

**Virginia Workforce Council
Strategic Plan
Revised June 2005
Approved December 6, 2005**

OVERVIEW

In December of 2003, the Virginia Workforce Council (VWC) defined its vision for workforce development within the Commonwealth, along with its mission and responsibilities. It also defined 5 strategic priorities, and organized committees to pursue activities to drive each.

In June of 2005, the Council held a session to review and assess the state of workforce development within the Commonwealth and make adjustments to its strategy as needed. It was noted that although clear progress has been made in many dimensions, the need continues to be great and there is considerable room for further improvement. While the vision, mission and even strategic priorities continued to be appropriate, the Council decided to modify its approach and to drive some more focused and foundational activities that will help the State's workforce system become even more efficient and effective at meeting the needs of both workers and employers.

I. VISION, MISSION & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE VWC

As defined in December of 2003, the **VISION** of the Virginia Workforce Council for workforce development in Virginia is as follows:

“Our Commonwealth has a world-class workforce system that is responsive to employer and worker needs and creates a well-trained, well-educated and globally competitive workforce. This workforce is qualified to meet the needs of employers, both now and in the future, and is engaged in life-long learning.”

As an important component of this workforce system, the Virginia Workforce Council also declared its own **MISSION**:

“The Virginia Workforce Council (VWC) is a business-led board that acts as principal advisor to the Governor and provides strategic leadership to the State regarding the workforce development system and its efforts to create a strong workforce aligned with employer needs.”

The Virginia Workforce Council **RESPONSIBILITIES** are to:

- Act as principal advisor to the Governor regarding workforce development matters
- Provide strategic direction and feedback to the system as a whole
- Recommend specific uses for discretionary funds made available through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA)
- Set policy & standards, provide oversight and assess performance of the Workforce Investment Boards (WIB's) and One-Stop Centers

II. STRATEGIC GOALS

There are **five Strategic Goals** of the Virginia Workforce Council:

1. Integration & Alignment

- Achieve greater integration and alignment of the various parties and programs within the Virginia Workforce Development Network

2. Local Excellence

- Promote excellence in the operation of all One-Stop Career Centers & WIB's

3. Awareness & Confidence

- Increase the awareness, confidence and engagement of stakeholders in the Workforce Development System

4. Metrics & Incentives

- Develop a robust set of metrics and processes to effectively assess and incent performance

5. Key Player Effectiveness

- Enhance the effectiveness of key players within the system

III. LOOKING BACK—RESULTS ACCOMPLISHED 2004-2005

Over the past 18 months, the VWC has leveraged five approaches in its efforts to improve workforce development with the Commonwealth, namely:

1. The State's "Partner MOU"
2. The efforts of the Governor's Special Advisor
3. Funding of specific state & local initiatives
4. Enactment of Committee-driven initiatives
5. Taking a "convener" role at meetings

It is clear that there has been a lot of activity and some solid progress within each of the VWC's strategic priorities. Highlights include:

Integration & Alignment

- Cascading of State MOU
- Development of US DOL State Strategic Plan
- Development of local strategic plans that go beyond WIA
- Creation of system governance documents
- Increased collaboration between workforce & economic development groups
- Roll-out of Career Readiness Certificate
- Issuance of first annual report

Local Excellence

- Establishment of WIB and One-Stop standards
- Tier 1 certification of all One-Stop Career Centers
- Locals provided with revised planning guidance and offered technical assistance on environmental scanning and strategic planning
- Development of Community Profiles
- Completion of "Demand-planning" pilots
- Realignment of Appomattox County
- Establishment of Peer-to-Peer network for local directors, chairs, etc.

Awareness & Confidence

- Seminars on work keys and certificate
- Commitment from Governor for PSA's
- Participation in National One-Stop Week
- Awarding of three \$10,000 WIB Marketing Pilots
- Awarding of \$100,000 Virginia Workforce Network Marketing Contract

Metrics & Incentives

- Establishment of State system performance measures
- Periodic review by Council of program and regional performance
- Revision of WIA Incentive Policy
- Establishment of Sanctions Policy and Continuous Improvement Policy
- Receiving of Workforce Information Core Products & Services Grant with VEC EIS

Key Player Effectiveness

- Monthly meeting with Executive Directors
- Annual State-wide meetings with One-Stop operators
- Informational seminars for LEO's, CLEO's
- Governor's Conference to present Best Practices
- Council member professional development and networking events
- State Institute Advisory Board approved
- Discussion on One Stop staff certifications

IV. CURRENT SITUATION--EXISTING GAPS

Acknowledging all the progress that has brought us to this point, the Council analyzed a great deal of information presented from environmental scanning of the current state of the Commonwealth. As of the June, 2005 VWC Strategic Planning Meeting, some significant gaps still remain:

- Not all components of the "system" are working together; duplication of effort exists; WIA -vs.- Non-WIA silos continue.
- The roles, responsibilities and expected interactions between the various players are unclear.
- Accountability for performance is relatively weak.
- In most cases, employers are still not aware or actively involved.
- It's not possible to get a quantitative view of the whole system, at the State or Regional level.
- The local environment lacks the flexibility to fully and quickly respond to unique opportunities (e.g., an economic development project) or a unique need.
- With the resignation of the Special Advisor, there is no individual person to take a leadership role in driving progress.
- There are significant financial inefficiencies associated with a lack of integrated technologies, duplication of activities and the overhead associated with a highly fragmented system.
- There is a considerable variance in the performance of the various WIB's and One-Stops, with some performing very well while others continue to be challenged.

