



# BLUEPRINT VIRGINIA 2030

**A BUSINESS PLAN**  
FOR THE COMMONWEALTH

**VIRGINIA**  
**CHAMBER**  
THE VOICE of BUSINESS

DEAR BUSINESS AND PUBLIC POLICY LEADERS:

The Commonwealth of Virginia is known for its strong economy, talented workforce, and favorable business environment. These great attributes have been the underpinning of our national recognition as one of the best states for business. While we have much to be proud of in Virginia, it is also important to recognize that there are areas of opportunity to improve upon for the Commonwealth to remain competitive among states and in the global economy. There are also many areas of Virginia that do not enjoy the level of prosperity experienced by others due to continued economic headwinds. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated this dynamic, impacting our Commonwealth and nation in so many ways. We are committed to fostering business investments and economic growth that ultimately benefits every person and region in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

That is why we are pleased to share with you *Blueprint Virginia 2030*, an update to *Blueprint Virginia 2025* that was adopted in 2017. Blueprint Virginia is a comprehensive initiative that provides business leadership, direction, and long-range economic planning for Virginia. During the past 12 months, we engaged business and community leaders from every corner of the Commonwealth to build an action plan that strengthens our economic competitiveness for all Virginians. More than 7,000 Virginians participated in this process through multiple surveys, regional briefings, strategic partnerships, Industry Council meetings, and the Virginia Chamber’s signature annual events. We hope that public and private sector leaders will work to implement these recommendations and keep Virginia among the top states for resiliency, inclusiveness, and national business rankings.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to the many organizations and individuals who contributed their leadership, insight, and support to *Blueprint Virginia 2030*. It has been our honor to provide leadership in developing this action plan. We look forward to working with public policy leaders, and all who call Virginia home, to implement the goals and recommendations outlined here. Working together, we will create a brighter future for each region and individual in the Commonwealth of Virginia.



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HOW IT’S MADE:  
THE PROCESS OF BLUEPRINT VIRGINIA 2030

*Blueprint Virginia 2030* is a plan of action to ensure the Commonwealth strengthens and secures its position as a leader in the global economy and is the best state in the nation for business. The Virginia Chamber collected input by bringing together leaders in business, economic development, workforce, education, housing, and other community representatives to ensure statewide representation of priorities for Virginia’s economic prosperity.

HOW DID PARTICIPANTS  
CONTRIBUTE TO THE PLAN?

Throughout 2021, the Virginia Chamber hosted the Blueprint Virginia 2030 Regional Tour, with participation of more than 2,000 Virginians from every region of the Commonwealth. These meetings were hosted virtually in each of the nine GO Virginia regions, in partnership with the GO Virginia Regional Councils, the Virginia Economic Developers Association, and more than 50 local and regional chambers.

In addition to the Regional Tour, the Virginia Chamber conducted more than 15 Industry Council Meetings, more than 20 stakeholder meetings, and four signature conferences. The Chamber also conducted a series of statewide, regional, and industry-specific surveys. These efforts engaged more than 7,000 Virginians and offered a broad range of recommendations to develop *Blueprint Virginia 2030*.

**9 REGIONAL MEETINGS**  
INCLUDING 2,000 VIRGINIANS FROM ALL NINE GO VIRGINIA REGIONAL COUNCILS, THE VIRGINIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS ASSOCIATION, AND MORE THAN 50 LOCAL AND REGIONAL CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

**61 MEETINGS & SIGNATURE CONFERENCES**  
ALLOWING EVEN MORE INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

**7,150 VIRGINIANS WERE INCLUDED**  
OFFERING A BROAD RANGE OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO DEVELOP BLUEPRINT VIRGINIA 2030

# A TRACK RECORD OF SUCCESS: PUTTING BLUEPRINT VIRGINIA TO WORK

Virginia has been recognized as the best state for business. Blueprint Virginia provides a roadmap for creating a nationally recognized business climate. Since its inception, Blueprint Virginia has provided the Commonwealth with a framework to:



# BLUEPRINT VIRGINIA 2030 FOCUS AREAS



WORKFORCE  
& EDUCATION



BUSINESS  
CLIMATE



INFRASTRUCTURE



HEALTH CARE &  
LIFE SCIENCES



INNOVATION &  
TECHNOLOGY



ADVANCED  
MANUFACTURING



ENERGY



HOUSING



CORPORATE  
SUSTAINABILITY &  
ENVIRONMENT



MILITARY &  
VETERANS  
AFFAIRS



SAFETY,  
PREPAREDNESS &  
RESILIENCY

## KEEPING VIRGINIA THE TOP STATE FOR BUSINESS

### ABOUT THE RECOMMENDATIONS

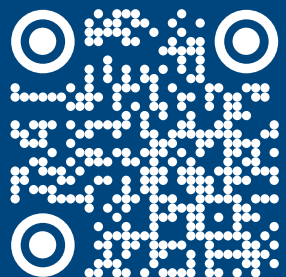
The recommendations outlined within Blueprint Virginia 2030 serve as an action plan to foster long-term economic growth and resiliency. These recommendations will ensure Virginia remains a leader in the global economy, develops a strong and diverse workforce that businesses need, and positions us to preserve our recognition as the top state for business.

### HOW WILL THEY BE IMPLEMENTED?

The Virginia Chamber, and its more than 27,000 members, are prepared to work collaboratively with strategic partners and public policy leaders to implement the Blueprint Virginia 2030 recommendations. The Executive Committees of the Virginia Chamber Foundation's Industry Councils will develop action plans to support implementation and monitor progress on initiatives and activities related to these recommendations.

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### VISIT THE BLUEPRINT VIRGINIA 2030 WEBSITE

Visit [BlueprintVirginia.org](https://BlueprintVirginia.org) today to watch videos from business leaders, see everyone who helped make Blueprint Virginia 2030 happen, and more!

Have a smartphone? Open your phone's camera app, focus on the QR code to the left, and click on the link that appears to access the Blueprint Virginia 2030 website.

# WORKFORCE & EDUCATION

The pandemic has highlighted the critical role skilled employees play in the success of our economy. Moreover, states that develop a resilient and industry-focused talent pipeline do a better job of attracting employers and building a vibrant economy. Workforce development remains the highest priority for the business community in every region of the Commonwealth and for every industry. Access to a well-trained, qualified workforce is vital for businesses to grow and prosper. This starts with a strong educational foundation. It has become clear that states who are able to develop, attract and retain talented workers with the right skills are the ones that will have a competitive advantage when it comes to economic development and business growth.

To be responsive to the shifting needs of a global economy, Virginia needs to develop a well-trained, adaptive workforce. When employers struggle to find and hire talent, they are less productive, hurting not only their bottom line but the Commonwealth's overall potential for economic growth.

The recommendations in this section aim not only to maintain Virginia's strong position in education and workforce, but to plan for and improve upon the Commonwealth's ability to supply the workforce needs of the future.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### ESTABLISH A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATION THROUGH EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE SUPPORT

- Encourage employer policies and strategies that support access to high-quality, affordable early learning and child care for families
- Expand public-private partnerships, community provider delivery of preschool services, and childcare subsidies with broadened eligibility and improved allocation practices to increase affordable access to child care for families
- Strengthen and stabilize the child care industry through special assistance, incentives, shared services strategies, and contract and enrollment-based financing
- Bolster the workforce that supports early learning and child care by ensuring access to affordable, competency-building credentials, competitive compensation, and retention and development strategies
- Support the Virginia Board of Education and its Early Childhood Advisory Committee in its expanded oversight and accountability role for early care and education out of the home
- Build out the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) longitudinally in grades first through third and provide a train-the-trainer model approach for teachers
- Provide high-quality curriculum, professional development, and coaching models to improve teaching and learning in the classroom (early learning to third grade)

### INVEST IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND IMPROVE OUTCOMES

#### SYSTEMWIDE COORDINATION

- Engage Virginia's employer community for workforce and education efforts through a coordinated strategy to limit duplications in efforts among educational institutions and instead foster sharing of resources and curriculum
- Coordinate development of talent pathways and other talent recruitment and development programs through a unified public-private partnership entity with a statewide vision for building Virginia's talent supply in alignment with the current and future needs of employers and specific to regionally oriented industry clusters
- Identify the most important industry clusters in each region and conduct a skills gap analysis to determine what training resources are needed to support their growth
- Establish and improve integrated IT, data, and information management systems to inform financing and policymaking decisions, clarify needs/gaps, and promote accountability

