

A Master Plan for 21st Century Workforce Transitions in Shenandoah Valley



Shenandoah Valley, Virginia

**A Master Plan for
21st Century Workforce Transitions
in Shenandoah Valley
January 2008**



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- Central Shenandoah Valley Planning Commission
- Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board
- Blue Ridge Community College
- James Madison University
- Harrisonburg/Rockingham County Healthy Community Council
- Harrisonburg City Police Department
- Rockingham County
- Augusta County

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Executive Summary

In the context of global and regional economic change, SRI International conducted an assessment of the Shenandoah Valley's education and training opportunities with a view toward 21st century workplace demands. Working with the Shenandoah Valley Partnership (SVP), staff members from SRI inventoried regional training and education resources to assess the future workforce needs of the Valley from a variety of stakeholder perspectives. Starting in April 2007, staff members from SRI's Policy Division (Center for Education Policy) targeted key individuals and organizations representing a cross section of the community in Augusta County, Rockingham County, Waynesboro, Staunton, and Harrisonburg. More than 160 individuals were interviewed, including elected officials, social service providers, law enforcement officials, community-based organizations, faith-based service providers, schools, universities, employers, and career and economic development specialists.

The goals of this effort were to analyze existing education and training resources in the region and to perform a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis examining the workforce system. These strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats include:

- The region's diverse economy is complemented by a strong work ethic, a strong public school system, a solid community college and higher education infrastructure, numerous technical training programs, and a high quality of life.

- A number of high school youth graduate without basic work-readiness skills.
- Students, parents, counselors, teachers, and school administrators are often unaware of postsecondary training and employment opportunities.
- Counselors and schools lack the capacity to provide effective career guidance.
- Minority populations are increasing in the region, yet their enrollment in regional higher education institutions remains low.
- Funding for programs to support youth and emerging and incumbent workers are scarce, competitive, and decreasing.
- Individuals and organizations are willing to collaborate to identify workforce problems and create solutions.
- There has been little regional action or communication among stakeholders to address chronic workforce challenges.

Based upon this SWOT analysis, SRI has proposed seven strategies for addressing the workforce system needs in the region:

- **Enhancing high school student work-readiness:** Given that a large percentage of high school students graduate without basic employability skills, greater efforts must be made to promote successful school-to-work transitions.
- **Supporting youth outside school:** Youth and young adults, especially vulnerable youth who lack support at home, need adult relationships and

healthy activities outside of school hours to help them achieve their full potential and contribute productively to society.

- **Bringing youth back into the pipeline:** Youth and adults outside of the K-12 system who are unemployed, underemployed, moving between low-wage entry-level jobs, or recently released from the juvenile justice system need help developing new work-readiness skills.
- **Integrating immigrant youth and families:** Recent immigrants need support for the immediate needs of their families so that they and their children can become self-sufficient in the future.
- **Attracting and retaining talent:** A large percentage of young, educated, skilled talent has left the area to attend college or seek employment, creating a serious “brain drain.” There is a need to attract, retain, and prepare talent at all levels as the baby boomers retire and the pool of qualified workers shrinks.
- **Enhancing business retention and expansion:** The majority of regional growth in business investment, job retention, and new job creation currently comes from existing businesses. Therefore, there should be ongoing outreach to these businesses to proactively respond to their concerns and needs.
- **Supporting worker advancement:** All workers need continued guidance and support as they upgrade skills, change jobs, reenter the workforce, or change careers.

In the fall of 2007, SRI met with various leaders from the Shenandoah Valley to share the initial findings from the SWOT analysis and obtain feedback on the seven strategies proposed above. Taking into account leadership input

regarding which strategies should be implemented first, SRI identified 4 strategic priorities to address the gaps revealed by the SWOT analysis:

- Enhancing high school student work-readiness
- Supporting youth outside school
- Enhancing business retention and expansion
- Supporting worker advancement

As these findings suggest, improving the education and workforce system in the Shenandoah Valley will be a challenging endeavor. It will require commitment from the region’s leaders and close collaboration among all the stakeholders to put in place the support structure necessary to develop youth and adults into 21st century workers who can contribute productively to the region and spur economic growth.

One of the greatest strengths of the region is its extensive network of community and faith-based organizations serving youth and young adults. SRI has identified a number of community organizations in this report that are already working to address some of the challenges identified above. This capacity and experience should be tapped into and enhanced to build an even stronger network of support for the people of the Shenandoah Valley.

SRI has also developed a series of action steps to implement each of the seven proposed strategies. These proposed steps are by no means exhaustive, and they should be viewed as a starting point for an extended communitywide effort to address the key gaps and meet the challenges involved in preparing a 21st century workforce. The region’s leaders will undoubtedly add to and modify this initial list of recommendations to best suit the needs of the Shenandoah Valley region.

Members of two task forces, consisting of community leaders knowledgeable about youth and workforce issues, will work together to come up with a list of the most appropriate recommendations and an implementation plan for turning those ideas into real action. One task force will focus on tackling the issues related to youth ages 13-25—i.e., enhancing high school student work-readiness, supporting youth outside of school, etc.—and the other will work on addressing the challenges of the adult workforce. These two task forces will be coordinated and supported by an executive committee and a board of directors, with assistance from SRI.

During the first six months of 2008, the two task forces will convene and plan for the initial phase of implementation, which will include further refining the strategic priorities, developing financial plans, and rolling out new program initiatives. Further planning and implementation will take place in six-month intervals thereafter.

The Shenandoah Valley region is poised to address some of the workforce challenges it will face in the coming years. This master plan attempts to identify strategies for addressing the region's workforce challenges. This plan will continue to evolve and develop as leaders and local stakeholders refine and redefine what strategies are most relevant for achieving the region's goals. Proactive strategic planning with broad community participation will provide a strong foundation for the region to address its workforce needs and challenges in the 21st century.

Introduction

Regional and Global Trends in Context

Virginia's Shenandoah Valley region is a pleasant place to live and work. Its majestic beauty and natural resources have attracted many visitors and new residents throughout its 300+ year history. Rockingham and Augusta Counties, in the center of the Valley, are two of the largest and most productive agricultural regions in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Valley is also home to a growing number of manufacturing, services, and technology firms. From the northern to the southern tip of the Valley, tourists can visit and enjoy historic Civil War battlefields, farms, festivals, museums, caverns, and parks offering a wide variety of year-round recreation activities. In 2001, *Money Magazine* recognized the Valley as one of the 12 best places to vacation in North America (Daragahi, Rafi, & Turner, 2001). The Valley's numerous schools and higher education institutions compare favorably with other schools in the Commonwealth and serve the educational needs of a diverse range of students.

The current economic health of the Valley looks very bright. Unemployment rates in the Valley have been among the lowest in the Commonwealth for a number of years. The region is known for its productive workforce, which has attracted a number of relocating businesses over the last several decades. However, the Valley is also increasingly influenced by the economic trends and forces that have affected the United States as a whole. In recent years, major restructuring in the national and global economy have placed U.S. workers in direct competition for jobs

with low-wage workers in other parts of the world, particularly in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, both of which have been historically vital to the economic health of the Valley. These developments have contributed to a climate of uncertainty and concern over the disparate distribution of opportunities and job skills for the U.S. workforce.

These economic shifts, in addition to demographic trends, have created a situation in the United States some have identified as "the perfect storm"—a convergence of forces that could potentially undermine the hope for sharing in America's future prosperity (Augustine, 2005; Kirsch, Braun, Yamamoto, & Sum, 2007). As a result, national experts and panels have called for creating a workforce prepared to meet the challenges of globalization. A skilled workforce is an economic necessity and is directly linked to U.S. competitiveness and the quality of life of all citizens. As U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke (2007) recently emphasized in a speech to an education and workforce summit, "Upgrading skills through continuing education and training outside the job is also important, particularly in an environment in which workers can face displacement from international competition or technological advance."

Planning for the Future Workforce

In view of the global trends affecting regional economic activity and workforce development, it is imperative that the region seize this opportunity to improve the education and workforce system in the Shenandoah Valley. It will be a difficult endeavor. The Valley faces many challenges in building the workforce of the future, including the large numbers of youth leaving high school without basic work-readiness skills, lack of funding for supporting worker advancement, and the perceived regional “brain drain” from the Valley to the Washington, DC, metropolitan area.

There should be no room for complacency; the social and economic costs of not addressing this are too great to be ignored. Like a number of communities around the country that are launching initiatives to support a skilled workforce, the region must plan and prepare all of its citizens for promoting economic growth. As former U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin (2006) stated in a *Wall Street Journal* editorial, “Broad participation in economic well-being and growth is critical, both as a fundamental value and to realize our economic potential.” The Shenandoah Valley region is in a strong position right now to take advantage of its unique assets and support a major effort to align its workforce system to the changing needs of its economy. This report provides a rationale for the region to take action to maximize its considerable human capital and suggests steps that might be taken.

Background and Methodology

Founded in 1946 as Stanford Research Institute, SRI International is an independent, nonprofit research and technology development organization that serves a variety of government agencies, commercial businesses, and private foundations. SRI has used its multidisciplinary expertise to address complex problems and produce innovative research-based solutions in different global settings. SRI has a staff of 1,400 professionals in five major divisions: Biosciences, Physical Sciences, Engineering, Computer Sciences, and Policy. SRI’s main research campus is located in Menlo Park, California, but staff work in offices throughout the United States and in other countries.

In 2006, the Commonwealth of Virginia and SRI International established a research and economic development partnership in the Shenandoah Valley. SRI’s presence in the region was seen as a catalyst for progress in the region and the state, conducting cutting-edge drug research and development and potentially spurring new private sector investments and jobs. With incentive funding and support from the Commonwealth, the Center for Advanced Drug Research (CADRE) was established in December 2006 to assist in improving the productivity of the pharmaceutical industry, respond to biothreats, and develop life-saving treatments for neglected diseases. CADRE is a part of SRI’s Biosciences Division.

In parallel to the establishment of CADRE, SRI's Policy Division (Center for Education Policy) proposed an initiative that would leverage its national expertise in education and workforce development for the benefit of the region's residents. With the increasing presence in the region of firms specializing in research and development, technology, and technical services, Policy Division researchers believed that it would be necessary to prepare the present and future workforce in the Valley to support this new type of economic growth. With funding from the Commonwealth of Virginia and under the aegis of the Shenandoah Valley Partnership (SVP), members of SRI's Policy Division inventoried the region's training and education resources to assess the future workforce needs of the Valley from a variety of stakeholder perspectives. The goal of this data collection and analysis effort was to assess existing education and training opportunities aligned to the 21st century workplace, and to produce a master plan that would identify strategic priorities, building upon efforts already underway to enhance the quality of the local workforce.

Exhibit 1 provides a graphic representation of the process and the different activities involved in developing this master plan for the Shenandoah Valley. Starting in April 2007, SRI staff members targeted key individuals and organizations representing a cross section of the community in Augusta County, Rockingham County, Waynesboro, Staunton, and Harrisonburg¹. SRI interviewed more than 160 individuals, including elected officials, social service providers, law enforcement officials,

community-based organizations, faith-based service providers, schools, universities, employers, workforce system specialists, and local government economic development specialists. The study team analyzed all interviews to identify recurrent patterns in the data as well as cross-cutting themes relevant to the five jurisdictions. Additionally, SRI analysts examined extant social and economic data from a variety of sources to frame the themes emerging from the interviews.

The study team, in concert with the SVP, convened three focus group meetings with different regional businesses representing the land development, manufacturing, and services sectors. After analyzing all of the interview, focus group, and quantitative data, the study team generated a list of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) and shared them with a group of 45 leaders from the five jurisdictions. SRI met with these leaders in two separate meetings to discuss these findings and elicit feedback on the seven strategies identified from the SWOT analyses and the recommended action steps developed by SRI to implement the strategies. With input from the leaders, four strategic priorities were selected from the original list of seven that would be the focus of any future implementation efforts. This document represents the workforce transitions master plan; a final action plan will be developed by task forces and local leadership with stakeholder input.

¹ Throughout this document, we use the term "Shenandoah Valley" to refer to the 2 counties and 3 cities listed. We recognize that the term "Shenandoah Valley" encompasses a larger geographical area that includes 18 jurisdictions.

Exhibit 1 Process Pyramid for the Workforce Transitions Master Plan



Organization of the 21st Century Workforce Transitions Master Plan

This document presents the results of SRI's inventory and highlights the seven proposed strategies, including the four strategic priorities identified by leaders from the region. The areas identified in this report represent additional components that build on the activities and supports already present in the community. In the following chapters, we

identify each strategy, outline the scope of the challenge, identify community resources already addressing these challenges, and propose a number of action steps to implement the strategy. In the final section of this report, we propose an organizational structure for implementation, a timeline for action, and a monitoring and evaluation plan that can be used by local stakeholders to guide and support implementation efforts.

Enhancing High School Student Work-Readiness

Scope of the Challenge

The high school graduation rates from area schools mirror that of many communities in Virginia.

The graduation rates from the schools in the Shenandoah Valley are comparable to many communities in Virginia (see exhibit 2). For the five participating localities, graduation rates for the 2005-06 school year ranged from 71.7% to 85.5%, compared to the state average rate of 76.4%.

Like other areas of the country, there is an increasing expectation for students in the region to enroll in postsecondary programs after graduation from high school. In 2006, more high school graduates in the region received the advanced studies diploma, geared toward college entry, than the standard diploma. According to our respondents, the five jurisdictions studied have seen a rise in the percentage of students entering 2- and 4-year postsecondary programs.

Not all high school graduates are planning to go on to higher education.

Despite this recent increase in the percentage of students entering 2- and 4-year postsecondary programs, the number of the region's high school graduates who plan to enter postsecondary programs are relatively low compared to the state average (see exhibit 3). Moreover, anecdotal evidence indicates that a significant portion of these students who enter postsecondary programs drop out during their first year, shortly after their first year, or prior to program graduation.