As Virginia's economy and demographics change, we believe that some of these gaps may be exacerbated and new issues will emerge. For example, most of the fastest growing job opportunities will require higher education degrees, while the largest number of jobs created will be lower wage, lower skill service-sector jobs. Also, Virginia's graduation and credentialing rates, the aging of our workforce, and other demographic trends indicate the state is likely to see significant gaps in "labor supply-versus-demand" unless more is done now to prevent it.

In addition to these shifts, new Federal legislation has been proposed that could significantly increase the role of the VWC within the system and could create new system requirements that would be difficult to implement under today's conditions.

V. SIX OBJECTIVES FOR 2005-2006

Based on all of these considerations, the VWC has decided to modify its approach. While the vision, mission and strategic goals remain intact, the Council has defined six focused and foundational objectives that it will drive during the next 18 months.

The six objectives for 2005-2006 fit well within the overall Strategic Goals of the VWC. An overview of these objectives and how they relate to the Virginia Workforce Council Strategic Goals are shown as follows.

Integration & Alignment

1. Create a comprehensive picture of the "system"

What are all the various components, what are their roles & responsibilities, how should they interact?

2. Develop an overall "Blueprint" for the State

Gather and analyze job creation projections, skills needs and potential gaps in light of projected economic development trends. Identify industry and occupational targets for workforce development, all towards the goal of aligning workforce development efforts at both the state and local levels.

3. Ensure that the system is adequately meeting needs of "hard to serve"

Assess activities and ensure that business focus doesn't result in inadequate service to "hard to serve" (e.g., disabled, paroled, etc.), recommend changes/programs to fill any gaps noted.

Local Excellence

4. Increase effectiveness and responsiveness at the local level

Assist local WIB's and One-Stop in removing obstacles and developing capabilities to allow them to meet their unique needs and respond rapidly to specific opportunities.

Awareness & Confidence

5. Develop a plan to market and brand system

Continue efforts to build general awareness; also, take output from “create comprehensive system picture” task force to more clearly define brand and broader marketing effort

Metrics & Incentives

2. Create a comprehensive picture of the “system”

- a. As part of the aforementioned effort, we need to also quantitatively describe the system, including funding, expenses and performance metrics of the primary parts and the whole

Key Player Effectiveness

6. Create a recommendation clearly describing suggested roles & responsibilities of the State’s senior workforce development leader (nee Governor’s Special Advisor)

Provide clearer articulation of specific accountabilities, authority, and relationship to other key players in other organizations, etc.

VI. TASK FORCE STRUCTURE

To organize around these six objectives, the VWC also decided to restructure itself from its current committee structure to a task force structure, aligned with each of the six objectives. The VWC will transition from its existing structure of five committees plus the Executive Committee to these six task forces (one for each priority) plus the existing Executive Committee.

Task force leaders have been named, and enlistment of other task force participants from among the Council members has begun. The task force approach to accomplishing the six objectives for 2005-2006 has leveraged, in many cases, the committee leadership, which existed in the past. This will allow the Council to benefit from the relationships and expertise that these people have developed.

Each task force will be responsible for further articulating their objective(s), defining specific goals for that objective (e.g. quantitative outcomes or the delivery of work products and milestones,) and declaring any specific initiatives that should be undertaken. Staff from the VEC and VCCS will support these groups. Other state agencies will serve as resources to the task forces.

The task force leaders are encouraged to lead their efforts in a manner that is inclusive and objective and with a sense of urgency. Our goal is to make significant progress during the next 2 months, so that proposals can be reviewed and considered at the next

VWC meeting (September 18, 2005) and subsequently recommended to the Governor. Each task force will be provided time at this (and subsequent) quarterly meetings.

VII. CONTINUING VWC INITIATIVES

The transition to the six objectives for 2005-2006 will not mean that work underway by the previous committees will be discontinued midstream. The continued leadership of many existing committee chairs also helps the Council ensure that each continuing initiative is driven to an appropriate conclusion or is smoothly transitioned to staff for ongoing work.

Some of these on-going activities are:

- Roll-out of State Performance Measures
- Independent third party assessment of WIB/One-Stop performance
- Tier II One-Stop Certification criteria
- WIB Incentive awards
- AVIP Scholarships

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that with the efforts of the VWC, the various State agencies and the local WIB's and One-Stops, that progress is being made. It is also without doubt, however, that more progress is needed and that we must all be willing to push the status quo. Increased clarity, cooperation and capability are needed, and the Virginia Workforce Council is committed to playing a leadership role in creating all three.