- Benchmark performance metrics to track progress in addressing policy goals

#### K-12 EDUCATION

- Support improvements to the Standards of Quality that provide high-quality learning, reflect the changing makeup of our schools, and prepare students for post-secondary education and the workforce
- Support updating the Local Composite Index formula and provide the appropriate funding needed with appropriate hold harmless safeguards
- Pair improved funding with evaluative criteria that measure outcomes over time for improved accountability
- Support and expand Dual Language Immersion and the Seal of Biliteracy as seminal pathways toward industry credentialing
  - Emphasize language instruction in earlier grades where children more easily learn other languages
- Partner with and create internships with multinational companies emphasizing language and technical skills
- Explore innovative models to fund the repair or replacement of aging school buildings, including the use of the historic tax credit or private investment
- Support and fund achievement of rigorous academic standards, growth measures, and other outcome measures to determine student achievement (e.g. dropouts, student growth, closing the achievement gap and absenteeism) and hold schools and divisions accountable for results over time
- Support early state intervention, improvement strategies, resources, and parent and family engagement to assist struggling schools and ensure improved quality for all students
- Work with school divisions, the board of education, higher education institutions, the community college system, and state policymakers to recruit and retain a robust and diverse teacher workforce in order to address the critical teacher shortage crisis in Virginia through solutions such as flexible staffing, recruitment of retired and part-time teachers, affordable professional pathways, mentorship programs, tuition assistance, financial assistance for adding credentials such as dual enrollment, teacher residencies, and achieving and exceeding the national average teacher salary
- Continue to streamline the Standards of Learning process to reduce the number of tests and more meaningfully track student achievement
- Encourage the further development of regional approaches to delivering educational services, both academic and operational, including exploring the use of financial incentives to enhance collaboration



- Support alternative and innovative models of education delivery with an appropriate incentive model and resources to help localities use them, especially through partnerships with the community college system
- Expand the use of effective virtual learning strategies as a way to offer improved access to specialized curriculum and flexible instruction options to all students, regardless of geography or school division
- Encourage additional work-based learning opportunities for students that help students explore potential careers and connect classroom instruction to experiential learning
- Develop career and technical education pathways that integrate high school and post-secondary training and lead to in-demand essential (middle) skills jobs in Virginia
- Support community-based efforts like the Opportunity Scholars Program that seeks to better prepare all students for life after high school through community engagement, career counseling for different pathways, and financial supports such as income sharing agreements

#### POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

- Provide every young Virginian access to an affordable talent pathway degree or credential program that includes a paid, for-credit internship or other work-based learning experience with a Virginia employer and that leads to full-time Virginia-based employment after graduation
- Provide all Virginians affordable and equitable access to a quality higher education and a strong return on investment through strategic increases in student financial assistance and state operating support for higher education
- Support opportunities for students to leverage and earn early college credit, including improvements to Virginia's dual-enrollment system



- Improve the transfer process for community college students to four-year higher education institutions
- Expand work-based learning opportunities for Virginia students, employers, and educational institutions through the initiatives of the Virginia Talent and Opportunity Partnership (Virginia TOP)
- Support the higher education initiatives from the Growth4VA campaign which seeks to improve Virginia’s talent supply, the affordability of higher education, the innovation ecosystem, and educational opportunity for all Virginians
- Coordinate with educational institutions on strategic initiatives to improve access and outcomes such as Virginia Community College system’s Opportunity 2027 plan and SCHEV’s Pathways to Opportunity plan

#### **BUILD AND ENCOURAGE TALENT PATHWAYS FOR IN-DEMAND CAREERS**

- Promote talent pathways for Virginia’s current and future workforce that include educator-employer collaboration, curriculum alignment with workforce needs, and internships and other work-based learning experiences, and opportunities for full-time Virginia-based employment after graduation
- Support the joint efforts of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) and the State Council for Higher Education of Virginia (SCHEV) and the new Virginia Office of Education Economics to better connect the skills and curriculum of education with the current and future needs of employers, and provide jobseekers with an understanding of the skills needed for in-demand careers
- Expand opportunities for the business community to engage in validating Virginia’s demand analyses for its education and workforce training programs
- Grow state and regional partnerships such as the GO Virginia Talent Pathways Initiative which utilizes partnerships among early childhood education, K-12 schools, higher education institutions, and business to align resources and identify existing and future supply and demand for skills and jobs

#### **SUPPORT EQUITY IN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY**

- Close the readiness gap by ensuring equitable access to early childhood education for children birth to age five
- Close the digital education divide through expanded access to broadband which is a necessity for learning in today’s world

- Expand access to “Earn & Learn” and credentialing programs that require a high school degree but less than a four-year or even two-year degree
- Ensure work-based learning opportunities like internships and apprenticeships promote diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Make post-secondary educational opportunities accessible and affordable for all Virginians, including low-income, first-generation, and other underrepresented college students
- Promote the “soft-skills” that build a strong foundation of translatable skills, such as those that are found in the Profile of a Virginia Graduate, regardless of occupation
- Provide additional funding to Virginia’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and collaborate on efforts to close the educational, economic, and entrepreneurial gaps in Virginia
- Invest in higher education institutions that enhance access for underrepresented populations and enroll large percentages of low-income students
- Support training programs that prepare individuals with disabilities for the workforce
- Improve job training and educational opportunities for incarcerated individuals such as “ready to work” initiatives that provide incarcerated individuals with critical job skills training prior to release
- Support efforts and programs to recruit more minority teachers and a more diverse teacher workforce generally

#### **DEVELOP, ATTRACT, AND RETAIN OUR WORLD-CLASS SUPPLY OF TALENT**

##### **ELEVATING POST-SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

- Attract, retain, and expand high-need credentials and degrees that are linked to the needs of businesses and are crucial to the economy with an emphasis on STEM and other in-demand fields (ex: growth in digital engineering)
  - Ensure that these efforts are regionally aligned through GO Virginia efforts and geared towards current and future industry needs
- Build on the New Virginia Economy Workforce Credential Grant Program to expand production of high-demand credentials including market-driven approaches, the integration of stackable non-credit FastForward credentials into degree programs, the On-Line Virginia Network, and other enhancements as appropriate
- Support programs that increase employability, skills development, and educational attainment for adults including veterans, displaced workers, individuals with disabilities, incarcerated or previously incarcerated

individuals, limited English proficient communities where English is not the primary language, and other unique populations

- Continue to make reform-based investments to keep Virginia on track to become the best-educated state in the nation through its degree and credential goals, and recognize that some form of postsecondary education is required to fully participate in the economy
- Enable workforce solutions for Virginia’s small and medium-sized businesses that leverage the non-proprietary elements of training programs
- Support efforts to provide incentives for public and private colleges to enroll more Pell-eligible students and consider need-based financial aid strategies to supplement

##### **CREATING CONNECTIONS TO JOBS AND BUSINESS**

- Support Virginia’s world-class, turnkey, customized workforce recruitment and training incentive program known as the Virginia Talent Accelerator
- Fully fund the Virginia Jobs Investment Partnership (VJIP)
- Build significant and meaningful partnerships among the business community, K-12 schools, and higher education to support the implementation of Virginia’s high school redesign efforts (profile of a high school graduate, new high school graduation requirements, the five C’s, and opportunities for students to participate in work-based learning experiences)
- Collaborate with the business community to develop and validate curriculum and explore opportunities for work-based learning experiences
- Scale-up best practices, such as the U.S. Chamber Foundation’s talent pipeline management model and the K2M Innovation Challenge
- Make work-based learning opportunities, internships, and apprenticeships available to every Virginia student through initiatives such as
  - Virginia Talent and Opportunity Partnership (Virginia TOP)
  - Growth4VA’s talent pathways and internship initiatives
  - LEAD4IT and other federal grant programs that encourage work-based learning

- Ensure that students and teachers throughout the Commonwealth have access and exposure to the technologies needed to flourish
- Support programs that encourage mentorship and career exploration opportunities for all young people in STEM-related fields, particularly for underrepresented populations in those fields such as women and minorities

- Expand and enhance career and skills development throughout a student’s educational experience using models that integrate career exploration into counseling, academic advising, and curriculum and develop tools and resources that support the easy exploration of careers

##### **DEVELOPING WELL-ROUNDED STUDENTS AND CITIZENS**

- Encourage the development of skills such as critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, collaboration, and citizenship (the five C’s)
- Support models that identify and measure quality in higher education, including civic engagement and job preparedness
- Expand entrepreneurship and financial literacy education beginning in elementary school

##### **TALENT ATTRACTION**

- Promote Virginia as a top state to live and work to attract and retain talented workers and their families through a talent attraction campaign
  - Market and highlight Virginia’s strengths in quality of life, education system, and economic opportunities
  - Explore incentives for talent pathways and other innovative strategies to attract and retain additional talented workers
- Utilize state collaboration and regional partnerships such as GO Virginia regions to target and fund talent attraction and retention efforts
- Identify and solve for challenges to talent attraction and retention such as high cost of living, transportation, broadband access, affordable housing, and other factors



# BUSINESS CLIMATE

Virginia boasts one of the best business climates in the country thanks to our supply of talented workers, strong education system, high quality of life, and overall business-friendly environment. In fact, Virginia recently ranked as the top state for business according to CNBC for the second year in a row – the first state to manage back-to-back top state rankings since the award began. We are proud of this recognition and the other rankings that reflect Virginia’s position as a great place to do business. These recognitions are the result of commitments to the business-friendly policies that Blueprint Virginia has consistently called for since its inception in 2013.

For Virginia to be a global leader in commerce and position itself for long-term success, the Commonwealth must address vulnerabilities in its business climate. Virginia can strengthen its entrepreneurial environment by decreasing the cost of doing business in the state; improving the legal, tax, and regulatory environment; and investing in infrastructure assets essential to our economic progress. If the Commonwealth does not address these critical areas, we risk relinquishing our business-friendly status and dropping in national business rankings.