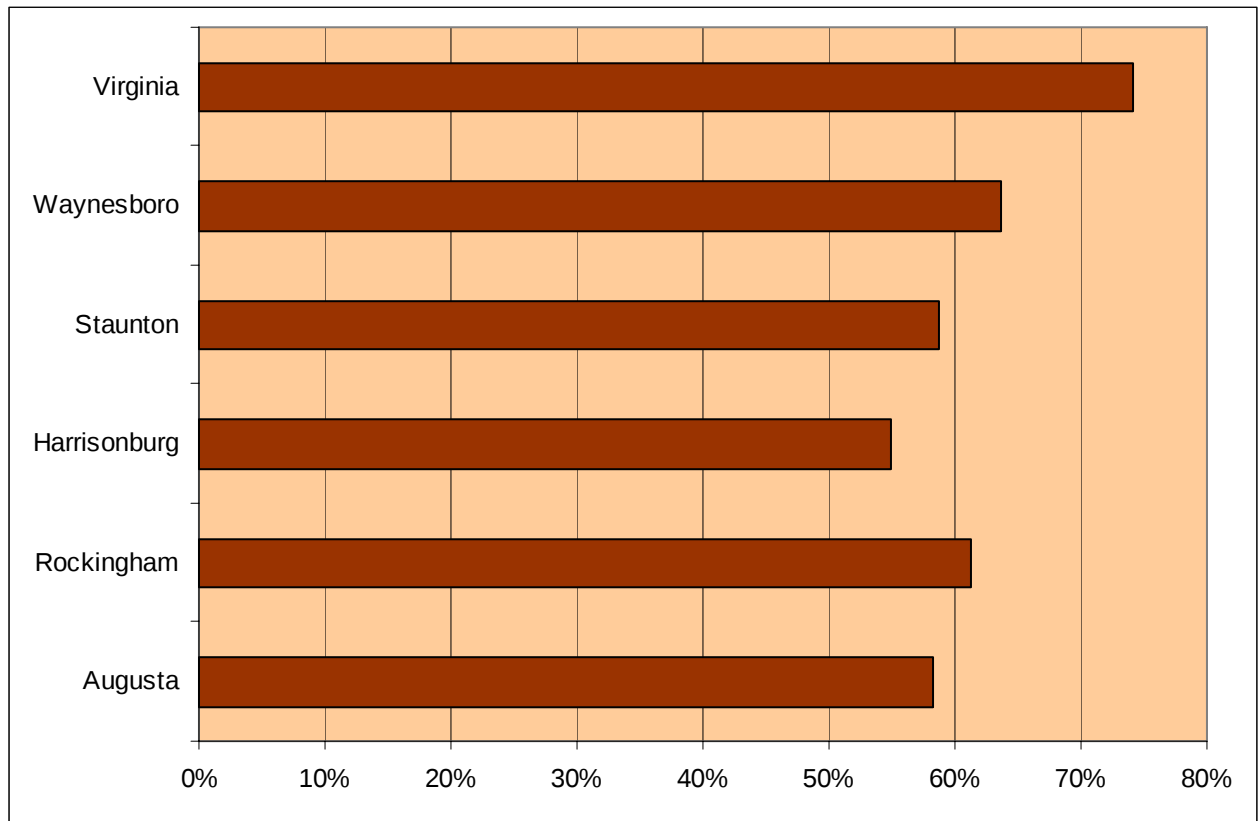
Exhibit 2
High School Graduation Rates

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Augusta County	76.9	81.3	81.3	81.5
Rockingham County	81.8	75.3	75.3	85.5
Harrisonburg	84.2	80.1	80.1	73.6
Staunton	60	61.9	61.9	71.7
Waynesboro	66.3	79.8	79.8	72.7
Commonwealth of Virginia	76.3	76.7	76.7	76.4

Source: Virginia Department of Education, Division of Technology, Office of Educational Management. http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Publications/rep_page.htm.

Exhibit 3

Percentage of Graduating Seniors Pursuing Postsecondary Education in 2005-06



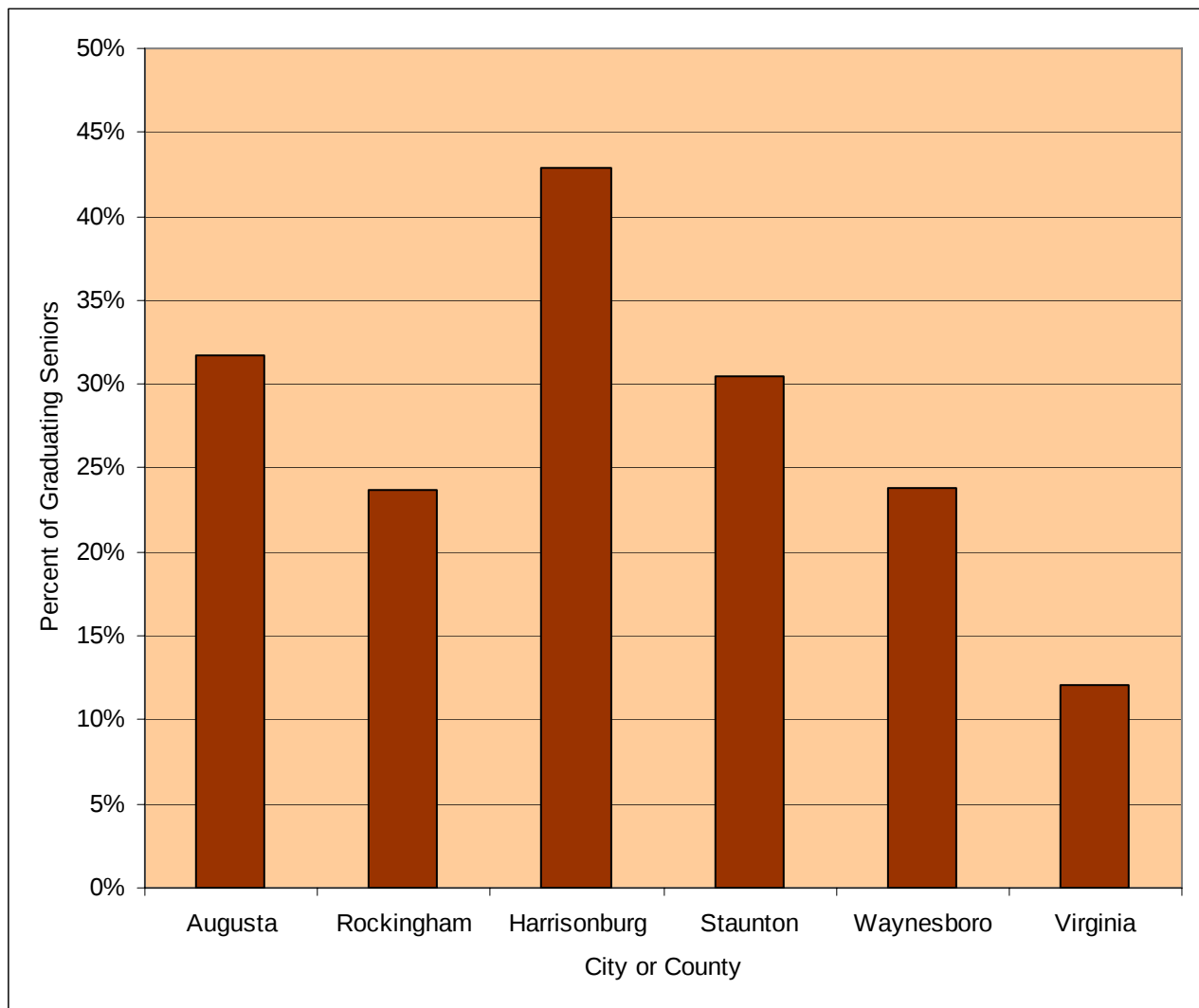
Source: Virginia Department of Education, Division of Technology, Office of Educational Management.
http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Publications/rep_page.htm.

Local respondents shared that the Valley is fighting the belief still held by some families that education is not important. Many parents expect their children to work right after high school and contribute to the family rather than go to college. Thus, for these students, there is little motivation to go on to higher education. The limited educational attainment of these students will directly impact their preparation for the 21st century workforce and their ability to obtain jobs, and some community members fear these students will be left behind.

Students are leaving high school without basic work-readiness skills that would make them employable.

A large percentage of students in the Shenandoah Valley plan to go to work straight out of high school. For the five jurisdictions studied, between 24% and 43%, of high school seniors plan to enter the workforce post-graduation compared to the statewide rate of 12% (see exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4
Percentage of High School Seniors Pursuing Employment Directly After Graduation
(2005-06)



Source: Virginia Department of Education, Division of Technology, Office of Educational Management.
http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Publications/rep_page.htm.

This issue is particularly alarming for these areas because, according to our interview respondents, students are leaving area high school without the basic work-readiness skills that would improve their employment prospects. Specifically, these high school-age youth lack soft skills and basic employment skills—such as critical thinking, team work, punctuality, interpersonal communication, proper appearance—that will help them succeed in the workforce.

Few students are pursuing career paths requiring trade skills.

While there is a relatively low rate of entrance into postsecondary programs among the region's high school graduates, the academic track and college attendance are more prized than technical education. This gap is due in part to the negative perception of skilled trades (e.g., technical programs are thought of as “dumping grounds”) held by students, parents, and school staff, and

the belief that college is the only or best (if perhaps unobtainable) option. Employers tend to favor college-educated employees and are not aware of other noncollege education and training resources or the value of graduates of those programs. With the push toward a college education, there is concern by some in the community that students who are not inclined to go to college, but are most likely to stay and work in the area, will get lost.

Technical education needs additional support and attention.

Technical schools and school districts in the region are working to promote technical education through apprenticeships and career pathways. Yet, technical education seems to be one of the first programs cut when there are staffing or funding shortages, and there are not enough workplace options for co-op programs (a program that combines secondary education and work experience). In addition, local respondents reported that existing technical pathways are not adequately preparing students for the workplace. Programs must be tied to the needs of local businesses and industry and should be regularly updated so that class offerings match the demands of the changing times.

Many respondents reported that schools need to do a better job of educating students on the career growth process and local employment opportunities. Anecdotally, the guidance counselor-to-student ratio in the area is 1 to 300. Although this is a relatively small ratio compared to other areas of the nation (American School Counselor Association, n.d.), the area's guidance counselors are overburdened. Their primary responsibilities are program administration, recording test scores, and handling social work cases. Consequently, they lack the capacity to

support and guide students in career preparation.

Community Resources

In the Shenandoah Valley, a number of organizations partnering with local school districts provide youth with the opportunity to pursue technical education and career pathways. These entities are aware of the local business and industry needs and are seeking to position students to meet the demands of the 21st century workforce.

Blue Ridge Tech Prep (B RTP) Consortium is a partnership of K-12 public schools, technical centers, Blue Ridge Community College, and area employers working to help transition students from high school to work or postsecondary education through a variety of resources and activities. The Blue Ridge Tech Prep Academy provides career-technical education (CTE) to more than 2,000 local students in 7th to 12th grades. Local school districts have established an articulation agreement with Blue Ridge Community College so that students enrolled in B RTP Academy receive dual enrollment for their CTE courses.

Massanutten Technical Center (MTC) is a regional technical center serving approximately 670 high school students from Harrisonburg City and Rockingham County. MTC offers 19 career programs through which students receive the necessary skills for entry-level positions in local industries and skilled trades as well as preparation for continued education.

Valley Vocational-Technical Center (VVTC) provides high school students with vocational training and opportunities. It currently serves approximately 560 high school students in Augusta County, Waynesboro, and Staunton. Students apply to a VVTC program related to their chosen vocational objective.

Staunton City Public Schools are moving toward the career cluster concept, where students with similar interests are grouped together to foster community and academic engagement. The first step of this process has been the Freshman Academy to support the transition of students from middle school to high school. In addition, they have hired a career coach, funded through Blue Ridge Community College, working with students, counselors, and administration at Robert E. Lee High School on a part-time basis.

Good communication between the local school districts, technical centers, and the B RTP Consortium enhances their efforts to collaborate and avoid duplication of services. However, better coordination and collaboration of services is needed between these programs and local higher education institutions to establish clear pathways for graduates of these programs into higher education.

Recommended Action Steps

This series of action steps will benefit both youth and industry by creating opportunities for youth to learn career options and workplace skills and by linking training and education with local business needs. We recommend establishing a task force to implement this strategic priority. Recommended action steps for this task force might include a public campaign to change the perception of skilled trades as viable career options, providing career coaches to all high schools, developing high school apprenticeship programs, use of Virginia's Career Readiness Certificate, and development of a career and postsecondary student data tracking system.

Launch a public campaign to change the perception of skilled trades.

Skilled trades offer a living wage and are a viable career option. Jobs in carpentry, masonry, plumbing, welding, cosmetology, electricity, and automotive technology are some of the many skilled trades needed in the community.

Launching a public campaign could change the negative perception of skilled trades held by students, parents, and school staff and alter the belief that college is the only or best option for every student. Broadcast and print media could be used by employers, schools, and higher education institutions for a communitywide campaign aimed at schools and staff. Campaign strategies could include providing literature directed toward school staff, sending information home with students, and addressing these issues at parent nights

Recruit career coaches for high schools.

Career coaches would support school staff, and guidance counselors in particular, in educating students on the career growth process and local employment opportunities. Career coaches would provide services that are student driven and follow a coaching model. They could be recruited from the community and trained to provide career guidance. Local employers could also assist in training career coaches.

Develop apprenticeship programs for high school students.