APPENDIX

Additional information and context for each of the **SIX TASK FORCE OBJECTIVES FOR 2005-2006** is provided below.

TASK FORCE 1—

CREATE A COMPREHENSIVE PICTURE OF THE “SYSTEM”

Main Issue: What are all the various components, what are their roles & responsibilities, how should they interact?

In our documents and conversations, the term “Workforce Development System” is frequently used. And yet, there is no clear and consistent description of what the system is, what roles and responsibilities the various components have or how the system is performing in terms of funding, expenditures and outcomes. This is true at both the State and the regional level.

Creating such a picture and building broad awareness of it is critical. Our ability to assess the effectiveness of the system and identify gaps would be greatly enhanced. With this increased insight, more impactful strategies could be developed, both locally and at

the State level, and the ability for the various components of the system to efficiently and effectively collaborate and coordinate would be dramatically improved.

We therefore will lead efforts to create this system-wide picture both descriptively and quantitatively, clarify the roles and responsibilities of the various components and provide models reflecting how those components should interact.

TASK FORCE 2— Develop a “workforce development blueprint” for the State

Main Issue: Gather and analyze job creation projections, skill needs and potential gaps in light of projected economic development trends. Identify industry and occupational targets for workforce development, all towards the goal of aligning workforce development efforts at both the state and local levels.

The workforce development system created by WIA emphasizes regional activities and has involved the establishment of local goals and strategies. These goals have been generally driven by WIA required measures and, increasingly, by the demands of the regional economic environment. Other than adding together the goals of the regions, we have not declared any statewide targets.

Having such targets could help to align efforts at both the State and local levels and would help us assure that at a macro-level, the needs of the State are being met. These targets should be created by developing an overall “workforce development blueprint” for the State that starts with analyzing job creation projections. This analysis then drives expectations associated with skill needs, which in turn can drive occupation-based targets for workforce development. The VWC will drive the creation of such a workforce development blueprint.

TASK FORCE 3— Ensure the system is adequately meeting needs of the “Hard to Serve”

Main Issue: Assess activities and ensure that business focus doesn’t result in inadequate service to “hard to serve” (e.g., disabled, paroled, etc.), recommend changes/programs to fill any gaps noted

One of the major goals of the Workforce Investment Act and the Virginia Workforce System is to make business a more prominent participant within the system. The greater prominence helps ensure that the skills developed are indeed the ones needed by employers, both today and in the future.

The impact of increasing the focus on the business community has generally been positive, but we do need to recognize and manage one key risk – namely that we will not balance this focus appropriately with the need to provide workforce development services to those considered “hard to serve.” The Council is committed to ensuring this balance is right and will drive the creation of a strategy and identification of tactics that will ensure that the “Hard to Serve” receive that right level of attention.

TASK FORCE 4— Increase effectiveness and responsiveness at the local level

Main Issue: Assist local WIB's and One-Stop in removing obstacles and developing capabilities to allow them to meet their unique needs and respond rapidly to specific opportunities

One of the primary objectives of the workforce development system created by the WIA is to emphasize the local WIB's and One-Stops so that the system is better equipped to deal with unique needs and opportunities that exist within specific areas. Unfortunately, many of our regions still lack the flexibility to adequately respond to such unique needs and opportunities. This may be in part due to legal restrictions on funding streams but also may be driven by a lack of involvement of key constituencies or the need to build more responsive internal processes. Because this need for flexibility is vital to both economic development efforts and workforce development efforts, the VWC is committed to taking a leadership role in helping WIB's and One-Stops overcome obstacles and develop the capabilities to rapidly and even proactively meet their unique needs and capitalize on opportunities.

TASK FORCE 5—Develop plan to market and brand system

Main Issue: Continue efforts to build general awareness; also, take output from “create comprehensive system picture” task force to more clearly define brand and broader marketing effort

A number of efforts have been made to increase awareness of and engagement in the current system. While these efforts have been quite successful, the need to market and brand the system still remains as a critical component that requires additional investment. Leveraging the work that has been undertaken by the VWC's “Awareness and Confidence” Committee, the Council will continue to drive comprehensive efforts in this arena.

TASK FORCE 6—Create recommendation clearly describing suggested roles & responsibilities of the State's senior workforce development leader (nee Governor's Special Advisor)

Main Issue: Provide clearer articulation of specific accountabilities, authority, and relationship to other key players in other organizations, etc.

One of the past recommendations made by the VWC was the creation of a cabinet-level position to take the lead on building and improving the Statewide system. This recommendation resulted in the appointment of the Governor's Special Advisor on Workforce Development. While having someone play this role did create some value, it became clear the responsibilities and expectations of this role need to be clarified and, potentially, this role needs to be re-engineered.

The VWC is committed to developing a recommendation that clearly describes the role of the State's leader for workforce development and ensures that the role is structured in a way that enables effectiveness.