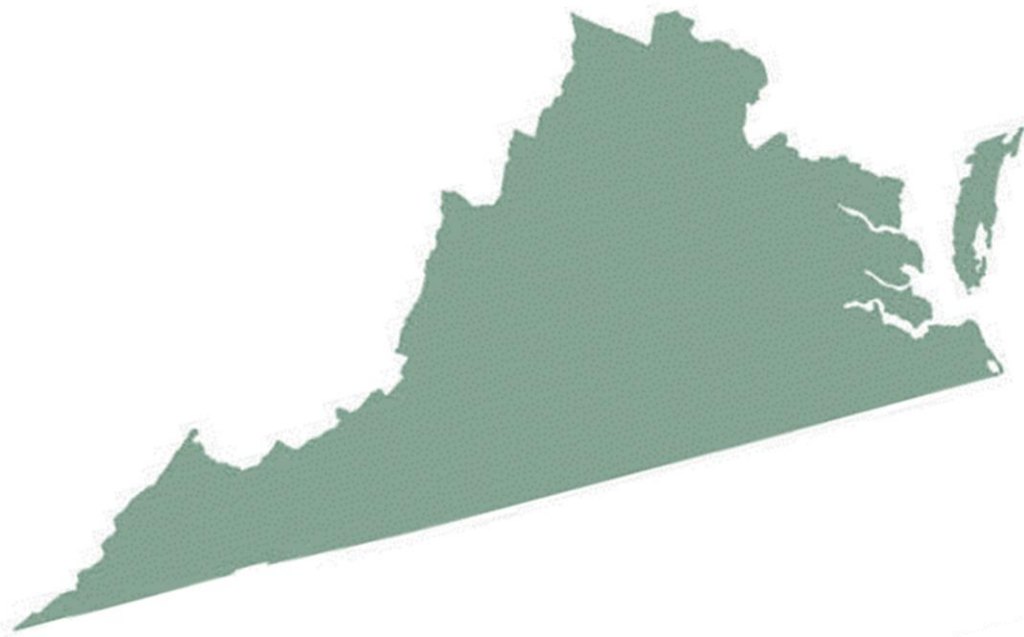# Virginia Workforce Development Customer Discovery Report

Table of Contents

Section 1:
Overview of the Commonwealth's workforce, workforce development efforts, and its economic impact

SECTION 1:
Overview of services provided by the formal
workforce system at the local level

SECTION 1:
Overview of the Commonwealth's workforce and regional workforce development efforts

SECTION 1.1
Virginia's workforce development ecosystem supports both individuals and employers in order to advance the economy and help Virginians thrive

The workforce development ecosystem in Virginia is a complex network of organizations that interact with job seekers, employers, and each other in many ways at the local, regional, and state levels. The ecosystem includes all those who are working toward one or both of two goals: supporting individuals in advancing skills and finding, gaining, and retaining employment, and supporting employers in their recruitment, development, and retention of talent. The ecosystem's objective is to "advance economic stability and growth by preparing and connecting job seekers with employers who seek to hire through [the workforce development ecosystem's] training providers and network of professional partners,"[1] even as ecosystem actors may prioritize or focus on one of these two goals differently.

This report has a primary focus on what is commonly considered to be the Commonwealth's formal "workforce system," which includes:

- The Department of Workforce Development and Advancement (with the external brand of Virginia Works) at the state level

- Virginia Career Works as the network of workforce development offices (also known as American Job Centers (AJCs),[2] one-stop centers / offices, or Virginia Career Works Centers and participating partners) organized at the local level into 14 Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs), each overseen by a board known as a Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) or Workforce Investment Board (WIB) - *see Appendix 4.1 for a map of LWDAs.* For the purposes of this report, these offices are referred to as AJCs hereafter and local workforce development boards are referred to as LWDBs.

- Programs in the Commonwealth funded under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) federal legislation which supports "job seekers' access to employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy"[3] – , *see Section 1.4.1 for additional detail on WIOA.* Note: some of these programs are administered by Virginia Works, previously highlighted.

Another primary focus area for this report is the credit and non-credit workforce training programs offered by the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), intended to prepare students for immediate entry into the workforce and commonly referred to as its "workforce development" functions that exist at each community college.

Virginia's broader workforce ecosystem is inclusive of a number of state agencies that provide training, education, and related support services in partnership with Virginia Works (e.g., the Department of Aging and Rehabilitation Services ("DARS"); Department of Veterans Services ("DVS"); the Department of Education ("VDOE") which administers adult education services under Title II of WIOA as well as overseeing the broader preK-12 education system; economic development organizations at the local, regional, and state level; four-year higher education institutions; community organizations focused on providing career navigation support and supportive services; and capacity-building entities like GO Virginia that provide significant financial support to launch and scale efforts aligned to traded sectors on a regional level. This extensive set of actors will be addressed in greater detail in Section 1.4.

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[1] Virginia Career Works Mission Statement, as of June 2024
[2] Note that while these workforce development offices are known by many names, they will be referred to in this report as AJCs for standardization

[3] https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa

SECTION 1:
Overview of services provided by the formal
workforce system at the local level

SECTION 1.2
The Commonwealth is facing growing labor needs, which are largely, but not fully, met by its strong talent pipeline

Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), the state-level economic development entity in Virginia, categorizes businesses as Traded sectors, businesses selling all or most of their production to out-of-state customers[4] or Non-Traded sectors, businesses that primarily serve local customers, competing with other non-trade employers for in-state sales.[5] Another way to categorize businesses is by size (number of employees). These are overlaid in Exhibit 1. On balance, Virginia businesses are more likely to be non-traded, and the vast majority of businesses have fewer than 50 employees. A small portion (~1%) are startups – companies in the first stages of operations, with high growth potential.

EXHIBIT 1
Number of Virginia firms by size and sector, as of July 2024[6]

	Less than 50 employees	50-300 employees	300+ employees
Firms: # (%) by segment **Employees: # (%) by segment**	149K (92%) 861K (26%)	7K (4%) 536K (16%)	6K (4%) 1.9M(58%)
Non-traded[1] 111K (69%) 2.1M (62%)	① 104K (64%) 633K (19%)	② 4K (3%) 335K(10%)	③ 3K (2%) 1.1M (34%)
Traded[2] 50K (31%) 1.3M (38%)	④ 45K (28%) 228K (7%)	⑤ 3K (2%) 201K (6%)	⑥ 3K (2%) 824K (25%)

Startups
~1.5K (1%)

Five industries make up 52% of all employment in Virginia: Health Care and Social Assistance (12.9%), Professional Scientific, and Technical Services (11.7%), Retail Trade (9.8%), Educational Services (9.2%), and Accommodation and Food Services (8.6%).[7] While the importance of each industry in regional economies varies, the five industries are consistent across regions; for example, health care and social assistance is the topmost employing industry for 6 of the 14 Local Workforce Development Areas (see Exhibit 2).

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[4] Traded sectors include Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting, Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas, Manufacturing, Wholesale Trade, Transportation and Warehousing, Information, Finance and Insurance, Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, Management of Companies and Enterprises

[5] Non-traded sectors include Utilities, Construction, Real Estate, Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services, Education Services, Retail Trade, Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, Healthcare and Social Assistance, Accommodation and Food Services, Other Services

[6] Statistics of US Businesses

[7] Virginia Works, Virginia Combined State Plan, 2024-2027

SECTION 1:
Overview of services provided by the formal
workforce system at the local level

EXHIBIT 2
Share of Virginia's Employment by Industry and Top Industries by LWDA, as of 2024[8]

Industry	Share	Top Industry	2nd Industry
Health Care and Social Assistance	12.9%	Blue Ridge, Central, S. Central, Crater, Capital, Hampton Roads	Southwest, Shenandoah Valley, Piedmont, Northern, Bay Consortium, W. Piedmont
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	11.7%	Northern, Alexandria/Arlington	
Retail Trade	9.8%	Southwest, Bay Consortium	Crater, Capital, Hampton Roads
Educational Services	9.2%	Piedmont	New River/Mt. Rogers, S. Central
Accommodation and Food Services	8.6%		
Public Administration	6.5%		Alexandria/Arlington
Admin and Support and Waste Mgmt. and Remediation Services	6.4%		
Manufacturing	6.3%	New River/Mt. Rogers, Shenandoah Valley, W. Piedmont	Blue Ridge, Central
Construction	5.5%		
Transportation and Warehousing	4.2%		
Finance and Insurance	3.6%		
Other Services (except Public Administration)	3.4%		
Wholesale Trade	2.8%		
Management of Companies and Enterprises	2.2%		
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	2.1%		
Information	1.8%		
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1.5%		
Unclassified	0.7%		
Utilities	0.5%		
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0.3%		
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0.1%		

Like in other states, Virginia's workforce development ecosystem is also "proactively reactive" – looking ahead and preparing individuals to pivot in response to emerging skill needs and economic trends that change employers' needs. Five occupations are projected to have the highest employment growth from 2020-2030: Food and Beverage Workers (18% growth); Business Operations Specialists (11%); Material Moving Workers (15%); Health Diagnosing and Treating Practitioners (13%), and Motor Vehicle Operators (15%).[9] These occupations include specialized roles that require specific certifications, including American Heart Association CPR & First Aid, Commercial Driver's License, and Nursing. Other occupations are expected to see a decline through 2030, including Secretaries

and Administrative Assistants, Financial Clerks, Other Office and Administrative Support Workers, Supervisors of Sales Workers, and Legal Support Workers, partially due to Artificial Intelligence and automation.[10]

Labor needs are largely met by Virginia's strong labor force that outperforms national averages on multiple fronts. Job openings as a percent of total employment in the Commonwealth exceed the US average and have trended positively since 2020 (see Exhibit 3). Over the same time, unemployment rates in Virginia have declined and remained consistently below the US average (see Exhibit 4). Additionally, the labor force participation rate in Virginia is slightly above that of the US overall (66.2% vs. 63.5% respectively).[11]

[8] Virginia Works, Virginia Combined State Plan, 2024-2027
[9] Virginia Works, Virginia Combined State Plan, 2024-2027
[10] Virginia Works, Virginia Combined State Plan, 2024-2027
[11] US Census, 2022

SECTION 1:
Overview of services provided by the formal
workforce system at the local level

EXHIBIT 3

Job openings as percent of employment for the US and Virginia, seasonally adjusted, as of May 2024[12]
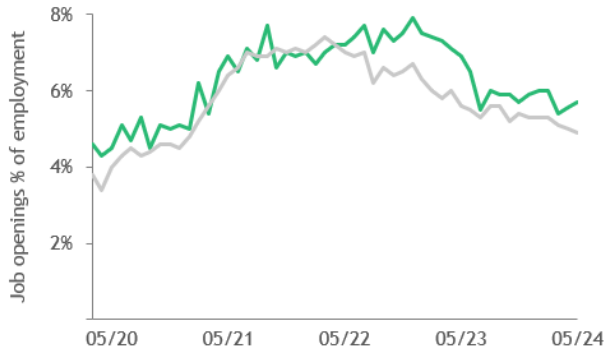
From a geographic standpoint, employment in the Commonwealth (similar to the total population) is concentrated in a few local workforce development areas (LWDAs), including 27% in Northern Virginia, 15% in the Capital Region, 13% in Hampton Roads,

EXHIBIT 4

Unemployment rate for the US and Virginia, as of June 2024[13]
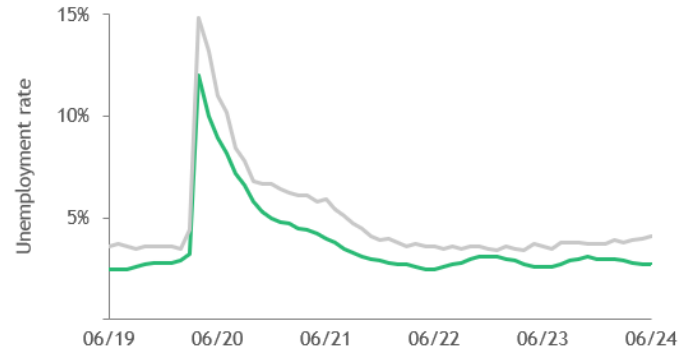
and 7% in Alexandria Arlington; the other 10 LWDAs account for the remaining 38%. Eleven of the 14 LWDAs have unemployment rates at or below the US average (Exhibit 5).

EXHIBIT 5:

Virginia 2023 annual average unemployment rates by LWDA[14]
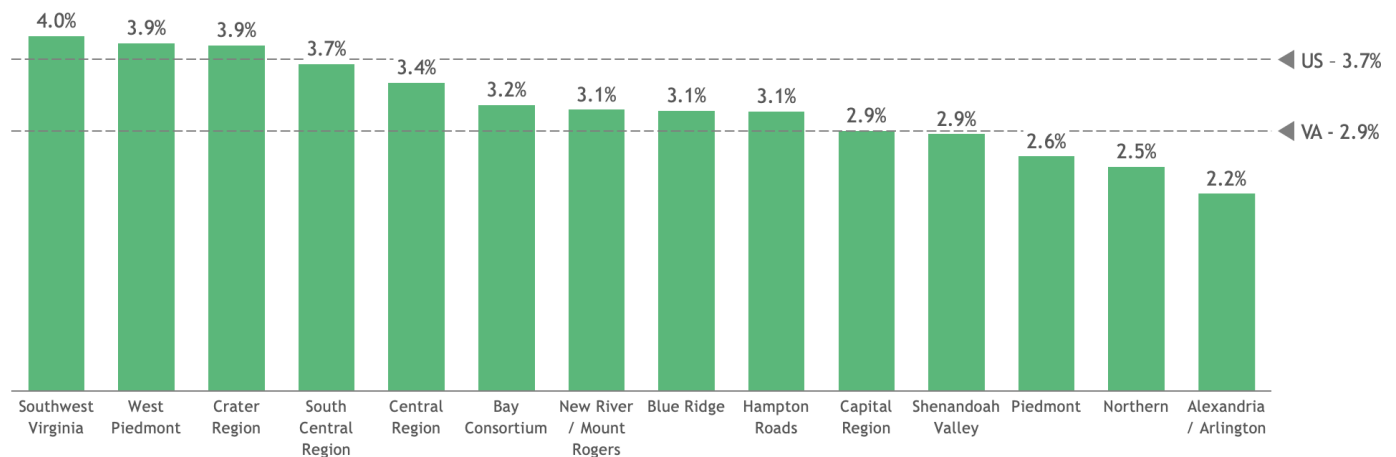
Since the economic shock of COVID-driven job loss in 2020, Virginia has developed and maintained a job surplus (see Exhibit 6), with more jobs available than job seekers.

Virginia's active labor force has remained relatively consistent over the past 5 years, with only a ~0.5% annual growth rate over the past five years. This

growth has accelerated, however; between Program Year 2023 (July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023) and Program Year 2024, the labor force experienced a 4.0% year-over-year growth rate, the largest annual growth since May 1978.[15] Virginia's labor force participation rate is consistently higher than the national average (see Exhibit 7).