The Department of Industry and Labor could work together with K-12 schools, tech centers, and employers to develop registered apprenticeship programs (both nationally recognized and transferable) in fields needed by local businesses. These employer-sponsored apprenticeships should be coordinated so that students could continue to take high school and technology classes while working at their apprenticeship locations. Ideally, students would also receive college credit for these apprenticeship programs through articulation agreements with local higher education institutions. Finally, as part of the development effort, partners should work together to attract students into these programs.

Use Virginia's Career Readiness Certificate.

The Career Readiness Certificate is a system that certifies the skills necessary for success in basic jobs. Virginia's Career Readiness Certificate, created by the Governor's Initiative, measures a student's ability in reading for information, applied math, and locating information. Individuals can use this certificate as a complement to a resume and diploma to demonstrate foundational job skills. Schools and employers can use this assessment to measure students' employment skills and provide any additional training and education that is needed. In addition, schools could adapt and update their course offerings and programs based on the assessment results.

Develop a data system to track students after high school.

Data on the career and postsecondary choices and trajectories of previous high school students can support school-to-work transitions and inform schoolwide decisions impacting current high school students. The development of a data tracking system on postgraduates that allows schools to collect such data could also inform schools of potential needs in the following areas: professional development for school staff, internship and apprenticeship programs, career and technical education, and career exploration.

Supporting Youth Outside of School

Scope of the Challenge

The after-school hours have potential for danger.

Many studies have shown that from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., juveniles are most likely to perpetrate or become victims of violent crime; be in or cause car crashes; and smoke, drink, or use drugs. Nearly 60% of all youth gang-related crime occurs on school days, and almost all of that crime occurs in the hours immediately after school dismissal (Snyder & Sickmund, 1997). In fact, nationwide, violent crimes committed by juveniles spike at around 3 p.m.

These risks are far greater for youth who are not under adult supervision. In Virginia, 27% of K-12 youth are responsible for their own care after school (Afterschool Alliance, n.d.); for the region's public school population, this percentage translates to more than 9,000 youth who are unsupervised after school every day. Further, gangs and gang-related crimes are becoming an increasing threat in the Shenandoah Valley area. Local police estimate that there are approximately 750 gang members in the Shenandoah Valley (500 in Rockingham County and Harrisonburg, and 250 in Staunton, Augusta County, and Waynesboro).

The likelihood of Shenandoah Valley youth engaging in risky behaviors is compounded by the geographical spread and limited public transportation in the area, which present a challenge for youth involvement in after-school programs. Respondents who work in organizations that serve youth reported that high-risk

behaviors were common among the region's youth because of geographical isolation and few options for productive activity to fill their after-school hours. Youth in the Shenandoah Valley need opportunities and support to participate in productive activities that will prepare them for future success. Nationally, the majority of youth (77%) who participated in Boys and Girls Clubs report that it really kept them out of trouble, and more than half (52%) report that it saved their lives (Boys and Girls Clubs, n.d.).

The personal and social costs associated with allowing youth to go without guidance and supervision is great.

Numerous studies have shown that unsupervised youth are more likely to be truant from school, experience stress, earn poor grades, and engage in risky behaviors, such as experimentation with alcohol and drugs. Between 2000 and 2003, there was a substantial increase in the total number of drug arrests in the cities of Harrisonburg, Staunton, and Waynesboro (Governor's Office for Substance Abuse Prevention, 2004). In both the Shenandoah Valley and statewide, nearly half of the drug arrests involve 18-to-25-year olds.

Nationwide, teens who do not participate in extracurricular activities are 57% more likely to have dropped out of school by the time they would have been seniors, 37% more likely to become teen parents, 49% more likely to have used drugs, and 27% more likely to have to have been arrested (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1995). Although in recent years the number of

teenage pregnancies has decreased in most areas of the Shenandoah Valley, between 2000 and 2005 the number of teenage pregnancies increased by 22% in the city of Harrisonburg (Virginia Department of Health, 2005).

Caring adult relationships and engaging after-school activities can help youth avoid risky behaviors.

Since the late 1990s, researchers have demonstrated that out-of-school programs play a constructive role in supporting young people's social development by promoting physical and psychological safety, positive social norms, and skill-building opportunities that strengthen youths' connections to their community and to adult role models (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; McLaughlin, 2000). A range of after-school activities, including age-appropriate recreational and arts enrichment activities as well as academic support activities, can help to nurture positive interpersonal relationships among the youth and the adult staff. They also can address the academic, social, and emotional development needs of youth (Connell, Gambone, & Smith, 2000; Fashola, 1998; Posner & Vandell, 1994).

Respondents from youth-serving organizations indicated that although there were a number of programs in the region serving out-of-school youth, their limited resources and staff capacity restrict their ability to serve more youth. The presence of a stable, caring adult and a variety of after-school options for youth can make a difference in preventing the threats to healthy development and help youth contribute productively to society.

Community Resources

In the Shenandoah Valley, a number of organizations and groups seek to decrease at-risk behaviors and provide youth with healthy adult relationships and outside-of-school activities.

Boys and Girls Clubs of Harrisonburg, Rockingham, and Augusta/Waynesboro serve approximately 3,000 area youth throughout the year. They offer program activities in five core areas: (1) character and leadership development, (2) education and career development, (3) health and life skills, (4) arts, and (5) sports and recreation. Through these activities, youth are provided with adult relationships and a range of developmental opportunities in a safe environment.

The *Central Shenandoah Valley Office on Youth* has a number of programs that prevent at-risk behaviors and promote positive youth development. It offers prevention and education programs on teen pregnancy and tobacco use to encourage youth to think carefully about their choices. With United Way funding, it also coordinates monthly substance-free social activities such as dances, concerts, and recreational events for youth.

Through its Harrisonburg-Rockingham County office and Central Blue Ridge office, *Big Brothers Big Sisters* provides adult mentors for more than 700 youth. They offer programs where mentors spend time with their mentees at schools and after-school program locations during non-academic or after-school hours. They also offer programs where mentors coordinate with parents to spend time with their mentees in the community. These programs offer these pairs the opportunity to participate together in healthy activities. Out of their Harrisonburg-Rockingham County office, roughly one third of the youth served are of Hispanic descent.

The *Harrisonburg and Rockingham Healthy Community Council* works to improve the quality of life through assessing the needs of the community, developing priority areas based on data findings, and assisting in the implementations of strategic priorities. Since its inception, addressing the needs of youth has been one of its top priorities. As a result of its 1996 community audit, *Generations Crossing*, a daycare center for children and adults, and *Success by Six*, a program to prepare children to enter school, were established. Over the next 5 years, the Council will develop an action plan and assist in implementing initiatives to decrease risky behavior in children and youth.

Each of the youth-serving organizations profiled above along with other nonprofits, churches, and government agencies can be lauded for their programs and efforts. However, while there is some discussion across the organizations and pockets of partnerships, groups tend to operate somewhat independently. There is a need for more task-oriented collaboration and coordination of services across organizations to meet the needs of local youth. Partnerships with businesses and education institutions would increase the community's involvement and capacity to serve youth. Additionally, these partners could provide direction, focus, and healthy activities for the mentor relationships.

Recommended Action Steps

Youth and young adults—especially vulnerable youth whose families lack the capacity to provide a sense of safety and security (e.g., they come from single-parent homes or both parents work) need adult relationships and healthy activities outside of school to help them achieve their full-potential and contribute productively to society. Specific action steps that could be implemented include expanding after-school programming, providing community-based internships, recruiting and training retired professionals, and educating families.

Expand existing after-school programming.

Existing funding for after-school programming can be increased through funds raised by discretionary grants and other funding from federal agencies and private foundations. SRI will work with local organizations and stakeholders to notify them of grant opportunities available for after-school programming.

Create opportunities for youth to develop life and leadership skills.

The after-school hours can be used to develop life and leadership skills through programs and service opportunities. Community-based organizations and schools could use existing after-school program sites to teach youth communication, public speaking, and financial literacy. In addition, older youth can play a role in meeting the needs of the community during the after-school hours and as part of after-school programming. For example, they can visit senior communities and serve as mentors, tutors, and teachers' aides to younger children.

Provide youth with community-based internships.

As part of a school course, students could design their own service learning project. Local students could work with community-based organizations willing to provide internship opportunities where students could carry out their service learning project for school and also participate in volunteer work to learn about the goals of the sponsoring organization.

Tap into the community of retired professionals.

A number of retired professionals living in the Shenandoah Valley have the time, ability, and resources to impact the area's youth. These individuals could be recruited to increase the capacity of the region to serve youth. These volunteers could be trained to participate in programs (mentoring, teaching, tutoring, career guidance, etc.) serving youth. This could be incorporated as part of the outreach and awareness efforts of local organizations and institutions.

Support parents in preparing children for college and work.

Parents can play a significant role in how students prepare for college or the workforce. Education and guidance for parents on how to support and motivate students as they move toward the future could be helpful to all parents. Retired professionals, who likely have both professional and university experience, could serve as mentors to interested parents of high school students. Schools, universities, and community-based organizations could work together to reach out to parents of K-12 students by offering workshops and seminars on school policies, curricular offerings, career options, applying to college, college financial aid, and applying for a summer job.

Bringing Out of School Youth Back into the Pipeline

Scope of the Challenge

Youth are leaving the education pipeline without the tools needed to succeed in the workplace.

During the 2005-06 school year, the dropout rate for the Shenandoah Valley region ranged from a low of 1.4% in Rockingham County to a high of 4.65% in Harrisonburg (compared to a statewide average of 1.88%) (Virginia Department of Education, 2007). This means that each year hundreds of youth are entering the workforce without critical skills, and as a result, many find themselves stuck in dead-end jobs with few prospects for advancement. Nationwide, the problem of youth leaving the education pipeline early is especially prevalent among English language learner students, who typically drop out of school to work (Edvantia, 2007).

In addition, as discussed earlier in this report, a significant proportion of high school graduates in the Central Shenandoah Valley region do not pursue postsecondary education and instead work right out of high school. However, a number of interviewees reported that many of these recent high school graduates enter the workforce ill prepared to advance along a career path. As one community leader noted, "They leave high school, get into a dead-end job, and realize they're not going anywhere."

There is benefit to society in helping dropouts and high school graduates to reenter the education system to develop additional skills.

Youth who have become disengaged from the system, either through leaving the education pipeline or graduating from high school without the tools needed to succeed in the workplace, must be offered extensive support to help them obtain a quality education and develop their skills and aptitudes. Not only will this directly benefit youth who are brought back into the pipeline, but the region as a whole will benefit as well. For example, a 5% increase in the number of males who graduate from high school translates into an annual crime-related savings of almost \$180 million for the state of Virginia (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006), and each teen prevented from adopting a life of crime (including future adult offenses) could save the country between \$1.7 million and \$2.3 million per youth (Tyler, Ziedenberg, & Lotke, 2006).

With additional education, vocational training, and skills development, undereducated youth can make important contributions to the region's economy.

According to the 2004 census, a high school graduate earns only half of what someone with a bachelor's degree earns, and those without a high school diploma earn thousands less than that. Even with just a few years of college, workers will earn thousands more than someone with only a high school diploma (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). However, without any guidance at home, these young high school dropouts and graduates simply do

not know how to get the education and training they need to better their situation.

Youth offenders will require additional supports and further education to keep them from returning to the juvenile justice system.

Young people who become involved with the juvenile justice system represent one special category of disenfranchised youth. New and better efforts to resocialize and reintegrate young offenders back into their communities are clearly needed. In the Commonwealth of Virginia, 21% of juveniles are rearrested within one year after incarceration, and 24% are rearrested 12 months after finishing their probation (Commonwealth of Virginia, n.d.). Research has also shown that incarceration correlates more highly with future criminal behavior than factors such as gang affiliation, weapons possession, or family dysfunction (Tyler et al., 2006). One important reason for this recidivism is that the risk factors that led to their criminal activity remain in place. They return to the same dangerous neighborhood and have few positive role models or mentors to support them. In addition, obtaining employment may be complicated not only by the stigma attached to being an offender, but also by their lack of education, vocational training, and life-skills preparation. According to research, youth who have been incarcerated are employed more sporadically than their similarly-situated nonconfined peers (Commonwealth of Virginia, n.d.). As a result, these youth will require a strong network of support services to avoid criminal behavior, complete high school, and move on to work or further studies.

Therefore, to build the desired 21st century workforce, the Valley must invest in building a network of supports to facilitate the transition of these young people into postsecondary academic or vocational training to improve their knowledge and skill sets to enable them to participate in the region's economy.

Community Resources

Central Shenandoah Valley Office on Youth serves youth primarily in the Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County areas. In addition to the prevention and youth development program mentioned previously, this office also positively engages students that have been suspended or expelled from school through the Pathways Program, which offers these youth tutoring, counseling, and the opportunity to develop valuable employment skills while serving the community. Similarly, the Out-of-School Youth Employment Program assists young people in securing employment and gives them the support and training they need in order to be successful at work and in the community.

Massanutten Technical Center (MTC) is an award-winning career and technical school serving both high school students and adults in the Shenandoah Valley since 1972. For youth and adults who have dropped out of the education pipeline complete their high school education, the MTC offers classes to help them complete their GED. In addition, MTC offers one of the largest adult and continuing education programs in the Commonwealth of Virginia, including a number of technical skills classes on masonry, plumbing, welding, and machine tool operations, etc.

Valley Vocational Technical Center has a number of opportunities targeted at youth and young adults who wish to develop or improve their skills and knowledge. For example, the VVTC's

Adult Learning Center offers programs designed for those who desire a better education and want a second chance to learn necessary skills. These programs are geared to meet the needs of people who have not completed high school, have trouble finding or holding a job because of limited education, want to prepare for the GED, or for those adults who merely want to improve their basic skills in reading, writing, English, math, and history. Also, incumbent adult workers who wish to broaden or upgrade their technical skills in a given vocational area can take advantage of the classes offered in the VVTC's adult continuing education program.

