workforce Development Strategy and Implementation Plan** – provides the region with a roadmap for the future. The strategy outlines the steps Region 2000 must take to have a superior labor force. The *Workforce Development Strategy* synthesizes all of the information developed during the first four parts of this project into goals, strategies, and action steps based upon the identified gaps and needs found in the community. Implementation will require a coordinated sequence of actions by a number of key stakeholders. *Market Street* has assisted Region 2000 in evaluating its options.

Introduction

Introduction

Region 2000 is at an important crossroads in workforce development. Changes in the structure of the economy require that complementary changes be made in education, training, and throughout the broad spectrum of workforce development. Despite the many dedicated professionals working on workforce development issues, the Region has not reached its full capacity and may not be able to move to the next level in terms of labor market competitiveness.

During the Workforce Audit process, *Market Street's* extensive research into the economic and demographic history and trends affecting the Region provided a substantial foundation for additional analysis about the Region's capacity and its needs. These key findings are outlined below.

Workforce Profile Key Findings

- Slow population growth over last 20 years (17.7% vs. 32.4% for Virginia and 21.5% for U.S.).
- Large percentage of retired (over 70) people (10.3% vs. 8% for Virginia and 8.7% for U.S.).
- Workforce was older in Region than Virginia or U.S.:

Region 2000	22.1% (18-34)	29.8% (35-54)	14.5% (55-69)
Virginia	24.2%	31.1%	12.2%
U.S.	23.0%	29.8%	12.2%
- Workforce will grow slowly over next 10 years (5.4% vs. 5.6% for Virginia and 11.7% for U.S.).
- Region 2000 is not diverse racially – mostly white and African-American (other races account for 2.4% vs. 8% for Virginia and 12.5% for U.S.).
- High school graduation rates lower than Virginia and U.S. (66.3% vs. 75.1% for Virginia and 75.2% for U.S.).
- Fewer college graduates than Virginia or U.S. (15.7% vs. 24.5% for Virginia and 20.3% for U.S.).
- Poverty rates comparable to the nation but higher than Virginia (13.6% vs. 11.6% for Virginia and 13.3% for U.S.).
- Labor force participation rate is lower than Virginia or U.S. (73.4% vs. 75.6% for Virginia and 79.2% for U.S.).
- Unemployment is growing (from 4.3% in October 2001 to 5.7% in December 2001; 3.6% to 4.2% for Virginia and 5.4% to 5.8% for U.S.).
- Per capita income (PCI) lower than Virginia and U.S. (\$23,406 vs. \$29,794 for Virginia and \$28,546 for U.S.).
- The Service and Manufacturing sectors were the largest in the Region in 1999 (27.9% and 20.7%).
- Jobs in the Service sector doubled over the last 20 years, but are still less concentrated in the Region than in Virginia and the nation (27.9% vs. 31.3% for Virginia and 31.6% for U.S.).

- Manufacturing lost jobs over the past 20 years but is still more concentrated in the Region than Virginia or the nation (20.7% vs. 9.4% for Virginia and 11.8% for the U.S.).
- Average wages in the Region (\$27,467) were lower than Virginia's (\$35,151) in all sectors, except Manufacturing.
- Nonfarm proprietorships grew at a slower rate than Virginia and the nation between 1980 and 1999 (35.4% vs. 54.3% for Virginia and 43.4% for the U.S.).
- Average income for nonfarm proprietorships was lower than Virginia and the nation (\$16,515 vs. \$19,770 for Virginia and \$25,637 for the U.S.).
- Lynchburg is the economic engine in the Region, housing 44% of all the businesses.
- The Service sector comprised 43% of all establishments and only 27.9% of employment; the Manufacturing sector comprised only 6% of establishments compared to 20.7% of employment.
- Almost three-quarters of all companies had fewer than 10 employees in 1999.
- The 10 largest companies employ 14% of the Region's workers.
- Five of the Region's 10 largest companies were in the Service sector and four were in Manufacturing (one company was in both).

Comparative Workforce Climate Analysis

- Among the comparison regions, Region 2000 was the only region to show a net job gain from October 2000 to October 2001.
- The average earnings in the Region have stagnated since 1980 (from \$26,221 to \$26,692).
- Between 1990 and 2000, the number of 25-44 year olds increased by only 1.7% in the Region, compared to a 5.5% increase for the U.S.
- The Region has responded to workforce needs through AMTA, apprenticeship programs, and customized training available through CVCC.
- The K-12 education system in Region 2000 is performing adequately, but there is little emphasis on developing career tracks or vocational/technical education for students.
- The community college system in Virginia lags behind comparison regions' statewide systems in preparing students for entry into the workforce.
- The quality of life in the Region is good and the cost of living is affordable.

Workforce Quality Study

- The businesses are diversified (good mix of manufacturing, technology, and services), but there is concern about the future stability of the regional economy.
- The Workforce Investment Board needs more resources and authority to be stronger and provide greater service.
- Workforce leadership and resources are too fragmented at the state level and the state level delivery system needs to be streamlined.
- Overall work ethic among workers was good, but has been declining in recent years.
- Work ethic and attitude needs improvement among younger workers.
- Sense of entitlement among younger workers.
- Work ethic and attitude should be a product of home life.

- Employers must recruit outside the Region for professional, skilled employees – there are not enough qualified applicants in the Region.
- The image of VEC/One-Stop Center is of an “unemployment office” rather than a career center; employers feel that they do not get much help for recruiting and screening from state and local resources.
- Resources and incentives are only available for attracting new jobs to the Region; there is a severe lack of resources for retraining employees in their existing jobs.
- Few employers are aware of resources for workforce development.
- Many workers do not have basic skills such as math and reading.
- Elementary and secondary schools do not prepare the students for the workforce or vocational and technical careers, but rather for a four-year college degree.
- Employers felt that the Region in general does not meet its training needs.
- No science and engineering-based educational institution.
- Quality of life is excellent according to most residents.
- Attracting and retaining young professionals (18 – 35) to the Region is difficult due to the perception of the lack of social, cultural, and economic opportunities.
- Lack of commercial air service and expensive airfares.

Document Structure

The remainder of this document addresses the five most pressing workforce development issues for Region 2000, and provides a set of recommendations that will help the Region address and overcome challenges while capitalizing on strengths and advantages that already exist. The five issues are:

1. Coordination and Collaboration;
2. Work Ethic/Foundation Work Skills;
3. Employability/Basic Work Readiness Skills;
4. Finding and Retaining Skilled Workers; and
5. Retaining and Attracting the Younger Workforce.

The two appendices at the end of the document contain the implementation plan and a summary of the Issues and Action Steps.