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[12] US Bureau of Labor & Statistics
[13] US Bureau of Labor & Statistics
[14] US Bureau of Labor & Statistics
[15] Virginia Works, Virginia Combined State Plan, 2024-2027

SECTION 1:
Overview of services provided by the formal
workforce system at the local level

EXHIBIT 6
Virginia unemployed persons per job opening ratio, as of 2023[16]
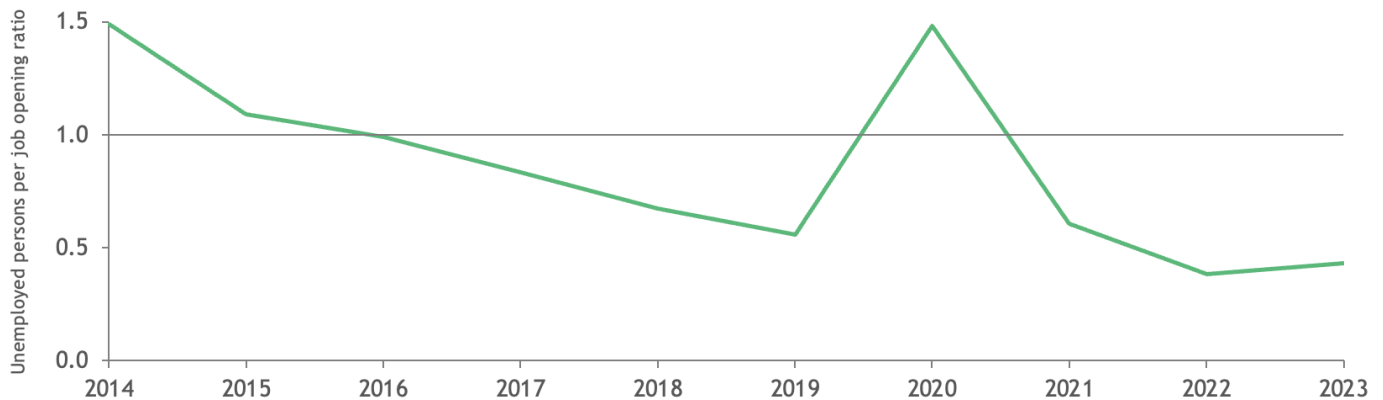
EXHIBIT 7
Virginia total population 16 years and over vs. national average, labor force participation, as of June 2024[17]

Percent of Virginians and of Americans across all states who are of working age, and participate in the workforce

— Virginia's Labor Force Participation Rate
— Nationwide Laborforce Participation rate
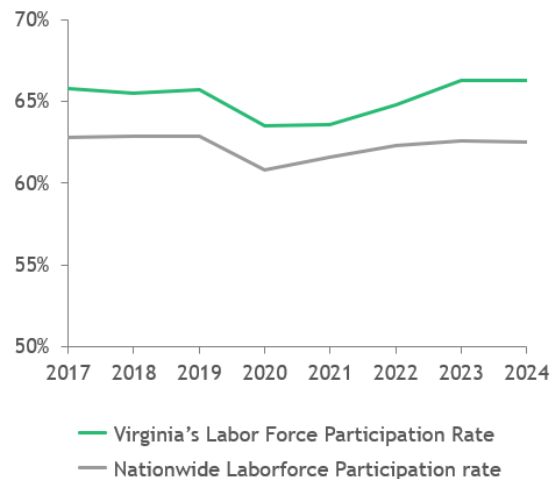
SECTION 1.3
Every individual in Virginia has a unique relationship to the workforce – segmenting common phases, experiences, and characteristics can help the Commonwealth's workforce ecosystem actors better serve their needs and opportunities

The Commonwealth's population can be segmented based on current relationship to the workforce and some of the common experiences and characteristics of that relationship (i.e., employment status, education level and skill development, barriers to participation, familial environment, and other lived experiences). Exhibit 8 presents five customer segments of the workforce and the estimated number of Virginians in each.

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[16] US Bureau of Labor & Statistics
[17] FRED Economic Data, 2024

SECTION 1:
Overview of services provided by the formal
workforce system at the local level

Exhibit 8:
Understanding the individual customer by relationship to workforce, as of July 2024[18]

Note: An individual may move from one segment to another in different life phases

Adults

Segment	Young people preparing for the workforce	... Who are unemployed (and looking for work)	... In low-wage, low-skill jobs	... In mid-high wage jobs (with potential upskill need)	... Currently out of the workforce
	1	2	3	4	5

Sums to Virginia's total population[2]

Approximate # of Virginians (% of VA population)	2.2M (25%)	124K (1%)	1.7M (19%)	2.7M (31%)	2.0M (23%)
Common experiences / characteristics / barriers[1]	• Pre-K to 12 • 2-year degree or certification (VCCS): credential, transfer, vocational paths • 4-year degrees • Out of school and work youth	• English language learner • Challenges with basic skills (e.g., reading comp., math) • Childcare needs that are incompatible with jobs • Transportation barriers • SNAP and TANF recipients	• Highest education is high school or below • ALICE households • Living in poverty • SNAP and TANF recipients • Migrant and seasonal farmworkers	• Employed in middle wage jobs with potential upskilling need - job obsolescence, lack of career mobility • Employed with reasonable career trajectory	• Retired • Providing unpaid services in the home • Justice-involved • Recent immigrants

This point-in-time snapshot captures how the workforce development ecosystem typically offers workforce education and training, as well as supportive or "wraparound" services, to each segment or group.

However, it is important to note that the picture is not static: individuals move, often non-linearly, across these segments over the course of their lives and career journeys.

SECTION 1.3.1
Young people preparing for the workforce

The first segment of the population is the group of young people below the age of 24 who are preparing to enter the workforce for the first time, estimated at roughly 2.1M Virginians, or 24% of the population. It includes young people in both the preK-12 and postsecondary education systems, including non-degree certification / credential and 2- and 4-year degree programs. These systems serve ~1.5M students through pre-K-12 public and private schools, ~400K through public and private 4-year higher education institutions, and ~160K students under the age of 24 through the Virginia Community College System.

The segment also includes 34K disconnected youth (~10% of young people[19] in the state, as of 2018), or young people aged 14-26 who are not engaged in the workforce but are also not engaged in an educational system (i.e., have dropped out of high school, are not actively in any postsecondary education or training programs, and do not yet have a job).

SECTION 1.3.2
Adults who are unemployed (and looking for work)

The second segment of the population is the group of adults who are experiencing unemployment and may be eligible for unemployment benefits: 124K Virginians in May 2024,[20] or ~1% of the population. This population typically includes adults with significant barriers to employment, including childcare needs, lack of access to reliable transportation, low English proficiency, and educational gaps in subjects like reading comprehension and basic math. While the size of the segment has varied (see Exhibit 9), the number of *initial* unemployment claims has stayed fairly constant since January of 2022, reflecting the low rate

[18] Note: Individuals in an archetype may belong to one or more of the subsegments; Sources: US Census; SCHEV; Strada Education Foundation; Virginia DOE; Public News Service; DataUSA.IO; Virginia Navigator; Education.gov; Commonwealth Institute; WIOA; Talk Poverty, VDSS; Pew Research; Career Minds
[19] University of Virginia, Copper Center for Public Service, 2012-2016 American Community Survey
[20] https://www.vec.virginia.gov/latest-release

SECTION 1:
Overview of services provided by the formal
workforce system at the local level

of unemployment in Virginia and the "hot" job market
with more vacancies than seekers.

Exhibit 9:
Virginia Weekly Unemployment Insurance Claims Activity, as of June 2024[21]

Initial claims filed in the 6-1-2024 filing week were fourteen percent lower than in the comparable week in 2023

Source: Source: Virginia Employment Commission, "Virginia's Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims for Week Ending June 1, 2024."

SECTION 1.3.3
Adults who are in low-wage, low-skill jobs

The third segment of the population is the group of adults who are participating in the workforce, but are employed in low-wage, low-skill jobs: roughly 1.7M Virginians, or ~20% of the population. For the purposes of this report, this segment has been defined as Virginians earning below $70K in annual household income, based on the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition of low-income as earning below 80% of the median income of a county or metropolitan area. (Note that Virginia's median household income is $87K.)

Subsegments of this population include Virginia residents whose highest educational attainment is high school or equivalent (or below), those living in poverty, ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households, those who are adult SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) recipients, and migrant and seasonal farmworkers. Note that these subsegments are not mutually exclusive – an individual may be represented by multiple of these experiences.

SECTION 1.34
Adults who are in mid- and high-earning jobs

The fourth segment of the population is a broad group of adults who are participating in the workforce and are in mid- to high-earning jobs (for the purposes of this report, above $70K in annual household income): roughly 2.7M Virginians, or ~31% of the population. The lower end of earners in this segment would still be considered part of the ALICE population, defined as households that earn above the Federal Poverty Level but cannot afford the basic cost of living in their county.[22]

Given the large range of income and skill level across this segment, there is also a large range in services the group may seek from the workforce development ecosystem, and not a perfect correlation between earnings and need. For example, some higher-wage earners may be at risk of job obsolescence with the rise of Artificial Intelligence technologies and choose to upskill or reskill, while other "middle skill, mid-wage" earners (e.g., in certain trades) may have fewer

[21] Virginia Works

[22] United for Alice; United Ways for Virginia

SECTION 1:
Overview of services provided by the formal
workforce system at the local level

immediate skilling needs – and both may seek support to access childcare if they also have young children.

SECTION 1.3.5
Adults who are currently out of the workforce

The fifth segment of the population is the group of adults who are currently out of the workforce, meaning not employed and not currently seeking employment, and are therefore not considered as part of unemployment in segment two: roughly 2.0M Virginians, or ~23% of the population.

This population is largely comprised of older adults not seeking to re-enter the workforce – roughly 1.5M Virginians who consider themselves retired. Beyond retirees, there are four (not mutually exclusive)

subsegments of people who, despite longer periods of unemployment, may be looking to enter the workforce:

- Those not seeking a job due to challenges with their immigration status: ~200K[23]

- Those who currently provide unpaid services in the home, such as stay-at-home parents: ~150K[24]

- Those who have a justice-involved background creating barriers to employment: ~50K[25]

- Those who recently immigrated to the US: ~25K[26]

SECTION 1.4
The formal workforce development system plays an important but targeted role in serving these segments

As referenced in section 1.1, the actors that serve these segments form a complex workforce development ecosystem at the state, regional, and local level:

- **Formal "Workforce system:"** (1) Virginia Works at the state level, (2) Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) at the local level (*see Appendix 4.3 for their governance structure*) and the American Job Centers (AJCs) they operate, and (3) Programs funded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (*see Section 1.4.1*)

- **VCCS:** The credit and non-credit workforce training offered by the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) intended to prepare students for immediate entry into the workforce and commonly referred to as its "workforce development" functions that exist at each community college

- **Partners in the workforce development ecosystem:** Including but not limited to Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

(DARS), Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), GO Virginia, Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI), Virginia Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI), Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), Veterans Education Transition and Employment (VETE) within Virginia Department of Veteran Services

At the local level: Exhibit 10 illustrates how the workforce development ecosystem operates at the local level, where workforce system customers can access services through different entry points. Most of these entry points (e.g., AJCs, community colleges) serve both individuals and employers, while some, such as economic developers and business entities, provide only employer services. The AJCs are also noteworthy because they consolidate many different services into one entry point, including access to WIOA programs, any additional programs run by LWDB staff, Virginia Works programs, and many other programs hosted by required partners.

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[23] https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/VA
[24] https://www.womenwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/01/cl_va.pdf
[25] https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/VA.html#:~:text=In%20

Virginia%2C%2060%2C000%20people%20are,are%20on%20probation%20or%20parole.
[26] https://cardinalnews.org/2023/12/20/new-census-data-shows-death-rate-dropping-fewer-people-moving/

SECTION 1:
Overview of services provided by the formal
workforce system at the local level

Exhibit 10:
Workforce development ecosystem at the local level[27]

Provides services for…

Access points for services at the local level	Services provided by: (varies regionally)	Individuals — Training	Individuals — Navigation	Employers — Hiring	Employers — Developing
AJCs	LWDB staff, Virginia Works, DOE, DBVI, DARS, DSS, CBOs, Contracted staff	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community colleges	Community colleges	✓	✓	✓	✓
Other education/ training	K12 school districts, Adult Education, Four-year institutions, Other training providers	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community-based orgs	Labor orgs, Non-profits	✓	✓	✓	✓
Economic development	VEDP RTSBO, Local REDA, GOVA Region			✓	✓
Business entities	Local chambers, Business associations			✓	✓

Overview of AJCs

American Job Centers (AJCs) are centers where workforce development services and activities are made available to the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia. LWDBs are responsible for evaluating and certifying the centers in their LWDA and managing the operators of the centers.

*A host of programs are made available at the centers, largely from a set of **required partners** who deliver federally mandated services. These programs include:*

- *Programs authorized under the WIOA Titles (see Section 1.4.1), including:*
  - *Title I - Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth*
  - *Title III - Wagner-Peyser Employment Services*
  - *Title II - Adult Education and Family Literacy*
  - *Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation*
- *The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)*
- *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Programs at the postsecondary level*
- *Trade Adjustment Assistance*
- *Jobs for Veterans State Grants*
- *Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) employment and training activities*
- *Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) employment and training activities*
- *Programs authorized under state unemployment compensation laws.*
- *Reentry Employment Opportunities (REG)*
- *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)*
- *Job Corps; YouthBuild; Native American programs; and Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker programs*

In addition to these programs, AJCs frequently host community-based organizations and provide additional programs or services that the LWDB receives grant funding to carry out.

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[27] Interviews with stakeholders

SECTION 1:
Overview of services provided by the formal
workforce system at the local level

SECTION 1.4.1
Overview of services provided by the formal workforce system at the local level

This section of the report focuses on how individuals access job seeker support through AJCs at the local level, services that largely focus on job search and placement, career coaching, resume support, skills assessments, and access to education and training funded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). It also briefly covers the latest unemployment insurance benefits received by residents of the Commonwealth.

Unemployment insurance: In July 2024, residents of the Commonwealth filed roughly ~2K new claims and ~16K continued claims.[28] These are available to adults who are short-term unemployed and are provided by the Virginia Employment Commission

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law by the federal government in 2014 and supports "job seekers' access to employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy."[29] The federal legislation provides funding for states and local areas to deliver these services. There are four Titles under WIOA that provide funds to serve these populations:

- **WIOA Title I Employment and Training Services** *(5K participants served in Virginia in Program Year 2022)***:** Funds workforce development programs such as career services and job training, serving populations federally described as Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth. The LWDBs receive these funds to provide services in AJCs.

- **WIOA Title II, Adult Education** *(18K participants)***:** Funds adult education and literacy activities specifically for out-of-school youth and adults who are not proficient in English or lack a high school diploma or the equivalent. Grants are given by VDOE to eligible education providers to deliver these services.

- **WIOA Title III, Wagner-Peyser** *(23K participants)***:** [30] An amendment to the Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933, this Title supports job seekers and businesses looking to hire through the provision of labor exchange services and referrals. Virginia Works employs staff who work in AJCs to provide services under Title III as a required partner.

- **WIOA Title IV, Rehabilitation** *(18K participants)***:** Funds vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities. Grants for this program are overseen by DARS.

This document focuses mostly on Titles I and III, which provide the most direct workforce and training services to the broadest population. Through these programs, job seekers who qualify can access job search assistance, 1:1 career development support, and other workforce preparation opportunities.

It should be noted that the LWDBs and Virginia Works provide many other services beyond Titles I and III. LWDBs leverage other grant funding streams to serve the needs of their communities, and Virginia Works delivers other programs at the local level, including Registered Apprenticeship, Jobs for Veterans (JSVG), Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), and Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA).

Each Program Year (PY), the federal government allocates funds to the Commonwealth to serve individuals under each program. The total allocation for PY 2023 was approximately $60M.[31]

- WIOA Title I Employment and Training Services

  - Youth (ages 14-24): $14.6M

  - Adult (ages 18+ with eligibility requirements): $13.6M

  - Dislocated Worker (defined as individuals who have involuntarily lost their job due to reasons beyond their control, e.g., a layoff): $13.0M

- WIOA Title III, Wagner-Peyser: $15.5M

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[28] https://www.vec.virginia.gov/UI-press-release
[29] https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa
[30] The Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933, amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), establishes a nationwide system of public employment offices, known as the Employment Service (ES). From https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/american-job-centers/wagner-peyser-program
[31] https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/05/09/2024-10074/program-year-py-2024-workforce-innovation-and-opportunity-act-wioa-title-i-allotments-py-2024-title

SECTION 1:
Overview of services provided by the formal
workforce system at the local level

Exhibit 11:
WIOA Title I and III participants in PY22, by LWDA[32]
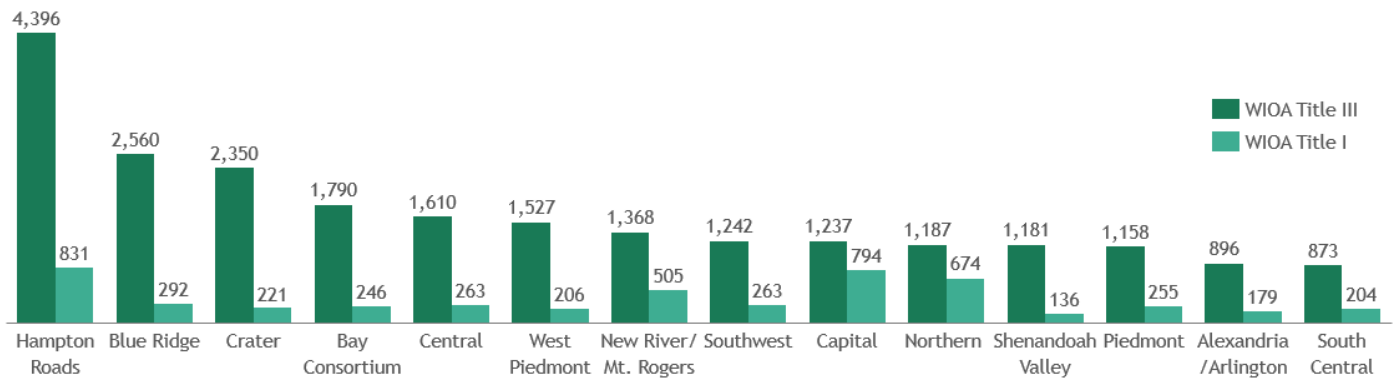
These programs are open to individuals across customer segments (Exhibit 12). While there is no data available to show how participants are distributed across these segments, the total represents only a very small fraction of the population of each segment. Still, despite their limited reach, the programs are highly effective at getting individuals into jobs. Two quarters after participating in and exiting from WIOA Title I and III programs, individuals were 81% and 70% (by respective programs) employed.[33]

Data to substantiate longer-term retention in these jobs or wage gains over time is limited.