Recommended Action Steps

Out of school youth and young adults who are unemployed or stuck in low-wage, entry level jobs need to be given opportunities to reenter the education system to upgrade their skills through further education or training. Specific action steps to address the needs of this population include: increasing the number of programs designed to support out of school youth, increasing the collaboration between different group serving these youth, increasing outreach and reenrollment efforts, capacity building activities for schools and community-based organizations, and state policy advocacy on behalf of out of school youth.

Increase the number of programs and services specifically designed to support out-of-school youth.

For youth who have recently graduated from high school, additional mentoring and career counseling services could be offered during their first formative years in the workforce, or even before they graduate from high school, to help them explore different postsecondary options. Young offenders need additional counseling and advisory services as their release date approaches to help them

navigate the challenges of reentering mainstream society. Finally, through BRCC, technical centers, and other community organizations, out-of-school youth could be encouraged to enroll in GED classes or vocational training classes.

Create closer collaboration and communication between groups that serve out-of-school youth, e.g., law enforcement, education, and community service organizations.

The Central Shenandoah Valley has many agencies, organizations, and institutions that can be helpful in reaching out-of-school youth. However, with such a broad range of services, communication between the various service providers is key to ensuring that records are transmitted in a timely fashion, information is shared, and gaps in services can be identified. Unfortunately, one weakness that was consistently identified by several community leaders was the lack of shared communications that would help them to better serve youth. Ideally, a data system should be developed that would allow schools and other public and private organizations serving *all* youth, not just those out of school, to share and track important information. As the school systems in Chicago and Philadelphia have shown, these data systems can track certain early warning indicators that may signal a youth is at serious risk of dropping out of the education pipeline (American Youth Policy Forum, n.d.). In addition, local partners should collaborate with the Healthy Community Council's Priority Action Team on Youth to coordinate planning, pooling resources, and implementation of programs.

Increase outreach and reenrollment efforts.

As noted earlier, the Shenandoah Valley region has a strong network of community and faith-based organizations serving youth and young adults. As a result, there is already an infrastructure in place to identify and reach out to these out-of-school youth. The key will be mobilizing key actors in this network and providing them with information about the opportunities for youth to reenter the pipeline. In addition, various media, such as television commercials and the Internet, should be used to get information directly to the out-of-school populations about these opportunities to get more education and training.

Build the capacity of schools and community-based organizations to serve out-of-school youth.

Despite a strong network of organizations serving mainstream youth and young adults, many of these organizations lack the capacity to serve the out-of-school population. It will certainly take a significant commitment of financial and human resources to offer the services that this population needs to succeed. Several nationally recognized organizations could be brought in to build the capacity of the Valley's community and faith-based organizations, making the network of support that much stronger for *all* youth and young adults.

Advocate for state policies that support out-of-school youth.

SRI heard from several of the interviewed community leaders that everything must first happen in Richmond, which makes it vital for regional leadership to advocate for more targeted policies that support and develop the workforce system, particularly for out-of-school youth. With the proper education and training, this special population can make a significant contribution to the future growth of the Shenandoah Valley.

Integrating Immigrant Youth and Families

Scope of the Challenge

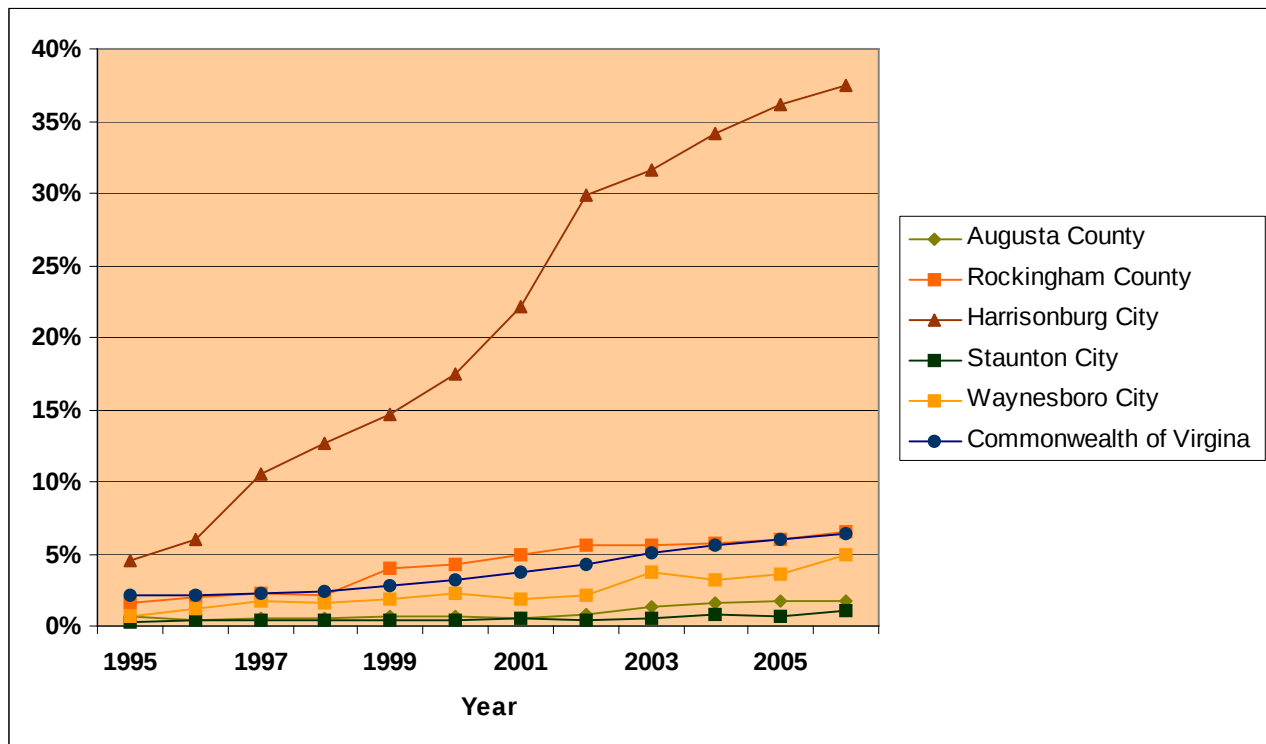
The region has attracted growing numbers of immigrant and refugee families.

In the last 10 years, a growing number of immigrant and refugee families have moved into the Central Shenandoah Valley region to pursue employment opportunities. Many of these families have settled in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County to find work in the area's poultry and agricultural industry. Consequently, the number of nonnative speakers of English in area schools has grown, especially in Harrisonburg. During the 2006-2007 school year, 37% of the

students enrolled in this city's schools were English language learners (see exhibit 5).

Many of these immigrant students and their families have a number of basic needs that go unmet, including accessible and affordable health care, housing, and transportation. To gain access to and utilize services and service providers, these families require assistance in translation and interpretation, especially when they first relocate into the area. In a survey of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County residents, almost two thirds of Spanish-speaking residents reported that they require medical interpretation (Healthy Community Council, 2006).

Exhibit 5 Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Enrollment, 1995-2006



Source: Virginia Department of Education

During our interviews, we learned that translation services are lacking and, in many instances, Hispanic youth are taken out of school by their parents to serve as interpreters for their family's service appointments.

Immigrant youth and adults need English language support as they integrate into the community and the local workforce.

Immigrant families need opportunities and support to learn English. Through school and other avenues, immigrant children are provided with more opportunities to learn English than their parents. Among the Hispanic adults in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, approximately half are not able to read or write English, and about a third are not able to speak English (Healthy Community Council, 2006). While the majority of immigrants in the region want to learn English to expand their employment options, they are unable to because of the lack of time, transportation, and childcare.

For employers, limited English proficiency as well as the growing cultural diversity of their employees is becoming unavoidable. According to our respondents, employers and businesses need to encourage their immigrant employees to learn the English language. However, employers often lack the capacity to address this issue in a way that is supportive of their immigrant employees.

Immigrants are not participating in the postsecondary training occurring in the region's higher education institutions.

Many immigrant youth are choosing to work instead of completing high school or going on to higher education. According to our respondents, this is, in part, because some immigrant families do not value the traditional educational system (especially

higher education), encouraging their children to seek employment at an earlier age. Despite recent increases in nonwhite population into the area, there is no corresponding increase in the number of nonwhite students enrolled in the area's higher education institutions (State Council for Higher Education for Virginia, n.d.). There is a need to work with these families, showing them the importance of both high school and college education for 21st century jobs, creating new pathways that link immigrant youth with the growing economy, and finding ways to enable immigrant students to remain in school and work at the same time.

Additionally, adult immigrants need to develop new workforce skills and use their previously developed skills. Some recent immigrants moving into the area (refugees in particular) have professional credentials that are not valid in this country. These immigrants need opportunities to plug into a career track that takes advantage of their skills. However, these adults often have very limited access to the region's various educational opportunities.

Community Resources

In the Shenandoah Valley, a number of organizations and groups recognize the need for the community to provide support to help integrate the incoming immigrant population into the community, schools, and workforce. These organizations and groups are seeking to meet the basic needs of immigrant families, provide English language education, and assist immigrants in becoming self-sufficient in their new environment.

The *Shenandoah Valley Migrant Education Program* focuses its services on supporting the children of migrant families (those who work in seasonal or temporary agriculture), most of whom are Hispanic immigrants, until their families become more self-sufficient in their new environment. Each of the approximately

360 students involved in the program is eligible for tutoring. Student advocates also offer practical, holistic help and advice to the families through home visits, providing information about existing services, and serving as a bridge for working parents (e.g., taking their children to medical appointments).

NewBridges Immigrant Resource Center is a nonprofit organization that provides free assistance to more than 300 immigrants each year to help them manage medical bills, immigration issues, and other crises. In addition, NewBridges offers workshops to help the community better understand the immigrant population and assistance to organizations seeking to address the needs of the immigrant population in a culturally appropriate way. Through its activities, the organization addresses the immediate basic needs of the immigrant population and serves as a bridge to their integration into the community.

The *Career Development Academy* offers English classes to approximately 200 students, ages 17 to 25, to support English language literacy and acquisition as well as career development. It currently offers three types of adult English classes (beginning, intermediate, and advanced) and test preparation. In addition, the *ESOL Career Development Academy* is open full-time during the academic school year as an alternative to high school and an opportunity to prepare for the transition to work or college.

Blue Ridge Community College provides Command Spanish programs, designed for non-Spanish speakers who interact with Spanish speakers in the workplace. This language and cross-cultural program is customized to fit the needs of specific industry sectors. Customized programs are available for professionals in law enforcement, corrections and probation, industry (manufacturing, construction,

warehousing), education, emergency medical services and firefighters, dental and medical, and business.

Each of the organizations profiled above along with numerous other nonprofits, churches, businesses, educational institutions, and government agencies can be lauded for their programs and efforts to serve recent immigrants that have moved into the community. However, in general, the basic needs (including English language and literacy) of these recent immigrants outweigh the current efforts of the region. More can be done through immigrant and nonimmigrant targeted education to better support the self-sufficiency of immigrant families as well as promote integration of new groups in schools, workforce, and community.

Recommended Action Steps

Recent immigrants and their children (migrant workers, guest workers, undocumented workers, and refugees) moving into the region need support both to meet their immediate needs and to provide for themselves in the future. Specific action steps proposed include increasing the English as a second language (ESL) training capacity of the region and the immigrants' access to it, planning and developing an international community center, facilitating communitywide cultural understanding through documenting immigrant experiences, and implementing wrap-around services in schools.

Enable immigrants to participate in ESL offerings.

Immigrants are often not able to take advantage of existing ESL opportunities because their work schedules and family demands present barriers to participating. With technical assistance, businesses could design a workplace ESL model suitable for their organization and connected to their work day, facilitating access for their immigrant employees. Alternatively, businesses could partner with local community-based organizations and higher education institutions to enable their immigrant employees to take advantage of existing ESL education opportunities. This support could include providing transportation, paid time off, and other incentives.

Increase the region's capacity to serve the ESL population.

Retired professionals (especially retired teachers) living in the Shenandoah Valley are a valuable resource and could be recruited to increase the capacity of the region to assimilate the immigrant population. These retired professionals could be engaged to work and volunteer part time through existing organizations as mentors, tutors, English teachers, and language partners to youth and adults. In addition, higher education institutions could recruit experienced ESL professionals from other regions (e.g., the Washington, DC, metropolitan area) to increase the expertise of the area to serve nonnative speakers of English.

Document immigrant stories and experiences for the community.

Students in the film and media departments at Eastern Mennonite University and James Madison University could be encouraged to document important stories of the local immigrant population as an element of community action research activities. These documentaries would help create connections to people's experiences and raise awareness in the local community to support change.

Plan and develop an international community center.

Parks and recreation can serve as a vehicle to help break down the self-segregation barriers of ethnicity and class. Consider expanding the scope of Park and Recreation to include Cultural Resources, a department whose responsibility is to foster and promote cross-cultural communication and activities.² With the support of the community, the Parks and Recreation Department could develop an international community center that would provide a meeting location for various groups and events to educate local residents on the cultures, foods, and traditions of the various ethnicities in the community.

² In Arlington, Virginia, where about a quarter of the residents were born outside of the US, the Department of Parks and Recreation has reorganized and become the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources. This department also includes a Multicultural Advisory Committee whose purpose is to advise the county board on issues affecting the diverse communities and promote cross-cultural communication and activities. (Arlington County Parks, Recreation, & Cultural Resources)

Consider implementing wrap-around social services to immigrants in schools.

Local authorities, in collaboration with community-based organizations, could offer social services in the schools. Using family resource centers in schools would provide a single place for immigrant students and families to receive assistance in education, careers, housing, transportation, and health.

Target immigrant workers with special assistance to help them and the local population develop cultural awareness.