The recommendations here provide the Commonwealth with a set of foundational business principles to create an economy for all.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## STRENGTHEN PROSPERITY FOR ALL VIRGINIANS AND EVERY REGION

- Provide leadership and a unified business voice for long-term strategic planning regarding business climate and economic development in the Commonwealth and work with our public and private partners to further these goals
- Encourage regional collaboration regarding economic development through the Growth and Opportunity Board of Virginia (GO Virginia), the GO Virginia Foundation, economic development organizations, and other economic development groups to grow Virginia’s target industry sectors on regional, cross-regional, and statewide levels
  - Advance cross-regional collaborations, also known as mega-regions, that work to advance economic prosperity across geographic boundaries through partnerships and shared goals
  - Target technology (e.g. data centers, emerging technology, cybersecurity, data science, machine learning), transportation and logistics, high growth advanced manufacturing, biotechnology and life sciences, and business services and operations sectors for growth and investment
- Coordinate Virginia’s educational and workforce development system’s focus on in-demand industry sectors to ensure that needed skills for the workforce of today and tomorrow are developed through new skill building, as well as upskilling and reskilling of the existing workforce
- Invest in economic development marketing, expand broadband coverage, strengthen regions’ inventory of shovel-ready sites, and support sector and regionally-specific talent development initiatives
- Expand and support initiatives that can bring previously outsourced jobs to rural communities in Virginia, such as CGI’s “onshoring” model in Lebanon, VA
- Incentivize business attraction for communities through targeted tax and regulatory changes, such as reducing the state and local tax burdens for capital-intensive manufacturing projects and easing start-up regulations
- Continue to support growth in Virginia’s agriculture sector, including related manufacturing, forestry, and agritourism opportunities
- Certify a community’s readiness for economic development and create an initiative to enhance their ability to recruit economic development projects
- Build and support strong civic and business leadership throughout Virginia

- Support investments in Opportunity Zones to encourage and coordinate greater, more impactful investment in expanding employment opportunities
- Expand incentives for employment in Federal Work Opportunity Zones to encourage broader employment growth in disadvantaged communities that face consistent barriers to employment
- Support additional funding to fulfill existing and future commitments for the revitalization of distressed areas through existing and future Enterprise Zones
- Address economic, educational, and employment opportunity gaps for underrepresented and disadvantaged communities through intentional and meaningful strategies
  - Seek to understand why these gaps exist and analyze approaches to address them
  - Promote greater employment opportunities through long-term workforce development programs that target underrepresented and disadvantaged populations
  - Encourage entry-level job opportunities that can lead to advancement and provide experience for all skill levels
  - Improve minority networks through greater access to work-based learning opportunities like internships and apprenticeships
  - Improve access to capital for minority-owned businesses through a review of existing barriers and targeted improvements
  - Expand entrepreneurial education that provide the tools and advisory services needed for more minority businesses to launch and succeed
  - Promote positive employment outcomes for people with disabilities by encouraging employers and others to recognize the value and talents they bring to the workplace and implement flexible and inclusive workplace practices
- Work with the Blueprint Virginia 2030 Military and Veterans Affairs Executive Committee to address the needs of veterans and transitioning service members and their families for greater employment opportunities
- Create economic and employment opportunities for previously incarcerated individuals and remove barriers to allow them to more easily become workers for in-demand jobs
  - Improve job training and educational opportunities for the incarcerated through programs like “Ready to Work” that enable



skill building and workforce development which can improve rehabilitation and re-entry to society, and reduce recidivism

- Develop workforce training partnerships in Virginia’s correctional system with businesses to deliver skills needed in the marketplace
- Reform occupational licensing restrictions at the state level in order to narrowly target any license restrictions and provide a means to recognize rehabilitation
- Create a system of immunity for employers from causes of action related to negligent hiring to encourage the hiring of individuals with criminal records, also known as “second chance hiring”

## IMPROVE OUR LEGAL AND REGULATORY CLIMATE

- Champion Virginia’s right to work law as the cornerstone of the Commonwealth’s pro-business and pro-economic growth policies and resist efforts which undercut employee choice
- Enact targeted legal reforms, defend our legal climate, and promote positive features of Virginia’s business climate and civil justice system
- Ensure state and local regulatory programs are consistent and compatible to limit additional burdens on business in complying with a patchwork of local requirements
- Maintain Virginia’s primacy in federally delegated regulatory programs such as environmental permitting and workplace safety
- Ensure an efficient and balanced unemployment and workers’ compensation system and support improvement in the agency’s ability to process valid claims and identify fraudulent ones
- Restore financial solvency to the unemployment insurance trust fund

- Allow for the sharing of thought leadership and business best practices to inform government process improvement
- Support an efficient, consistent, and effective immigration system that provides certainty to employers
- Implement strategies that reward high-performing state employees and constructively address underperformance
- Enhance the relationship between state government, local government, school systems, and other partners to support cost-effective performance and delivery of services
- Ensure that the Commonwealth sufficiently funds its “rainy day” fund to ensure Virginia maintains its positive credit rating



## TARGET COMPREHENSIVE TAX REFORM

- Work with the Governor and General Assembly on a comprehensive review of Virginia’s tax system that better positions the Commonwealth for economic growth and investment, such as, but not limited to:
  - Conduct a full review of the competitiveness of Virginia’s corporate tax burden in comparison to peer states
  - Reduce the tax burden on capital intensive manufacturing
  - Modernize Business, Professional, and Occupational Licensure (BPOL) taxation to limit the burden on professional services and other industry partners
  - Ensure Virginia’s state and local tax officials maintain a fair and balanced approach to treatment of Virginia’s business community

## ENCOURAGE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

- Utilize data-informed, business-driven, decision-making for statewide, regional, and local economic competitiveness and workforce priorities
- Maintain the partnership among the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), the Virginia Chamber’s Business Climate Executive Committee, and other relevant stakeholders on the National Rankings Initiative which seeks to further improve Virginia’s position on national rankings of business climate in comparison to other states
- Market Virginia for economic development opportunities to site selectors and corporate leaders through robust advertising, branding, lead generation, and site consultant cultivation
- Prioritize a client-focused and responsive system of streamlined incentives for economic development that attract investment and job growth while allowing the flexibility to meet the needs of private sector growth and fulfill existing incentive commitments
- Strengthen and evaluate Virginia’s portfolio of economic development incentives, and clearly communicate the return on investment of this spending
  - Improve support for Virginia’s incentive programs and other business attraction assets such as the Commonwealth Opportunity Fund (COF), Virginia Investment Performance Grant (VIP), the Virginia Talent Accelerator Program, Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund (AFID), the Port Volume Increase Tax Credit, among others
- Position Virginia to secure transformational economic development projects that attract positive national attention, create jobs, result in significant capital investment, and add to the Commonwealth’s quality of life
- Retain our existing workforce and employers and work to secure their expansion in the Commonwealth
- Strengthen Virginia’s inventory of strategic, project-ready sites
  - Prioritize a significant state investment in building out more Tier 4 and Tier 5 shovel-ready, greenfield sites to catch up with competitor states to attract opportunities from the growing domestic advanced manufacturing industry including necessary infrastructure to support these sites; and ongoing investments to maintain and expand the Commonwealth’s full portfolio of sites
  - Support public-private financing models as an approach to enhancing Virginia’s economic development sites and buildings

- Support and encourage opportunities for the “re-shoring” of industry to help address current and future supply chain issues providing reliability and resiliency to business

## SUPPORT OUR SMALL BUSINESSES AND ENTREPRENEURS

- Nurture a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship that values and encourages new business formation and small business growth in Virginia
- Remove barriers that currently impede small business growth, such as conflicting regulatory standards, excessive licensure and registration requirements, and uneven taxation across locality, region, and sector
- Promote development of entrepreneurial ecosystems surrounding Virginia’s research universities that facilitate business startups and commercialization of new discoveries
- Provide community resources for small and growing businesses like business incubators, shared workspaces, and other resources that allow for the acceleration of small business growth with a distinct focus on economic inclusiveness
- Leverage Virginia’s Business One Stop portal as a resource for small businesses to plan, develop, and expand their business
- Increase access to capital and provide additional financing options for small businesses and entrepreneurs, which is one of their largest barriers for growth
- Promote the creation of regional private and community investment funds and support existing and the launch of additional sector-specific accelerators

## EXPAND INTERNATIONAL TRADE OPPORTUNITIES

- Fully fund and implement Virginia’s International Trade Plan which seeks to increase Virginia’s exports by 50 percent by 2035
  - Expand the capacity of state agencies to build capabilities, facilitate connections, and share risk with Virginia firms that export
  - Increase focus of state agencies to build capabilities and facilitate connections for firms that import critical elements of their supply chains
  - Align business expansion and recruitment activity with international trade efforts
  - Advocate for critical investments in logistics, infrastructure, and tourism strategies