Coordination and Collaboration

1. Coordination and Collaboration

Definition of Issue:

This issue has arisen because of the many agencies in Region 2000 and the Commonwealth of Virginia that deliver workforce development services. The Workforce Investment Board, Virginia's Region 2000, the Region 2000 Regional Commission, Central Virginia Industries, the Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce and chambers in each municipality, the Virginia Employment Commission, and educational institutions all play a role in the Region's workforce development community. While there are multiple concerns that fall under this issue category, the predominant source of frustration is the lack of guiding leadership from one organization. The identification of one central leading workforce organization may help the Region tackle other related – and pressing – issues such as overlapping responsibilities, wasted resources, miscommunication, and strengthening existing businesses and services. A central single identity needs to have the capacity to identify and solve challenges that arise for both the workforce development community and the Region's workers.

In addition, there is a desire for local workforce development providers and professionals to have clearer and more direct communication with counterparts at the state level. This issue has led to additional concerns about resource allocation and assistance for the Region. Specific concerns about the structure of the state level workforce development system in Virginia are also a key factor.

Concerns about the economic development capacity of the Region are also part of this issue, and have been addressed to a certain degree in the Strategy. However, as noted previously, because this strategy is specifically focused on workforce development issues, it cannot *also* chart the course for all of the Region's economic development initiatives. What the workforce development community *can* do is to continue to support and encourage strategic thinking in economic development that will lead to the creation of a framework within which training and education partners can work.

Finally, it must be emphasized that the first and most important step in this strategy is for workforce development partners to come together to clarify and simplify regional development roles in the Region. This may also include identifying the best-suited organization to take the lead in workforce development. Working through these issues will require the community to address a number of questions about current capacity, structure, use of resources, consolidation, and so forth. Figuring out how to approach these issues and accomplishing this action step is a necessary first step in achieving other parts of this strategy, and will affect the direction of all other efforts. Failure to accomplish this action step will dramatically reduce the chances of success for every other action step.

Action Steps

1. Strengthen the Workforce Investment Board by modeling its structure on an existing successful Board and staff.

By assuming a strong leadership role in regional workforce development, the Region 2000 Workforce Investment Board (WIB) follows both the principle of the law and the intentions of the community. It is very important that the Board develop to its full capacity as the organization gains additional responsibilities and begins to fulfill new roles. To help ensure that the Board continues to proceed in the right direction, staff and board leadership should work with counterparts from WIBs in other states that have substantial experience and have been recognized for their focus on regionalism, ability to collaborate, and successful delivery of services. A short visit with these counterparts would provide a useful opportunity to learn some WIB and one-stop best practices. WorkSource (Jacksonville, Florida), Work Advantage (Tarrant County/Fort Worth, Texas), or Thumb Area Michigan Works! (the eastern region of Michigan known as the “thumb” for its geographic shape) could all be models for Region 2000.

2. Clarify and simplify the regional workforce development delivery system.

Without clarifying and simplifying the roles of all of the workforce development stakeholders, it will be very difficult to accomplish anything else that is outlined in this Strategy. All workforce stakeholders must be involved in the discussions about the Region’s preferred structure in order for any changes to be successful. Stakeholders include but are not limited to:

- Region 2000 Workforce Investment Board
- Virginia’s Region 2000
- Region 2000 Regional Commission
- Central Virginia Industries
- Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce
- Altavista Area Chamber of Commerce
- Amherst County Chamber of Commerce
- Appomattox Chamber of Commerce
- Virginia Employment Commission
- Advanced Manufacturing Technology Association
- A.L. Philpott Manufacturing Extension Partnership
- Public School Systems
- Central Virginia Community College
- Virginia Department of Labor and Industry
- Child Care Resource Center
- Employee Assistance of Central Virginia
- Small Business Development Center
- New Land Jobs
- Lynchburg Community Action Groups, Inc.

It is not enough for roles and responsibilities to be merely clarified; the most important outcomes of this action step are to simplify the system, reduce the amount of service delivery overlap and ensure that workforce development operates in a logical, efficient manner.

3. *Establish an ongoing forum in which workforce providers can come together with employers to discuss current programs, innovative practices, and methods of collaboration.*

Regional workforce development stakeholders could benefit from a regular forum that provides an opportunity to communicate and tackle challenges facing the Region. For example, in Western North Carolina, economic and workforce development partners have formed a “Training Alliance,” designed to “provide information for job training and economic development efforts.” Meetings include presentations about programs, training strategies, and current issues of importance relating to the services available to employers and to the workforce, especially dislocated workers, and provide for regional agency information exchange. The Training Alliance counts K-12, Workforce Investment Act administrators, community colleges, universities, and the North Carolina Department of Commerce as members.

Establishing a similar forum in Region 2000 would help ensure that all business stakeholders are involved in workforce development, regardless of company size or sector. As a natural outgrowth of the coordination efforts the Region 2000 WIB has already begun. In addition, the forum would help bring together the education community with workforce and economic development leadership to better understand the skills and jobs need by current employers. The alliance could also help identify services, programs, or even providers that could be consolidated to avoid duplication of efforts and wasting resources. The alliance would serve existing businesses by making information about workforce development resources more accessible, perhaps via a regular newsletter or through an enhanced Internet presence.

4. *Strengthen relationship and communication with the state level workforce development system.*

Since the Workforce Investment Act was passed in 1998, there has been significant confusion about Virginia’s approach to workforce development, the one-stop service delivery system, and other programs and services. Local WIBs have expressed dissatisfaction with the level of support they are given and are years behind counterparts in other states as a result.

Creating more opportunities to communicate concerns to state level partners is a good first step in helping transform the structure of Virginia’s workforce development system and improve delivery of service. Region 2000 representatives could begin to strengthen these relationships by meeting with the Governor’s staff and other state level partners on a regular basis. Working with the local legislative delegation to increase awareness of workforce development

needs and concerns would also be a good use of time and energy for the Region 2000 community.

Working with other regional WIBs that are contiguous to Region 2000 might be the most effective approach to improving the state's delivery system and relationship with local representatives. Proceeding with plans to regularly meet and work with these partners can also continue as Region 2000 continually reevaluates its communication strategies with state level counterparts.

Finally, the annual Workforce Summit can continue to be a tool for improving communication between state and regional partners and could serve as a model for other regional summits throughout the state. Inviting representatives from the Governor's staff, the Department of Business Assistance, legislators, and other state level partners to be part of the summit agenda will help convey how important the issue of communication is to Region 2000.