Working with regional partners and stakeholders, initiatives could be developed to respond to the needs of an increasingly diversified workforce. Efforts should assist immigrant workers to become more mainstream, but they should also create cultural awareness among the local population. Examples of activities include the following:

- Increase industry-specific workplace language literacy skills to address the addition of immigrant workers as new entrants into identified industry sectors and to advance incumbent workers.
- Consider two programs: one for employers to include cultural awareness sensitivity training, and the second for employees and prospective employees to acquire English workplace language skills.
- Consider a structured ongoing support system for both programs, including internal culture mentors, a worker advancement coordinator, and support tools.

Attracting and Retaining Talent

Scope of the Challenge

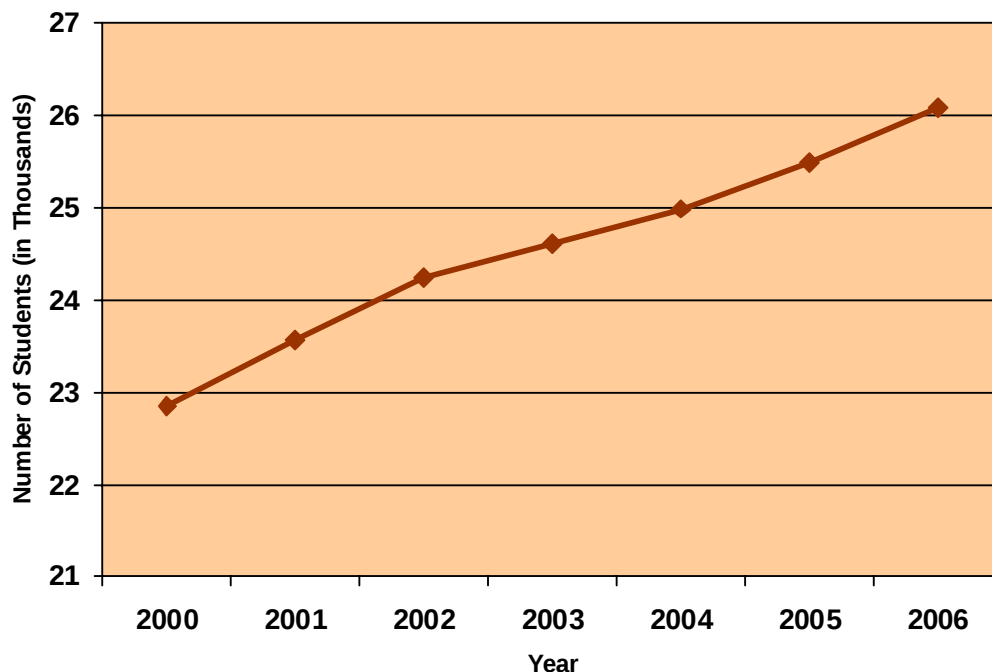
Many of the region's college graduates leave to find work in other urban areas in the state.

With the high density of higher education institutions, it is no surprise that many regional stakeholders view university students as a potential source of talent. Large numbers of college graduates from the region represent an opportunity to expand the size of the labor pool for new and existing businesses in the region (see exhibit 6 for enrollment projections). By one estimate, James Madison University's enrollment has grown by 40% (from 11,927 to 16,428) between 1995 and 2006 (Healthy Community Council, 2006). Similar

increases in enrollment at Bridgewater College and Eastern Mennonite University have also brought more students to live and study in the region. Unfortunately, according to university representatives we interviewed, many of the region's college graduates move to larger urban areas where there is greater availability of high-paying jobs.

Many business leaders interviewed reported that they expected university graduates to leave but perhaps return to the area after they marry and have children. Considering the number of potential college graduates from the institutions in the region, talent attraction and retention in the Valley is considered a priority by many.

Exhibit 6
Number of Students Enrolled in Region's Higher Education Institutions

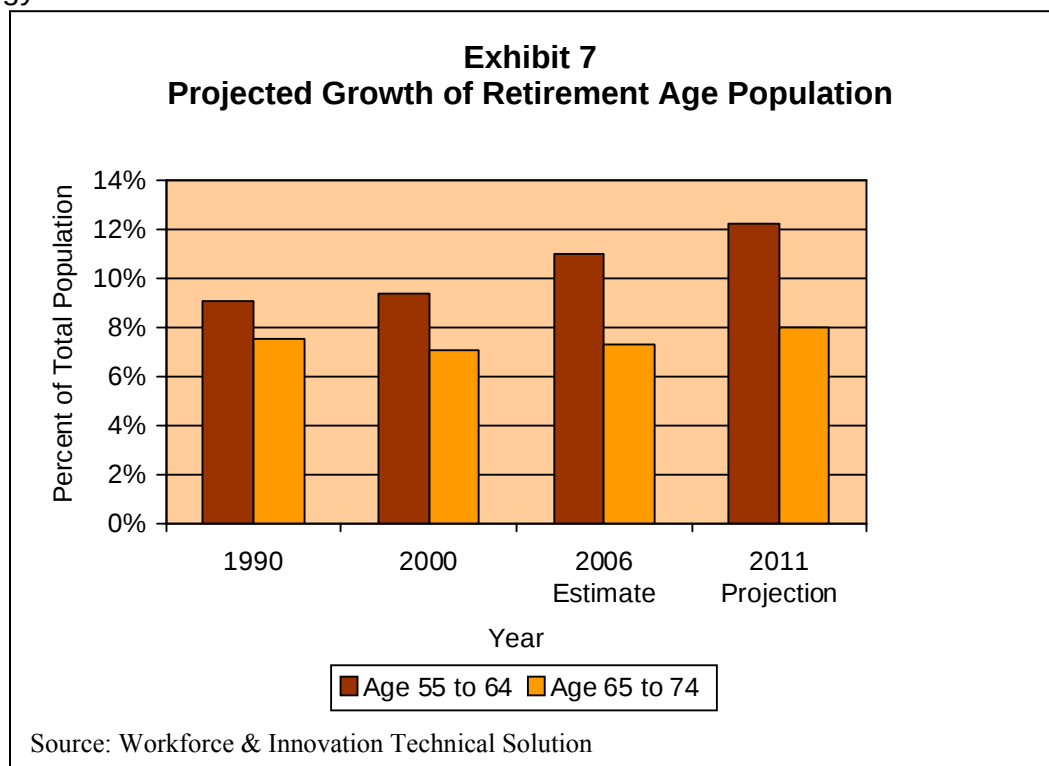


Increasingly, advanced manufacturing firms in the region recruit both professional and production employees from outside the region.

One of the recurrent themes identified during the focus group with representatives from the advanced manufacturing sector was the need to recruit skilled employees from outside of the region. One respondent indicated that he conducts national searches for all professional positions in his firm and that he increasingly needs to look outside of the region to recruit skilled production workers who can meet the hiring requirements. Several other manufacturing representatives reported an intense need for supervisors with trade-specific skills and a good educational foundation (i.e., reasoning skills, troubleshooting skills, general business knowledge). They reported that the local pool of qualified candidates to train as supervisors is small. In the fields where specialized professional skills are needed (e.g., allied health, nursing), there is a concerted strategy to recruit professional workers outside the region to meet workforce needs and address looming employment gaps.

A growing number of skilled professionals are leaving businesses or retiring, and there is a need to replace them with equally experienced workers.

As the baby boom generation ages and as skilled professionals leave the region seeking further opportunities for advancement, there will be a need to attract new professionals to fill those jobs. This phenomenon is likely to occur across a number of different job sectors. A manufacturing representative expressed concern that the maturity of the current workforce and looming retirements will leave many important holes in the future workforce if new talent is not developed. A number of respondents indicated that generational differences in work habits and attitudes between older and newer workers may make it more difficult to develop similarly skilled workers to step into retirees' shoes. Exhibit 7 indicates that the retirement population is projected to grow considerably in the coming years.



Community Resources

The *Waynesboro Economic Development Office* has been focused on revitalizing the downtown area of the city of Waynesboro during the economic shifts the region has experienced, trying to make the city attractive to young, urban professionals. With the increase in the retail economy as well as a rising housing market, tax revenues have been used to revitalize the historic city district, a museum, and a theatre in the hopes of attracting more professional tenants to the downtown area.

The *City of Staunton Department of Economic Development* has undertaken a strategic, coordinated branding campaign to gain a better understanding of the city's attributes and assets. The department has been collecting input from numerous resources, including community focus groups. The hope is to accurately capture, depict, and market the unique nature of the city and attract and retain businesses, tourists, and workforce talent to the area.

Recommended Action Steps

A large percentage of young, educated, skilled talent currently leaves the region, creating a perceived "brain drain." This talent is lost when local youth leave the area to attend college and pursue jobs out of the region and when youth attending one of the 11 colleges or universities within the region leave directly after graduation. There is an intensifying need to attract, retain, and prepare talent at all levels as the baby boomers retire and the replacement pool shrinks. Specific action steps proposed to attract and retain talent include researching attraction/retention efforts elsewhere,

using organizational networks to support talent retention, conducting outreach activities, establishing a regional talent development strategy, and leveraging opportunities with state and other regional initiatives.

Research current state and national efforts to attract and retain talent.

It makes sense to identify best practices being implemented in other places that align with the Valley's regional vision. Local leaders could visit representatives from identified national efforts involved in managing and coordinating talent networks for individuals and employers. This activity would provide opportunities to learn first-hand about ongoing talent attraction activities. To identify best practices, local leaders could also talk with representatives from organizations attempting to attract people to their respective regions, such as the Return to Roots program in Southwest Virginia, the Roanoke Valley Economic Development Program, and the New River Valley Economic Development Alliance. Special efforts should be made to identify regional assets from the young professional's perspective.

Engage local and regional young professionals in community and regional visioning, planning, and growth efforts.

Networking opportunities could be developed and supported through the formation of a Young Professionals Organization. Include the younger talent already working in the region in community planning (especially entertainment-related programming) and promote their participation in leadership programs. In a formal, strategic manner, work to engage young professionals in community decisions and promote community ownership. The more involved professionals are in their community, the more likely they will stay and the more influence they can have on what the region becomes. This can also be a popular creative outlet for professional and personal growth.

Determine a long-term regional talent strategy.

Develop a comprehensive worker attraction and retention strategy that addresses the full worker development continuum: pipeline development and attraction of the young professional (emerging worker), retention and retraining of the current worker (incumbent worker), re-skilling the dislocated and disadvantaged worker or career switcher (transitioning worker), and development of untapped labor pools (young retirees, immigrants, trailing spouses, etc.). It will be important to establish clear goals, identify resources for implementation, propose a reasonable timeline, and establish benchmarks that can be used to measure success. To ensure transparency to local stakeholders, create and disseminate a strategic scorecard that lists all planned activities and identifies the activities' status and any performance measures used to assess the implementation and outcomes (e.g., increases in the number of talent network members, level of activity, number of companies ranked in national competitions).

Enhancing Business Retention and Expansion

Scope of Challenge

In the past decade, the Central Shenandoah Valley region has experienced considerable economic and population growth.

Since 2002, there has been \$1.5 billion in economic growth through existing business expansion and the attraction of new business into the region (Chabin, 2000). Because of regional economic strengths, this trend is expected to continue. In addition, the regional population has grown, particularly from increases in the immigrant and refugee population; in some parts of the region, this growth has been significant. Exhibit 8 presents the population projections for the region through 2011.

Economic growth in the region has been facilitated by its central location, its extensive transportation infrastructure, and the presence of higher education institutions.

The region is located approximately 120 miles southeast of Washington, DC, 50 miles outside of the “blast zone” from Washington, DC, and away from nuclear power plants. The area is approximately 100 miles west of Richmond, 85 miles north of Roanoke and midway between Atlanta and New York. Drive times from the Shenandoah Valley to metro areas in most of the Midatlantic, Southern, and Upper Midwestern states allows for overnight product delivery. Interstate 81, Interstate 64, the railways, and the Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport play a significant role in economic growth.

**Exhibit 8
Demographic Projections for the Shenandoah Valley Region**

Race/Ethnicity	2000 Census	2006 Estimate	2011 Projection	Percent Change 2000 to 2006	Percent Change 2006 to 2011
White	198,830	207,249	214,746	4.2%	3.6%
Black	10,951	11,259	11,555	2.8%	2.6%
American Indian or Alaska Native	375	288	230	-23.2%	-20.1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1,903	2,641	3,233	38.8%	22.4%
Hispanic	7,329	11,433	14,727	56.0%	28.8%

Source: Workforce & Innovation Technical Solution (WITS)

A study by Chabin Concepts, Inc., in 2000 identified the region as a logical area for relocation of information technology (IT) companies clustered in Northern Virginia (Chabin, 2000). Since that time, the decentralization from Northern Virginia has become a reality for more than just IT companies. Interest has expanded to include outsourcing back-office processes to lower-cost areas and the need for federal agencies to locate their data back-up facilities outside the blast zone.

The region is especially rich in postsecondary education institutions, including Blue Ridge Community College, Bridgewater College, Eastern Mennonite University, Mary Baldwin College, and James Madison University. The Valley is a part of Virginia's 6th congressional district, which contains 17 colleges and universities, more than any other congressional district in the country. These institutions are one of the major attractions for technology and research-related firms considering locating in the Valley, because of the opportunities to leverage and expand faculty and research resources.

Existing employers expressed an urgent need for more motivated and skilled workers.

The demand for motivated and skilled workers is high according to a cross section of regional employers and economic development specialists. Numerous businesses reported that many of their workers needed additional training after they were hired and that many lacked both basic work-readiness skills and technical skills. A representative from one of the advanced manufacturing firms indicated that English language literacy was a big barrier to recruiting and hiring Hispanic workers. A number of the manufacturing employers also indicated that there is considerable movement of workers back and forth between different

companies, resulting in high rates of turnover and movement from one entry-level job to another. One of the larger manufacturing firms indicated that it is increasingly looking for more employees with "soft skills" that allow them to work in teams, manage their own time, and work independently within a flattened management structure. Other worker needs identified by employers included better career guidance and more options for career advancement.