- Enhance the Commonwealth’s ability to serve Virginia businesses through increased coordination among agencies and federal stakeholders
- Continue investments in the Port of Virginia and other transportation assets to maintain the state’s competitive advantages
- Work to further increase agricultural and forestry exports from the Commonwealth and seek to expand their value-add production
- Recognize the important role international trade plays in Virginia’s largest industries in every region of the Commonwealth, such as agriculture and forestry, and other export intensive sectors

## BUILD ON VIRGINIA’S REPUTATION AS A WELCOMING PLACE

- Build on Virginia’s strong reputation as a high-quality and safe state to live, work, and raise a family
- Support efforts that improve quality of life standards such as access to well-paying jobs, high-quality health care, child care, affordable housing, and a world-class education system
- Nurture vibrant tourism, hospitality, and travel industries to attract visitors and new Virginians
  - Create and support public and private investments in vibrant communities, hotels, attractions, and other tourism-related facilities, so that people will choose to live, work, invest, and vacation in Virginia
  - Promote efforts and state infrastructure to attract new and repeat visitors to Virginia while growing the state’s revenue and tax base
- Support the protection, continued development and funding of Virginia’s state parks and trails for the benefit of all Virginians and our economy
- Capitalize on opportunities to make the Commonwealth more attractive for professional sports franchises, amateur sporting events, travel, and entertainment
- Develop and advance intercultural and global competence frameworks to entice and improve international trade opportunities
- Support development and communication at the local level of global economic engagement across the Commonwealth of Virginia

# INFRASTRUCTURE

Businesses rely on Virginia’s robust infrastructure assets not only to move people, goods, and services efficiently and effectively into and throughout the Commonwealth, but also to access the internet and electric service. Prudent investments in local water and sewer utilities both foster economic growth, but also have environmental benefits. Virginia depends on a comprehensive transportation network that meets our current needs, is well-maintained, and plans for the future. Businesses cannot grow if they cannot move products, access broadband, or affordably and reliably power production.

The Commonwealth has made strides in recent years to evaluate and prioritize infrastructure needs. However, we have to continue investing in long-term transportation solutions, expand access to broadband, and provide businesses with the energy solutions they need. The recommendations listed here seek to address these critical needs.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## ADVANCE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS AND EFFICIENT PERMITTING PROCESSES

- Promote consistency in local regulations as it relates to development of critical infrastructure that facilitates the flow of people, goods, and services
- Support participation by impacted communities in decision-making forums, especially those which have been disadvantaged
- Advance the principle of timeliness and certainty in permitting and regulatory decision-making while maintaining strong, uniform standards

## ADVANCE BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

- Embrace a variety of approaches for expanding broadband access to unserved parts of Virginia
- Increase financial support for public-private partnerships to facilitate broadband deployment in unserved areas
- Support efforts to prepare workers for the advancement of broadband investments and initiatives
- Explore new technologies and strategies to increase access to broadband in unserved areas
- Support a more uniform and streamlined process for the approval of cell facilities including next-generation advancements in technology and other enhancements
- Support Virginia’s subsea cable assets across the Atlantic from Europe landing in Virginia Beach, which grow jobs and foster a stronger data center ecosystem
- Identify ways to leverage expanded broadband for remote working and entrepreneurial activities

## MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE OUR NETWORK OF ROADS, BRIDGES, AND TUNNELS

- Reduce congestion and improve reliability of travel on major corridors, such as I-64, I-66, I-81, I-95, and associated routes through investment in long-term, multi-modal strategies
- Address potential funding challenges for Virginia’s highway system with ongoing pressures on state and federal budgets through new funding models and diverse revenue streams

- Build, repair, and improve transportation assets that promote the efficient movement of goods and people such as the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel expansion and many other critical transportation updates needed
- Encourage the completion of I-73/I-74/I-75 which would provide greater connection for the Commonwealth to other regions of the country for the flow of goods and people
- Incentivize local and regional investment in key transportation corridors, including using the Northern Virginia, Hampton Roads, and Richmond regional sales tax model to support transportation projects in other regions of the state to the extent there is local support for this approach
- Continue support of programs that constructively identify and prioritize important transportation projects and review current approaches on a regional and cross-regional basis
- Encourage the use of traffic management technology to offset congestion and reduce needs
- Enable adequate and equitable access to electric vehicle charging infrastructure around the Commonwealth

## EXPAND VIRGINIA’S RAIL AND TRANSIT CAPABILITIES

- Capitalize on recent federal funding for passenger, commuter, and freight rail priorities that will improve rail infrastructure across the Commonwealth
  - Expand and improve passenger and commuter rail service through Virginia Railway Express and Amtrak
  - Build a new Long Bridge connecting Washington, DC and Virginia for enhanced rail service
  - Lay the groundwork for future high-speed rail opportunities
- Evaluate and implement recommendations to improve the governance, accountability, and operational challenges at Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority to include identifying a long-term dedicated funding source for this critical economic development asset
- Encourage partnerships with the owners and operators of the Commonwealth’s rail lines to make strategic investments in higher-speed rail

- Support the extension of passenger rail service throughout the Commonwealth

## DEVELOP A WORLD-CLASS LOGISTICS AND MULTI-MODAL DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY

- Become the best state for testing innovative, emerging transportation trends to support the next generation of transportation and logistics investments to better move goods across the Commonwealth and beyond
- Support the transformation of Virginia’s linear supply chain into tomorrow’s “Next Generation Supply Networks” through public-private research and analytic efforts
- Recognize that all modes of transportation are valuable for Virginia’s economic future and that any meaningful long-term solution will require a multi-modal approach
- Develop and encourage transportation policies and investment strategies that address Virginia’s transportation challenges through a multi-modal lens
- Promote the exchange and integration of data between highway, rail, and ports to expand Virginia’s intermodal capacity and reduce congestion on Virginia’s highway system
- Explore opportunities to work with surrounding states and the federal government on projects of shared interest

## CAPITALIZE ON VIRGINIA’S PORT AND OTHER TRADE ASSETS

- Support the development and implementation of the Port of Virginia’s economic development strategy which seeks to leverage this important asset to grow Virginia’s economy
- Fully fund and adopt Virginia’s International Trade Plan which seeks to double Virginia’s exports over the next two decades
- Support the widening and deepening of the Norfolk Harbor Channels that will help Virginia maintain its competitive advantage as the East Coast’s deepest port





- Fully utilize Virginia's network of inland ports, the Richmond Marine Terminal and other trade assets, as well as explore the economic feasibility of creating additional inland ports throughout the Commonwealth
- Advocate for infrastructure upgrades at the Port of Virginia to, among other things, enhance Virginia's ability to serve as a platform for domestic offshore wind development and attract associated supply chain investments
- Strengthen Virginia's infrastructure and inventory of strategic, project-ready sites
  - Prioritize a significant state investment in building out more Tier 4 and Tier 5 shovel-ready, greenfield sites to catch up with competitor states to attract opportunities from the growing domestic advanced manufacturing industry; and ongoing investments to maintain and expand the Commonwealth's full portfolio of sites
  - Support public-private financing models as an approach to enhancing Virginia's economic development sites and buildings
- Provide for collaboration among the Port of Virginia, the wider maritime community and the Commonwealth's network of colleges and universities to educate and train the workforce necessary to fill 21st Century jobs in the nation's supply chain, from waterfront to final destination

#### STRENGTHEN OUR AVIATION AND AEROSPACE ASSETS

- Encourage the development of Virginia's Unmanned Aerial Vehicle industry while focusing on safety, security, and appropriate regulatory oversight
- Promote policies that will strengthen space operations at the MidAtlantic Regional Space Port
- Encourage regulatory reform and incentives that will allow Virginia to develop a robust maintenance, repair, and overhaul industry for aircraft
- Explore innovative, cost-effective ways to better connect and expand capacity for Virginia's communities to major airport hubs
- Support the creation of economic sites around Virginia's airports, including actively securing the proper permits for development in advance

## HEALTH CARE & LIFE SCIENCES

For businesses to thrive, they need healthy employees and healthy communities. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for affordable high-quality health care, a strong public health infrastructure, a robust supply of health care professionals, and an equitable access to services. A strong economy relies on a healthy workforce. Supporting employee wellness and preventative care programs, as well as employee assistance programs to address the rising level of mental health and behavioral health issues in our workforce, has become a top priority.

Blueprint Virginia 2030 surveys reflected the continued concern with the rising cost of health care and the need to support affordable, high-quality health benefits for employees. The Chamber will continue to advocate to support employer-sponsored health coverage, as well as the ability for small businesses to pool their risk through a Health Benefits Consortium.

Access to affordable and quality care is critical for a sustainable health care system that works for all Virginians and is a priority of the business community.