5. Integrate the Workforce Development Strategy with economic development strategies.

Aligning workforce and economic development efforts helps create a quality labor force by providing direction to professionals working in both fields about where the Region is going and what kinds of economic growth is desired. Currently the Region is developing a five-year strategic plan that is intended to pull together the economic development goals and needs of the seven governments that are within the Region. Where possible, goals, action steps, and recommendations of other partners' efforts should be reaffirmed by workforce development stakeholders. Likewise, the objectives of Workforce Development Strategy should be incorporated into economic development strategies as much as possible.

Work Ethic/Foundation Work Skills

2. Work Ethic/Foundation Work Skills

Definition of Issue:

“Work ethic” is a term that is somewhat subjective, and is defined differently depending on a person’s perspective. However, some very basic elements can be used to define a good work ethic for Region 2000 employers – coming to work on time, taking responsibility for the service and/or product, and working until “the job is done” – these are all characteristics that all of the Region’s employers would like to see in their employees. A good work ethic is closely related to other characteristics that have often been called “soft skills,” but in truth, are actually foundation work skills that are fundamental to creating a competitive labor force.

In addition to the three characteristics cited above, foundation work skills also address punctuality, appropriate professional appearance, interpersonal communication skills, and a good attitude. These foundation skills are desired in workers in every sector and in every type of work environment, regardless of the wage or skill level of the employee. The *Workforce Quality Study* illustrated employers’ frustrations with what appears to be a declining work ethic in the Region. While some feel that there is a correlation to age (with younger employees being the most likely to exhibit a poor work ethic), other employers feel that age is irrelevant and that skill or wage levels often dictate the quality of the employee’s work ethic.

The responsibility of ensuring that workers have a good work ethic and can enter the workforce with foundation work skills is not an easy task, nor does it necessarily fall to any one person or group. While many participants in this process have expressed that the declining work ethic is a product of the employee’s home life, it is understood that other people and organizations within the community can help create solutions to these problems. Employers and professionals in workforce development acknowledge that schools have “a lot on their plates” already, but still have an important role to play.

Action Steps

1. Encourage schools to incorporate work ethics into school curricula.

Several school systems in Georgia have incorporated work ethics into students’ grades, and track a separate work ethic grade. Work ethic grading usually involves eliminating the daily participation grades and replacing them with grading on a student’s attendance, punctuality, work habits, and attitude towards others. Work ethic can also encompass students’ ability to work in teams, or “cooperative learning.” Cooperative learning can help prepare students for work environments that rely upon successful teamwork among employees.

In Lakeland, Georgia, students at Lanier County High School must be present to receive a daily work ethic grade, which makes up 10% of their total semester grade. If a student is absent, they will receive their work ethic grade only when the work is made up (within the required number of days). Schools will also give extra credit or dock credit for the work ethic grade. Schools that are using the

work ethic grade are working to implement its use in all grades, but currently are only being used in some high schools and post-secondary educational institutions.

2. *Encourage employers to use team systems or mentoring to engage and develop foundation work skills of entry-level or younger workers.*

By developing team systems or mentoring partners, companies can use employees with ideal work ethic traits to set an example for employees that need to develop these skills. These teams or mentoring relationships may be just for an introductory period or may be incorporated into the work process long-term. The employee will have an example of what a good work ethic should be, and may be more prone to adopt a good work ethic if his or her peers are also practicing it. Employers that do not already have team systems in place can use cooperative learning techniques used by educators as a model.

3. *Encourage employers to continue to invest in their employees.*

Many young people are taught that moving from job to job is the only way to get ahead in his or her career because companies do not have any loyalty toward their employees. If an employer invests in the employee's professional development or allows classes to be taken that may not even directly relate to the employee's job, then the employee may be more willing in return to invest their time in the company and do a good job. This in turn breeds a better work ethic within employees because they will feel like an integral part of the workplace, take ownership of the product or service they represent, and feel like the company places importance on them as an individual.

However, some employers feel that investing in employees does not always breed loyal employees, and that this doesn't necessarily keep employees from receiving training and leaving the company. Some states have found that providing incentives, such as tax credits for tuition reimbursement programs is a good way to encourage employers to invest in their employees. Tuition reimbursement programs generally require participating employees to commit a certain length of employment in return for the company's investment. As a result, both the employer and the employee benefit from the program.

4. *Work with community partners to promote the value of education and work ethics.*

Encourage collaboration with faith-based and social service organizations to produce brochures, classes, or television advertisements/programs related to parenting issues and teaching work ethic to children in the home. Many people in the Region believe that work ethic should be a product of home life, and that work ethic should be instilled before a child goes to school by promoting basic activities such as cleaning his or her room and playing with other children. Parents themselves may not have a work environment to emulate, so simple classes or faith-based organizations may help them articulate a proper behavior to instill in their children that will benefit them in a workplace environment.

5. *Strengthen and increase job-seeker services provided by the one-stop career center.*

While it is understood that the one-stop career center in Lynchburg is relatively new and programs are still being developed, this is an ideal time to look to other states whose one-stop programs are successful and emulate these programs and services. The one-stop center should also be marketed aggressively as a customer friendly career center for all job seekers, and not just a place to collect unemployment insurance. This will require a significant shift of mind-set for many people in the Region, but it is a change in culture that is overdue.

The State of Florida has successful one-stop centers that offer a wide range of programs and services, with some of the information readily available via the Internet. Workforce Central Florida currently maintains six one-stop centers in the Orlando area. Services and programs at these one-stops include:

- Career assessment;
- One-on-one counseling/matching people with suitable jobs;
- Free, daily seminars;
- Assistance with financial aid;
- Welfare transition program;
- Job search tools such as labor market information and salary comparisons; and
- Fully staffed resource room, which includes the use of fax, copier, telephone computer and printer, Internet access, various software packages, and testing for interests, basic skills and aptitude testing.

Employability/Basic Work Readiness Skills

3. Employability/Basic Work Readiness Skills

Definition of Issue:

While closely related to the issue of Work Ethic/Foundation Work Skills, this issue is more specifically focused on the ability of workers to perform any job that requires a basic understanding of math, reading comprehension, basic computer data entry and processing skills, and the ability to apply this education “on the job.” Like many other communities, Region 2000 is finding some gaps in its workers’ basic skills. According to the American Management Association, more than one-third of job applicants tested in reading and math during 2000 lacked the basic skills required by employers.

There is significant concern, as expressed in the *Workforce Quality Study* that many students leave high school without these basic skills, and are not adequately made aware of how these skills relate to their future careers. Primarily, this issue touches on how educators are prepared to teach these skills, and what kind of resources they are given in order to do so. Teachers are subject to a multitude of conflicting pressures from parents, politicians, businesses, and other groups regarding the content and delivery of education. Adding requirements and programs to improve work readiness instruction can be a burden unless there is also assistance in developing the capacity to teach either new curricula or in a “new way.”