More could be done to assist the jurisdictions to develop business retention and expansion plans.

Much of the growth in the region has come through expansion by existing businesses. Most of these expansions have been in the manufacturing and distribution sectors, with large capital investments and small increases in number of employees hired. None of the jurisdictions have developed or implemented a formal business retention and expansion plan or program, although they have been responsive to employers when a need is expressed. The challenge for the region is to be proactive and address employer needs before they are expressed or escalated. Although the Shenandoah Valley Partnership has worked to help businesses develop networks so that issues can be addressed, there is much to be done to use available resources to support existing businesses.

There is a growing recognition that the region's economic development can only be enhanced by increased collaboration between employers and the education system.

Schools and higher education institutions do not have regular channels to communicate and coordinate with local business and industry to make the kinds of adjustments necessary to prepare students to fill the workforce needs of existing businesses in the region. This was a common finding across many of the interviews with officials from the schools, the higher education institutions, and local businesses in the region. Some expressed the concern that educators and business people, both of whom serve demanding clients and are accountable for their overall performance, focused exclusively on their own needs. Communication between the two sectors has been intermittent, and strong links have yet to be established.

Some respondents from the region also indicated that some higher education institutions and the two vocational training centers had good communication and coordination with local business and industry to prepare workers to fill local workforce needs. Any additional work in promoting partnerships would build on a number of successful relationships local businesses have fostered with the region's higher education institutions.

Community Resources

Shenandoah Valley Partnership (SVP) has begun an existing business retention and expansion effort targeting manufacturing with site visits to get input and explore areas of need. SVP has started Business Roundtables for three sectors: land development, manufacturing, and services. This provides a networking opportunity for business leaders within the same sector. Staunton has begun collecting and documenting information from existing businesses.

The *Virginia Economic Development Partnership* (VEDP) is licensing software for capturing information about existing businesses. The *ExecutivePulse* business intelligence software system allows local jurisdictions to collect and manipulate data at a local level and can also aggregate data to the state level. Data may be used to make strategic decisions about how to best apply economic, workforce, and community resources. It should streamline survey development and data collection and analysis at both the local and state levels.

Neighboring *Winchester County* and *Fredrick County* both have an existing business ambassador. Some action items in their Business Retention and Expansion agenda include industry cluster luncheons; VIP tours of manufacturing facilities for regional and state elected officials, school superintendents, and key decision makers; career awareness tours for middle school students, guidance counselors, and teachers; and a Call Program with retired business executives acting as regional liaisons to visit existing businesses.

Recommended Action Steps

Although the region has experienced population and economic growth in recent years, wisely managing this growth will be important to ensuring that the whole community benefits from and participates in the changing economy. The majority of regional growth in business investment, job retention, and new-job creation has come from existing businesses. Thus, there should be ongoing communication with these businesses and other stakeholders in the region that acknowledges the needs of local businesses and proactively responds to their concerns and needs. Proposed action steps include making explicit links between business retention and talent attraction and retention, conducting research on current business retention and expansion efforts, developing a regional strategy for business retention and expansion, conducting business visits to collect data, and creating an action plan with measurable indicators.

Recognize the link between business retention and expansion and talent attraction and retention.

Business retention and expansion (R&E) must be viewed in connection with talent attraction and retention because businesses cannot grow or prosper without a pool of workers with increased skills and productivity. Likewise, workers want to work for strong, high-quality employers. Regional stakeholder support can help local employers be the most diverse and flexible in the state. Having talented workers and the best companies positions the region as a region of choice for both workers and employers.

Current regional, state, and national efforts for business R&E should be researched and promising practices that align with the regional vision should be identified.

Identify best practices by talking with VEDP and regional economic development organizations in and out of Virginia that are known for their strong R&E programs. Efforts should be made to collaborate with the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC) on the development of the next Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and other regional strategic initiatives.

Determine a regional business R&E strategy by developing a mechanism to address and respond to immediate needs of employers.

Consider the development of a mechanism to understand and respond to the immediate needs of current employers. A team of volunteers could visit firms in the region to collect and analyze information on individual business issues related to workforce development, state and local regulatory policies, and the changing economic climate. These confidential data can be aggregated and analyzed to identify potential projects that could address the needs of a number of businesses. This process could also be used to identify promising practices adapted for the region, develop an R&E strategy, create a plan of action, and identify the resources needed for implementation. It would be important to consider comprehensive plans for regional jurisdictions and advocate for changes and revisions or align any R&E plan with comprehensive plans.

Create a long-term agenda for business retention and expansion.

Implementing any action plan for business R&E would involve setting realistic objectives, identifying resources, establishing a timeline, executing the plan, and evaluating the results using appropriate performance indicators. Possible performance indicators could include increased number of employees, payroll, or profits. Additionally, increased demand for products and services of local firms could be indicators of success. Performance metrics would have to be established based on a thorough understanding of the mix of needs among the region's businesses. Evaluation would continuously measure performance against the baseline data and establish performance benchmarks that would be adjusted annually.

Supporting Worker Advancement

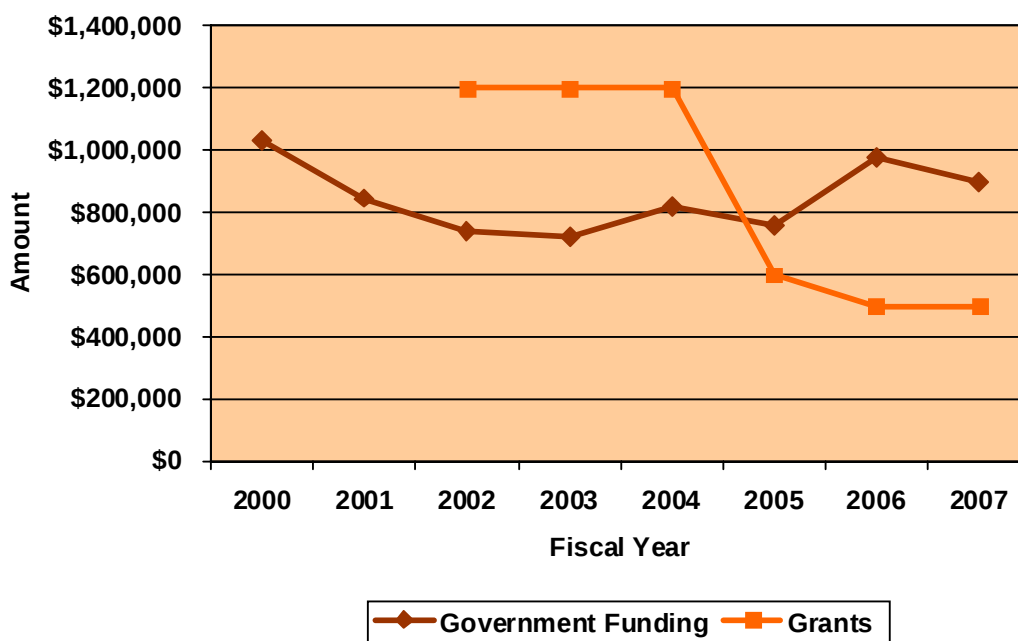
Scope of Challenge

Workforce development, in general, has suffered from the lack of funding, turf competition, and inertia.

Although the quality of the region's workforce may have been high in the past, a large number of respondents expressed concerns that the quality of the region's workforce may be changing in the face of increased demand for skilled workers in a widening range of fields and occupations.

One measure of support for worker advancement is the amount of funding available to address workforce development. In general, funding from federal and state workforce sources has decreased over time (see exhibit 9). From July 2000 to June 2006, the Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Area consisted of 11 political jurisdictions: the cities of Buena Vista, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Staunton, and Waynesboro; and the counties of Augusta, Bath, Highland, Page, Rockbridge, and Rockingham. In July 2006, five political jurisdictions—the city of Winchester and the counties of Clarke, Frederick, Shenandoah, and Warren—were added. Consequently, there is less funding for each jurisdiction in spite of a rise in overall funds.

Exhibit 9
Workforce Investment Funding for Shenandoah Valley
Workforce Investment Board



Source: Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board

Relations between the jurisdictions and workforce organizations in the Valley, according to many respondents, are cordial and marked by polite discourse. These conversations, however, rarely result in any coordinated action to address regional issues. Many respondents reported that organizations and leaders give only “lip service” with respect to addressing important issues like improving the workforce.

In spite of these tensions, partners have aggressively and successfully collaborated in the regional search for additional workforce funding. Grant-writing efforts have yielded an additional \$4.4 million for upgrading skills of incumbent workers and building the worker pipeline into high-growth occupations. Funding has come from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration initiatives, and programs have been implemented to address workforce needs in the health care and manufacturing sectors. Some of this funding has been leveraged locally through a partnership between the Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board (SVWIB), the Department of Business Assistance (DBA), and Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC) to provide additional resources for incumbent worker training. Concerns remain, however, that grant funding is too limited and should be expanded to include additional industry sectors and occupations.

There is growing demand from local businesses to increase the number of new and incumbent workers with enhanced basic and technical skills.

From interview data we collected, employer investment in upgrading skills of existing workers appears to be low and far less than other improvement investments. Locally, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) provides limited funds for dislocated workers in the 16 jurisdictions of the Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Region IV. Unfortunately, this funding is based on a region’s unemployment rate, not the number of individuals served, and does not include funding for incumbent worker training. The amount is derived from a state funding formula, and it would require state policy adjustments to change funding allocations. This was a major concern reported by workforce system representatives and by individuals served by the system. The region has identified major gaps in employers’ demands for skilled workers and has only begun to address upgrading new and incumbent worker skills.

In the *Shenandoah Valley Readiness to Compete Report*, employers listed education, workforce development, and training as the most beneficial initiative that the region could provide (Chabin, 2000). Employers felt that workforce development would provide the biggest impact on their businesses over the next 5 to 10 years. Employers ranked their ability to find qualified, skilled employees as 2.5 out of a possible 5, with 5 being *plentiful*. Interviews and focus groups confirmed that this trend continues and has gotten worse. Employers reported that there was a big need for leadership development programs as well as programs to help workers develop trade-specific skills and obtain the knowledge that would come through a good general education.

The region has a diverse range of education and training resources that could support worker advancement at all levels.

Respondents who are employers reported the need for continuing education and training for adults. Jobs in the research and technology fields require new skills, and many adults lack those skills. Schools need to refine their training to reflect the new skills needed, and businesses need to support the continuing education of their employees. The enhanced technical skills that are required for positions available now and in the future can represent major barriers to many in the workforce. A number of respondents reported that underemployment (i.e., highly skilled workers in low-skill, low-wage jobs) is an issue, and a vast majority of current employees are looking for new jobs for a number of reasons, including wanting different hours, new responsibilities, more benefits, more job flexibility, etc.

Data from the National Household Education Survey of 2003 seem to indicate that experienced learners more readily take advantage of postsecondary education opportunities than adults who do not have much education beyond high school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). These data have implications for working adults who could benefit from additional training and education. Although some employers in the Valley have internal training programs, many do not. As one manufacturing representative reported, his company used to provide some training and education to its workers, but stopped because other providers could better train its employees. The responsibility for seeking out additional training and credentials may rest on the shoulders of the group of adult workers least prepared to take full advantage of continuing education. Additional incentives and

support will be needed for these adult workers to be successful in pursuing lifelong learning activities.

Community Resources

The *Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board* (WIB) is located in Harrisonburg and covers 16 jurisdictions from Rockbridge County in the south to Frederick County in the north. The WIB links workforce development dollars to the specific needs of local businesses. Its funding originates from the U.S. Department of Labor through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and comes through the state based on a state-defined funding formula, which is based on the region's unemployment rate. The WIB provides core and intensive services which may include adult education, literacy training, and skills upgrading.

Massanutten and Valley Technical Centers offer adult continuing education and apprentice-related instruction for state affiliated registered apprenticeship programs. Their adult learning centers, such as the Dayton Learning Center, help adults with GED preparation and testing, offer night high school or external diploma programs, and provide English language instruction to nonnative English speakers.

Blue Ridge Community College offers credit and noncredit courses and seminars in many areas, including computer training and Command Spanish. For a focused course of study, adults may pursue career studies certification (CSC) or noncredit professional certification in numerous areas of specialization. Workforce Services and Continuing Education (WSCE) offers customized training services for area businesses, including workforce development and skill assessment.

Local workforce centers of the *Virginia Employment Commission* (VEC) provide an array of employment and training services through the Virginia Workforce

Network and in partnership with regional organizations. In collaboration with the SVWIB, the centers provide employment assistance to job seekers—access to job listings and an array of job search aids available in their Resource Room. The centers assist employers with finding job-ready applicants. The VEC is a source for labor market data, including economic, demographic, and occupational information. The local VEC also supports and coordinates the efforts of the regional Employer Advisory Committee and works to provide no-fee services to employers. (This information came from meeting notes from SVP Education Committee Chairperson Karen Wigginton.)

Recommended Action Steps

Emerging, incumbent, and transitioning workers need career information, guidance, and support as they work to upgrade skills, change jobs, reenter the workforce, or change careers. This effort to support worker advancement will require additional supports, training, and education. Proposed action steps to promote worker advancement include developing partnerships between employers and education to identify workforce needs, determining high-growth sectors, identifying career pathways for workers, providing career coaches, conducting employer recruitment in neighboring locales, integrating untapped talent pools, and developing a regional approach to support knowledge transfer for retirees.

Develop ongoing partnerships between education and employers through the newly established education consortium to identify and address workforce needs.