The recommendations put forward here focus on building a world-class health care system and life sciences industry in Virginia that will continue to have a significant positive impact on our economy.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

#### SUPPORT POPULATION HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- Encourage and support employee wellness and preventative care programs that lead to a healthier, more productive workforce
  - Promote preventative care that includes well visits, annual exams, screenings, oral care, and non-COVID ACIP recommended immunizations
  - Support medical management for chronic diseases, including comorbidities like obesity and diabetes
  - Promote employee assistance programs that reduce the stigma of mental health by providing services and support for individuals with mental health concerns, including depression, anxiety, and substance use disorder
- Encourage collaboration on the development of innovative proposals, including funding models, to address issues such as access to behavioral health services and substance use disorder treatments (e.g., opioids)
  - Leverage the newly-formed Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority to fund evidence-based models of care to address the Opioid epidemic
  - Encourage integrated care models that include behavioral health resources in the primary care setting
  - Support efforts like Project BRAVO which provide fully-integrated, high-quality, evidence-based, and trauma-informed behavioral health services
  - Encourage collaborative efforts between free clinics and hospitals, health systems, Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and other community-based organization to better address social determinants of health through holistic approaches to care

#### IMPROVING ACCESS

- Advocate for innovative solutions to expand health care coverage that reduce health care costs for Virginia's business community and workers
- Enable small businesses to pool their risk and achieve scale similar to large employer plans through a Health Benefits Consortium which will produce cost savings, increased health coverage, and high-quality benefits for small businesses with 2-50 employees

- Recognize and support the critical role that employer-sponsored health coverage plays in providing health benefits to millions of Virginians
- Encourage the continuation of effective COVID-19 pandemic health care delivery flexibilities (telehealth) as an option along with traditional services (in-office)
- Improve access to health care, including physical and mental health, in rural areas by working with community partners
- Address physical barriers to care through alternative delivery services to those unable to travel to a doctor's office such as telehealth, community health clinics, transportation assistance, and home visits
- Support strategies that address the current and future needs of aging Virginians in accessing long-term services and supports
- Develop mechanisms to increase individual's access to interpretation and translation resources to include non-English languages and American Sign Language (ASL)





## STRENGTHENING QUALITY WHILE CONTROLLING AND REDUCING COST

- Raise awareness about affordability and total cost of care
- Promote the tracking and reporting of health care cost growth and transparency into the total cost of care
  - Build health care literacy by assisting employers and patients in understanding the cost drivers of the health care system and how they affect premiums
  - Encourage providers, health plans, employers, and other health care industry partners to participate in the All Payer Claims Database (APCD)
- Continue to serve as a national leader in the reduction of low-value, unnecessary, and potentially harmful health care services while preserving access to evidence-based, high-value care
- Continue to promote care for undertreated, underdiagnosed conditions such as hypertension and depression
- Help ensure federal health care reform efforts provide states with the flexibility to develop quality, access, and cost solutions
- Support collaboration to streamline performance measures tied to meaningful improvements in health care
  - Expand the use of value-based purchasing for health care and reduce reliance on the fee-for-service model over time. For instance, hybrid free and charitable clinics that serve uninsured patients as well as individuals covered by Medicaid would benefit from value-based payments that support their more comprehensive and holistic approach to wellness
  - Adopt coordinated care models that are patient-centered and reduce unnecessary, duplicative services
- Increase interoperability between data platforms to share health care data to improve health outcomes and control costs
- Encourage health care that is viable, essential, consistent, and performance-measured in order to advance value in health care

## FOSTERING INNOVATION THROUGHOUT HEALTH CARE AND LIFE SCIENCES

- Support the growth of the emerging life science and biotechnology sectors in Virginia for strong economic growth and the creation of high paying jobs
  - Nurture innovation and research in the life sciences and biotechnology sectors that spur economic development and include a goal of improving health outcomes through public-private partnerships, grant funding, and greater collaboration with our research institutions
- Encourage advanced pharmaceutical manufacturing in Virginia, through strategically focused workforce initiatives and capital expenditure incentives
- Leverage Virginia's "Data Alley" to lead the world in bioinformatics, health care and biotechnology artificial intelligence and big data
- Invest in emerging technologies and data analytics that support advanced biotechnologies and health care delivery to improve outcomes and quality, reduce costs, and empower consumers
- Use lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to build resiliency and strengthen Virginia's public health infrastructure and emergency response planning
- Support regional collaboration to solve unique health care challenges to that region
- Bring mental health services and supports directly to the patient by supporting innovations in telepsychiatry, including improvements that expand access to those with visual, hearing and motor disabilities

## BOLSTER HEALTH CARE TALENT SUPPLY

- Strengthen and grow the supply of health care professionals through a multi-pronged, long-term approach that recognizes and plans for existing and future health care workforce shortage needs
  - Analyze the current and future talent needs for the full continuum of Virginia's health care system

- Coordinate with medical schools, two and four-year higher education institutions, and other education providers to build a more robust pipeline of talent for the sector
- Utilize partnerships between K-12 schools and local child care and long-term care communities to introduce students to a career in child and adult care
- Support loan forgiveness programs and other incentives that encourage healthcare providers to serve in the healthcare safety net or in provider shortage areas
- Build a stronger pathway for occupational licensing for individuals with credentials and licensing from other states that is reciprocal to Virginia
- Build the health care professional workforce by implementing recruitment and retention strategies that may include "grow your own" models and expansion of the role of community health workers
  - Expand partnerships with K-12 and community college systems to introduce students to in-demand careers in the full continuum of health care and the life sciences at an early age

## IMPROVE HEALTH EQUITY AND SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

- Support programs and initiatives aimed at reducing maternal, child and infant mortality including a focus on communities with long-standing challenges in these vital public health metrics
  - Encourage patient-centered, trauma-informed, culture-specific post-partum care
- Support efforts to reduce health disparities for vulnerable populations across the state by encouraging and funding efforts to better address social determinants of health such as housing, food access, transportation, and linguistic diversity
- Address gaps in racial and ethnic diversity in the industry through intentional, long-term approaches to greater inclusion and opportunity
- Engage strategic partnerships with health systems, the broader health industry, and community organizations to reduce health disparities and address health equity

- Expand telehealth capabilities to underserved communities and populations to increase access to health care services and better manage population health
- Leverage mobile health solutions, such as medical care vans, to provide more accessible and convenient care where individuals live and work
- Strengthen the data capabilities of Virginia's All Payer Claims Database (APCD)
  - Standardize definitions and requirements to improve the collection of demographic information
  - Reduce barriers for self-insured employers operating in Virginia to share their health care claims data with the APCD
  - Incentivize clinicians to capture social determinants of health information, known as Z codes, in their claim's submissions
  - Support the transfer of information on health care utilization by uninsured Virginians from Virginia's federally qualified health centers and free clinics into the APCD
  - Promote linkage between the APCD and other complementary data sources
  - Encourage Virginia's requests for the federal government to submit military and federal employee claims data to the APCD



# INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY

Technology and research enable innovation and are used within every industry to grow profits and remain competitive. Technology and research also allow for the creation of new businesses that can generate wealth and contribute to Virginia's economic performance. Virginia is well-positioned to advance innovation, technology, and entrepreneurship to support economic growth and job creation.

The Commonwealth is a global technology center with a strong and diverse technology industry and is home to one of the most robust and well-educated supply of technology workers in the nation. To enable innovation, Virginia possesses unique assets such as an impressive distribution of federal laboratories and targeted research and development capabilities at its higher education institutions. Virginia can leverage and enhance its value proposition for innovation, technology, and entrepreneurship with a strategy that encourages business investment through location and expansion decisions, and new high-growth company formation.

The recommendations here focus on making Virginia a global leader in research, technology, and innovation throughout the Commonwealth.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## STRENGTHEN OUR INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM

- Build on the Commonwealth's strength in the high-growth, technology sector through a dual- focus on attracting technology-based economic development and growing the technology industry organically through nurturing start-ups, entrepreneurs, and commercialization efforts
- Increase federally and privately funded research at Virginia's higher education institutions and expand the activities of research universities as hubs for entrepreneurship and new business startups
- Leverage the power of state collaboration, consistency, and coordination through the Virginia Innovation Partnership Authority (VIPA) and the Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation (VIPC)
- Promote technology-based economic development by building, attracting, and retaining innovation and high-technology jobs and businesses in Virginia
- Ensure promotion and marketing of Virginia's statewide innovation economy and support and coordinate regional marketing efforts to align local and statewide objectives
- Expand targeted incentives and tax policies that drive research, innovation, and new company formation, and ensure the statewide technology ecosystem is promoted and well resourced
- Close the support gap and improve access to capital through pre-seed and seed-stage investments, coordination of private investor networks, and enhanced deal syndication
- Promote culture of entrepreneurship through education, public policies, and a robust network of support
- Encourage programs that provide business counseling and entrepreneurial training to the minority community such as recent efforts at Virginia State University through GO Virginia funding and Hampton University's Business Incubator utilizing a US Department of Education grant

## GROW VIRGINIA'S TECHNOLOGY SECTOR

- Increase industry competitiveness by supporting the application of technology to improve productivity and efficiency
- Attract and provide additional private and public funding to enhance and expand the scientific and technological research and commercialization at

federal research institutions and facilities, as well as the Commonwealth's higher education institutions