Exhibit 12:
Individuals participating in workforce system, across segments[34]

Segment	Total population	# individuals participating in workforce system, relevant to each segment
Young people preparing for the workforce	~2.2M	• ~1K (<1%) through WIOA Title I Youth
Adults who are unemployed	~124K	• ~18K (15%) through Unemployment Insurance benefits • Up to ~3K (<1%) through WIOA Title I Adult* • Up to ~600 (<1%) through WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker* • Up to ~23K (19%) through WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser*
Adults who are in low-wage, low-skill jobs	~1.7M	• Up to ~3K (<1%) through WIOA Title I Adult* • Up to ~18K (1%) through WIOA Title II Adult Education* • Up to ~18K (1%) through WIOA Title IV Rehabilitation*
Adults who are in mid- and high-earning jobs	~2.7M	N/A
Adults who are currently out of the workforce	~2.0M	• Up to ~3K (<1%) through WIOA Title I Adult* • Up to ~600 (<1%) through WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker* • Up to ~18K (1%) through WIOA Title II Adult Education * • Up to ~18K (1%) through WIOA Title IV Rehabilitation*

*Note: May serve other segments

WIOA Title I funds training opportunities for job seekers: participants are supported to receive training from eligible training providers, including community colleges, nonprofit organizations, and privately run

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[32] VAWC reports, PY 2022-2023
[33] VAWC reports, PY 2022-2023
[34] US Census 2022; Pew Research; Career Minds; VAWC reports, PY 2022-2023; Virginia Works

SECTION 1:
Overview of services provided by the formal
workforce system at the local level

programs. The number of eligible providers varies across regions, with Northern Virginia having the most providers at 70, who delivered 379 programs in PY23. Most regions have closer to 10 providers (see Exhibit 13).

Eligible training providers across the Commonwealth are most likely to offer programs in Information Technology, Healthcare, and Manufacturing (Exhibit 14). However, the industry focus can vary greatly across regions to be responsive to local conditions. For example, Northern Virginia has few to no eligible programs in Manufacturing and Skilled

Trades, whereas West Piedmont and Crater have few or no eligible programs in Information Technology.

On average, programs with at least one WIOA-funded participant in the program year trained eight WIOA participants and 67 participants total.[35] Completion rates across WIOA and non-WIOA participants were effectively the same at around 70%. However, this data has significant limitations. The data available shows that half of eligible training providers reported that all of their participants were WIOA-funded, but staff believe from interacting with providers that this number is likely significantly lower.

Exhibit 13:
Eligible training programs and providers, by region[36]

Total programs: 2201
Total providers: 260

■ Unique programs ■ Unique providers
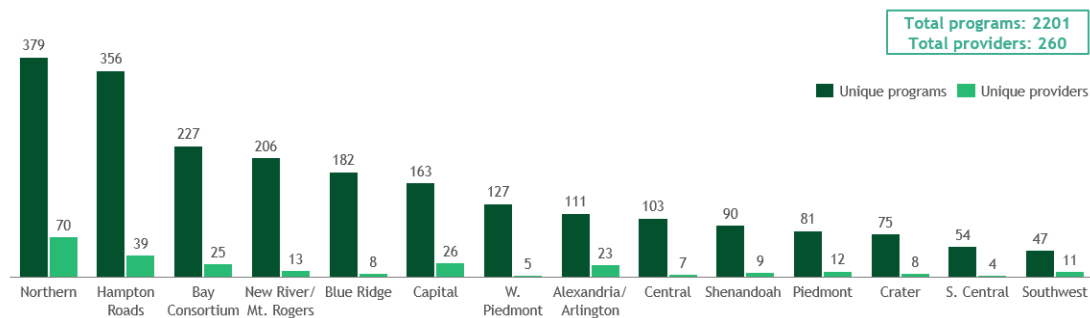
Exhibit 14:
Eligible training programs broken down by industry, by region[37]
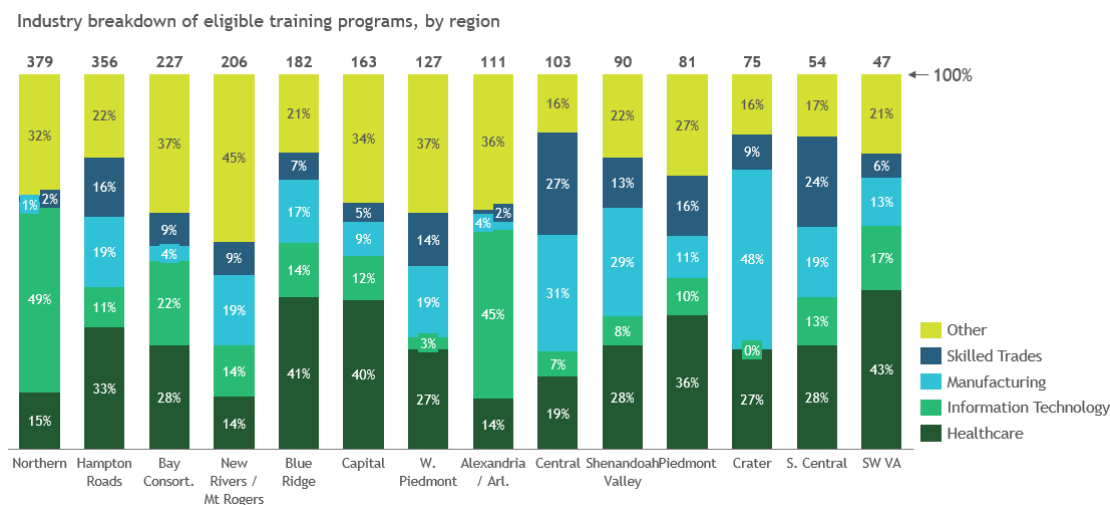
Industry breakdown of eligible training programs, by region

Other
Skilled Trades
Manufacturing
Information Technology
Healthcare

SECTION 1:
Overview of services provided by the formal
workforce system at the local level

SECTION 1.4.2
Overview of services provided by VCCS

Many individuals go directly to community colleges to access workforce training and services, rather than entering through the workforce system and receiving a referral to a local college. VCCS offers both credit and non-credit programs, in which students are trained in their field of interest and may work toward a recognized credential; they may also receive additional career search and/or "wraparound" supports (e.g., some offer free access to public transportation, mental health support services) through the community college.

As with the programs provided by the workforce system, the proportion of individuals served by VCCS represents a small fraction of the total population in each segment (Exhibit 16).

VCCS's workforce development offerings include both credit and non-credit programs:

- **Credit programs:** Of the 207K students enrolled across VCCS for credit programs in 2023-2024, 51K were enrolled in Career Technical Education (CTE) – which directly prepare students to enter the workforce. Of this group, 26K were ages 24 or younger and fit into the young people category..

- **Non-credit programs:** 13K students were enrolled across VCCS in non-credit programs through Fast Forward in 2023-2024. Of those, 4K were ages 24 or younger.

Exhibit 15 shows the distribution of credit and non-credit workforce students across the system. 20% are enrolled in Northern Virginia, followed by 14% at Tidewater, 9% at Brightpoint, 7% at Reynolds, 6% at Germanna and all others were less than 5%.

Exhibit 15:
2023-2024 headcount of workforce enrollment by community college across VCCS [38]

47.3% of systemwide workforce credit and non-credit enrollment is 24 years or younger

Non-credit
Credit

	Northern Virginia	Tidewater	Brightpoint	J. Sargeant Reynolds	Germanna	Virginia Western	Virginia Peninsula	Southside Virginia	Laurel Ridge	Blue Ridge	Central Virginia	Southwest Virginia	Piedmont Virginia	New River	Danville	Virginia Highlands	Mountain Empire	Rappahannock	Patrick & Henry	Wytheville	Paul D. Camp	Eastern Shore	Mountain Gateway
Total	12.8K	8.9K	5.8K	4.6K	3.9K	3.2K	2.6K	2.2K	2.2K	2.1K	2.0K	1.7K	1.5K	1.5K	1.4K	1.3K	1.3K	1.3K	1.2K	0.9K	0.8K	0.7K	0.7K
Non-credit	1.1K	1.0K	2.0K	1.1K	1.1K	0.5K																	
Credit	11.7K	7.9K	3.8K	3.5K	2.8K	2.6K																	
% of enrollment	20%	14%	9%	7%	6%	5%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%

[38] Virginia Works

SECTION 1:
Overview of services provided by the formal
workforce system at the local level

Exhibit 16:
Individuals enrolled in VCCS programs, across segments[39]

Segment	Total population	# individuals enrolled in VCCS programs
Young people preparing for the workforce	~2.2M	• 31K (~2%) through credit and non-credit workforce programs[40] • 132K (~6%) through non-workforce programs
Adults who are unemployed	~124K	
Adults who are in low-wage, low-skill jobs	~1.7M	• 34K through credit and non-credit workforce programs for ages 24 and under • 23K through non-workforce programs
Adults who are in mid- and high-earning jobs	~2.7M	
Adults who are currently out of the workforce	~2.0M	

Within VCCS' suite of workforce offerings, the majority of non-credit options are part of Fast Forward. Fast Forward a is state-funded, short-term training program that prepares students to obtain third-party, industry-recognized credentials in high-priority sectors.[41] In 2022, Fast Forward served ~10K students (including 43% students of color and an average age of 35 across all students). The cost of attendance is shared by the state, students, and course providers, with course providers reimbursed fully only when the student successfully earns the credential.[42] The program has a 95% program completion rate and a 72% credential attainment rate through 2024, with students seeing on average an increase in wages of $11,746.[43] The top five training programs through Fast Forward are Commercial Driver's License, Clinical Medical Assistant, VDOT Asphalt Field, Phlebotomy Technician, and CompTIA A+. 72% of graduates from the 2020 Fast Forward cohort who obtained credentials were employed six months after graduation.

Students in both credit and non-credit programs can also receive financial support from G3, a tuition assistance initiative for students enrolled in high-demand careers programs who come from households that are 400% below the Federal Poverty Level (roughly $100K household income for a family of four). In 2023, 12,600 students across VCCS received $20.5M in G3 tuition assistance,[44] which kicked in once federal and state aid were applied. Over 49% of students in 2022 were over the age of 25, and 83% of students were retained semester after semester.[45]

Of students enrolled in credit programs (Career Technical Education) in 2021, 78.9% were employed within 21 months.[46]

SECTION 1.4.3
Overview of services provided by other partners in the workforce development ecosystem

As previously discussed, many entities and programs provide workforce development-related services to individuals and employers in the Commonwealth, beyond what has been considered the formal workforce system and VCCS. There is an ongoing effort by Virginia Works to, first, catalogue all the statewide programs that provide services via state and Federal funding; second, collect a set of common metrics focused on the ultimate key outcomes of individual placement, retention, and wage growth to better understand the programs' impact; and, third, support how they collaborate, communicate, and refer customers between each other.

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[39] US Census 2022; Pew Research; Career Minds; VAWC reports, PY 2022-2023; Virginia Works
[40] Cutoff age that differentiates young people from adults is 24, with young people being ages 24 and under
[41] There are additional programs run by VCCS and SCHEV (State Council of Higher Education in Virginia) which are not profiled in this document, and include Innovative Internship Program, Institutes of Excellence for Non-Credit Training and Instruction, Non-Credit Workforce Training, Postsecondary Career and Technical Education (Perkins).
[42] https://documents.ncsl.org/wwwncsl/Education/Virginia_FastForward_f01.pdf
[43] https://fastforwardva.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2024-FastForward-Fact-Sheet.pdf
[44] https://www.vccs.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/XGR-2024-VCCS-Fact-Sheet-FINAL.pdf
[45] https://www.vccs.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/G3-Fact-Sheet-2022-FINAL.pdf
[46] https://www.vccs.edu/graduate-outcomes/

SECTION 1:
Overview of services provided by the formal
workforce system at the local level

As of mid-2024, Virginia Works has collected two quarters of data and programs have been categorized into four categories based on their primary service or focal area (workforce education & training, business services, supportive workforce services, and capacity building). So far, this effort has identified 72 distinct programs (inclusive of the WIOA Title programs), with 13 administered by the workforce system as defined in this report, six administered by VCCS and SCHEV, and the remaining 53 administered by other state agencies and entities. As this is a new process, many of the programs have not been able to provide comprehensive metrics, resulting in some gaps in data

collection that will continue to be addressed over the coming quarters.

Beyond the programs administered by the formal workforce system and VCCS, those that reported the greatest total cost included Secondary CTE / Perkins (VDOE), Virginia Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (DSS), and Virginia Student Loan Repayment Program, Tobacco Extension (Virginia Department of Health). The programs reporting the greatest numbers of individuals trained included Secondary CTE / Perkins (VDOE) and Growth and Opportunity Fund (GO Virginia).

SECTION 1.5
A coherent, aligned workforce development ecosystem would have immense benefits for the Commonwealth

This report seeks to consider how, at the local level, the Commonwealth's workforce development ecosystem is and can be aligned to the diverse needs of its population. By understanding customer segments and how existing programs do or do not address their needs, the Commonwealth can strategically address gaps and opportunities to serve its customers more effectively, building on the work

that has already been done to streamline and coordinate programs through Virginia Works. Continuing these efforts at the local level has the potential to produce more satisfied jobseekers and employers, and ultimately support a positive economic impact for individuals, their employers, and the state (with increased tax revenue and continued economic growth).

Section 2:
The experience of job seekers and employers engaging the Commonwealth's workforce system

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As discussed in Section 1, the Commonwealth's workforce development ecosystem, inclusive of all its stakeholders and partners at the state, regional, and local levels, directly serves a small fraction of potential customers, both individuals and employers. However, the entities within the local ecosystem that are the core focus of this report – AJCs and community colleges – do provide meaningful support to job seekers and employers. Section 2 focuses on the experiences and needs of these two customer groups.

Sections 2 and 3 reference insights from three surveys launched in June 2024 to inform this research effort. These surveys reached three critical populations:

- **Job seekers:** ~1000 individuals who started a new role in Virginia in the last 5 years.[47] 22% of respondents lived outside Virginia at the beginning of their job hunt; the remainder that lived in Virginia at the time are representative of Virginia's population on gender, age, geographic distribution, and educational attainment. The survey intentionally reached a broader audience than only those who have directly interacted with the workforce system (through LWDBs / AJCs) in finding or preparing for their job, with the intent of understanding the full range of job seeker perspectives across the Commonwealth and informing opportunities to broaden awareness, outreach, engagement, and services provided by the ecosystem as whole.