Additionally, there are strong feelings throughout the Region that elementary and secondary schools do not prepare the students for the workforce or vocational and technical careers, but rather for a four-year college degree. Further, the Standards of Learning curricula is not perceived to be successful in preparing students for the workforce. Career and technical programs are not strongly advocated in high schools, especially private schools, which is creating a shortage of quality workers that the Region needs to fill its high-skilled jobs. Some schools do offer apprenticeships or internships, which is the only “real-world” experience the students receive to benefit their careers; however, not all schools offer them, and not all students participate.

Finally, it is important to note that many of the action steps that follow require substantial commitments from the business community in order to be successful. School systems and other community partners may be able to establish programs, but without consistent feedback from employers about specific workforce needs, new programs will not help improve workers’ skills. Businesses and educators share joint responsibility in accomplishing these steps.

Action Steps

1. Support existing use and further expansion of pre-employment testing resources.

One successful way to approach pre-employment assessment is to test candidates before they are hired to understand what skills they have. If the candidates prove they have the skills necessary, they can immediately start work and not have to attend a remedial class. Resources such as the WorkKeys[®] assessments currently being used in some high schools in conjunction with Central Virginia Community

College (CVCC) are an excellent way to test potential employees for reading, math, and teamwork skills, as well as providing employers with a common language for assessing skill sets for particular jobs. Ultimately, the goal is to have all entry-level applicants go through the WorkKeys® assessments.

2. *Increase the number of students that obtain practical work experience through high school programs.*

Internships, apprenticeships, summer academies, and co-ops have proven to make the transition from school to career or college an easier one. Students gain meaningful “real work world” experience and employers are able to “try out” potential employees. For these programs to be successful, regional employers must commit to providing as many student work experience opportunities as possible. Businesses and other community partners may also be able to assist the schools by providing free transportation for students as well. Developing partnerships with employers in *all* business sectors will help expand the options available to students; setting incremental targets that increase each year will allow school systems to phase in programs at a pace that is realistic for the schools. Alternatively, the Region may choose to pilot the program in one school district at a time as a way of phasing in the work experience requirement. The ultimate goal for the Region would be to have every high school adopt a policy that requires every student to have practical work experience prior to graduation.

A program ensuring that all students participate in meaningful workplace internships based on their interests is already in place in Columbus, Ohio. The program, known as the Columbus Public School Student Internship Program, requires every public school student to participate in a work site internship of at least 60 hours to graduate. Some internships are paid, depending on the employer and type of work environment (e.g., manufacturing internships are more like shadowing programs, where students do more observing than performing, and therefore do not get paid). Several regional high schools currently have internship or apprenticeship programs, but these are typically geared toward vocational or technical careers. Programs such as Columbus’ could also be used as a model for careers other than vocational or technical skilled trades.

3. *Support and expand opportunities for direct interaction between educators and businesses.*

One key consideration in successful career development is that educators from both the elementary and secondary levels fully understand the needs of businesses. Teachers and trainers need to participate in “hands-on” experience to illustrate how the concepts in the classroom are applied in the workplace. Teacher externships, summer work programs, business tours, and consulting opportunities expose individual teachers to stimulate a re-orientation of teaching and learning in the traditional classroom environment. Programs such as the Partners in Education venture between the Lynchburg City Schools and the Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce may be able to serve as a model for other school systems in the Region.

4. *Create a pre-employment training program based on standardized basic employability skills identified by regional employers in all business sectors.*

Currently, many employers in the Region are taking it upon themselves to train potential or current employees for certain basic skills. A central course or certification program could be developed to provide training for basic employability, workplace literacy, and practical application of basic skills throughout the region to ensure that the skills being taught are the ones employers need. Regional pre-employment training programs in communities nationwide now pair employers in similar businesses with local training resources to achieve similar training goals. These programs should be supported by local workforce development resources and businesses that share these needs. Program developers may choose to incorporate some elements of the WorkKeys[®] assessments as well.

Pre-employment training programs should fill a need for the short term in bringing students up to speed on basic skills until the schools can implement long term plans to improve basic skill set delivery. While schools may be currently teaching basic skills, students are not necessarily learning how to apply these skills in a workplace environment. For example, if a student learns basic geometry in tenth grade, he or she may not understand how this skill may be used in the workplace, nor will he or she probably use the skill until graduation, so much is forgotten. A pre-employment training program may combine groups of candidates with similar skill requirements, such as blueprint reading, geometry, and reading a ruler, and train them all at the same time. Companies may share the cost of training potential employees since they are all learning the same skills.

The program can be flexible in who it will train, and does not necessarily have to be administered only before someone is hired. Employers could choose to send current employees if they needed to obtain these skills, or employers could require that no person be hired without completing the class. Displaced workers re-entering the workplace might also be ideal candidates for this program, which could serve as a “refresher” course for these job seekers. The program would require a broadly focused “host” such as CVCC or a local college to ensure that all employers have access to the class. Faculty would not be limited to CVCC or college personnel, but could also be practitioners or current employees of companies requiring the course who have mastered the skills. As with many other efforts recommended in this strategy, the leading workforce organization would be the catalyst in ensuring the implementation of this action step.

5. *Encourage career awareness in elementary and secondary schools.*

Schools should actively seek employees in various businesses to participate in “career days” at the elementary and secondary schools. Career days should not be limited to high schools, but should be encouraged at early grade levels in order to expose children of all ages to different types of career opportunities. Parents should be encouraged to participate as representatives of their companies, and companies should encourage these parents to participate as well, offering time off

for the employee to spend telling students about their job. If the students know the person, they may be more apt to listen and become interested. Focus should also be placed on telling students how their studies will benefit them in the workplace, as well as what types of skills are needed for different jobs.

6. *Strengthen career counseling in elementary and secondary schools.*

In addition to increasing opportunities for students to be exposed to different career options, as recommended above, there is also a need to provide students with improved career counseling services. While the previous action step has an audience that includes teachers, administrators and students, this action focuses on the student as the primary audience.

In order to be able to offer useful career advice, counselors need to be focused on this one objective, rather than having to also serve all students' needs, as many guidance advisors often have to do. Some communities begin offering career counseling in elementary schools, increasing the "depth" of services as students advance through the grade levels. Columbia Public Schools in Missouri has made career counseling an integral part of elementary school education by creating a full time career counselor position that works with each of the school district's 18 elementary schools. Schools may be able to work with businesses through existing partnerships or new opportunities developed by the workforce development community to help offset the costs of additional personnel.