- Maintain cybersecurity, data analytics, unmanned systems, biotechnology, and life sciences as key areas of focus
- Coordinate higher education, workforce development, quality of life and place, and attraction investments like Virginia Tech's Innovation Campus in National Landing
- Target opportunities in rural areas and small metros to help build business centers of excellence for technology and innovation clusters
- Ensure Virginia's business and legal climate allow for innovation
  - Advance "regulatory sandbox" approaches that allow for emerging technologies and concepts to be tested and piloted, such as the moratorium on local regulation for unmanned aerial systems and autonomous vehicles
  - Boost competitiveness in advanced manufacturing, robotics, machine learning, and artificial intelligence
  - Remove barriers to entry for the adoption of "gig economy" business models
  - Improve access to capital for early-stage technology companies, especially minority-owned businesses that have historically had more difficulty in securing funding

## BOLSTER RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND COMMERCIALIZATION

- Build the Commonwealth's capability to find and grow ideas for commercialization
- Attract and provide additional private and public funding to support and enhance innovation-led entrepreneurship ecosystems and coordination of existing activities and programs
- Encourage the Commonwealth to continue to measure and incentivize the commercialization of intellectual property from higher education institutions and support federal facilities' IP transfer initiatives
- Support applied research initiatives that target agriculture and forestry in our land grant universities and support the Virginia Cooperative Extension system as a means to help disseminate information

- Utilize models such as the ones developed by the Commonwealth Center for Advanced Manufacturing (CCAM) and the Commonwealth Center for Advanced Logistics Systems that foster industry-driven and higher education institution-supported research in key industry sectors

## BUILD THE TECHNOLOGY TALENT SUPPLY

- Collaborate with Virginia's leading businesses and educators to develop a best-in-class model that streamlines entry into the technology workforce
  - Provide additional support in workforce training to small-to-medium size companies by facilitating connections with Virginia's educational institutions
- Identify and develop skills that are critical to the high demand technology sectors and support strategic outreach initiatives
- Focus on increasing access to technology sector careers for all Virginians through improved work-based learning opportunities
- Develop technology and innovation career pathways that increase awareness of STEM and other in-demand technology-related careers in K-12 schools and post-secondary education and workforce development programs
- Promote the scaling of models like CodeVA to engage K-12 students in technology skill building and technology-based careers and apprenticeship programs like MAXX Potential to facilitate technology upskilling and transitions into the workforce for individuals from all backgrounds
- Provide leadership on the design and implementation of the USDOL H-1B One Workforce Grant Program to strengthen assistance for up-skilling and training Virginia's workforce for critical jobs in technology (LEAD4IT)
  - Virginia is piloting the LEAD4IT program, a national initiative to expand apprenticeships, internships, and on the job training opportunities in cyber and technology career fields
- Streamline and improve the federal security clearance process to improve employers' access to qualified and cleared employees for government contracts
- Address barriers to entry that delay individuals from starting work in technology-based in-demand careers through strategies that target increased equality of opportunity and diversity in the technology sector

# ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

As the pandemic impacts the global production of goods, Virginia must capitalize on its strategic assets to advance manufacturing within the Commonwealth. However, while Virginia has a good business climate and a transportation system to support manufacturing, it must address certain challenges to attracting advanced manufacturing in the state—(1) High tax burdens discourage capital investments in new and existing companies, (2) The lack of available business ready sites, (3) Supply chain disruptions and the need for an expanded footprint in international markets (4) Certainty and predictability in the permitting process, and (5) The need for highly-skilled, highly-trained talent.

The recommendations included here offer a platform for growing the advanced manufacturing sector and building the talent workforce in Virginia.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### ENCOURAGE GROWTH IN THE ADVANCED MANUFACTURING SECTOR

- Strengthen Virginia's potential in the high-growth, advanced manufacturing sector through a dual focus on attracting manufacturing economic development opportunities and growing the industry organically by nurturing entrepreneurs and commercialization efforts
- Explore ways to expand and utilize incentive programs for capital investments in areas of the state where manufacturing clusters exist and can grow
- Explore opportunities to work with surrounding states on economic development projects of shared interest
- Revise the definition of "local match" within Virginia's economic development incentive programs to enable multiple localities or even regions to pool their resources to meet this requirement
- Support efforts to build a strategic portfolio of project-ready sites by connecting them to important infrastructure such as broadband, energy, water, rail, highways, etc.
- Create a more welcoming business climate for the advanced manufacturing sector
  - Work with the Governor and General Assembly on a comprehensive review of Virginia's tax system, including identifying targeted tax changes for Virginia's manufacturers which will allow for greater growth in the industry
  - Pursue targeted tax changes to reduce the combined state and local effective tax burden for job-creating manufacturing business investments
  - Streamline the regulatory and permitting process to provide greater efficiency, consistency, and predictability to allow for greater manufacturing growth
  - Ensure regulations are evaluated with standards that appropriately balance environmental protection and economic development
  - Improve permit processing times among Virginia's state agencies and localities
  - Limit the growth in fees for services which currently act as a regulatory unfunded mandate on industry
  - Allow the General Assembly to oversee regulatory agencies' use of fees for service and evaluate their effectiveness in processing permits and applications
- Attract and provide additional private and public funding to enhance and expand the scientific and technological research and commercialization at federal research

institutions and facilities, as well as the Commonwealth's higher education institutions for advanced manufacturing

- Target opportunities in rural areas and small metros to help build and expand business centers of excellence for manufacturing

### STRENGTHEN OUR EXPORT POTENTIAL AND SUPPLY CHAINS

- Fully fund Virginia's International Trade Strategic Plan which seeks to double exports by 2035
  - Prioritize the importance of advanced manufacturing in export growth
- Target advanced manufacturing growth for products that have large export potential and a high return on investment
- Strengthen the domestic and international supply chains for critical materials and products for advanced manufacturing, especially regarding inventory critical to national security and public health
- Recognize the sensitivity of the global supply chain and work collaboratively with the business community to ensure continuity of critical operations through public-private partnerships and the removal of trade barriers and impediments to the efficient movement of goods and services
- Limit supply chain disruptions to avoid negative impacts to the economy and ensure as much predictability and stability in production for manufacturers as possible
- Develop a working partnership between the private sector and the Commonwealth's network of colleges and universities to educate and train the workforce necessary to fill critical jobs in the 21st Century supply chain to move materials and products from the waterfront to final destination

### IMPROVE THE SUPPLY OF TALENT FOR ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

- Encourage facilitated communication between manufacturers, academic institutions, and other training curricula developers to address local industry-identified gaps and emerging skill needs
- Support the Commonwealth Center for Advanced Manufacturing's (CCAM) efforts to solve advanced manufacturing challenges and grow

a qualified manufacturing workforce ecosystem by providing a diverse and industry-driven educational pathway

- Create and expand work-based learning opportunities such as internships, apprenticeships, and other training programs
- Reduce the stigma amongst young people and their parents in entering the manufacturing industry or the skilled trades through career education in K-12 and other forums
  - Communicate the opportunity and high return on investment for a career in advanced manufacturing

### IMPROVE WORKPLACE SAFETY

- Recognize the need for smart regulations that ensure workplace safety and protect public health while appropriately balancing the economic impact
  - Support commonsense workplace safety measures that are consistent, reasonable, and account for the views of communities and businesses
- Support constructive workplace safety strategies that contribute to a day-to-day safety culture in the workplace
- Provide thought leadership on workplace safety best practices and regulatory updates for small businesses



# ENERGY

As business and industry increasingly depend on electronic and connected devices, machinery, and systems, the need for a dependable and sustainable supply of energy continues to intensify. Increasing population and economic growth will drive even greater energy consumption in the future. So too will the electrification of the transportation sector and other segments of the Virginia economy.

Increasingly, the Commonwealth envisions that these needs will be met in growing proportion by clean and renewable sources of energy. Continued investment in the modernization of Virginia's energy grid is needed to facilitate this transition. Updates to key energy infrastructure are needed to support the provision of clean, safe, reliable, and affordable energy.