- **Employers:** ~300 employers across all regions of the Commonwealth, contacted through the state and local workforce system, state and local chambers of commerce, and state and local economic developers. As a result, it is a reasonable assumption that respondents were more likely than the average Virginia employer to be familiar with workforce services provided at the local level through any or all of these entities, positioning them to provide feedback on how the system works today and how it can improve. Most respondents were entirely based in Virginia, roughly 40% of respondents had fewer than 50 employees in the state, and annual revenue spanned from small companies earning less than a $1M each year to those earning over $1B. Roughly half of respondents were company executives, with the next biggest group serving in HR roles.

- **Workforce development ecosystem staff and stakeholders:** ~300 individuals across all regions of the Commonwealth who deliver workforce development services to job seekers and employers, across both state and local actors and programs. This includes but is not limited to LWDB Board Members, program staff across all WIOA Titles, local and regional economic developers, VCCS, community-based organizations, and local elected officials.

SECTION 2.1
Job seekers

SECTION 2.1.1
Current and recent job seekers in Virginia come with a range of needs and goals and leverage many tools and resources in their search

Key findings from the job seeker survey include:

- **Many job seekers have a dream – and see the potential to realize that dream in Virginia**. 43% of survey respondents said they have a dream job or role in mind; of that group, 88% believe that job is available in the Commonwealth.

- **Job seekers' motivations diverge.** Pay was the top priority for a plurality of job seekers, but was only cited by 22% of respondents, who also cited job security, interest / passion, and work-life balance (less than 10% each of responses). Other priorities included benefits package, commute time, and company reputation.

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[47] The survey was fielded by Dynata, a third-party company which specializing in targeting surveys to particular respondent profiles

SECTION 2:
The experience of job seekers and employers engaging
the Commonwealth's workforce system

- **Many job seekers are interested in a career pivot but have not pursued additional learning to make said pivot.** 60% of all respondents were looking for a job that was not directly related to the field of their degree or credential, with 36% looking in a different industry and 31% in a different function. However, few (only 13%) pursued additional learning before applying to a new role.

Job seekers in Virginia leverage a wide array of tools and resources, but do not always find these effective. The three leading resources used by job seekers to find job listings (see Exhibit 17) were networking and personal connections; employment agencies, offices, or websites; and social media, all

used by over half of respondents. Resource usage to prepare candidacies or applications when applying to roles was much lower: only 25-32% of respondents cited using resume building tools, social media, networking and personal connections, employment agencies, offices, or websites, and interview preparation websites, and far fewer used other tools such as online tutorials and workshops or mock interviews (see Exhibit 18).

However, only a third of those who used each resource found it effective and, notably, higher-income respondents were more likely to rate tools as effective than their lower-income counterparts.

Exhibit 17:
Percentage of respondents who used the following methods to find a job listing[48], by effectiveness of method (self-rated)[49]

Exhibit 18:
Percentage of respondents who used the following methods to prepare for job applications[50]
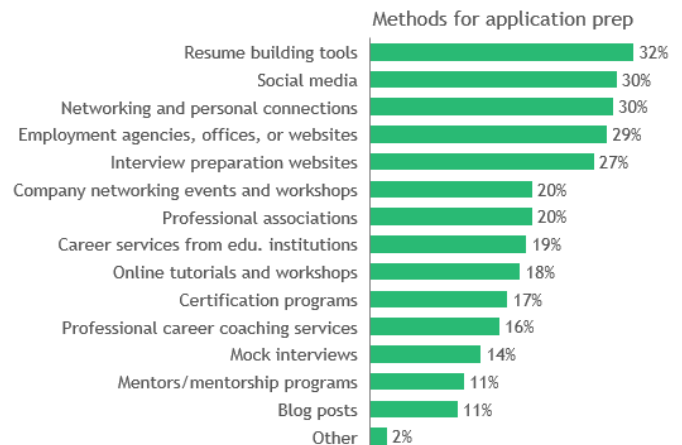
SECTION 2.1.2
A small fraction of job seekers, but largely lower-income, people of color, and facing barriers to employment, turn to the workforce system for assistance

LWDBs and the AJCs in the area collect comprehensive data on job seeker participation and exit outcomes for WIOA Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and Title III programs. Other data of locally-provided services, such as those funded by discretionary grants, are collected less consistently. As a result, Section 2 primarily references WIOA Title I and III data in addition to survey results.

Across the Commonwealth in Program Year 22-23, there were 5K Title I and 23K Title III participants, respectively (see Exhibit 19). While some LWDAs served a larger absolute number of job seekers, others served a higher percentage of the unemployed population in the region; this percentage ranged from 0.3-6.6% for Title III and 0.2-0.8% for Title I. 828 individuals were co-enrolled in Titles I and III, which

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[48] Multiselect question: What resources did you use to find job opportunities during your job search?; Source: Boston Consulting Group VA Job-seeker survey
[49] Mutliselect question: Of the resources that you used, which sources led to a successful job search?; Source: Boston Consulting Group VA Job-seeker survey
[50] Multiselect question: What resources did you use to prepare to apply to your job search?; Source: Boston Consulting Group VA Job-seeker survey

SECTION 2:
The experience of job seekers and employers engaging
the Commonwealth's workforce system

represents 16% of Title I and 4% of Title III
participants.

Exhibit 19:
WIOA Title III and I participants, by region[51]

Title III and Title I participants, as a % of regional unemployed population

	Hampton Roads	Blue Ridge	Crater	Bay Consortium	Central	West Piedmont	New River/ Mt. Rogers	Southwest	Capital	Northern	Shenandoah Valley	Piedmont	Alexandria /Arlington	South Central
WIOA Title III	4,396	2,560	2,350	1,790	1,610	1,527	1,368	1,242	1,237	1,187	1,181	1,158	896	873
WIOA Title I	831	292	221	246	263	206	505	263	794	674	136	255	179	204
Title III %	1.3%	5%	6.6%	1.2%	3.1%	4%	2%	3.8%	0.7%	0.3%	1.3%	1.5%	1.3%	2.4%
Title I %	0.3%	0.6%	0.6%	0.2%	0.5%	0.5%	0.7%	0.8%	0.5%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.6%

Though representing only a small fraction of total job seekers, the population served by WIOA programs is more concentrated in certain groups. Compared to the population of the Commonwealth, WIOA participants are at least twice as likely to be African-American (see Exhibit 20) and have lower educational attainment (i.e., do not hold a degree beyond a high school diploma or equivalent) (Exhibit 21).

Exhibit 20:
Racial demographic of VA, Title I participants, and Title III participants[52]

	VA	Title I Adult	Title I Dislocated Worker	Title I Youth	Title III
Total	8.63M	3,245	570	1,379	23,427
Other	14.0%	10.9%	10.9%	14.3%	11.1%
Asian alone	7.1%	4.5%	3.3%	2.4%	1.8%
Black/African American alone	18.6%	50.3%	44.0%	47.4%	45.0%
White alone	60.3%	34.3%	41.8%	35.9%	42.0%
% Hispanic or Latino	10.5%	6.3%	6.1%	10.4%	5.8%

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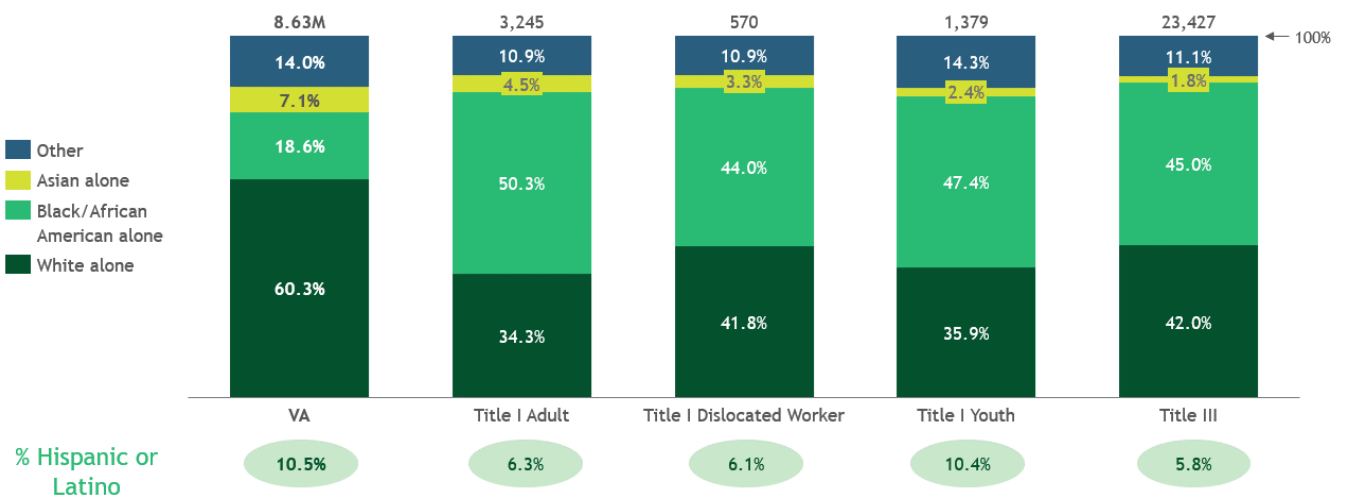
[51] Note: 2 WIOA Title I participants and 52 WIOA Title III participants were not matched to a region in the VAWC system; for % of unemployed population, numerator is region's number of participants divided by 12, denominator is region's annual average unemployed population in 2023 as reported by BLS; Source: VAWC reports, PY 2022-2023
[52] Individuals who identified as Hispanic only, Native Hawaiian, Native American, or who did not specify their race are included in 'Other' category; % Hispanic or Latino includes all individuals who identified as Hispanic only as well as Hispanic and another race; Sources: VAWC reports, PY 2022-2023; US Census

SECTION 2:
The experience of job seekers and employers engaging
the Commonwealth's workforce system

Exhibit 21:
Educational attainment of VA, Title I participants, and Title III participants[53]

Legend:
- Bachelors' degree (or beyond)
- Associates' degree
- Post high-school certification
- 1+ year of post-high school
- High school grad (or no diploma)

	VA (8.63M)	Title I Adult (3,245)	Title I Dislocated Worker (570)	Title I Youth (1,379)	Title III (23,427)
Bachelors' degree	44%	12%	21%	1%	16%
Associates' degree	8%	6%	11%	1%	12%
Post high-school certification	7%	5%	3%	2%	3%
1+ year of post-high school	11%	11%	18%	96%	10%
High school grad	30%	66%	47%		59%

← 100%

Per Exhibit 22, 82% of WIOA Title I participants face at least one barrier to employment. Of the barriers identified by WIOA case managers, the most prevalent are low-income status (70% of the population), English-language learner (28%), long-term unemployed (15%), formerly incarcerated (11%), and single parent (9%). However, there is significant variation in the prevalence of these barriers across regions (for example, English-language learner ranges from less than 5% in some regions to 60% in others), underscoring the regional differences navigated at the local level. In comparison (see Exhibit 23), 52% of WIOA Title III participants face at least one barrier to employment. The most prevalent barriers for this group are age (25%), low-income status (20%), and long-term unemployed (19%).

Exhibit 22:
Barriers of WIOA Title I participants[54].

Most WIOA Title I participants have at least 1 barrier to employment...

... with low-income being the most prevalent barrier, followed by a long tail of other barriers

Top 5 most prevalent barriers, % individuals with each barrier across the state

— Max % in a region
— Min % in a region

Left chart: Total % of VA WIOA Title I participants with 1+ barrier: **82%**

Right chart:
- Low income: **70%**
- English language learner: **28%**
- Long-term unemployed: **15%**
- Formerly incarcerated: **11%**
- Single parent: **9%**

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[53] Note: Totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding; Sources: VAWC reports, PY 2022-2023; Lumina Foundation
[54] VAWC reports, PY 2022-2023

SECTION 2:
The experience of job seekers and employers engaging
the Commonwealth's workforce system

Exhibit 23:
Barriers of WIOA Title III participants[55].

Half of Title III participants have at least 1 barrier to employment...

...and of these individuals, most identify with one of 3 major archetypes: older individuals, low income, and long-term unemployed

Top 5 most prevalent barriers, % individuals with each barrier across the state

--- Max % in a region
--- Min % in a region

52%

Total % of VA WIOA
Title III participants
with 1+ barrier

25% Older individual
20% Low income
19% Long-term unemployed
2%   Ex-offender
1%   Homeless/Runaway

SECTION 2.1.3
The workforce system is generally effective at helping participants find jobs, with little variation across participants' backgrounds

Approximately 81% and 70% of individuals who exit WIOA Title I and Title III programs, respectively, are employed two quarters after they conclude the program, with median quarterly earnings of $7,550. The higher employment rate of Title I is likely attributable to the fact that Title I participants have access to dedicated case managers and training programs, whereas Title III provides a broader but "lighter touch" set of services focused on finding a job, and support can be as one-off as a single resume review session. Notably, employment rates and median earnings vary little by race or education level, with exiters seeing comparable outcomes regardless of background.

The survey conducted for this report indicated that job seekers who referenced that they used a state-run job center are also pleased with their experience, with minimal variability across geographies. Survey respondents reported high overall satisfaction (see Exhibit 24), with an average score at 4.32 (on a scale of 1 for highly dissatisfied to 5 for highly satisfied), and with satisfaction levels tightly ranged across the different types of services that job seekers received. One relative outlier was income level: lower-income job seekers were slightly less satisfied with the services they received than their higher-income peers, though their overall satisfaction level (4.0) was still high.

Survey respondents also indicated satisfaction with the roles they received at the end of their search (average of 4.25, with minimal variability across regions).

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[55] VAWC reports, PY 2022-2023

SECTION 2:
The experience of job seekers and employers engaging
the Commonwealth's workforce system

Exhibit 24:

Satisfaction level with in-person services received at AJCs (1 being least satisfied, 5 most satisfied), weighted average[56]

	Overall visitor satisfaction	Access to job listings	Mentor services	Interview preparation	Resume-building workshops	Internships	Tech support	Career coaching	Remote access services	Provision of supplies	Training	Multi-lingual services	Special demographic support
Value	4.32	4.48	4.40	4.38	4.34	4.34	4.34	4.29	4.27	4.27	4.22	4.19	4.18
N=	1343	161	108	149	119	94	136	126	102	73	123	54	98

SECTION 2.1.4
However, aspects of the job seeker experience can vary significantly by region, due to different approaches to service delivery and center structures

Site visits and interviews with local AJC staff and leadership illuminated key differences at the local level in how centers serve job seekers:

Physical infrastructure and resources: Comprehensive job centers are physical locations where both job seeker and employer customers can access the programs, services, and activities of all AJC partners required under federal and state regulations and policies. Comprehensive centers range from just under 2,000 square feet to almost 8,000 square feet and provide a range of environments for job seekers. Larger centers typically have interview rooms and extensive offices for staff, while smaller centers typically have a greeting area, one or two offices, and a resource room for job seekers. There does not seem to be a correlation between whether a center is located in a rural or urban area and size of center. To note: job seekers can receive excellent service regardless of center size and resourcing.

Some LWDAs also have what are called "affiliate" job centers. An affiliate center must have at minimum one of the required partner programs (with physical staff presence) at the location. An affiliate center does not need to provide access to every required partner program.

Assistance to unemployed job seekers: Most regions shared that a large portion of their job center foot traffic comes from individuals seeking assistance with unemployment benefits. However, regions differed in *how* they engaged these job seekers, from fungibility of staff time to accessibility of services.[57]

Wraparound supports: Job centers tailor the wraparound supports they provide to the most prevalent barriers faced by job seekers in the region. For example, job seekers in many of the rural areas face transportation challenges, so the job centers may offer transportation stipends or support in procuring driver's licenses. Often, job centers seek grant funding to enable additional supports (e.g., childcare) or engage community partners to supplement the provision of relevant services (e.g., accepting donations of job interview-ready clothes from local non-profits or churches).

Partner availability: The regions also have a different mix of partners co-located in the centers, again reflecting the diversity of needs and populations in different regions (see Exhibit 25). While all regions administer the WIOA Titles and/or identify them as a partner, actors and programs like the Job Corps, Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers, Goodwill, and Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired appear in some but not all the regions.

The number of partners available in each center impacts additional services or programs that a customer may be referred to.

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[56] Multiselect Question: You specified that you received the following in-person services during your job search process. Please rate your level of satisfaction for the employment support you received; Source: Boston Consulting Group VA Job-seeker survey
[57] This priority access has been discontinued, but some centers are not aware of the change.