7. *Conduct employer review of career and technical curricula in regional public schools and revise curricula if necessary.*

While much of the curricula taught in the Region's schools fulfill state requirements and cannot be changed, schools do have some flexibility in changing coursework for students. By working together on a review of existing curricula, educators and business representatives can help ensure that career and technical curricula matches the needs of employers. Local chambers of commerce and other business membership associations can play a pivotal role in encouraging employers to increase participation in the existing Career and Technical Advisory Councils established for each school. In addition to these general Advisory Councils, Individual Program Councils should also be encouraged in an effort to link employers directly with the classes that are most closely linked to their field of business.

The general Advisory Council helps provide a broad review of school curricula and goals, while Individual Program Councils are appealing to business partners because they are able to use their time to focus specifically on their field of interest. These analyses and subsequent revisions will be most successful if all school systems in the Region participate. To make the best use of business partners' time (and therefore make their investment and participation more worthwhile), educators should consider creating Individual Program Councils that serve multiple schools and even multiple school districts.

Finding and Retaining Skilled Workers

4. Finding and Retaining Skilled Workers

Definition of Issue:

Maintaining a solid base of skilled workers is imperative for the Region. As technology changes, the structure of the local economy shifts, and globalization widens the pool of available workers at lower costs. According to local employers, there are currently not enough skilled employees in the Region. While many of the low-skilled jobs can be filled by residents from Region 2000, many companies must recruit outside of the Region for skilled, professional, or salaried positions. Many businesses would like to lower expensive “external” recruiting as much as possible, and there is also a concern that workers recruited from outside of the Region are less likely to stay – creating costly turnover for employers that have invested in recruiting these workers.

Increasing the educational attainment level of the Region’s workforce is a critical aspect of addressing the Skilled Workers issue. Currently, only 15.7% of the Region’s workers have a Bachelor’s degree or more, compared to 24.5% for Virginia. The percentage of workers that have had some college training is also lower than the state or national averages (15.8% compared to 18.5% and 18.7%). While Region 2000 has the same proportion of workers with Associate degrees as does the entire state (5.5%), both trail the national average of 6.2%. More importantly, the need for greater educational attainment will continue to become even more imperative. By 2010, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that approximately 42% of U.S. jobs will require two-year vocational or four-year academic degrees, up from 29% in 2000.

Historically, Region 2000 workers have been able to earn good wages with a high school degree or even less schooling. However, a significant number of manufacturing jobs have left the Region, and this trend is not likely to reverse. The jobs in manufacturing and all sectors that have “stayed” have become more technologically based. Region 2000’s workers need to become proficient with high-tech equipment, computer aided machines, and the latest innovations in production that are required to maintain competitive efficiency. Training and education beyond high school is becoming a requirement for maintaining a superior labor force. Convincing everyone in the Region of the importance of this requirement must also be accompanied by creating opportunities and incentives for students to continue educational achievement and for workers to gain additional education and training to upgrade existing skill levels.

Action Steps

1. *Work with community partners to promote the importance of obtaining and upgrading skills and pursuing lifelong learning.*

Just as in the Work Ethic/Foundation Work Skills issue, there is a clear need for Region 2000 to develop a public education campaign to stress the importance obtaining valued worker skills through post-high school education and upgrading skills through lifelong learning. Again, the workforce development community should pursue partnerships with faith-based and social service organizations to produce brochures, classes, or television advertisements/programs related to the need for workers to upgrade skills, pursue re-training, and engage in lifelong

learning. Without “convincing” the workforce that these pursuits are necessary, the programs, services, and initiatives outlined in the following action steps will have little impact. To be most effective, this campaign could be targeted at workers in low-tech business areas with low wages and skills that are becoming outdated.

2. *Encourage employers to adopt high school graduation/GED hiring requirements.*

The goal of this action step is to provide an incentive for workers to reach a minimum level of educational attainment. By requiring applicants to have a high school education (or GED equivalent), employers can be effective in helping the Region’s workforce become better prepared to pursue skill set upgrades and complete re-training if necessary, due to business needs and changes in the regional economy.

3. *Establish a scholarship program that targets students not already on the “college track.”*

As noted previously in this section, increasing the educational attainment level of the Region’s workforce is a key factor in developing a high quality labor force. One approach is to establish a scholarship that targets students that otherwise would not consider continuing their education beyond high school. A similar program called the New Century Scholars program is currently being used in various communities in North Carolina. For example, in Western North Carolina, the program identifies students in 6th grade that are between the top of class and the “at risk” group; the students in this target group are in the 25%-75% range who are not often targeted for educational advancement beyond high school. Students sign a contract, agreeing to maintain a certain grade level, stay drug-free, and do community service.

Upon graduation, tuition is paid to the local community college. After successfully completing work at the community college, the local university then offers a scholarship to the student for the completion of a four-year degree. The support system for the program provides for teachers and counselors who follow students closely and work through problems with them. The Western North Carolina program is currently funded by private donations from about 400 donors, in addition to \$200,000 in state funds. Region 2000 would need to consider working with local legislators to appropriate funding to help offset the program costs that wouldn’t be covered by private fundraising.

4. *Establish business forums for retail and service sector employers.*

The development of the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Association (AMTA) in 1997 has been a very successful project for the Region. AMTA is now considered a model for workforce development around the nation, and is being merged with Central Virginia Industries (CVI) to achieve a more efficient use of training and business support resources. AMTA can be used as a model to develop two similar forums that serve both small and large retail and service

sector businesses that might not be fully served by existing services and programs. Forum representatives could work with the newly established workforce development forum to identify sources of business support, funding, training resources, and other services for members. Ultimately, an umbrella organization for the Region's business forums could help each group maximize its resources by enabling the sharing of resources, training equipment, and instructors whenever possible, and this could be coordinated by CVI, the Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce or the Region 2000 WIB.

5. *Promote the use of recognized skill standards by all workforce development providers.*

Adopting a uniform set of skill standards can strengthen the Region's capacity to guarantee that it has a quality workforce. For example, if all regional trainers and educators are using guidelines established by the National Skill Standards Board, the Region can promote this as an advantage over communities that have inconsistencies in training efforts because of the existence of multiple providers. Companies seeking to locate or expand in Region 2000 can be assured of the community's ability to provide workers that are trained at the same level as those that the company already employs elsewhere. With a consistent set of skill standards, developing course curricula is made more efficient for providers, and smaller businesses in the Region will be better equipped to identify and plan for their training needs.

