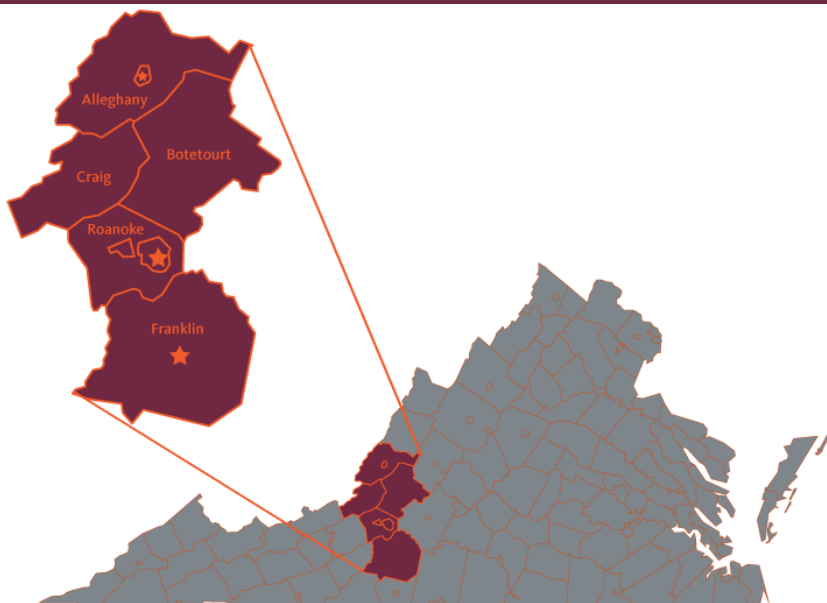


2020 - 2024

STRATEGIC PLAN

Virginia Career Works
Blue Ridge Region

Alleghany County
Botetourt County
Craig County
Franklin County
Roanoke County
City of Covington
City of Roanoke
City of Salem



**VIRGINIA
CAREER WORKS**

BLUE RIDGE REGION

Introduction

The Virginia Career Works – Blue Ridge region encompasses the Counties of Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig, Franklin, and Roanoke and the Cities of Covington, Roanoke, and Salem. With a population of 334,159¹, the region has a diverse population and economy, encompassing both rural and urban localities with a wide range of business and industry representation. To ensure the success of the regional economy and to ensure the business and industry community has a trained and skilled workforce to meet current and future job demand, the workforce development system in the Blue Ridge region is a strong and collaborative partnership between dozens of agencies and organizations working toward the same goal.

Western Virginia Workforce Development Board

The Western Virginia Workforce Development Board (WVWDB) is the public-private partnership implemented through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014. This legislation charges the WVWDB with the oversight and administration of the federal workforce programs authorized under Title I of the WIOA including the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. The Commonwealth of Virginia has gone further, to authorize the WVWDB as the regional convener for workforce development activities in the region, and as a 501(c)(3), the WVWDB serves in this role through collaboration and partnership.

Made up of 29 members, 15 from the private sector and 14 from the public sector, the WVWDB oversees the activities of the workforce development system and provides strategic direction for workforce programming in the Blue Ridge region. The WVWDB is solely responsible for the following strategic activities:

- Decide how best to organize the regional workforce system to most effectively serve the needs of current and emerging private sector businesses and job seekers;
- Decide how to best deploy available resources to achieve negotiated local performance;
- Decide how to best provide comprehensive services to regional private sector employers;
- Decide how to expand the resource base and service capability through the development of strategic partnerships, an integrated service-delivery system, and generation of additional public and private funding.

Chief Local Elected Officials Consortium

The Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEO) Consortium is made up of one representative from each of the 8 localities in the Blue Ridge region and provides input and oversight of the WVWDB for the purposes of WIOA Title I funds. Each of the members of the CLEO Consortium represents the locality in discussions regarding the workforce development system and the oversight of federal WIOA Title I funds. This valuable insight drives service delivery strategies to where they are needed in the region and in specific communities within the localities. The CLEO Consortium shares roles with the WVWDB in setting priorities and providing oversight of the WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth funds.

¹ JobsEQ, Chmura Economic, December 2020

The Workforce Development System

The workforce development system is made up of several agencies and organizations that provide workforce services to businesses and individuals in the communities within the Blue Ridge region. The workforce system has two primary customers:

- 1) Businesses seeking qualified candidates for employment opportunities and partnering on solutions for economic and workforce challenges
- 2) Job seekers (unemployed and underemployed) including, but not limited to, youth, adults transitioning from unemployment, job dislocation or public assistance to self-sufficient employment, and current workers.