SECTION 2:
The experience of job seekers and employers engaging
the Commonwealth's workforce system

Exhibit 25:
Common partner organizations across areas[58]
Note: Source data of MOUs date from 2021-2022 (most recent available), so major changes to the workforce development ecosystem since then (e.g., formation of Virginia Works) are not reflected

Partner organization	Southwest	Blue Ridge/ Western VA	New River/ Mt.Rogers	Shenandoah Valley	Crater	Piedmont	Central	South Central	Capital	West Piedmont	Northern	Alexandria/ Arlington	Bay Consortium	Hampton Roads
Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Virginia Employment Commission	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
VCCS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Department of Social Services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Goodwill	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓			✓	
Workforce Development Boards		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				
Department for Blind and Vision Impaired		✓	✓	✓								✓		
SkillSource				✓		✓					✓	✓		
Blue Ridge Job Corps		✓	✓			✓								

✓ Area partners with organization

Virtual services: During COVID, many regions began or scaled up virtual services for job seekers and, today, most still offer some digital offerings, most frequently online webinars and digital job boards. However, regions handle high-touch virtual services, such as enrolling individuals in Title I, very differently. At least two regions, Blue Ridge and Northern, offer both in-person and fully virtual appointments (region 3, for example, serves over 90% of job seekers virtually), and engage Title I job seekers with their case managers over text, Facetime, and Zoom. Other regions may have elements of virtual support for WIOA (e.g., online orientation videos, connection to a case manager), but require in-person meetings for certain paperwork or signatures.

Case manager load: Per Exhibit 26, rural areas[59] tend to have fewer Title I case managers, with eight case managers per region versus 18 managers in urban regions on average. There is not a clear correlation between the number of case managers and caseload; the average case load per Title I case manager in Program Year 2022 ranged from 17 to 53 across regions. This almost 4x difference in case manager capacity could impact the job seeker experience.[60]
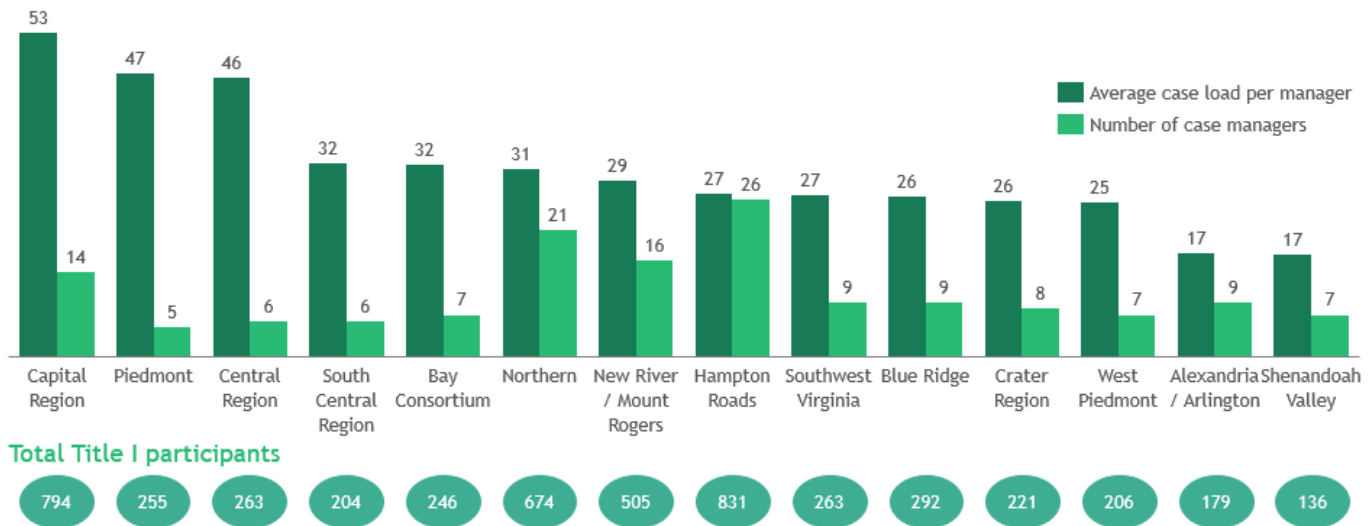
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[58] Regional MOUs; Client site visits
[59] Alexandria/Arlington, Capital, Hampton Roads, and Northern regions are considered urban; all others rural
[60] According to the dataset, there were no case managers who exclusively served Title III participants – the only Title III participants who received case manager support were those co-enrolled with Title I.

SECTION 2:
The experience of job seekers and employers engaging
the Commonwealth's workforce system

Exhibit 26:
Average case load per case manager and number of case managers, by region[61]

Legend:
- Average case load per manager
- Number of case managers

Region	Average case load per manager	Number of case managers	Total Title I participants
Capital Region	53	14	794
Piedmont	47	5	255
Central Region	46	6	263
South Central Region	32	6	204
Bay Consortium	32	7	246
Northern	31	21	674
New River / Mount Rogers	29	16	505
Hampton Roads	27	26	831
Southwest Virginia	27	9	263
Blue Ridge	26	9	292
Crater Region	26	8	221
West Piedmont	25	7	206
Alexandria / Arlington	17	9	179
Shenandoah Valley	17	7	136

SECTION 2.1.5
Community colleges serve job seekers directly and as training providers referred through the workforce system, but with significant differences at the local level

Community colleges are a crucial component of the workforce development ecosystem and provide essential training services to job seekers. Many job seekers go directly to community colleges to receive a credential, rather than first engaging with the "front door" of the workforce system (through Title I). The profile of these individuals varies by community college. For example, some community college leaders shared that their students in workforce programs are less likely to be unemployed and more likely to seek upskilling while continuing in their current jobs. Others have said that they are most likely to serve individuals (re)entering the workforce and looking for training or upskilling to access higher-paying roles. Several cited that their typical incoming student lacks confidence in their academic abilities.

Community colleges also interface with the workforce system and LWDBs to serve job seekers in three main ways, though partnerships differ across regions:

- **Eligible training provider:** With the exception of Alexandria / Arlington, every LWDB and their AJCs recognize at least one community college in the region as an eligible training provider for WIOA Title I. Exhibit 27 shows how many WIOA Title I participants are trained by community colleges in their LWDA. LWDB staff in rural areas shared that they tend to have fewer training providers available to them and therefore are more likely to

rely on the community colleges to train a larger portion of their Title I participants.
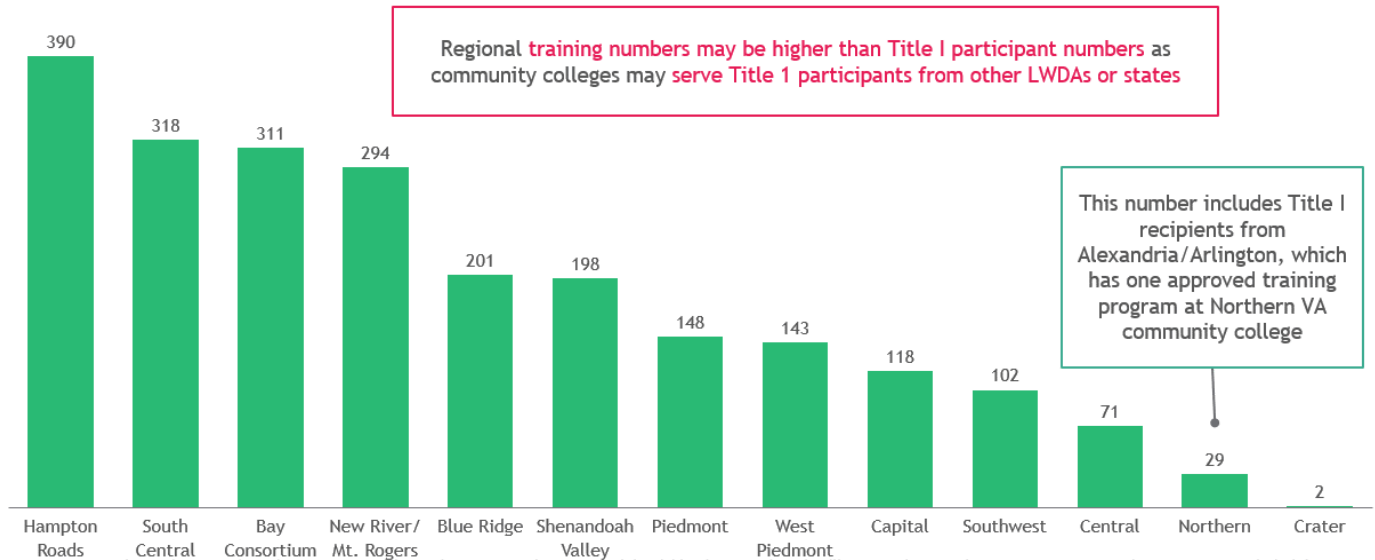
- **Center operation:** Community colleges in some regions are contracted by the LWDB to serve as center operators, particularly for affiliate centers (e.g., Keysville center in South Central is housed at the community college). This means that the AJC is part of the community college campus and is staffed by community college employees.

- **Title I case management:** In at least part of one LWDA (Bay Consortium's affiliate centers in the Northern Neck, Middle Peninsula, and Eastern Shore), the LWDB's contract for Title I case managers is granted to the local community college, which then provides case management services for Title I participants in the region.

Job seekers who are trained through community colleges increasingly have the option to pursue for-credit pathways and degrees upon completion of their initial credential programs, opening avenues to additional education. This gives job seekers additional flexibility to decide on the most relevant path for them, whether it is immediately entering the workforce or accumulation of additional skills and credentials.

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[61] Note: VAWC identifies case managers for 89% of WIOA Title I participants; Source: VAWC reports, PY 2022-2023

SECTION 2:
The experience of job seekers and employers engaging
the Commonwealth's workforce system

Exhibit 27:

WIOA Title I participants provided training through community colleges, by region[62]

Regional training numbers may be higher than Title I participant numbers as community colleges may serve Title 1 participants from other LWDAs or states

This number includes Title I recipients from Alexandria/Arlington, which has one approved training program at Northern VA community college

Region	Value
Hampton Roads	390
South Central	318
Bay Consortium	311
New River/Mt. Rogers	294
Blue Ridge	201
Shenandoah Valley	198
Piedmont	148
West Piedmont	143
Capital	118
Southwest	102
Central	71
Northern	29
Crater	2

SECTION 2.2
Employers

SECTION 2.2.1
Employers face considerable challenges around recruiting talent with the right skills and experiences

Despite earlier data in this report citing the Commonwealth's ability to meet labor market demand, key findings from the employer survey include:

- Employers across the Commonwealth say they struggle to meet talent needs. Over two-thirds of respondents identified meeting talent needs as a moderate, considerable, or significant challenge for their organizations.

- Recruiting talent with the required skills or experiences was the largest pain point identified, by 68% of respondents. 83% of large company respondents (with over $500M of annual revenue) cited this as a significant challenge.

- Other talent needs cited include attracting talent and retaining talent, both indicated by 1/3 of respondents. Per Exhibit 28, attraction challenges included providing adequate compensation, finding prepared candidates, and getting the right candidates aware of the job. Retention challenges included adequate compensation, career advancement opportunities, and work-life balance (of greatest concern for large company respondents).

- When asked how AJCs can help them in the future, 22% of respondents named assistance with finding their desired profile of job applicants as their top need, followed by 17% for building awareness of open roles and 14% for developing apprenticeships or on-the-job training.
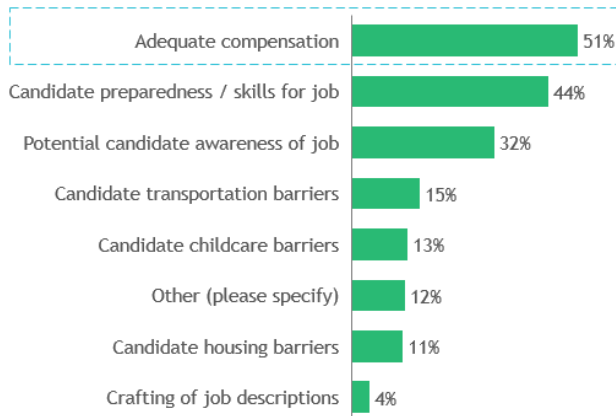
Exhibit 28:

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[62] Note: Mountain Empire CC and Southwest VA CC are in Southwest; New River CC, Virginia Highlands CC, and Wytheville CC are in New River/Mt. Rogers; Mountain Gateway CC and Virginia Western CC are in Blue Ridge; Blue Ridge CC and Laurel Ridge CC are in Shenandoah Valley; Brightpoint CC is in Crater; Piedmont Virginia CC is in Piedmont; Central Virginia CC is in Central; Southside Virginia CC is in South Central; Community College Workforce Alliance is in Capital; Danville CC and Patrick Henry CC are in West Piedmont; Northern Virginia CC is in Northern; Eastern Shore CC, Germanna CC, and Rappahannock CC is in Bay Consortium; Paul D Camp CC, Tidewater CC, and Virginia Peninsula CC is in Hampton Roads; Sources: VAWC reports, PY 2022-2023

SECTION 2:
The experience of job seekers and employers engaging
the Commonwealth's workforce system

Top challenges companies face in attracting talent (left)[63] and retaining talent (right)[64]

% of respondents who identified each of the following as significant barriers to attracting talent, multiselect possible[1], N=287

Adequate compensation	51%
Candidate preparedness / skills for job	44%
Potential candidate awareness of job	32%
Candidate transportation barriers	15%
Candidate childcare barriers	13%
Other (please specify)	12%
Candidate housing barriers	11%
Crafting of job descriptions	4%

% of respondents who identified each of the following as significant barriers to retaining talent, multiselect possible[2], N=287

Adequate compensation	44%
Career advancement opportunities	28%
Work-life balance	25%
Location / commute issues	21%
Adequate benefits	17%
Other (please specify)	16%
Workplace culture and environment	12%
Opportunities for professional development and retraining	11%
Job security	2%

SECTION 2.2.2
The workforce system provides support to only a small fraction of employers, with mixed effectiveness

While many actors, including VCCS colleges and VEDP's Regional Talent Solutions & Business Outreach (RTSBO) team, engage with businesses on their talent needs, employers tend to access the "formal" workforce system through two main channels.

1. LWDB Business Services: Per Virginia's WIOA Combined State Plan and as set in VBWD policy, each Local Workforce Development Area is required to have a Business Services Team whose responsibility it is to drive sector strategies within a region, provide local employers with human resources solutions, and identify methods to shrink regional skills gaps. Teams are intended to be cross-agency and cross-program, comprised of representatives of each of the core partner agencies, economic development, and other partners as appropriate. They are encouraged to help businesses develop relationships with the AJCs, and each partner agency in the AJC has statutory requirements for creating relationships with businesses and assisting clients receiving services through their funding in finding employment opportunities. While there is no "single point of contact" that handles intake across all workforce services in the region, Business Services Teams are expected to manage relationships with businesses in the community in a coordinated manner.[65]

Services offered to employers span the strategic (e.g., strategic planning / economic development, "light" HR consulting) to the tactical of workforce recruitment (e.g., accessing untapped labor pools) and retention (e.g., assessment, training).

With only guidelines but no prescriptive direction on how to engage employers, Business Services Teams deliver a wide range of service experiences. In terms of scope:

- Some regions have a narrow focus centered on connecting Title I-supported jobseekers with employers, such as setting up work-based learning experiences for their Title I participants, and do not provide any consulting services.

- Others have a broad focus, providing a wide range of employer support, including but not limited to consulting services, holding hiring events for major industries and specific populations (e.g., teens), and offering labor market information.