6. *Support and encourage additional satellite CVCC centers.*

The opening of a CVCC off-campus location in Altavista in January 2001 has been well received and generally viewed as a successful expansion of the community college's services throughout the Region. Just as with online courses, off-campus/satellite centers help increase access to education and workforce development resources. Support from the business and workforce development community will be very helpful in ensuring the establishment of additional centers that are currently being considered for Bedford, Appomattox, and Amherst counties. Another center is also planned to open in Brookneal in Fall 2002.

Retaining and Attracting the Younger Workforce

5. Retaining and Attracting the Younger Workforce

Definition of Issue:

Region 2000 is facing an aging population trend, as younger residents continue to leave the area upon graduation from high school and/or college. While all age groups are important to the vitality of the Region, the declining growth of the younger population especially shows cause for concern. As demonstrated in the *Workforce Profile*, the Region is losing population in its 18 to 24 age group, and is growing less than the national average in its 25 to 44 age group. Maintaining a strong workforce is dependent upon maintaining a “young population,” as they are the future of the workforce and employers need to know that there will be stability in the labor pool for the next 10 to 20 years as they consider expansions and relocations. Not only does the loss of younger workers affect the sheer numbers of the Region’s potential labor force, but this trend is even more harmful because of “brain drain” taking the best and brightest minds away from the Region.

Feedback received from young professionals throughout this process has helped to identify some of the causes for the loss of younger workers. Many of the concerns of this group arose as components of the quality of life in the Region. Young professionals agreed that they do not feel connected to the Region, both socially and professionally. Young people do not feel they are connected to people their own age, and do not know how to become connected. There seems to be a lack of communication in the Region about cultural and social opportunities, and there are many places close to the Region where these young people could go that could possibly be in competition with the Region for its young people. Young people also do not feel connected to the community because of a “cliquish” nature of the area and the perception that the affairs of the Region are handled by more established residents.

Addressing many of the concerns raised by young professionals will also help the Region become a more attractive location to workers of all ages. In addition to greater economic and networking opportunities, young professionals are seeking expanded cultural, social and recreational activities, which will benefit everyone in the Region and serve as selling points for the area. In addition, as is often the case, there are a lot of solutions being developed that simply need better marketing and more exposure, both inside the Region and outside of it. The Region could market its assets as a great place to raise a family to the upper-20s crowd, while keeping in touch with the 18 to 24 year old population group to remind them of the Region.

Action Steps

1. *Promote and strengthen the Young Adult Policy Council (YAPC).*

The YAPC is an excellent way to engage young people in the development of the Region. Businesses and community leaders should support this Council and regard it as the voice of the future on matters concerning all citizens of the Region. The Council should also be the catalyst for other groups and events that will engage all young people interested, even if it is only at the social level. The

Council could host fundraisers and benefits for special events, community service volunteer events, or simply host monthly networking socials.

YAPC plans to host recreational and social events in an effort to ensure that young single and married professionals have access to a variety of entertainment options is an important part of recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce. Organizations such as the Jaycees can help YAPC organize and promote events for young professionals, and help serve as a liaison to other organizations within the Region. Strengthening this organization, and developing events such as career-oriented workshops, weekend trips, after-hours receptions, and volunteer activities, will help improve the quality of life for the Region's younger population and keep them in the Region.

Efforts to research best practices from other communities have already begun and should continue. These best practices will provide guidance for YAPC leaders as they begin to develop programming and plan events.

2. *Recruit graduates of regional colleges and universities.*

The YAPC could take a lead in recruiting other young people to the Region. The Council could host a dinner targeted toward graduating college seniors in the Region and present the benefits of returning to the Region. This plants the seed for graduates who may already have jobs, but could one day return to the Region because it is familiar to them, or it is even their home. Another way to focus on the upper-20s group would be a visit from a YAPC member to the local college's 5- and 10-year reunions to remind them of how great it is to come home and raise a family in Region 2000.

3. *Expand promotion of cultural and social activities within the Region.*

Many young people in the Region felt they were not aware of what was going on culturally and socially, and the only way to find out was to read the newspaper. Many people are Internet-active today, so the natural place to look for something to do would be on the Internet. The development of a regional or even multi-regional website should be encouraged. *Citysearch.com* is an example of a comprehensive website that identifies cultural and social opportunities for many cities. Lynchburg could subscribe to a service such as this – Roanoke is currently available on the *Citysearch.com* website. Other vehicles of communication include a newsletter, email updates, and the enhancement of the entertainment section of the *News & Advance*.

4. *Market Region 2000 effectively to attract skilled workers.*

Many residents felt the Region has many aspects of a good quality of life, such as outdoor recreation and low cost of living, but that it is not marketed adequately. Many graduates seek cultural, social, and economic opportunities when looking for a place to live and work, and often assume these can only be found in a large, metropolitan area. By making people aware of Region 2000 and its amenities, people may choose to locate to the Region to work. Again, the use of a strong

website would be very effective. The website should be comprehensive and easy to use, with links to places of interest and historic sites in the Region, local establishments and real estate. The focus on the Region as a great place to raise a family should also be emphasized, and links to school systems, day care facilities, and children's activities could also be included on the website.

Just as a company looking to locate its business would seek as much information as possible from a comprehensive website, so would a family looking to relocate. As much information should be provided on the Internet without someone having to place a call. Currently, if someone must place a call, difficulties often arise because marketing materials have not been updated to note the new area code (434). Updating these materials is very important and is the only way to assure that people from outside the Region who call businesses and organizations inside the Region have the correct phone numbers.

5. *Expand programs to recruit graduates originally from Region 2000 to return to the Region upon completion of education and training.*

Having successful recruitment programs focused on students and professionals originally from Region 2000 is a region-wide effort. Currently, recruitment efforts for any new professional (not just those from the Region) are the responsibility of individual companies and businesses. One example of a good recruitment effort was sponsored by the Greater Louisville Chamber of Commerce, which hosted many of its expatriates at a cocktail party in Atlanta, Georgia to let them know how much is going on in Louisville.

A region-wide recruiting effort is most effective if one entity, such as the leading workforce organization, has coordinating responsibility with representatives of specific companies in target business areas. This allows professionals in each field to maintain primary contact with potential recruits, but enables all businesses to work together in coordinating event and activity plans, pooling resources for these events, and ensuring that the Region is sending the same message to all recruiting prospects.

6. *Provide financial support and student loan forgiveness for students returning to the Region upon graduation to accept jobs in target business areas.*

Scholarship and loan forgiveness programs could provide a practical incentive for students to return to or stay in Region 2000 upon graduation. While support from individual employers will be critical to funding such incentives, others in the Region can also dedicate some resources to supplementing these programs, as well. These programs must be seen as an investment in the Region's future, and as management turnover decreases and new leaders are found in the area, Region 2000 will see a return on investment that will strengthen the workforce and the Region and a whole.