The following recommendations recognize the steps Virginia must take to build a more diverse energy portfolio that is reliable, affordable, and weaves innovative solutions for the future into energy policy.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## SUSTAINABILITY, RELIABILITY, AND AFFORDABILITY

- Support efforts to empower energy users with detailed information about their usage and emissions footprint, and promote rate designs that leverage price signals to encourage more active management of energy consumption
- Highlight Virginia's leadership role in combining utility energy efficiency programs and energy assistance programs
- Develop and promote energy solutions and other programs which cater to companies' sustainability objectives while meeting the reliability and resiliency needs of the economy

## ENCOURAGE ENERGY DIVERSITY

- Recognize, support, and encourage the need for a diverse energy portfolio serving industrial, commercial and residential users that incorporates reliability, affordability, and weaves in innovation
- Prioritize investments in energy that ensure competitive rates, attract economic development, and environmental protection
- Promote responsible and geographically diverse in-state deployment of energy resource types required by recent policy changes, including solar, wind, and energy storage
- Capitalize on carbon-reducing innovations such as renewable natural gas, green hydrogen, advanced nuclear technology, and other promising energy developments
- Account for businesses that may not be well suited for electrification, such as those with thermal energy needs where natural gas, hydrogen, and biomass may be more appropriate

## BOLSTER ENERGY TALENT SUPPLY

- Support the work of the Virginia Nuclear Energy Consortium, Virginia's Community Colleges, and the Virginia Energy Workforce Consortium on energy workforce and education pathways

- Continue to support the Get into Energy Innovation Challenge as a national model to engage students in project-based learning regarding energy and introduce them to potential careers in the energy industry
- Encourage the expansion of initiatives like the Powerline Worker Training program at Southside Virginia Community College as a model to meet the powerline technician needs of the energy industry
- Build on Virginia's best-in-class Troops to Energy program to further integrate veterans into all segments of Virginia's energy industry
- Refine and periodically revisit curricula established to support Virginia's energy career cluster to ensure that knowledge and skillsets reflect the latest industry competencies and credential models

## ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGULATION

- Encourage uniform, consistent regulations that reduce barriers to energy project development at the local level and enable fact-based discussions and decision-making
- Engage diverse and low-income communities throughout the clean energy transition and consider the potential benefits to be gained by avoiding disproportionate negative impacts
- Support grid modernization initiatives that make Virginia's energy system ready to accommodate the fundamental changes brought about by decarbonization and electrification and prioritize reliability, affordability, and sustainability
- Continue supporting landmark zero-carbon investments like the Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind project anchored at the Port of Virginia in Hampton Roads, which also have the potential to spur regional economic revitalization
- Continue to support Virginia's natural gas utilities in implementing the Commonwealth's Steps to Advance Virginia's Energy Plan (SAVE) statute, resulting in the creation of jobs to upgrade the infrastructure necessary to assure safe, reliable, and affordable energy, with accompanying reductions in greenhouse gas emissions



# HOUSING

Businesses need appropriate housing in the communities where they operate to attract and retain their workforce. Without stable housing, a person is more challenged to find and keep stable employment. The lack of an adequate supply of housing options detrimentally affects talent attraction, the transportation system, worker productivity, and quality of life. Housing strains also impact certain areas of the Commonwealth more than others and targeted approaches are needed to ensure appropriate housing options are available to all Virginians.

When homes are affordable and accessible to jobs, individual lives are improved and communities as a whole grow stronger.

Improvements to both the supply and affordability of quality housing options are the primary focuses of the recommendations in this section.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### IMPROVE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR OUR WORKFORCE

- Recognize the importance of having a broad range of housing options for economic development and a high quality of life for all Virginians
  - Target improvements for housing access and affordability for all Virginians, but especially to close gaps that exist among population groups
- Address state housing needs through engagement with all stakeholders in the housing delivery network
- Study the impact that insufficient supply of affordable, quality housing options has on the workforce and the limitations it places on future economic growth
- Review current programs and policies to determine the effectiveness of current housing policy and strategies
- Review the impact residential segregation has on housing opportunities and access; and explore ways to address it
- Collect data to inform and project the future housing needs of the Commonwealth
- Consider the findings from Virginia's statewide housing study for recommendations to improve access, affordability, and supply of housing for the workforce
- Encourage regional cooperation and broad-based funding methods to enable the growth of affordable, quality housing
- Support workforce housing by addressing land use issues and constraints on the construction and housing industries such as exclusionary zoning practices
- Expand housing incentives and programs that promote development and redevelopment efforts in our communities

### TARGET HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

- Support financial assistance to increase the housing delivery networks capacity to deliver affordable housing services
- Support Virginia Housing initiatives that target homeownership, rental, and community outreach
- Expand pre- and post-closing financial literacy and housing counseling resources to enable sustainable homeownership

- Develop innovative loss mitigation strategies to assist households in sustaining homeownership during periods of financial hardship
- Develop targeted strategies to lessen disparities in homeownership
  - Expand access to financial resources in underserved areas
  - Establish and strengthen community and industry partnerships to identify and address key barriers facing underserved populations and markets
  - Increase wealth-building opportunities through homeownership in underserved populations
  - Expand outreach and marketing of affordable homeownership opportunities to potential homebuyers
  - Develop innovative solutions to expand the affordable home purchase inventory
- Advance housing revitalization efforts to increase capacity and enhance living environment for renters

### INCREASE HOUSING SUPPLY

- Remove barriers to increasing the housing supply such as exclusionary zoning practices and other local regulatory limitations for homebuilding and development
- Improve the construction talent supply in order to allow for more housing options to be built with greater speed
  - Expand apprenticeship and training initiatives supported by industry and state partners
  - Support talent attraction and retention efforts
- Support efforts to increase Virginia's inventory of rental units and other high-density housing options as appropriate
- Support the creation and appropriate use of tax credits, including the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program, as incentives to private investment in real estate, to broaden available housing stock, to preserve historic infrastructure, and to create jobs



# CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY & ENVIRONMENT

Employers are increasingly embracing the concept of corporate sustainability which seeks to improve on environmental, social, and governance factors. Virginia businesses are leading the way on corporate sustainability and stewardship of our natural resources and environment.

The Chamber recognizes the important role that quality of life and place plays for economic development, workforce development, employee retention, and Virginia's position on national rankings of business climate. Clean water and recreational lands are critical components to achieving a high quality of life in the Commonwealth. Each Virginian should be able to enjoy Virginia's diverse landscape of resources, including over 30 state parks across the Commonwealth. Not only does smart stewardship of our natural resources keep them available for the use and enjoyment of our citizens, but our water and land resources provide the Commonwealth with economic opportunity and are critical inputs for business and industry.

The recommendations here offer a pathway to highlighting Virginia's leadership in corporate sustainability, but also protecting the Commonwealth's natural resources while enabling economic growth.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### ENCOURAGE CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

- Encourage and recognize the continued adoption of, and incentives for, corporate sustainability practices that seek to address the environmental, social, and governance challenges businesses face
- Leverage Virginia's national leadership in meeting corporate sustainability goals through Blueprint Virginia 2030 Corporate Sustainability and Environment Executive Committee
- Prioritize sustainable hiring practices that seek to identify, train, and hire Virginia workers, veterans, and members of disadvantaged communities so businesses can benefit from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives

### ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- Develop and promote energy solutions and other programs which cater to companies' sustainability objectives
- Promote responsible and geographically diverse in-state deployment of energy resource options required by recent policy changes, including solar, wind, and energy storage
- Create incentives for carbon-reducing innovations and advanced technologies
- Continue investing in landmark, zero-carbon investments such as the Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind project which have the potential to spur regional economic revitalization
- Pursue state energy strategies that maximize efficiency in usage
  - Enhance smart metering infrastructure to provide consumers with real-time data on usage and optimize distribution

### STREAMLINE REGULATORY AND PERMITTING PROCESSES

- Support a permitting process that efficiently and effectively makes determinations for Virginia's businesses in a predictable and clear manner, free of political interference, and utilizes the expertise business leadership can provide in the process

- Ensure environmental regulations are achievable, clear, provide reasonable timelines for businesses to achieve compliance, and are accompanied by compliance assistance tools that help businesses achieve and maintain compliance
- Engage with diverse and disadvantaged communities throughout the clean energy transition regarding strategies to mitigate disproportionate impact
- Support Virginia universities and colleges pursuing academic programs in the field of Environmental Security which focuses on safe and healthy human ecosystems

### ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP OF OUR LAND AND WATER RESOURCES

- Continue to support efforts to ensure water quality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed through state and federal investments, while also promoting continued growth within the watershed
- Strengthen state and local efforts to address the impact of sea-level rise in Coastal Virginia and throughout the Commonwealth
- Promote continued investment in water quality infrastructure projects in regional and locally owned wastewater treatment facilities
- Support the utilization of the Nutrient Offset Fund to offset the impact of new or expanding facility discharges in the watershed
- Promote investment in stormwater improvement infrastructure projects
- Encourage the continued use of agricultural best management practices to reduce agricultural runoff from animal operations and croplands, and support implementation of a stable and adequate cost-share with farmers
- Ensure access to reliable surface and groundwater supplies for a full range of responsible uses
- Support land conservation programs, public access projects, and reforestation efforts
- Support the protection and continued development and funding of Virginia's state parks and trails for the benefit of all Virginians and our economy



# MILITARY & VETERANS AFFAIRS

Virginia is home to a strong military and veteran community. Defense has historically been a strong economic sector for Virginia, and it remains an important part of Virginia's economy, with an estimated \$60.3 billion in defense-related spending, much of which is in Virginia-based companies. As Virginia continues to diversify its economy, we must protect its current military assets and resources. Over 115,000 active military personnel are spread throughout Virginia at numerous Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard facilities.

Virginia is deeply committed to taking care of service members, their spouses and families, and providing a high quality of life for them not only while they serve but as they transition to civilian life. Our goal is to be the best state in the nation for military families with increased access to community-based health care services, quality education and childcare services for their children, and economic opportunity to ensure their financial stability.

Virginia has the fastest-growing veteran population in the nation, where one in 10 Virginians is a veteran. One of the most important services we can deliver is to help ensure our transitioning service members, veterans and their spouses are equipped with the skills that will give them access to today's in-demand careers. Our military community also represents an invaluable resource for employers that need highly qualified talent to increase profitability and productivity.