There are also different approaches to engaging employers, which include:

- Convening employer round tables or "sector partnership" groups by industry, to surface common issues and facilitate sector-wide dialogue and relationship-building

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[63] Question: What are the biggest barriers for your organization in attracting talent?; Source: Boston Consulting Group VA Job-seeker Survey
[64] Question: What are the biggest barriers for your organization in retaining talent?; Source: Boston Consulting Group VA Job-seeker Survey
[65] https://virginiacareerworks.com/wp-content/uploads/VBWD-Policy-403-01-Business-Services-Requirements-Change-1.pdf

SECTION 2:
The experience of job seekers and employers engaging
the Commonwealth's workforce system

- Organizing workshops and lectures on topics of interest to employers in the region

- Individual outreach and coordination on an employer-by-employer basis

2. Virginia Workforce Connection (VAWC): VAWC is an online portal that serves as a "gateway to employment and labor market information in Virginia."[66] It offers many services to employers, including options to post job listings, search for qualified employees through an advanced resume search, analyze labor market information, and locate business services. Title III staff who work in the local regions (but report up through Virginia Works at the state level) are responsible for adding employers and their open roles to the portal.

Across these channels, only a small fraction of employers in the Commonwealth are engaged or supported. Business Services teams estimated that they serve approximately 5% of businesses in their region, with some variation in the single digits. Survey
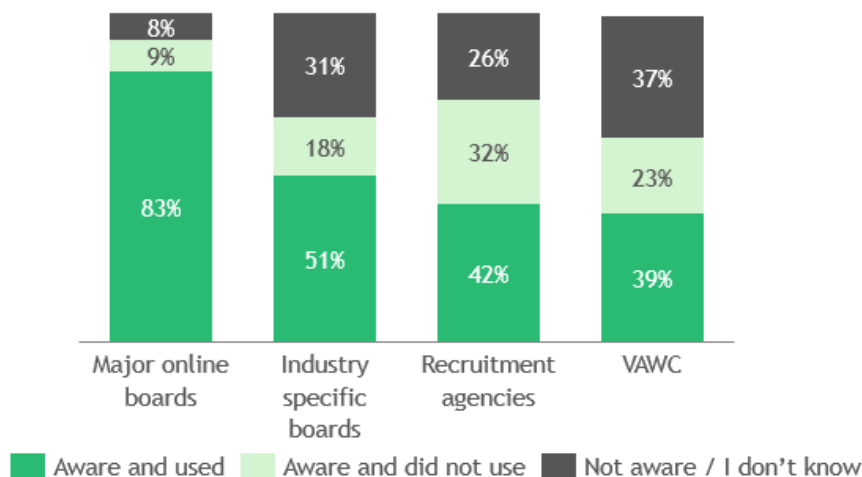
respondents who used LWDB Business Services support were most likely to be:

- In the Public Administration or Healthcare and Social Assistance sectors

- Mid-size to large, by employee count (501-1000 employees); a much lower percentage of the smallest companies by headcount (1-50 employees) used these services

- Mid-size to large, by revenue ($10-500M in annual revenue)

Usage of the VAWC among employers is also low, especially compared with other online options. Only 39% of employers surveyed had used the VAWC (and this likely overstates implied statewide usage, given the survey was distributed to employers that already had a relationship with workforce or economic development entities), although over 60% were aware of them, a meaningful difference versus other online job boards like LinkedIn and Indeed (see Exhibit 29).

Exhibit 29:
Percentage of employer respondents who used different types of job boards[67]

Legend: ■ Aware and used ■ Aware and did not use ■ Not aware / I don't know

	Major online boards	Industry specific boards	Recruitment agencies	VAWC
Not aware / I don't know	8%	31%	26%	37%
Aware and did not use	9%	18%	32%	23%
Aware and used	83%	51%	42%	39%

Usage aside, employers provided mixed feedback on the services they accessed from both LWDBs and AJCs and through the Virginia Workforce Connection and other state-run job posting sites. Only a third of respondents said they would be likely to recommend workforce services (see Exhibit 30) and only 41% said

that engagement from LWDBs and their centers was helpful and effective (see Exhibit 31). One contributing factor: only 20% of respondents perceived that candidates sourced through LWDA channels were high-quality and/or better qualified than those sourced through other channels.

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[66] https://vawc.virginia.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx
[67] Question: When you have previously conducted an employee search were you aware of and/or used: Virginia

Workforce Connection, major online job boards, government run job boards, industry specific job boards.; Source: Boston Consulting Group VA Job-seeker Survey

SECTION 2:
The experience of job seekers and employers engaging
the Commonwealth's workforce system

Exhibit 30:
Percentage of respondents by likelihood of recommending government-provided workforce services[68]

Unlikely	17%
Neutral	50%
Likely	33%
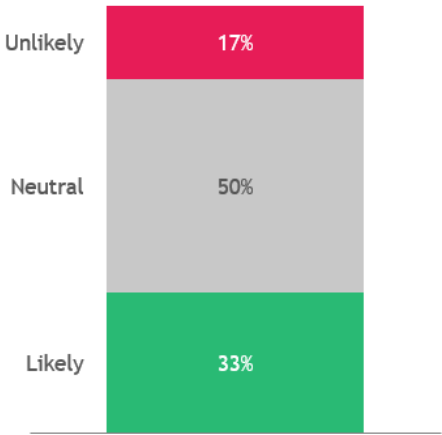
Exhibit 31:
Percentage of respondents who agree / disagree on helpfulness of LWDB Business Services Teams[69]

Disagree	21%
Neutral	38%
Agree	41%
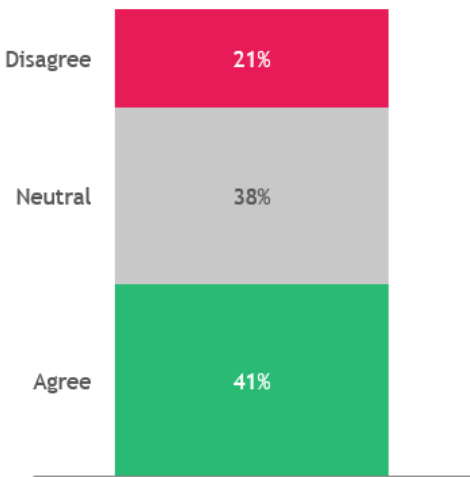
SECTION 2.2.3
Community colleges have independent relationships with employers and primarily support them by preparing talent and connecting them to talent

Employers also rely on community colleges for their workforce needs. Of employers surveyed, 51% said that community colleges were important or very important to help them source and hire talent, and 46% said they were important or very important to helping them develop, upskill, and reskill talent. Notably, employers referenced community colleges as the most important actor for sourcing and hiring talent, and a close second for developing talent (versus four-year institutions, economic development organizations, and LWDBs).

Most employer relationships with the community college system, including industry association relationships, are owned by individual community

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[68] The question was "How likely are you to recommend state-provided workforce services to your organization," with a score of 1 being least likely and 10 being most likely. Scores of 1-3 were collapsed into unlikely, 4-7 into neutral, and 8-10 into likely.
[69] Question: The services and resource provided to our company from local workforce development agencies are effective and helpful; Note: Individuals who responded N/A were not shown this question. Disagree is an aggregate of strongly disagree and disagree responses. Agree is an aggregate of strongly agree and agree responses.; Source: Boston Consulting Group VA Employer survey

SECTION 2:
The experience of job seekers and employers engaging
the Commonwealth's workforce system

colleges. (There are a few relationships with major employers handled at the VCCS system level; one example is the U.S. Department of Labor grant with Amazon Web Services, engaging seven community colleges and coordinated centrally.) The way relationships are managed is based in part on how colleges' workforce and employer engagement functions are structured:

- More **centralized** approaches have a college-wide team responsible for coordinating employer relationships for both credit and non-credit pathways, often with individuals owning specific course pathways (e.g., Career and Technical programs). Some of the outreach to employers is led by course instructors who have industry connections. In smaller colleges, rather than a college-wide team, the Deans of specific disciplines (e.g., STEM) will drive outreach across both credit and non-credit classes for the industries that fall under their purview.

- More **decentralized** approaches see credit and non-credit program leads reach out to employers separately through emails, cold calls, and connecting at relevant events, even if within the same industry. Two staff teams and separate tracking systems can lead to confusion, though teams are trained to make referrals as needed.

Strong relationships between colleges and employers are mutually beneficial. By better understanding the

skills and competencies desired by employers, community colleges can make their programming more relevant for students and drive enrollment over the long-term; employers, in turn, can have a more active hand in shaping their talent pipelines. More specifically, strong employer-college partnerships:

- **Grow awareness of programs:** The community colleges conduct outreach to employers in their community to help them understand what programs are available at the college, especially for priority industries. In many cases, employers are only familiar with the Associate's degree and do not realize that there are students in non-credit programs, as well as ways the community college can support them with day-long workshops or incumbent worker trainings. The latter service is also offered by other actors in the ecosystem, such as the LWDB Business Services team.

- **Understand and meet employer needs:** The community colleges are keen on maintaining an evergreen picture of employer needs; often, they will tour employer facilities and interview key leaders to identify workforce gaps and needs. Colleges then try to fill those needs by curating learning experiences (credit, non-credit, or customized to that employer) and/or modifying or refreshing curriculum for existing courses to ensure that it stays relevant. At times, some community colleges will refer employers to other actors within the workforce ecosystem, but this varies greatly across regions.

- **Connect students to employers:** Some colleges have explicit goals around student-employer touchpoints (e.g., every student engages with at least one local employer before graduation). Practically, this can manifest in different ways: inviting employers into the classroom as speakers, running job fairs, arranging interviews, curating internships.

SECTION 2.2.4
Employers believe the workforce development ecosystem can better serve them by improving outreach and offering more relevant and coordinated services

Employers and other system actors surfaced three major opportunities to improve employer engagement with the workforce ecosystem:

Improving outreach: Employers are eager to see more proactive outreach and information from the workforce development ecosystem on the tools, resources, and services they can access, with asks ranging from webinars to marketing campaigns to dedicated employer liaisons.

Offering more relevant, high-quality services: Respondents named a range of services that they sought from the workforce ecosystem (e.g., candidate sourcing, funding for training programs, upskilling/ reskilling support, apprenticeships, wraparound supports). Here, the opportunity is both to ensure

awareness of existing services (i.e., not all employers are aware of the breadth provided in their region) and to improve delivery.

> *"Your survey mentions many organizations that could help with training and recruiting that I am not aware of. It would be great to see 'one-stop-shopping' clearing houses-type of resources to find all the training and job posting offerings in one place. I'm at a small organization with an HR dept of one person - it would be time consuming to research all that seems to be available. Perhaps you could have webinars on how to register and maximize the state workforce services."*
>
> *- Free response answer to employer survey*

SECTION 2:
The experience of job seekers and employers engaging
the Commonwealth's workforce system

Streamlining coordination across ecosystem actors: In addition to the LWDBs and community colleges, workforce development ecosystem actors that engage directly with employers include, but are not limited to, VEDP's RTSBO team, local Economic Development entities, teams from agencies like DARS or the Virginia Department of Veteran Services, and Title III staff that operate independently from LWDB Business Services staff. Across this landscape, some challenges were cited, to varying degrees across regions and individuals:

- **Limited collaboration:** Some LWDB Business Services staff who reached out to Title III staff to collaborate on employer engagement reported an initial lack of success – at least, until senior leadership stepped in to encourage dialogue.

- **Lack of knowledge of other actors:** Some Economic Development leaders at the local and county levels did not know what LWDA they belonged to and had never engaged their LWDBs. Others had met with their LWDB or the LWDB's Executive Director, but felt that there was no ongoing effort to collaborate on shared objectives.

- **Loss of institutional knowledge:** 41% of survey respondents (workforce staff and stakeholder survey) had been in role for less than four years. High turnover rates present challenges in coordination across local actors, especially without the supporting infrastructure to smooth knowledge transfer.

> *"…We find that potential and new employees need more of… the soft skills area. Many of these folks need training on the basic functions of being successful in life: how to manage money, what effects does drug use have on their ability to find work, having reliable transportation, etc."*
>
> *- Free response answer to employer survey*

Section 3:
Opportunities to action or scale

SECTION 3:
Opportunities to action or scale

This section sets out opportunities that the state[70] and Local Workforce Development Areas can pursue to enhance the customer experience and outcomes for job seekers and employers served by the workforce development ecosystem. These opportunities are primarily informed by the customer-centric learnings gathered through this effort. There are additional perspectives that may enhance or provide nuance to these opportunities, particularly related to policy, regulation, and implementation considerations that were beyond the scope of this effort.

The opportunities are grouped into three focus areas:

- More clearly define whom the workforce ecosystem serves in each region, and the objectives, local and state roles, data, and collaboration needed to serve customers well

- Advance the resourcing, data infrastructure, and brand of workforce boards and their associated programs, to best enable the workforce system to support the broader ecosystem

- Improve the customer experience for job seekers and employers – with better delivery of and access to supports and services

These opportunities collectively are intended to improve the ecosystem's durability and responsiveness to workforce needs, particularly in light of contextual factors:

- The ecosystem is very fragmented with many actors at the state and regional level

- Many organizations in the ecosystem, particularly those in rural areas, are small, making both institutional memory within organizations and relationships across organizations vulnerable when leaders and other personnel transition. Political transitions, including in state administrations, add to this challenge

- Workforce needs are not static. The ecosystem must be responsive to the shifting needs of Virginia's economy and workers. The case highlighted in Chapter 1 of job displacement from artificial intelligence in middle and high-wage roles is but one example

Therefore, an important through-line across the opportunities is establishing networks, processes, and norms that outlast transitions in administration, leadership, and staff and ensure that the continuous, cross-actor engagement needed to deliver on the promise of an effective ecosystem persists over time.

SECTION 3.1
More clearly define whom the workforce ecosystem serves in each region, and the objectives, local and state roles, data, and collaboration needed to serve customers well

SECTION 3.1.1
Opportunity #1: Maintain an up-to-date, segment-specific view of the workforce ecosystem's customers and how they are served – at both the state and regional levels

Especially given the complexity of the workforce development ecosystem, building alignment cannot start with organizations and programs. It must be grounded in a deep understanding of customers, both job seekers and employers.

Chapter 1 of this report establishes a promising frame for building this understanding. By maintaining an up-to-date view of its job seeker and employer segments – their size and characteristics; and how, by whom within the ecosystem, and ultimately how well they are served

– the Commonwealth can position more effective strategic investments over time. Cascading this analysis to the local level would provide similar benefits to LWDBs and other regional actors.

As described in Opportunity #4, there is an important state role in establishing a measurement infrastructure to maintain this analysis. Both state and local leaders then would have the responsibility to make customer-centric language and metrics central to their work.

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[70] This section makes several references to "the state." Where possible, the text indicates a specific state actor (e.g., Governor's Office, Virginia Works, the legislature, or the

Virginia Board of Workforce Development). For the rest, the ecosystem will need to determine which entity should take the lead on exploring the opportunity.

SECTION 3.1.2
Opportunity #2: Clearly define what an effective workforce development ecosystem looks like in a region, with input from multiple actors

A wide array of actors make up the workforce development ecosystem. These actors are largely aligned at the mission level, but do their day-to-day work in different ways, complicated by different governance structures, incentives, constraints, and funding streams. To promote greater alignment in *how* they do their work, state and regional actors across sectors –agencies providing workforce services, community colleges and higher education institutions, economic development organizations, and other partners – can collaborate to more clearly articulate and codify what effective workforce development looks like at the local and state level.

The state should bring together stakeholders to build the framework, and then each Local Workforce Development Area should customize the definition and application to its unique needs. This process would enable the right balance of consistency across LWDAs and local ownership of the vision and its execution. It will be necessary to refresh this process every few years to ensure that the definition remains relevant to individuals and employers in the face of evolving workforce dynamics.

(Note that a parallel process is already underway at the state level: with the development of a statewide strategic plan for workforce development mandated in Code,[71] there is a cross-agency group beginning to convene and create a shared workforce vision, strategies, and goals, connected to the "Top State for Talent" pillar in the VEDP-led Strategic Plan for Economic Development of the Commonwealth.)