The SVP Education Committee coordinates, supports, and promotes the efforts of postsecondary educational institutions in the Valley. This committee develops and nurtures mutually beneficial partnerships among educational institutions, businesses, and local industry that elevate the overall educational attainment of residents in the Valley. This committee also provides high-quality teaching and learning environments and opportunities for career development. (This information came from meeting notes from SVP Education Committee Chairperson Karen Wigginton.)

An ongoing partnership between regional postsecondary educational institutions and employers to address 21st century skill gaps would be mutually beneficial in supporting worker advancement.

Provide career coaches in all high schools and within the workforce system to provide career guidance and awareness to youth and workers.

Career coaches are community college employees housed in local high schools. This is a Virginia Community College System (VCCS) initiative that was launched January 2005 with 11 career coaches from 10 community colleges working in 13 high schools. As of October 2007, there were 85 career coaches from 23 community colleges working in 110 high schools (Virginia Community College System, n.d.). Funding is creatively provided through regional grassroots efforts. This is an established program with a reporting structure, formalized training, outcome tracking, and evaluation criteria already in place.

Career coaches provide services that are student-driven. Trained as coaches and not as counselors, the career coaches bring executive-level coaching skills to high school students. The coaching process takes students through rapport building, active listening, questioning for clarification, decision making, active planning, and follow-up. The coach controls the process and the student controls and is responsible for the content. To build decision-making skills, the coach-student team investigates career alternatives and the student's guiding values. Consequently, students develop lifelong career planning skills.

Consider joint regional employer recruitment efforts with neighboring jurisdictions.

This recommendation includes the identification of the occupations and jobs that are most difficult to fill within the region and the competencies and skills needed for high-demand jobs. Current labor market information, job postings for a defined period, and employer input will provide additional information for initiative planning decisions. Once the regional occupations, jobs, and competencies have been identified, employers could consolidate recruitment efforts and appoint a regional representative to recruit from other parts of the nation where the workforce has the necessary skills but is experiencing mass layoffs and high unemployment. In addition, the task force could gather information regarding promising practices and lessons learned from current workers who have recently moved from more depressed parts of the nation for job opportunities in the Central Shenandoah Valley.

Develop a process to recruit and integrate untapped talent pools and nontraditional talent into selected industry sectors (e.g., young retirees).

Businesses in the region should consider the development and implementation of accelerated training programs based on identified employer needs and regional worker skill deficits. Such programs could be geared to untapped regional talent. Local leadership should review similar state and national programs.

Adopt a regional approach and provide support to employers to address knowledge transfer as baby boomers retire.

Regional leadership should consider efforts to support employers with workforce planning that includes pipeline planning, team talent management, and career planning. Current and future competency requirements for mission-critical positions could be identified. A regional Individual Development Plan to guide employees through the career planning and skill upgrading process could be implemented. In addition, a regional Workplace Learning and Performance Scorecard could be adopted. The scorecard could be customized by industry sectors and then by employers within each sector.

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Implementation Structure and Action Plan

Moving From the Master Plan to Implementation

To conclude the first phase of its work, SRI met in October and November 2007 with more than 40 workforce, education, government, business, and community leaders to share findings from the SWOT analysis and get feedback on the seven strategies and the recommended action steps outlined in the previous sections. Based upon the input gathered during these meetings, SRI selected four priorities from the original set of seven strategies:

- Enhancing high school student work-readiness
- Supporting youth outside school
- Enhancing business retention and expansion
- Supporting worker advancement

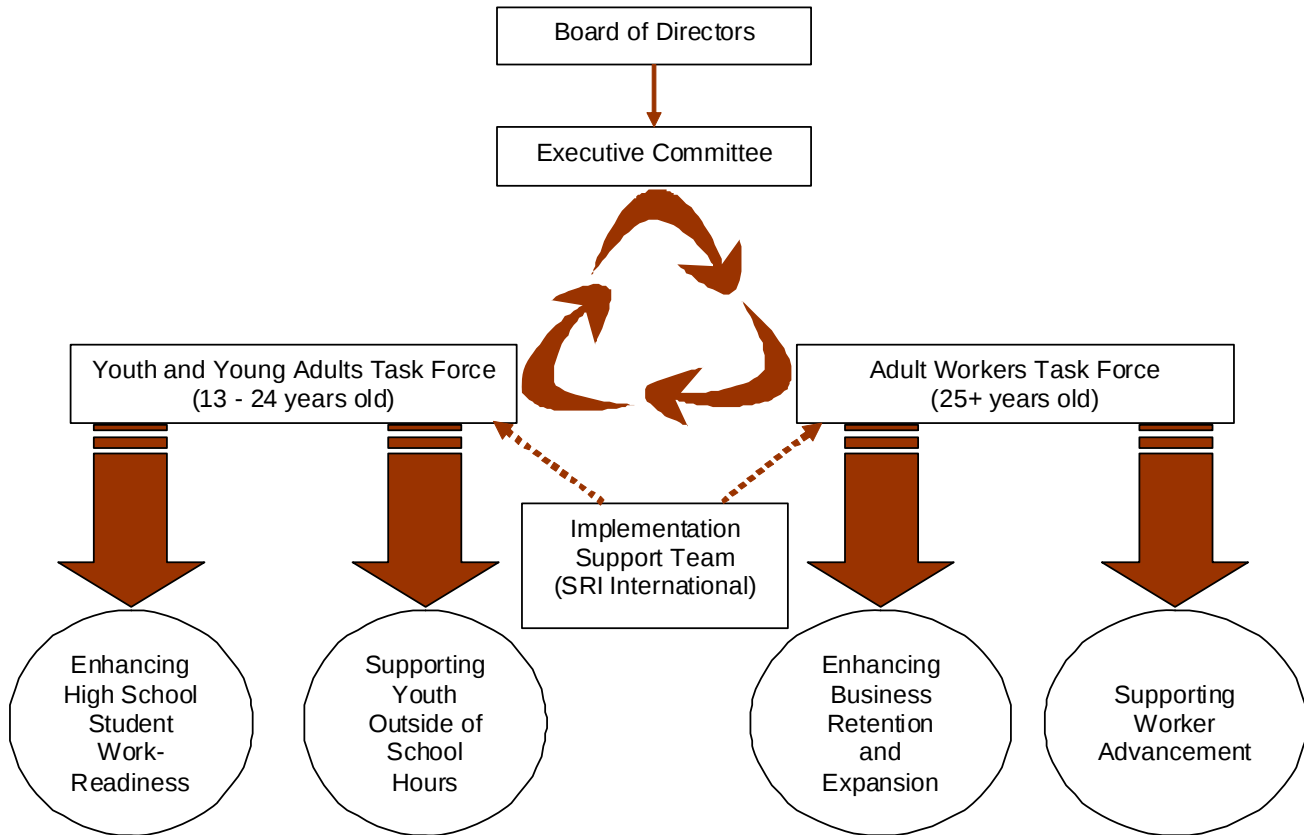
The strategies and action steps discussed above are by no means exhaustive and should be viewed as the starting point for the next phase of an extended communitywide effort to address the numerous challenges involved in preparing the workforce to transition into the 21st century. The implementation of any action plan will be guided by a regional board of directors working with two task forces that will provide coordination and support.

Proposed Organizational Structure and Roles

The proposed organizational structure for the action plan is designed to address both youth and adult workforce development needs as effectively and efficiently as possible. As many stakeholders will be involved as is reasonable while also optimizing the size of a working group.

The core of the proposed organizational structure is a board of directors, an executive committee, and two task forces whose charges will include considering the suggested strategic priorities and fleshing out an action plan to address some or all of the targeted priorities. Exhibit 10 portrays this organizational structure graphically.

Exhibit 10 Proposed Organizational Structure



The work of implementing the recommended action steps will be coordinated and supported by the board of directors. Composed of a small group of 10 to 15 of Shenandoah Valley's preeminent education, government, and business leaders, this group will oversee and review all program activities, monitor progress, and make adjustments as necessary. The board will also be responsible for overseeing the funding for individual projects and fund-raising efforts to implement the strategic priorities. Funding will be sought from individual donors, foundations, government agencies at all levels, corporations, and business associations.

A smaller executive committee (EC) will be selected from the larger board of directors. With the consent of the board chair, this committee will make tactical decisions, particularly on issues that require urgent attention. Also, the EC will serve as the board's voice between

meetings of the full board of directors and liaise with SRI and the task forces.

The two task forces will play a central role in all phases of implementation and should include a diverse range of relevant community leaders and organizational stakeholders who are knowledgeable about youth and workforce issues. Each task force should have approximately 10 members, including a chairperson. The chairperson should possess the knowledge and standing in the community to lead the effort in the designated area. Each task force will develop processes through ongoing discussions and collaboration to develop the strategic priorities and ensure implementation of these plans. Although the focus of the task forces will be on action, guidelines governing group decision-making processes and other group processes will need to be developed.

The board of directors and the task force chairpersons will be assisted by SRI, which will support the work of the task forces and help oversee the implementation of the strategic priorities. Specific tasks that SRI would perform as the Implementation Support Team will include

- Developing needed research and analysis
- Working with task force chairpersons to build detailed implementation plans
- Sharpening, modifying, or adding strategic priorities to address the needs identified by the task forces
- Refining cost estimates and identifying other resources needed to execute task force plans.
- Identifying discretionary grant or foundation grant support for initiatives

Strategic Priorities and Recommended Action Steps

Based on the four top need areas identified during the fall 2007 meeting with the region's leadership, below are examples of the strategic priorities and action steps that each task force might conduct in its implementation activities. Exhibit 11 lists the proposed task forces, the strategies, and a number of recommended action steps. These recommendations are only suggestive, not exhaustive. Nor should these lists imply that task forces will find all activities feasible or even desirable.

Exhibit 11
Strategic Priorities and Recommended Action Steps

Task Force	Strategic Priorities	Recommended Action Steps
Youth and Young Adults (13–24 years old)	Enhancing High School Student Work-Readiness	➤ Launch a public campaign to change the perception of skilled trades through broadcast and print media. ➤ Provide career guidance support to students beginning in middle school and continuing through high school. ➤ Establish communications links between the schools and employers to discuss the workforce skills students need. ➤ Create internship and apprenticeship programs that expose youth to different workplace settings and successful workers. ➤ Implement improved career and technical education using a systemic approach or model (i.e., career clusters) that incorporates career exploration and the development of basic workplace skills in high schools. ➤ Recruit and train members from the community to serve as mentors and career coaches to high school youth. ➤ Provide additional professional development to school guidance counselors, teachers, and other school staff. ➤ Develop a data tracking system that would allow schools to track all career and postsecondary choices.
	Supporting Youth Outside of School	➤ Expand existing after-school programming through funds raised by discretionary grants and other funding from federal agencies and private foundations. ➤ Create after-school program offerings that help to develop life and leadership skills (e.g., communication, public speaking). ➤ Develop after-school programming that incorporates community service and service learning opportunities. ➤ Recruit and train retired professionals in the area to volunteer and participate in programs serving local youth (mentoring, tutoring, etc.). ➤ Build the capacity of community-based organizations to collaborate with the schools to work with students from different age groups. ➤ Provide education and guidance to families on how to support and motivate their student to prepare for college or the workplace.

Exhibit 11
Strategic Priorities and Recommended Action Steps (conclude)

Task Force	Strategic Priorities	Recommended Action Steps
Adult Workers (25+ years old)	Enhancing Business Retention and Expansion	➤ Conduct research on current regional, state, and national efforts for business retention and expansion. ➤ Identify and document promising practices that align with regional culture and vision. ➤ Develop a mechanism to address and respond to immediate needs of employers to expand their businesses. ➤ Determine a regional business retention and expansion strategy. ➤ Create an action plan, develop appropriate performance measures, identify resources, and establish a timeline for implementation.
	Supporting Worker Advancement	➤ Develop ongoing partnerships between education and employers through the current education committee to identify workforce needs. ➤ Identify high-growth industry sectors and the regional demand for occupations within those industries. ➤ Determine occupational competencies and develop regional sector strategies to address worker needs of employers. ➤ Investigate local programming for professional certification and recertification. ➤ Provide adult career coaches in the workforce system to provide career guidance and awareness to workers. ➤ Consider joint regional employer recruitment efforts with neighboring jurisdictions. ➤ Develop a process to recruit and integrate untapped talent pools and nontraditional talent into selected industry sectors (e.g., young retirees). ➤ Adopt a regional approach and provide support to employers to address knowledge transfer as baby boomers retire.

Timeline for Implementation

We envision that implementation will occur in a series of six-month phases. Exhibit 12 lays out a possible timeline for the initial phase of implementation (January – June 2008).

Sample Milestones for the Enhancing High School Student Work-Readiness Strategic Priority

Each task force will be asked to map out a timetable and a detailed list of milestones to be accomplished for each phase of its work. Exhibit 13 provides some possible examples of the kinds of milestones a Task Force might establish to guide its first 6 months of implementation activities.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting Plan

SRI International will assist the board of directors in preparing a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system to track the progress of all the work of the two task forces. The Shenandoah Valley community will be investing a significant amount of financial and human resources into this work, and therefore, it is imperative that the task forces and any programs they implement be held accountable to the public for results. The core of the system will consist of quarterly and annual reports that will include the following information:

Exhibit 12
Proposed Timeline for Implementation

Phase 1 Implementation Tasks	2008					
	January	February	March	April	May	June
Public presentation of the plan	X					
Selection of 21st Century Workforce Transitions board of directors members	X					
Briefing and orientation for board members	X	X				
Convene meeting of board of directors	X	X	X	X	X	X
Selection of Workforce Transitions task force members	X	X				
Briefing and orientation for task forces members		X	X			
Convene task forces		X	X	X	X	X
Developing strategic priority components		X	X	X		
Establishing milestones and timetable			X	X		
Developing financial plans			X	X	X	X
Roll-out of new program initiatives					X	X

- Major activities undertaken during the previous quarter
- Progress and results achieved, tracked against previously set performance indicators
- Problems encountered and steps taken or proposed to address them
- Activities planned for the subsequent report period

In addition to technical reports, the task forces will prepare financial reports, including funds received, expended, etc. The reports will then be submitted to the board of directors for review and approval.

