**Region 8**

  *Cities of: Buena Vista, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Staunton, Waynesboro, & Winchester*

 *Counties of: Augusta, Bath, Clarke, Frederick, Highland, Page, Rockbridge, Rockingham, Shenandoah, & Warren*

Meeting summary for Talent Pipeline Initiative Ad-Hoc GoVaR8 Committee (02/19/2025)

Quick recap

The team discussed the weather situation in their respective locations and introduced new members to the ad hoc committee. They also analyzed employment data and industry clusters in Region 8, focusing on manufacturing and transportation/logistics sectors, and discussed the challenges of gathering data on non-traditional training providers. The conversation ended with a discussion on the importance of sector-based partnerships in workforce development and the progress of their ongoing project.

Next steps

• Alison to send contact information for the Virginia Innovation Center in Buena Vista and the Shahadi Center in Winchester to Sharon.

• Sharon to add Joe Sprangell to the list of people to interview.

• Alex to look into more granular data on inflow/outflow of workers at the county level.

• Work Ed team to update the training providers slide to clarify that universities are not included in the 9 providers mentioned.

• Work Ed team to add a legend to the map slide showing manufacturing, transportation/logistics, and training provider locations.

• Work Ed team to create a new slide identifying buckets of potential workforce populations (e.g. neurodivergent, returning citizens, chronically poor).

• Sharon to send the outline of the final report to committee members before the next meeting.

• Sharon to distribute today's PowerPoint presentation to the committee.

• Alison to send calendar invites for future meetings to new committee members Joe and Andre.

• Alison to send out meeting brief via email.

Summary

Weather and New Committee Members

In the meeting, the team discussed the weather situation in their respective locations, with Mason and Sharon noting the snowfall in their areas. Alison then led the introductions of new members to the ad hoc committee, including Alex, Mason, Matt, Andre, Ann, Eric, and Joe. The team also discussed the progress of their next steps, with Sharon confirming that all tasks had been addressed. Sharon also expressed gratitude for the contacts provided by Alison and the team, and mentioned plans to interview Joe and Tracy.

Regional Workforce and Education Data

The summary discusses the regional workforce and education data presented by Mason. He highlights key findings, including population and job growth outpacing national rates, increased labor force participation, and higher high school diploma attainment but lower bachelor's degree attainment compared to national averages. Mason also presents data on workforce commuter patterns, showing a net outflow of over 30,000 workers from the region daily. The committee is asked to validate and provide context for the data presented. Additionally, the summary notes gaps between program completions and openings for in-demand jobs, suggesting educational institutions may not have the capacity to meet current employment demands in target industries.

Addressing Employee Retention and Commuting

In the meeting, Mason discussed the challenges of retaining employees and the need to attract new talent. Alison raised concerns about the net loss of employees in the DC area, particularly in the Northern regions. Alex confirmed that they can track the inflow and outflow of jobs at a county level, but the level of detail might not be as granular as at a regional level. Ann suggested updating the 2010 data on commuters to reflect recent trends. Sharon asked about the high number of people commuting to Richmond. The team agreed that remote work could increase the pool of potential employees and change commuting patterns. The group also discussed the importance of blending qualitative and quantitative data in their final report.

Analyzing Region 8 Employment Data

The discussion focuses on analyzing employment data and industry clusters in Region 8, particularly in manufacturing and transportation/logistics sectors. Alex explains that both sectors are projected to grow over the next five years and are more concentrated in the region compared to the national average. The group examines occupational data, noting that production and transportation/material moving occupations are the largest groups. Mason highlights a shortage of workers, especially for third shifts in manufacturing. The team identifies 501 companies in the manufacturing cluster and 333 in transportation/logistics, with 9 training provider locations including community colleges and CTE centers. They also discuss the geographical distribution of these industries, noting concentrations along major highways and in specific cities.

Non-Traditional Training Providers Discussion

Mason, Alison, Matt, Andrei, Alex, and Sharon discussed the challenges of gathering data on non-traditional training providers and the importance of including such providers in their report. Mason explained that while there's no standard data source for this information, they can gather data through anecdotally or informally. Matt clarified that the 9 training providers mentioned did not include universities. Andrei asked about the inclusion of small business non-traditional training providers, to which Alex responded that it's challenging to quantify them. Mason suggested incorporating data on registered apprenticeship programs and informal on-the-job training contracts. Alison expressed interest in capturing all training opportunities, including those from non-traditional organizations. Sharon suggested adding the Shahada Center to their list of interviewees.

Addressing High Turnover and Talent Retention

Mason discussed the issue of high turnover rates in various sectors, particularly in lower-wage and entry-level jobs. He mentioned that employers are now engaging third-party staffing agencies to provide support for individuals transitioning from education or training into employment. Mason also highlighted the potential for collaboration between employers as a sector to work better together and avoid poaching employees from each other. He noted the interest in strengthening the talent development pipeline and the creation of new job roles with higher pay to retain talent. Challenges discussed included shortages and retention challenges, technical skills gaps, soft skills deficiencies, barriers to workforce participation, and low industry awareness and engagement.

Engaging Underemployed Populations in Manufacturing

In the meeting, Mason and Joe discussed the potential benefits of engaging underemployed populations, including neurodiverse individuals, returning citizens, and those in generational poverty. Joe highlighted the need for showcasing the benefits of working in manufacturing to attract talent. Mason agreed and suggested further engagement on these topics. Alison asked about obtaining data on these demographics, to which Mason responded by mentioning census data and other sources as potential data sources. Andrei emphasized the potential talent pool among neurodivergent individuals. The team also discussed the importance of accommodating neurodiverse candidates and the need for companies to update their practices when dealing with diverse candidates. Alison brought up the topic of interviewing and retaining neurodiverse individuals, which Joe mentioned he specializes in. The team ended the conversation with a commitment to making the report actionable and to identifying the different demographic buckets in the report.

Sector-Based Partnerships in Workforce Development

Mason led a discussion on the importance of sector-based partnerships in workforce development, emphasizing their employer-driven nature and the involvement of various partners such as the Workforce Development Board, Go Virginia, nonprofit organizations, and training institutions. Alison sought clarification on the concept, and Sharon provided an example of a sector-based partnership in the Shenandoah Valley for the life sciences. The team also discussed the need for more specific recommendations in their final report. Alex suggested using B2B sourcing tools to gather information on manufacturers and transportation providers, which would be shared with Region 8 by the end of the report.

Project Progress and Next Steps

In the meeting, Alison, Alex, Mason, Sharon, Matt, and Tracey discussed the progress of their ongoing project. Mason expressed appreciation for the trust placed in their partnership and shared his professional growth from the project. Sharon outlined the next steps, which included conducting interviews and researching best practices at regional, state, and national levels. She also mentioned the need to finalize the outline of the final report and to distribute the PowerPoint slides used in the meeting to the committee. Alison agreed to send out the meeting brief and calendar invites to the new members, Joe and Andre. The team agreed to continue their dialogue and share additional insights and questions as they arise.