The developed definition should include both outcomes (performance today) and system enablers, which speak to a region's ability to sustain and improve its performance over time:

Outcomes (for the workforce ecosystem to achieve)

- Closing supply-demand talent gaps in the region, with priority focus on high-demand industries, specific skillsets, and/or "high economic value" jobs or roles

- Building a pipeline of workers for the jobs of the future (e.g., adapting to forward-looking needs and/or skilling / upskilling the incumbent workforce)

- Successfully serving a large proportion of job seekers with barriers to work (i.e., enabling individuals served by the workforce development ecosystems to overcome the barriers they face and find high quality, living-wage jobs); and a growing percentage of employers seeking talent

- Delighting customers with excellent service and a high-quality set of services, including:
    - Training and upskilling (job seekers)
    - Individualized advising / case management and wraparound services (job seekers)
    - Talent matching and development (employers)

Enablers (to allow the system to achieve its goals over time; see additional detail in opportunities below)

- An active coalition that prompts effective collaboration across all workforce development actors in the region, with clear roles and responsibilities for different actors in the ecosystem (Opportunity #3)

- Accessible regional data on workforce needs and talent supply that is broadly understood and used across stakeholders in the ecosystem (Opportunities #4 and #6)

- High quality training options that are responsive to labor market and employer needs, and support strong jobseeker employment outcomes

- Effective individualized support models (e.g., case management, advising) that reach all job seekers who need them

- Clear and accessible physical and virtual access points for customers and stakeholders

SECTION 3.1.3
Opportunity #3: Enable an effective workforce coalition in each region, which includes the workforce system, community colleges, economic development, and other system actors

Today, there is an expansive set of ecosystem actors at the state, regional, and local levels. Collaboration structures are often organic and built over decades and

are advanced through personal relationships, with many positive examples especially evident in and across regions (e.g., LWDA leaders' information-

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[71] https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/2.2-435.6/

sharing as a group). The flipside to this arrangement is its vulnerability to people transitions, especially in organizations with a small staff (often, but not always or only, in rural areas) where there is no succession plan and assurance of leadership continuity.

Importantly, different regions can structure and engage the ecosystem in different ways and still be effective, with participant roles (e.g., workforce board and job centers) and collaboration mechanisms varying to reflect the distinct relationships and context of the region. However, most successful ecosystems have a "lead convener" who brings others into the tent and encourages alignment. In some regions, the LWDB is itself the convener; in others, it can be one member of an overarching body. As an example of the latter, the WorkforceCoalitionRVA in Capital Region is a partnership among the LWDB, the Community College

Workforce Alliance, and community-based organizations like United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg that aims to connect prepared job seekers with living wage jobs.[72]

Further illustrative is the range of structures used by community colleges to administer non-credit workforce offerings; as laid out in Section 2, some embed workforce into each academic department, whereas others manage it in an independent arm. There is no one model that is right across all contexts – intentional focus on the customer and high-quality implementation are most critical to creating an effective approach.

SECTION 3.1.4
Opportunity #4: Clarify the role of Virginia Works and other state-level actors in supporting regional workforce development; consider a role focused on leadership and convening, data and transparency, and support

This research points to several valuable roles that Virginia Works and other state-level actors can play in the workforce ecosystem. It also suggests an area of caution, where further empowering regions might be further explored.

Leadership and convening:

While a full analysis of roles and responsibilities among state-level actors engaged in workforce development is beyond the scope of this report, the instances of customer confusion surfaced through the research demonstrate a clear need for alignment and coalition-building at the state level, similar to the local opportunity described in #3. As the Commonwealth's workforce agency, Virginia Works is well-positioned to collaborate with its education, economic development, and social service sister agencies to ensure a coordinated and strategic approach to workforce development in the Commonwealth. This role could entail building on current efforts, such as the workforce town halls and Governor's workforce summit, to be a lead convener of workforce stakeholders at all levels in the Commonwealth. In addition, Virginia Works is positioned to take a leading role in strategy – through the state workforce plan mandated in Code and described above – and aligning state resources with workforce needs, using the customer-centric framework described in Opportunity #1.

Data and transparency:

Transparent and easy-to-access data is a pre-requisite to monitoring progress toward a shared vision, and the return-on-investment of the Commonwealth's workforce investments. Data efforts that paint a comprehensive, holistic picture of education, workforce, and economic development outcomes have benefits across the workforce development ecosystem, including to:

- **Individuals and employers,** who can make informed choices based on their needs and context

- **Ecosystem providers and supporters,** who can understand how their work contributes to ecosystem outcomes and what is and isn't successful, and align their efforts accordingly

- **The state,** to better guide strategic resource allocation, policymaking, and support to the regions

The state is positioned to support both state and region-level actors in the workforce ecosystem through collaborative development of metrics; ongoing measurement, data visualization, and communications of data; and providing analytical tools, data infrastructure, and technical assistance on data use. Regions and others should be engaged but should not have to figure this out on their own.

Several significant efforts are underway in the Commonwealth to improve visibility into both labor

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[72] https://www.yourunitedway.org/program/network2workrva/

market alignment and workforce program performance. Examples include:

- The Virginia Office of Education Economics (VOEE) is analyzing Commonwealth data to inform policy implementation related to talent pipeline and development.[73]

- Virginia Works is collecting metrics that relate to the cost and performance of workforce programs. Two quarters of data have been collected at the state level, and the process of extending this exercise to the regions is underway.

- Community colleges are advancing efforts to collect student outcomes and pathways data following the completion of non-credit courses.

- The Secretary of Education, in partnership with the Secretary of Labor, is convening an education and data work group to identify the underlying challenges across the Commonwealth's data ecosystem and opportunities to better aggregate, analyze, validate, visualize, and communicate data.

However, significant challenges around data consistency, completeness, and visibility remain, especially within and across regions. The state should continue to[74] work with regions to define a targeted set of metrics that are tightly aligned to the ecosystem vision and valuable to individuals, employers, staff, and service providers – while balancing the reality that collecting data can be time- and resource-intensive for regions with limited staff and funds. The state can also continue to establish and expand platforms and processes for regions to use and share data with stakeholders. One area of opportunity: helping community colleges better leverage the outcomes data collected across the VCCS system (e.g., on employment rate) in decision-making. While VCCS collects robust data, not all community college leadership were actively using it to improve their programs. Another opportunity: helping VCCS collect more robust data on graduates' median earnings, which is currently less reliable.

Support:

As it emerges from its own significant transition, Virginia Works can enable more streamlined channels of communications with the LWDAs and, over time, advance a greater range of supports. Currently, LWDAs report that they have different points of contact with

the state for different topics (e.g., policy vs. operational topics), and while some individual relationships between the state and local level are strong and trusted, others are less robust.

Creating clearer points of connection and stronger relationships between Virginia Works and LWDAs opens up further possibilities for collaboration and support. This report identifies a number of areas – including funding, employer engagement, coalition-building, center operations, online services, technology platforms – where there is significant variation across LWDAs, not fully attributable to differences in local context. Building on continued advancements in data and transparency that improve visibility into current ecosystem conditions, Virginia Works can provide and enable greater expertise and sharing across regions. Growing its support model of, for example, training, technical assistance, coaching, data and project management tools, could enable both durability and greater consistency in application across regions, while continuing to account for local context.

While a detailed analysis of interactions between VCCS and individual community colleges was beyond the scope of this report, the research surfaced a more established and defined relationship between VCCS and community college-level leaders engaged on workforce topics that could serve as inspiration for how Virginia Works and LWDAs team together (with the caveat that the VCCS system is an imperfect analogue because the workforce boards are not a system and do not, organizationally, report to Virginia Works).

Caution around directly-managed services:

As described in Opportunity #10, research suggests frequent coordination challenges, and in some cases acute tension, with state-managed services that sit alongside locally-directed ones within AJCs. The most prominent, but not only, example of this dynamic is state-managed WIOA Title III employees who work alongside LWDB-managed or contracted Title I employees (see Section 1.4.1 for overview of WIOA Titles). While there may be benefits not fully explored in this effort, the impact of Virginia Works directly managing a subset of employees who must operate deeply embedded in local models is not clear.

In a new paradigm where the state role focuses on leadership and convening, data and transparency, and support, the model for service provision should be revisited in parallel.

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[73] https://voee-tableau.link/views/VOEE2024HighDemandOccupations/HighDemand?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y

[74] https://virginiacareerworks.com/wp-content/uploads/VBWD_24-01_Systemwide_Workforce_Metrics_at_the_Local_Level_FINAL.docx.pdf

SECTION 3.1.5
Opportunity #5: Streamline inter-agency coordination and collaboration by aligning regional boundaries

Many of the agencies and entities of the Commonwealth engage with different regional geographic subdivisions of the state. Put another way, each system in Virginia seems to have its own definition of regions and regional boundaries. The following list provides the number of regional entities for different state systems that have a role in or relationship to workforce development:

- Local Workforce Development Areas – 14 [75]

- GO Virginia Regions – 9 [76]

- Regional Economic Development Organizations – 17 [77]

- Department of Social Services Regional Offices – 5 [78]

- Department of Education Superintendent's regions – 8 [79]

- Virginia's Community Colleges service areas – 23 [80]

- Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development Planning District Commissions: 21 [81]

Further, regional boundaries do not align across agencies, leading to challenges in coordination at the regional and local levels. As just one example, New Rivers / Mount Rogers is split across two GO Virginia regions, meaning the leadership of New Rivers / Mount Rogers would need to align with both to execute on a region-wide project. However, the two GO Virginia regions have different Board member profiles, priorities, and processes, which complicates achieving engagement and buy-in.

In the near term, regional leaders should evaluate the potential benefits and feasibility of greater alignment. If there is interest, state and local stakeholders could be engaged to explore boundaries for an updated set of regions that are used across most, if not all, agencies that operate in the broader workforce development ecosystem.

SECTION 3.2
Advance the resourcing, data infrastructure, and brand of workforce boards and their associated programs, to best enable the workforce system to support the broader ecosystem

SECTION 3.2.1
Opportunity #6: Introduce new processes and data management systems for sharing knowledge and building institutional memory across regions and administrations

Virginia Works can advance both collection and discussion of data by providing better technology and systems to support local-level work. To implement the right systems, Virginia Works should first confer with the LWDAs to understand how they have engaged in data collection, storage, analysis, and sharing of best practices within and across regions – and with what resourcing and staff capacity. This is a lesson learned from previous efforts, such as the launch of the Virginia Career Works Referral Portal, which was designed to standardize how Virginia residents find, access, and are tracked across LWDBs. That roll-out failed due to adoption challenges and poor change management.

Based on articulated needs, Virginia Works should develop a new Customer Relationship Management solution or other technology for data and knowledge tracking across regions. Ideally, data should reside in one system (for example, eventually transitioning all the data across the four WIOA titles into the same system) and be organized into a consistent, coherent platform that allows for historical trend analysis, cross-region views, and a comprehensive picture of service delivery to both job seekers and employers. Progress is already underway, with Virginia Works reviewing the data in Virginia Workforce Connection to understand service delivery by local area, in addition to reflecting on statewide data and self-reported data by region.

[75] https://virginiacareerworks.com/local-workforce-boards/
[76] https://govirginia.org/regions/
[77] https://www.goveda.org/page/REDO
[78] https://www.dss.virginia.gov/division/regional_offices/

[79] https://www.doe.virginia.gov/about-vdoe/virginia-school-directories/virginia-public-school-listing-by-region
[80] https://courses.vccs.edu/colleges
[81] https://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/pdcs

Context on data management across LWDAs

Data management across the regions is highly fragmented, with significant variation in the types of data collected and the processes for doing so. Broadly, data collected at the regional levels falls into two categories: federally mandated metrics and data voluntarily collected by the regions.

The federally mandated metrics are laid out in WIOA regulation and include:

- *WIOA Title I and Title III participant and outcomes data, which is collected in the Commonwealth through the Virginia Workforce Connection*

- *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) from the LWDAs that details the partner programs and organizations operating in a region, as well as the services they provide*

- *Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) from the LWDAs that outline budgets and costs for a region's comprehensive centers (IFAs are optional for affiliate centers)*

Beyond these metrics, the state provides policy direction on how data is collected and analyzed, and within that guidance, regions determine how they implement the specifics of the policy. Data shared by the LWDAs as part of this research effort suggests a spread of priorities. Many – but not all – regions collect data on foot traffic, services used, customer satisfaction, number of employers served, and non-WIOA funds. Fewer regions collect metrics on job seekers accessing virtual services, outcomes data associated with non-WIOA funds, and "return on investment" of dollars spent in terms of customer outcomes.

The regions may not prioritize data capture and analysis beyond what is mandated because they:

- *Do not see an obvious benefit or need (especially without a through-line to how data informs day-to-day decision-making)*

- *Lack capacity to track and/or analyze data, given other demands on staff members' time*

- *Are unable to invest in a fit-for-purpose data tracking system*

Even when they do collect data, regions often encounter practical challenges:

- *Data may not be stored in a manner that is easily maintained, organized, or transferred – e.g., many regions report using Google sheets that are sometimes lost over time, especially through staff transitions*

- *Data tracking is siloed across partners – e.g., partners collect information in different systems and do not have visibility into each other's systems*

- *Data needs to be re-entered into multiple systems of record – e.g., some regions have a local system of record on individuals visiting the centers, but then need to manually re-enter information into the VA Workforce Connection or platforms for distinct grants*

- *Data is not analyzed and interpreted to motivate action – e.g., employer satisfaction surveys after events are generally positive, so are not reviewed consistently*

- *Leaders and staff under-utilize opportunities to share best practices and collaborate on next steps, informed by key data*

SECTION 3.2.2
Opportunity #7: Equip regions to draw sufficient non-WIOA funding to fulfill job seeker and employer needs

Each LWDA is allocated funding from WIOA Title I dollars, which occurs at the start of each Program Year through a predetermined formula based on demographics and economic conditions. [82] However, Title I dollars are insufficient on their own to provide high-quality support to all of the relevant customers:

- **They do not match the actual level of need or number of individuals needing support.** Some LWDAs have turned individuals away from Title I support toward the end of a Program Year because

they are too close to exhausting their funds. More commonly, LWDBs actively manage to their available capacity: they do not pursue all the means they could to increase Title I participation, because additional customers do not come with incremental funding.

- **They do not support a full suite of wraparound services**. In theory, Title I funds can be used to fund many wraparound services, but in practice, LWDBs must ensure that 40% of their funds go

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[82]https://dpb.virginia.gov/budget/buddoc18/partc/BiennialReportCoordinationOfWorkforceDevelopment.pdf

directly to training, per the Virginia state requirement.[83] Once costs necessary to the operations of the LWDB (e.g., staff, technology, and other administrative costs) are factored in, some LWDBs feel that they do not have enough left to provide the full suite of supports and services an individual may need – such as transportation support, English Language education, and childcare vouchers – to succeed in the workforce. As a result, LWDBs frequently pursue funding from other sources or limit what they can provide.
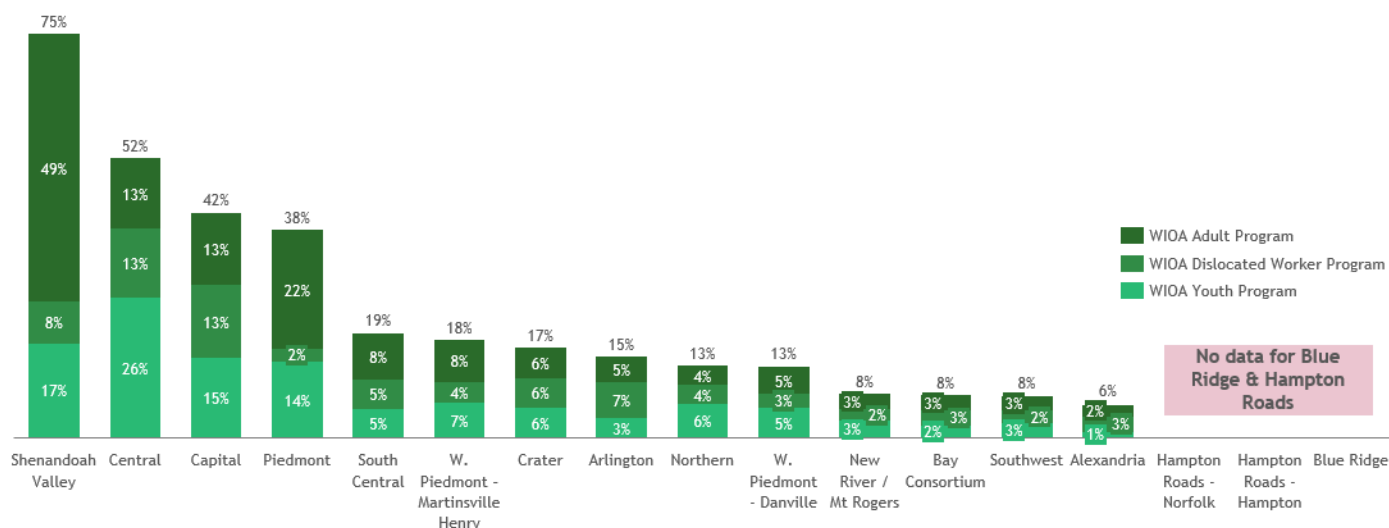
Given the local workforce ecosystem's track record of delivering positive outcomes for job seekers (approximately 80% of WIOA Title I exiters are employed during their second quarter after exit), their communities would benefit from increased capacity and funding for their services.