Many states, including Oregon and Pennsylvania, have enacted scholarship or loan forgiveness programs for students going into career fields that are in demand

for that state. Many of these programs are in nursing and teaching, occupations that are in short supply in states throughout the nation. In Virginia, loan forgiveness programs have been created to keep law school graduates and medical professionals in the Commonwealth. Similar efforts could also be concentrated locally to forgive loans for graduates who stay in Region 2000. Some states, including Pennsylvania, have even financed these programs through tobacco settlement money received by the State.

7. *Market the Region to young people in their upper-20s as a “great place to raise a family.”*

One solution being discussed is the focus on the upper 20s group while “planting the seed” for the 18 – 24 year olds to return someday. The Region should focus on its strength of being a great place to raise a family, which would appeal to young people who have been out of college for a few years and are starting to settle down. As stated in an earlier action step, the YAPC would be an excellent vehicle for marketing this effort. However, the Region should not discount the 18 – 24 year olds just because they are losing population in that group. Community leaders should make strong efforts to let this group know about the benefits the Region has to offer if they are looking for a place to come back to after the “big city experience” that many young people seek.

8. *Encourage further corporate involvement in education and training.*

Employers can have a very direct and substantial impact on the quality of the Region’s workforce by investing directly in the education, training, and career preparation programs that feed directly into their company. By encouraging local companies to form coalitions with educational institutions at various levels, the Region is more likely to graduate students that have the skills needed by employers. This would involve a new level of commitment on the part of both educational institutions and businesses to be successful. In Region 2000, two major employers (M/A-COM and Framatome) have scholarship programs that help create a path for students to gain work experience and eventual full-time employment. CVCC is currently working with another major employer to develop a similar program. With each new internship partnership created, the community strengthens its ability to produce graduates that have the skills needed by regional employers.

Conclusion

CONCLUSION

The Region 2000 Workforce Development Strategy brings the Workforce Audit to a close with a clear guide for the Region's next steps. The process has involved a thorough quantitative and qualitative analysis of the Region's strengths and the challenges it faces in developing and maintaining a world class workforce. The five issues that frame the Workforce Development Strategy encompass the Region's major concerns about workforce development. Through the action steps outlined in this document, stakeholders have created an action-oriented plan to address each issue. The successful implementation of this Strategy requires the commitment of all of the Region's workforce development stakeholders.

It is also important to note that the goals and issues of workforce development are closely linked to the Region's economic development objectives and structural capacity. This is an overarching issue that has an impact on all parts of this strategy, and therefore, all aspects of workforce development. Just as there is a desire to have one leader for workforce development, the same can be said for the multitude of economic development efforts in the Region. Business and community leaders have strongly expressed the opinion that building capacity does not mean adding more layers to economic development initiatives, rather, it is about using resources wisely and towards the same purpose. Regionalism requires genuine support and a commitment to working together, in both public settings and behind closed doors, and at all decision-making levels.

Within the issue of Coordination and Collaboration, there are action steps that have been identified that begin to address regional economic development concerns. However, these recommendations do not attempt to solve any overarching economic development structural challenges facing the Region. While workforce development is easily the most important issue *within* economic development, they are not one and the same. The regional economic development issues and needs of Region 2000 are naturally linked to workforce development and can greatly impact the success of this Strategy, but are outside the scope of the Workforce Audit.

Therefore, there is still more work to be done to strengthen the regional capacity so that economic development and workforce development efforts can be maximized. The completion of the Region 2000 Strategic Plan, "Pressing the Advantage," provides direction for the some of the regional development actions that are required. Follow-through with this plan and other efforts are important priorities for regional success.

Next Steps

Implementation of this Strategy is the logical next step for Region 2000. Over the next three years, the entire regional workforce development community will be focused on completing the action steps outlined in this Strategy. Determining the roles of stakeholders and assigning responsibilities to all partner organizations is the first step to take in implementation. The process of making these assignments will help Region 2000 create a sustainability plan for long-term success.

Appendix A: Implementation Plan

Appendix A. Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan is intended to serve as a guide for the Region 2000 workforce development community. During the process of creating the Workforce Development Strategy, a number of issues arose concerning the structural capacity of the Region's workforce development community. One of the most pressing concerns was the lack of a clearly identified leader in workforce development. This importance of this issue was followed closely by the need to reduce overlap in service delivery and improve efficiency in using the pool of resources for workforce development.

By working through these concerns, decisions were made regarding different structural options available to the Region, in terms of leadership roles and responsibilities. As the designated leader in workforce development issues, the Region 2000 Workforce Investment Board will assume the primary responsibility for implementing the action steps outlined in this Strategy. The Workforce Audit Steering Committee will stay together for the next six months to a year in an advisory role to the Workforce Investment Board as it assumes the primary leadership role for the Region.

The following table lists the action steps and notes the key stakeholders that will have roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the Strategy. The WIB is a key stakeholder in the implementation of every action step, and its level of involvement will vary depending on the action step – from convener to facilitator to deliverer of services. Priorities for the first year are highlighted in **bold type**.

It is understandable that in the next few years priorities may shift, due to available resources, policy changes in workforce development outside the control of Region 2000 stakeholders, etc. However, even with unexpected changes, there are three primary objectives that can help keep the Strategy's implementation on track and facilitate sustainability for long-term success:

- 1. Consistent leadership by the Workforce Investment Board, which includes meeting regularly with stakeholders and tracking progress of successful efforts;**
- 2. Continual engagement by the Workforce Audit Steering Committee for the first six months to one year, enhancing the capabilities of the WIB staff and Board and then phasing out; and**
- 3. Finding funding sources wherever possible to support additional staff for the WIB and to pay for training programs for employers and job seekers.**

Action Step	Key Stakeholders
<i>Coordination and Collaboration</i>	
Strengthen the Workforce Investment Board by modeling its structure on an existing successful Board and staff.*	Region 2000 WIB
Clarify and simplify the regional workforce development delivery system.	All Stakeholders
Establish an ongoing forum in which workforce providers can come together with employers to discuss current programs, innovative practices, and methods of collaboration.	Region 2000 WIB, Region 2000 Regional Commission
Strengthen relationship and communication with the state level workforce development system.	Region 2000 WIB, Region 2000 Regional Commission, Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce, Local legislative delegation, Region 2000
Integrate the Workforce Development Strategy with economic development strategies.	Region 2000 WIB, Region 2000, Region 2000 Regional Commission, Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development departments in each municipality
<i>Work Ethic/Foundation Work Skills</i>	
Encourage schools to incorporate work ethics into school curricula.	Region 2000 WIB, All Chambers of Commerce, All public school systems
Encourage employers to use team systems or mentoring to engage and develop foundation work skills of entry-level or younger workers.	Region 2000 WIB, All Chambers of Commerce, Employee Assistance of Central Virginia
Encourage employers to continue to invest in their employees.	Region 2000 WIB, CVCC, CVI, All Chambers of Commerce, Local legislative delegation
Work with community partners to promote the value of education and work ethics.	Region 2000 WIB, Lynchburg Community Action Groups, Inc., Local ministerial associations, Virginia Employment Commission

* Action Steps in **bold type** represent first year priorities.