The recommendations here discuss how Virginia can protect and secure its current military assets, while ensuring our veterans can access civilian careers upon the completion of their service.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### PROTECTING AND LEVERAGING OUR MILITARY ASSETS

- Strengthen military missions that currently exist in Virginia
- Communicate the value of future military missions in Virginia
  - Grow the Commonwealth's leadership in shipbuilding and maintenance, intelligence gathering, and unmanned systems research and development across military and private sectors
- Encourage the development of a state-funded defense community infrastructure program to assist communities that surround Virginia's military bases with planning projects that contribute to readiness, resiliency, and improved quality of life
- Support cross-regional collaboration for strategic opportunities like developing the talent pipeline for critical military operations
  - An example is the Danville and Hampton Roads collaboration as a federal designated Defense Manufacturing Community
- Enhance coastal resiliency to mitigate the impact of sea-level rise on security and military readiness
- Continue to support the Virginia Military Advisory Council in order to strengthen the public-private partnership between military and the civilian community

### CONNECTING VETERANS TO JOBS

- Educate Virginia's business leaders, hiring managers, and recruiters on the value of employing members of the military community and provide training and resources that empower them to connect with military talent
- Encourage and facilitate business engagement in the state's Virginia Values Veterans program to better advertise career opportunities and attract veteran talent to the Commonwealth
- Identify and advocate for business incentives to train and hire veterans, including internships and other work-based learning opportunities
- Provide clearly defined and easy to use pathways and other career readiness resources to transitioning service members (TSMs), veterans, and spouses to help them prepare for and seek employment
  - Include justice-involved veterans and disabled veterans in these efforts
- Connect transitioning service members, veterans, and spouses to careers in Virginia through the Virginia Chamber's HIRE VETS NOW events and in collaboration with other military employment organizations and initiatives in the Commonwealth

- Leverage Virginia's strong network of veterans in the business community for mentorship, advisory, and networking opportunities in formal and informal ways like the Virginia's Exec Vets Connect partnership and other initiatives
- Encourage more opportunities to modify or substitute military experience for degree requirements

### CONNECTING MILITARY SPOUSES TO JOBS

- Fully support the adoption of occupational and professional reciprocity policies to enable military spouses to find employment opportunities as soon as they receive orders to installations in Virginia
- Establish the Commonwealth as the top state in the country in reducing military spouse unemployment and underemployment
  - Leverage initiatives such as Virginia's Military Spouse Economic Empowerment Zones
- Incentivize development of training, internship, employment, and other meaningful career opportunities for military spouses
- Address barriers to spouse employment such as availability of affordable childcare, flexible working arrangements, and discrimination in hiring
  - Create a method of military spouse self-identification so employers can build programming and initiatives that aid in military spouse hiring
  - Encourage employers to market themselves as military spouse friendly employers



### PREPARING VETERANS AND SPOUSES FOR CIVILIAN CAREERS

- Empower veteran and military spouse entrepreneurs by increasing access to capital, corporate and government contracting opportunities, mentorship and business support
- Build on Virginia's reputation as a leader in education and career training for student veterans and their spouses
- Expand opportunities for veterans and their spouses to gain access to training and education for careers in high demand fields prior to transitioning from the military
- Facilitate the development of short-term training programs, work-based learning opportunities and apprenticeships for veterans, spouses, and family members
  - Promote increased awareness and use by Virginia companies and military installations of pre-transition training programs such as the Department of Defense's Skill Bridge program
  - Promote increased awareness and use of the HIRE VETS NOW Fellowship Skill Bridge program
  - Retain student veterans, transitioning service members (TSMs), and military spouses by providing on-the-job training (OJT), internship, and apprenticeship employment opportunities through programs like LEAD4IT, a statewide initiative to increase work-based learning opportunities in IT and cyber security
  - Include veteran training and employment prominently in the development of talent pathways throughout Virginia's higher education system
- Leverage a "credits to careers" approach in preparing our military community for a transition to a civilian career
- Develop a credit-for-prior-learning model that helps veterans earn the credentials required for civilian careers in an expedited time frame based on their military experience
- Assist education and training institutions in understanding and meeting the needs of the military-connected student and identifying employment pathways for veterans
- Support and promote Virginia Department of Veterans Services' Virginia's Military Education & Workforce Initiative



## SERVING OUR MILITARY FAMILIES

- Ensure that Virginia remains the top state for transitioning service members, veterans, and their families in the United States
- Encourage transitioning service members, recent veterans, and their families to remain in or move to Virginia after their military service
  - Develop a statewide strategy to target the retention of transitioning service members, recent veterans, and their families
  - Make Virginia the destination state for Veteran and Military Spouse-owned small businesses
  - Explore opportunities to make the Commonwealth more competitive in attracting and retaining more veterans in comparison to other states, including factors like economic environment, quality of life, and taxation
- Strengthen support to the military community by prioritizing veteran and military family access to quality health care, including mental and behavioral health services, and child care needs
- Increase access to community-based health care services and ensure private providers have better understanding of military culture
- Explore the potential for an employer tax credit for hiring military spouses and/or providing child care benefits
- Advocate and raise awareness for the Governor's Challenge on Suicide Prevention Among Veterans, Service Members, and their Families
- Encourage the adoption of military cultural competency training through Department of Veteran Services and other military culture trainings to better educate health care providers on the specific needs of the military and veteran communities



## SAFETY, PREPAREDNESS & RESILIENCY



Safety, preparedness, and resiliency have taken on a greater significance as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. The pandemic has highlighted the need for coordination and collaboration among and between the public and private sectors.

Worker and public safety are key priorities for the Virginia business community. As workplace safety initiatives are considered, it is important that businesses are involved in the discussion and their recommendations are considered to avoid unnecessary impacts to business operations or the economy.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted areas for improvement to ensure that the Commonwealth and the business community are ready for any future public health event, national security issue, natural disaster, environmental challenge, and economic risk. To ensure Virginia is prepared for these potential challenges, the Blueprint highlights the need for improvement in the resiliency of our critical systems for reliable and affordable energy, broadband access, and transportation infrastructure.

To improve Virginia's safety, readiness for adverse and emergency situations, and resiliency in weathering them, this section seeks to provide recommendations for a business approach on these topics.

## RECOMMENDATIONS



### IMPROVE COMMUNITY AND WORKPLACE SAFETY

- Recognize the need for smart regulations that ensure workplace safety and protect public health
  - Support commonsense workplace safety measures that are consistent, reasonable, and account for the views of communities and businesses
- Support improved analysis that evaluates the impact additional regulations might have on jobs, small businesses, and economic and personal freedoms
- Highlight the Virginia business community's positive track record of success in workplace safety, while supporting constructive workplace safety strategies that contribute to a day-to-day safety culture in the workplace
- Provide thought leadership on workplace safety best practices and regulatory updates for small businesses

### PREPARE FOR EMERGENCIES AND DISASTER SITUATIONS

- Improve communication, coordination, and cooperation between businesses, government, and nonprofits in times of disaster
- Establish legal and operating frameworks to ensure sustained collaboration between industry and government
- Promote the development of Virginia's research universities as hubs of resilience where innovative research and development is focused on crisis readiness and response
- Ensure reliability of the electric grid and other critical infrastructure even when faced with severe weather and other emergency scenarios
- Expand existing efforts to convert particularly outage-prone overhead power lines to underground to minimize the incidence and duration of electric service disruptions
- Improve business effectiveness in responding to disaster preparedness, response, and recovery in order to maintain effective operations
- Collaborate with the federal government to build a cohesive, integrated cyber security response system to deal with emerging cyber threats
- Utilize business expertise and innovation to improve disaster management
- Help small businesses build the resilience they need to face any disaster
  - Support efforts like the US Chamber Foundations "Resilience in a Box" toolkit which serves as a best practices and education initiative for business leaders on disaster preparedness and business resilience

### BUILD ADDITIONAL RESILIENCY INTO OUR CRITICAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS

- Invest in improved infrastructure assets, such as communications, energy, food, health, and water, which are necessary for companies and communities in order to respond effectively
  - Support policies that reduce risks for companies and communities
  - Target better coordination and integration of critical support systems
  - Support investments that utilize the latest innovations and technologies to modernize the Commonwealth's infrastructure with resilience prioritized
  - Promote public-private partnerships that leverage the business community's technical and practical expertise in identifying and mitigating risks in developing and implementing effective resilience solutions
- Strengthen the domestic and international supply chain for critical materials and products, especially regarding inventory critical to national security
- Support efforts to mitigate the growing risks of sea-level rise, especially in coastal Virginia where the impacts are particularly acute
- Target opportunities to build a "resilience economy" that harnesses innovative solutions to new challenges in community resiliency
- Enhance the resiliency of power delivery infrastructure through targeted improvements and adoption of new materials standards and other strategies



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# BLUEPRINT VIRGINIA 2030 STAKEHOLDERS

**We would like to recognize the organizations and individuals who served as co-hosts of the Blueprint Virginia 2030 Regional Tour. We would also like to recognize those who contributed their leadership and insights to the overall Blueprint Virginia 2030 development process.**

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