There are numerous agencies and organizations that collaborate in the workforce development system and contribute resources and programs to customers. Some of the key partners in the region include:

- Virginia Employment Commission
- Department for Aging & Rehabilitative Services
- Department for Blind & Vision Impaired
- Local Departments of Social Services
- Roanoke Valley Alleghany Region 5 Adult Education
- West Piedmont Adult Career & Education
- Virginia Western Community College
- Dabney S. Lancaster Community College
- Goodwill Industries of the Valleys
- Total Action for Progress
- Blue Ridge Job Corps
- Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Alleghany Highlands Chamber of Commerce and Tourism
- Botetourt Chamber of Commerce
- Vinton Chamber of Commerce
- Salem-Roanoke Chamber of Commerce
- Roanoke Regional Partnership
- Local Economic Development Departments
- Virginia Economic Development Partnership
- Roanoke Redevelopment Housing Authority
- Covington Redevelopment Housing Authority

The role of the WVVWDB is to convene these agencies and organizations throughout the region to provide oversight to the workforce development system, promote alignment and reduce duplication of services, and provide ease of access to services and resources for the region's businesses and individuals. This includes the oversight of services provided to businesses in the region and coordination with regional and local economic development entities. The WVVWDB also provides resources to the system, including relevant labor market information, to drive individuals toward high wage, high demand jobs and provide information on available career pathways and advancement in the region.

Blue Ridge Region: Current Analysis

Below is an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) for the Blue Ridge region to identify areas for concentration in the future. The WVVWDB worked with a third-party facilitator to invite members of the Board, CLEO, partner agencies, business

representatives and community leaders to participate in a 2-part discussion for this analysis. The sessions included both larger group and smaller group conversations to help focus the conversation on the four areas of evaluation.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged stakeholders and partners Partners and stakeholders desire to be cohesive and want to work together Strong expertise in the field Qualified and committed staff Region wants to be collaborative Strong relationship between workforce development and economic development Strong relationship between workforce development and K-12 schools Alleghany Highlands feels heard and supported Staff are proactive in finding new stakeholders Administrative and field staff have grant writing expertise & experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Too many cooks in the kitchen” – too many organizations in the system duplicating services Federal funding has decreased over the past few years, which has been relied upon as the main source of funding Lack of communication between stakeholders Institutional inertia for job seekers and businesses Stakeholders not aligned Lack of an investment from businesses to grow their current workforce from within Lack of apprenticeship programs and ability to “sell” the program due to bureaucracy No good single pipeline source for talent
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovative approaches to funding Creation of more training programs to meet business demand More engagement and programs with youth and young adults, particularly engagement with youth in high school Large number of unemployed and underemployed individuals due to COVID-19 Creation of better working cultures for local businesses Assisting companies in investing in growing their existing employees and training new employees Elimination of confusion on the different training providers and the resources available Better relationships between the workforce development board and local businesses (single point of contact) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19 and economic impacts from shutdown Reduction and lack of funding Partners and stakeholders that continue to operate in silos Too much bureaucracy and administrative work can prohibit innovation and flexibility New entities starting workforce programs without understanding the current availability and the workforce system Not enough childcare opportunities in the region to meet the needs of working families Lack of coordination of resources amongst partners in the workforce system Transportation limitations in the region High areas of unemployment and poverty in the region Not enough youth and young adults to fill the talent needs of the future (talent attraction) Health access and general health of citizens in Southwest Virginia

Strategic Plan: 2020-2024

Mission

To serve as a regional talent resource for businesses by providing trained and skilled job seekers that meet current and future demand.

Vision

The region will have both a skilled and diverse talent pipeline for businesses and employment opportunities that provide self-sufficient wages that promote all around success for the Roanoke Valley and Alleghany Highlands.

Goals & Strategies

Goal #1: Strengthen the role of the workforce development board in the region to be the premier talent development resource.

Strategies:

1. Increase involvement with economic development efforts in the region.
2. Increase involvement with GO Virginia Region 2 Council.
3. Increase engagement of workforce development board members.
4. Strengthen presence and utilization of Virginia Career Works Centers in the region.

Goal #2: Lead the convening and coordination of the partners of the workforce development system to reduce competition, streamline efforts, and eliminate gaps in service delivery.

Strategies:

1. Submit applications to federal, state, local, public and private sources of funding to eliminate gaps in service delivery and enhance the workforce development system.
2. Create Blue Ridge Partnership Consortium that consists of all workforce partners participating in the system-wide Memorandum of Understanding.
3. Conduct a program asset mapping of the workforce development system to better understand offerings and suggest alignment opportunities.

Goal #3: Increase awareness of the workforce development board and the system partners

Strategies:

1. Implement the workforce board as “the front door” for workforce services.
2. Produce online business resources for all workforce programs to be used by internal and external partners.
3. Conduct direct marketing to underemployed and out-of-work individuals in the region.
4. Utilize board members as ambassadors for the workforce development system.
5. Implement sector strategies with key business leaders to drive program development and increase the knowledge of the workforce development system with business and industry.

Goal #4: Develop and retain a qualified, desirable workforce that meets current and future job demand.

Strategies:

1. Be an active partner with the United Way Roanoke Valley to distribute and implement the ALICE survey for the Roanoke Valley and Alleghany Highlands.
2. Increase the number of job seekers utilizing services through Virginia Career Works who receive a new job, better job, or increased wages.
3. Ensure that the workforce development board is involved in conversations surrounding infrastructure development with economic development and locality partners.
4. Provide virtual and in-person targeted opportunities for businesses to recruit new employees.
5. Increase awareness of career development and career pathway opportunities in the Roanoke Valley and Alleghany Highlands to attract and retain talent.