Action Step	Key Stakeholders
Strengthen and increase job-seeker services provided by the one-stop career center.	Region 2000 WIB, Virginia Employment Commission
<i>Employability/Basic Work Readiness Skills</i>	
Support existing use and further expansion of pre-employment testing resources.*	Region 2000 WIB, CVCC, All public school systems
Increase the number of students that obtain practical work experience through high school programs.	Region 2000 WIB, All public school systems, All Chambers of Commerce, Employers
Support and expand opportunities for direct interaction between educators and businesses.	Region 2000 WIB, All public school systems, All Chambers of Commerce, Employers
Create a pre-employment training program based on standardized basic employability skills identified by regional employers in all business sectors.	Region 2000 WIB, CVCC, All Chambers of Commerce, Employers
Encourage career awareness in elementary and secondary schools.	Region 2000 WIB, All public school systems
Strengthen career counseling in elementary and secondary schools.	Region 2000 WIB, All public school systems
Conduct employer review of career and technical curricula in regional public schools and revise curricula if necessary.	Region 2000 WIB, All public school systems, Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce
<i>Finding and Retaining Skilled Workers</i>	
Work with community partners to promote the importance of obtaining and upgrading skills and pursuing lifelong learning.	Region 2000 WIB, Lynchburg Community Action Groups, Inc., Child Care Resource Center, Local ministerial associations, Virginia Employment Commission
Encourage employers to adopt high school graduation/GED hiring requirements.	Region 2000 WIB, All Chambers of Commerce, Employers
Establish a scholarship program that targets students not already on the “college track.”	Region 2000 WIB, Greater Lynchburg Community Trust, Local legislative delegation

* Action Steps in **bold type** represent first year priorities.

Action Step	Key Stakeholders
Establish business forums for retail and service sector employers.*	Region 2000 WIB, AMTA/CVI, Lynchburg Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center
Promote the use of recognized skill standards by all workforce development providers.	Region 2000 WIB, CVCC, AMTA/CVI
Support and encourage additional satellite CVCC centers.	Region 2000 WIB, CVCC, Local legislative delegation, All Chambers of Commerce
<i>Retaining and Attracting the Younger Workforce</i>	
Promote and strengthen the Young Adult Policy Council (YAPC).	Region 2000 WIB, Region 2000
Recruit graduates of regional colleges and universities.	Region 2000 WIB, All colleges and universities, Region 2000
Expand promotion of cultural and social activities within the Region.	Region 2000 WIB, All Chambers of Commerce, Regional media
Market Region 2000 effectively to attract skilled workers.	Region 2000 WIB, Region 2000
Expand programs to recruit graduates originally from Region 2000 to return to the Region upon completion of education and training.	Region 2000 WIB, Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce
Provide financial support and student loan forgiveness for students returning to the Region upon graduation to accept jobs in target business areas.	Region 2000 WIB, Local legislative delegation
Market the Region to young people in their upper-20s as a “great place to raise a family.”	Region 2000 WIB, Region 2000, All Chambers of Commerce
Encourage further corporate involvement in education and training.	Region 2000 WIB, AMTA/CVI, All Chambers of Commerce, Employers

* Action Steps in **bold type** represent first year priorities.

Appendix B: Summary List of Issues and Action Steps

Appendix B. Summary List of Issues and Action Steps

Coordination and Collaboration

Action Steps

1. *Strengthen the Workforce Investment Board by modeling its structure on an existing successful Board and staff.*
2. *Clarify and simplify the regional workforce development delivery system.*
3. *Establish an ongoing forum in which workforce providers can come together with employers to discuss current programs, innovative practices, and methods of collaboration.*
4. *Strengthen relationship and communication with the state level workforce development system.*
5. *Integrate the Workforce Development Strategy with economic development strategies.*

Work Ethic/Foundation Work Skills

Action Steps

1. *Encourage schools to incorporate work ethics into school curricula.*
2. *Encourage employers to use team systems or mentoring to engage and develop foundation work skills of entry-level or younger workers.*
3. *Encourage employers to continue to invest in their employees.*
4. *Work with community partners to promote the value of education and work ethics.*
5. *Strengthen and increase job-seeker services provided by the one-stop career center.*

Employability/Basic Work Readiness Skills

Action Steps

1. *Support existing use and further expansion of pre-employment testing resources.*
2. *Increase the number of students that obtain practical work experience through high school programs.*
3. *Support and expand opportunities for direct interaction between educators and businesses.*
4. *Create a pre-employment training program based on standardized basic employability skills identified by regional employers in all business sectors.*
5. *Encourage career awareness in elementary and secondary schools.*
6. *Strengthen career counseling in elementary and secondary schools.*
7. *Conduct employer review of career and technical curricula in regional public schools and revise curricula if necessary.*

Finding and Retaining Skilled Workers

Action Steps

1. *Work with community partners to promote the importance of obtaining and upgrading skills and pursuing lifelong learning.*
2. *Encourage employers to adopt high school graduation/GED hiring requirements.*
3. *Establish a scholarship program that targets students not already on the “college track.”*
4. *Establish business forums for retail and service sector employers.*
5. *Promote the use of recognized skill standards by all workforce development providers.*
6. *Support and encourage additional satellite CVCC centers.*

Retaining and Attracting the Younger Workforce

Action Steps

1. *Promote and strengthen the Young Adult Policy Council (YAPC).*
2. *Recruit graduates of regional colleges and universities.*
3. *Expand promotion of cultural and social activities within the Region.*
4. *Market Region 2000 effectively to attract skilled workers.*
5. *Expand programs to recruit graduates originally from Region 2000 to return to the Region upon completion of education and training.*
6. *Provide financial support and student loan forgiveness for students returning to the Region upon graduation to accept jobs in target business areas.*
7. *Market the Region to young people in their upper-20s as a “great place to raise a family.”*
8. *Encourage further corporate involvement in education and training.*