The board of directors, with input and guidance from SRI, will decide whether an independent evaluation of the entire effort is appropriate and, if so, how it should be structured.

Exhibit 13 Sample Milestones for Enhancing High School Student Work-Readiness

Tasks	2008					
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Convene task force to review tasks, timeline, and initial program recommendations.	X	X				
Convene educators and employers to develop consensus on workforce skills students need.	X	X				
Identify career and technical education offerings in all the region's school divisions.	X	X				
Sharpen cost estimates and develop plans for fund raising.	X	X				
Conduct focus groups of middle and high school principals in schools already adopting career clusters approach (e.g., Staunton City Schools).			X	X		
Finalize list of community resources addressing work-readiness skills for youth.			X	X		
Identify key partners to work with in establishing internships, apprenticeships, and mentoring programs.			X	X		
Finalize strategic priority and program components.			X	X		
Develop theory of action diagram representing program components.			X	X		
Establish resource requirements and funding from federal, state, and other sources.			X	X		
Apply for funding for first-year program roll-out.			X	X		
Reach agreement with key institutional partners on implementation of program components.				X	X	
Set up program implementation infrastructure: management, staffing, fund distribution, results reporting and other accountability mechanisms, etc.				X	X	X
Roll out programs where infrastructure is already in place, and provide technical assistance for implementation.					X	X

Conclusion

The Shenandoah Valley region has had a history of change and adaptation while holding on to important values that are grounded in the region's natural resources, its quality of life, and its people. As the region looks forward to the future, it is on the cusp of new developments in workforce development, education, and economic development efforts.

The plan presented in this document outlines a series of strategic priorities and action steps that will address some of the workforce challenges the region will face in the coming years.

This plan is but an attempt to identify one way of addressing the region's workforce challenges. It will continue to evolve and develop as leaders and local stakeholders refine and redefine what strategies are most relevant for achieving the region's goals.

The time for action is now. Waiting for a crisis is not a luxury the region can afford in light of the shifts in the global economic picture. Proactive strategic planning with broad community participation will provide the foundation for the region to address its workforce needs and challenges into the 21st century.

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Appendixes

Appendix A: Interviewees, by Sector

Appendix B: Leadership Feedback Participants

Appendix A: Interviewees, by Sector

Interviewees		
<i>K-12 System</i>		
Robin	Crowder	Waynesboro Public Schools
Donald	Ford	Harrisonburg Public Schools
Vermell	Grant	Waynesboro Public Schools
Scott	Hand	Rockingham County Public Schools
Joe	Hill	Rockingham County Public Schools
John	Kidd	Rockingham County Public Schools
Paul	Leaman	Eastern Mennonite High School
Mike	Loso	Harrisonburg Public Schools
Gary	McQuain	Augusta County Public Schools
Charlette	McQuilkin	Rockingham County Public Schools
Ed	Smith	Rockingham County Public Schools
<i>Colleges and Universities</i>		
Emily	Akerson, RN	James Madison University
Jerry	Benson	James Madison University
Douglas	Brown	James Madison University
Linda	Cabe Halpern	James Madison University
Lisa	Clark Schick	James Madison University
Diane	Foucar-Szocki	James Madison University
Pamela	Fox	Mary Baldwin College
Jane	Hubbell	JMU, Institute for Innovation in HHS
Richard E.	Ingram	James Madison University
Nick	Langridge	James Madison University
Pat	Martin	Eastern Mennonite University
Marie	Morris	Eastern Mennonite University
Chris	Nye	James Madison University
Marcos	Quintana	James Madison University
Robyn	Puffenbarger	Bridgewater College
Lisa	Schirch	Eastern Mennonite University
Jim M.	Shaeffer, Sr.	James Madison University
Kirk	Shisler	Eastern Mennonite University
Phillip C.	Stone	Bridgewater College
Donna	Sundre	James Madison University
Loren E.	Swartzendruber	Eastern Mennonite University
Phillip	Wishon	James Madison University
<i>Technical Preparation/Community Colleges/Career Technical Education</i>		
Martin	Auville	Blue Ridge Tech Prep Consortium
Kim	Blosser	Blue Ridge Community College
Ken	Clever	Blue Ridge Community College
John	Downey	Blue Ridge Community College
Scott	Gochenour	Valley Vocational Technical Center
Jenny	Groh	Blue Ridge Tech Prep Consortium
Harry	Hogshead	Valley Technical Center
Betsy	Mierzwa	Blue Ridge Tech Prep Consortium
Darla	Miller	Valley Vocational Technical Center
Bonnie	Moyers	Blue Ridge Community College
James	Perkins	Blue Ridge Community College
Marshall	Price	Massanutten Technical Center

Sandy	Rinker	Massanutten Technical Center (MTC)
Lester	Smith	Blue Ridge Tech Prep Consortium
Paul	Sorrell	Staunton City Schools
Nicky	Swayne	Valley Vocational Technical Center
Pam	Wilkins	Blue Ridge Tech Prep Consortium
<i>Economic Development</i>		
Ben	Carter	Greater Augusta Regional Chamber of Commerce
Dale	Cobb	Augusta County
Darryl	Crawford	Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission
Christine	Drake	Shenandoah Valley Partnership
Ray	Griffin	Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission
Bill	Hamilton	City of Staunton, Department of Economic Development
Joan	Hollen	Shenandoah Valley Partnership
Debbie	Melvin	Department of Business Assistance
Christine	Michaels	Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce
Henry	Reeves	Shenandoah Valley Small Business Development Center
Brian	Shull	City of Harrisonburg
Robin	Sullenberger	Shenandoah Valley Partnership
William	Vaughn	Rockingham County Administration
Meghan	Williamson	Economic Development, City of Waynesboro
<i>Workforce Development/Apprenticeship Programs/Special Interest</i>		
Linda	Braughman	Fisherville Employer Advisory Committee
Todd	Cook	Department of Labor and Industry, Commonwealth of Virginia
Paula	Homes	Goodwill of the Valleys
Taylor	Howell	Virginia Employment Commission
Linda	Matthews	Goodwill of the Valleys
Suzette	McCarthy	Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board
Jim	Orondoff	Dayton Learning Center
Bob	Satterwhite	Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board
Loretta	Snow	Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board
Brenda	Southern	Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board
Emily	Sterrett	PerformanceWorks, LLC
Gale	Vest	Education & Training Corp. – Augusta, Waynesboro & Staunton
<i>Community Development</i>		
Carol	Blair	Central Shenandoah Valley Office on Youth
Dave	Blanco	Young Life
Beth	Bland	RMH Home Health care
Kurt	Boshart	Public Affairs, City of Harrisonburg Police Department
Rick	Castaneda	Harrisonburg High School
Pablo	Cuevas	Rockingham County Board of Supervisors
C.E.	Dearing	Rockingham County Sheriff's Office
Heather	Denman	Boys & Girls Clubs
Don	Driver, Jr.	Harrisonburg Rockingham Social Services District
Sheriff Don	Farley	Rockingham County Sheriff's Office
Les	Forrester	Harrisonburg Parks and Recreations
Asrat	Gebre	Hope Community Builders Inc.
Susannah	Gerber Lepley	New Bridges Immigrant Resource Center
Betsy	Hay	United Way of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County
C.M.	Hess III	Rockingham County Sheriff's Office
Pat	Kennedy	Success by Six Coalition
Sharon	Lowell	James Madison University

Tom	Mattingly	Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church
Charlotte	McNulty	Harrisonburg-Rockingham Community Services Board
Dwayne	Moore	Boys & Girls Club of Augusta/Waynesboro
R. Ann	Myers	Department of Social Work James Madison University
David	Nelson	Muhlenburg Lutheran Church
Cindy	Reeves	Coordinator of Health Education & Awareness
Mary	Rodiham	Big Brothers Big Sisters of Harrisonburg and Rockingham
Beth	Rogers	Skyline Literacy Coalition
Chris	Rush	Gang Unit
Rajan	Shore	Big Brothers Big Sisters of Harrisonburg and Rockingham
Judith	Shuey	Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Blue Ridge
Reggie	Smith	City of Harrisonburg
Viktor	Sokolyuk	Virginia Council of Churches, Refugee Resettlement Program
Judith	Trumbo	Rockingham Memorial Hospital
Dave	Van Covern	Waynesboro Parks and Recreation
Joe	Vought	Muhlenburg Lutheran Church
Tim	Walton	Rockingham County Sheriff's Office
David	Wiggonton	Harrisonburg Parks and Recreations
J.B.	Wittig	Rockingham County Sheriff's Office
Michael	Wong	Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority
Duane	Yoder	Lindale Mennonite Church
Focus Groups		
<i>Development</i>		
Tony	Biller	Nielsen Builders, Inc
Scott	Coombs	Riddleberger Brothers, Inc.
Terry	Cunningham	Interchange Company Group, Inc.
Ann Marie	Gathright	Environmental Standards
Steve	Hill	Century 21 Real Estate Unlimited
Patricia	May	Nielsen Builders, Inc
Phillip	McKalips	Environmental Standards
Franklin	Root	Countryside
Bryan	Smith	Dominion Virginia Power
<i>Manufacturing</i>		
Gary	Calleo	RR Donnelly
Bill	Conklin	Merck and Company
Rick	Lotts	Invista (Old DuPont)
Kevin	Saxton	Perdue Farms
Mary	Sayre	Sayre Enterprises
Scott	Sayre	Sayre Enterprises
Dwanye	Soisson	Merck and Company
Michael	Stoltzfus	Dynamic Aviation
John	Street	PGI
Michael	Sullivan	FR Drake Company
<i>Service</i>		
Seth	Bokelman	First Bank & Trust Company
Greg	Godsey	First National Bank Southeast
Steve	Gordon	United Bank
Linda	Hartley	First Bank & Trust Company
Cindy	Knupp	Bridgewater Retirement Community
Sarah	Landrum	Dupont Community Credit Union
Jeff	Sauder	Shenandoah Shared Health Services

David	Snyder	Dupont Community Credit Union
Dewey	Swicegood	VaLiance Health
Dennis	Traubert	Bank of Rockbridge
Brian	Vigliare	First Bank & Trust Company
Micahel	Wikerson	Wachovia Corporation
Lee	Witherow	Adams and Garth Staffing Solutions
Government Officials		
Chuck	Ahrend	Rockingham County Council
F. James	Baily, JR	Augusta County Board of Supervisors
David	Beyeler	Augusta County Board of Supervisors
Michael	Breeden	Rockingham County Council
Charles	Chenault	Harrisonburg City Council
Patrick	Coffield	Augusta County Board of Supervisors
Wendell	Coleman	Augusta County Board of Supervisors
Pablo	Cuevas	Rockingham County Council
Rodney	Eagle	Harrisonburg City Council
Dee E.	Floyd	Rockingham County Council
Carolyn	Frank	Harrisonburg City Council
Kay	Frye	Augusta County Board of Supervisors
Larry	Howdyshell	Augusta County Board of Supervisors
William	Kyger	Rockingham County Council
John	McGehee	Augusta County Board of Supervisors
George	Pace	City Municipal Building
Tracy	Pyles, JR	Augusta County Board of Supervisors
Nancy	Taylor Sorrells	Augusta County Board of Supervisors

Appendix B: Leadership Feedback Participants

James	Berg	Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce
Carol	Blair	Central Shenandoah Valley Office on Youth
Linda	Braughman	Fishersville Employer Advisory Committee
Patrick	Coffield	Augusta County Administration
Todd	Cook	Department of Labor and Industry, Commonwealth of Virginia
Darryl	Crawford	Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission
Scott	Coombs	Riddleberger Brothers, Inc.
Robin	Crowder	Waynesboro Public Schools
Pablo	Cuevas	Rockingham County Board of Supervisors
Don	Driver	Harrisonburg-Rockingham County Dept. of Social Services
Rodney	Eagle	Harrisonburg City Council
Don	Farley	Rockingham County Sheriff's Office
Carol	Fenn	Rockingham County Schools
Donald	Ford	Harrisonburg Public Schools
Ray	Griffin	Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission
Kurt	Hodgen	Harrisonburg City Management
Taylor	Howell	Virginia Employment Commission
Amanda	Huffman	Staunton Department of Economic Development
Troy	Kurtz	Rockingham Memorial Hospital
William	Kyger, Jr.	Rockingham County Board of Supervisors
Gary	McQuain	Augusta County Public Schools
Debbie	Melvin	Virginia Department of Business Assistance
Neal	Menefee	The Rockingham Group
Elizabeth	Middleton	Department of Social Services (Staunton-Augusta Office)
John	Noftsinger	James Madison University
Stephen	Owen	City of Staunton
George	Pace	Harrisonburg City Council
Catherine	Pack	Virginia Economic Development Partnership
Joe	Paxton	Rockingham County Administration
James	Perkins	Blue Ridge Community College
Thomas	Reynolds	Waynesboro City Council
Linwood	Rose	James Madison University
Bob	Satterwhite	Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board
Rajan	Shore	Big Brothers Big Sisters of Harrisonburg & Rockingham
Paul	Sorrell	Staunton City Schools
Nancy	Sorrells	Augusta County Board of Supervisors
Robin	Sullenberger	Shenandoah Valley Partnership
Loren E.	Swartzendruber	Eastern Mennonite University
Judith	Trumbo	Rockingham/Harrisonburg Healthy Community Council
William	Vaughn	Rockingham County Administration
Karen	Wigginton	Bridgewater College
Meghan	Williamson	Economic Development City of Waynesboro