LWDBs are already exploring additional funding sources beyond WIOA – including localities, federal and/or state grants, and grants from outside the government (e.g., corporations, NGOs). Their ability to do so varies: the percentage of a comprehensive center's budget that comes from WIOA Title I can range from 6% to 75% (see Exhibit 32).

Exhibit 32:
WIOA Title I comprehensive center budget as a % of total one-stop comprehensive center costs, by region[84]

WIOA Title I comprehensive center budget (% of total one-stop comprehensive center costs in region)

Legend:
- WIOA Adult Program
- WIOA Dislocated Worker Program
- WIOA Youth Program

No data for Blue Ridge & Hampton Roads

Region	Total	Adult	Dislocated Worker	Youth
Shenandoah Valley	75%	49%	8%	17%
Central	52%	13%	13%	26%
Capital	42%	13%	13%	15%
Piedmont	38%	22%	2%	14%
South Central	19%	8%	5%	5%
W. Piedmont - Martinsville Henry	18%	8%	4%	7%
Crater	17%	6%	6%	6%
Arlington	15%	5%	7%	3%
Northern	13%	4%	4%	6%
W. Piedmont - Danville	13%	5%	3%	5%
New River / Mt Rogers	8%	3%	3%	2%
Bay Consortium	8%	3%	2%	3%
Southwest	8%	3%	3%	2%
Alexandria	6%	2%	1%	3%
Hampton Roads - Norfolk				
Hampton Roads - Hampton				
Blue Ridge				

The variation in the amount of non-WIOA funding available to an LWDA can be explained by a few factors:

- **LWDB structure:** LWDBs across the Commonwealth are either part of a government entity or a standalone 501c3 and may only be eligible for certain funding streams based on their structure (e.g., local funding for government-connected entities, grants open to nonprofits for 501c3s).

- **Regional interests:** Some regions benefit from access to robust supplemental funding through regional interests and/or for industries with high strategic importance (such as shipbuilding in Hampton Roads, which makes the region eligible for certain grants from the federal government).

- **Fundraising capacity and expertise:** Grant applications can be time consuming to prepare and, if successful, more significant to maintain (e.g., reporting requirements, funder management). Many regions have said that their staff does not have the capacity to apply for and

[83]https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodefull/title2.2/chapter24/article24/
[84] MOU – Area 1 Southwest Region (2023–2024); IFA Wytheville center (2023-2024); IFA Fishersville center (2023-2024); IFA Harrisonburg center (2023-2024); IFA Winchester center (2023-2024); IFA Prince George center (2023-2024); IFA Piedmont Region (2023-2024); MOU – Area 7 Central Region; IFA South Central Region (2023-2024); IFA Chesterfield

center (2023-2024); IFA Henrico center (2023-2024); IFA Richmond West center (2023-2024); IFA Danville center (2023-2024); IFA Martinsville center (2023-2024); IFA Prince William and Cherokee centers (2023-2024); MOU – Area 12 Arlington/Alexandria Region (2023-2024); IFA Northern Neck center (2023-2024); IFA Eastern shore center (2023-2024); IFA Fredericksburg center (2023-2024); IFA Hampton center (2023-2024); IFA Norfolk center (2023-2024)

manage grants at scale, nor do they have the budget to hire additional capacity to do so (and/or it can be difficult to source the talent).

While some aspects of governance structure and regional interests have developed over time and can be difficult to alter, the state can support LWDAs by helping to address their fundraising capacity and expertise. This could include providing tools and resources helpful to the grant application process, including lists of grants that could be relevant to LWDAs and community college workforce programs, technical assistance support on grant applications, software to help track grant outcomes, and knowledge-sharing channels across regions to build additional capacity where needed. LWDBs can also explore partnerships across LWDA lines to pursue grant

opportunities collaboratively, which some have done already.

In the long run, the state may also wish to consider a funding model that better enables the LWDBs to scale services to meet job seekers' needs. This would be more comparable to the VCCS construct for Fast Forward and G3, which enables workforce programs to scale more rapidly by financially supporting students with their tuition. While these programs do have a capped budget at the state level, funding is significant enough that it has provided an incentive to grow enrollment at the college level. In other words, so long as there is demand from employers to train more students, the community colleges are motivated to thoughtfully grow workforce program enrollment, with state-provided support to ensure students can afford to participate.

SECTION 3.2.3
Opportunity #8: Craft a recognized, consistent brand for the workforce development ecosystem, visible to both job seekers and employers

Consistent nomenclature around state and regional resources available to job seekers and employers is necessary to improve the customer experience. Today, job seekers experience confusion on where to go for assistance and interpret there to be differences in support offered across differently-named destinations. For example, while AJCs (as defined earlier) across the Commonwealth have the same mandate and serve the same functions, they are known to their communities by a myriad of names, including but not limited to:

- American Job Centers

- VA Career Works job centers

- VA Career Works offices

- One-stop offices

- Unemployment offices

In different regions, the signage for these centers – and how staff, job seekers, and employers refer to them – varies significantly. A survey of job seekers in Virginia over the last five years indicates significant brand fragmentation, and even user confusion, about naming and branding conventions (e.g., over a third of respondents who said they visited a job center referred to it by a "fake name" listed in the survey; see Exhibit 33). [85]

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[85] These respondents selected the fake names in addition to at least one real name; those who only selected a fake name
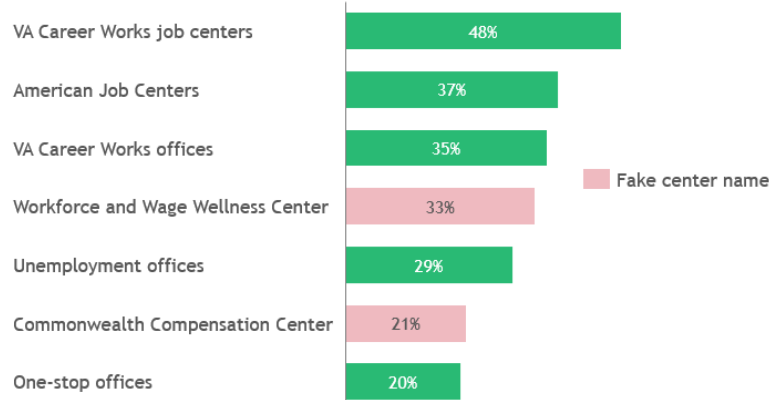
were terminated from the survey under the assumption that they were casting invalid responses.

Exhibit 33:

Of respondents who said they went to a job center in the last five years, percentage who said they went to each brand listed[86]

% of respondents who indicated they used a state-run job center, shown by perceived name,[2] N=337[3]

VA Career Works job centers	48%
American Job Centers	37%
VA Career Works offices	35%
Workforce and Wage Wellness Center	33%
Unemployment offices	29%
Commonwealth Compensation Center	21%
One-stop offices	20%

Legend: Fake center name

Virginia Works and the Virginia Board of Workforce Development can work with the regions to align on a refreshed, consistent brand for the centers. The state can then promote standardization of terminology and work in conjunction with the regions to implement the change – and ensure follow-through. This implementation will be crucial, as brand proliferation today is partially the result of the state rolling out different initiatives over time without clear communications to the public about which naming conventions are "legacy" vs. current.

SECTION 3.3
Improve the customer experience with better delivery of and access to supports and services

SECTION 3.3.1
Opportunity #9: Advance more integrated case management across systems to support individuals with wraparound services [broader than just AJCs]

As outlined in Section 2, many Title I and III participants face at least one barrier to employment. Simply enrolling these prospective workers in a training program or providing them with job-search specific advice is insufficient; many also require supports to address basic needs (e.g., access to childcare, professional clothing, or transportation subsidies) that enable the (re)entry into the workforce. While the LWDBs can facilitate the provision of some of these wraparound supports, they can also leverage the Commonwealth's other social service agencies, which may already be engaging this population as well.

When case management across agencies and systems is not well-integrated, staff do not have visibility into services received across systems. There are several major downsides:

- Staff cannot coordinate across agencies to help jobseekers to work toward common goals

- Staff may unknowingly replicate the same services

- Job seekers need to share the same information with different agencies, resulting in a diminished customer experience

Some regions are starting to adopt a more integrated approach to case management, with coordination happening beyond the intake process and throughout service provision for job seekers. Many have cited referrals from other agencies as one of the primary reasons the centers receive inbound foot traffic, along with physical proximity. For example, in Alexandria / Arlington, the AJCs are in the same building or nearby other social service agencies, making it easy for individuals to access other services if they are referred there.

To promote more integrated case management, Virginia Works can explore several different angles, including encouraging affiliate and comprehensive site

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[86] Question: You indicated that you are aware of the following state- or local-run employment offices. Which of the following did you go to or use as part of your job search process? ; Source: Boston Consulting Group VA Job-seeker survey

co-location with other agencies or with community colleges, and recommending strategies and approaches to referrals among different social services agencies and community organizations (currently happening in Alexandria / Arlington, where majority of their foot traffic is referrals from partner agencies). To facilitate greater communication and coordination while cases are active, the state can explore technological solutions (possibly the same solutions as for Opportunity #6) that give agencies appropriate visibility into peers' efforts. Any solution of this nature will require extensive consultation across the relevant agencies to ensure that it is additive and fit-for-purpose. Virginia Works can also help broker connections or formalize the process of connecting individuals across agencies to each other, so that, once they have a sense of how each plays a role in

supporting certain individuals and/or populations, they can align on how best to coordinate.

SECTION 3.3.2
Opportunity 10: Break down silos to service delivery for individuals accessing supports on-site [AJC-specific]

Within AJCs, staff funded by both Title I and Title III are part of the broader team that delivers services to assist individuals with their job search. In most regions, Title III staff, who are employed directly by the state, are more likely to sit in a resource room and work with individuals with basic job search needs, such as resume review and accessing VA Workforce Connection. Title I employees, who are employed directly or via contract by the LWDBs, tend to work as case managers to connect eligible individuals with education and training opportunities – but these roles may differ by center. It is possible that many job seekers could be eligible for support from and benefit from the support of both Titles as part of their job search.

Title I and Title III staff have different reporting lines to the LWDBs and Virginia Works, respectively, which in some LWDAs have created silos that result in fragmented experiences for individuals. Examples include:

- Job seekers must interface with several different staff members to receive similar services, increasing friction and delaying the relationship-building process.

- Individuals receive duplicated or inconsistent services. In many centers, Title III employees are a job seeker's first point of contact and make the judgment call about what other services or center partners the job seeker should engage. Title I and center operations staff do not always have visibility when job seekers are referred to other center-based staff, so they cannot verify if Title I services

are being offered to all eligible individuals or if services are being duplicated.

The customer experience could be improved by removing silos between Title I and Title III service delivery, either through structural changes or realignment of ways of working across center-based staff (today, AJCs do the latter to varying degrees). <u>Structural</u>: Virginia Works could explore having the same staff members deliver both Title I and Title III services by having them hired by and reporting through the same chain of command, but would need to recognize and accommodate federal regulations governing the staffing of Title III. <u>Ways of working</u>: Virginia Works can partner with the LWDBs to explore opening new channels of communication and collaboration across staff members, drawing on best practices in certain LWDAs that already have a more integrated approach.

Integrated approaches have been taken by other states upon receiving Federal waivers to do so, including:

- **North Dakota** – Title I and Title III of WIOA are both administered by Job Service North Dakota, which is the WIOA one-stop operator. Both Titles of WIOA report up through the same Workforce Services Director at the state level.[87]

- **North Carolina** – Title I and III programs are both operated by the North Carolina Department of Commerce. The state's one-stop system has fully integrated services across both programs, and there is a formal referral process with programs offered through Title IV that is intended to soon integrate Title II. The centers deploy integrated

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[87] https://wioaplans.ed.gov/node/17501

staffing and use integrated technology to ensure nonduplication of services and provide a customer-centric experience. To achieve this, staff in centers are organized by provision of services / function, instead of program, agency affiliation, or funding source. Staff are cross-trained to be qualified on all workforce programs and services provided, and the

Department of Commerce checks in routinely to improve integration of services when necessary. [88]

SECTION 3.3.3
Opportunity #11: Introduce more digital and technology-enabled options to better serve individuals accessing virtual supports [AJC-specific]

As discussed in Section 2, some LWDBs have the ability to administer WIOA Title I services in a fully virtual manner. Other regions have elements of virtual support for WIOA participants (e.g., online orientation videos, connection to a case manager), but require in-person meetings for certain paperwork or signatures. Areas that have not or have only partially scaled up virtual services for Title I have shared several concerns, including:

- They do not have a secure way to collect sensitive information virtually

- They have equity concerns around access, since there is limited broadband access in their region

While in-person support should remain available to all job seekers, the enhanced flexibility of the virtual option enables LWDBs to better serve those who prefer remote services – especially youth who are used to and

frequently prefer virtual interfaces, and individuals with caregiving responsibilities.

To make it more viable for regions to offer virtual options, the state could provide guidance on the most secure and effective ways to intake and process sensitive information through the web. In addition, the state could host trainings for local staff to increase familiarity and comfort with virtual options and spotlight the learnings of regions already successfully offering virtual services. One such learning is that while broadband access may be limited in parts of the state, most individuals can still access the internet via smartphone, so having a phone-based interface is crucial. The state may also consider subsidizing implementation of a secure virtual platform across all regions.

SECTION 3.3.4
Opportunity 12: Drive coordinated employer marketing, outreach, and support across actors in the workforce development ecosystem [Employer-specific]

As discussed in Section 2, many employers have significant needs and would like help attracting, hiring, and retaining workers with the skills they need – services that many actors provide across the workforce development ecosystem. However, as indicated by respondents to the employer survey, they are not always aware of the resources available to them and where to go for help.

At the local level, actors who engage with employers (including but not limited to LWDB Business Services teams, Title III employees, community colleges, local economic development entities, and the Regional Talent Solutions & Business Outreach (RTSBO) team of the VEDP) should better coordinate marketing and outreach. Some LWDBs are already doing this effectively with most local actors, although all will benefit from assessing to ensure that the group is comprehensive and outreach is streamlined. This will

enable the ecosystem to serve more unique employers more effectively by bringing the expertise of all entities to bear.

This process will necessarily be connected to the regional coalition-building work described in Opportunity #3 but should also include specific focus on employer engagement approaches. The state actors that oversee the relevant local players (e.g., Virginia Works, VEDP, VCCS) can unite with LWDBs to convene employer-facing staff across a comprehensive set of actors in each region. Senior leadership buy-in will be critical to generate the necessary momentum.

How this looks will vary region by region, but some aspects of effective coordination could include:

- Specialization across actors on which employer services they bring to the table, to minimize duplication and increase customer clarity

[88] https://www.commerce.nc.gov/north-carolina-wioa-unified-state-plan-2024/open

- Alignment to conduct outreach on behalf of the entire group and refer employers to the appropriate actor for specific services

- Creation of a unified set of marketing materials (including website) to disseminate to employers, which could include providing a comprehensive list of all services offered across all entities for local employers to reference

In addition to supporting local convening efforts, Virginia Works, VEDP, and other state actors can also support regional efforts through actions such as:

- Launching a state-wide campaign to promote work-based learning as a recruitment and retention tool for employers, with clearly defined points of contact in each region

- Spotlighting effective employer engagement tactics from different regions, with trainings and guidance on how to replicate efforts in other regions

- Increasing regional accountability through periodic check-ins on the status of local collaboration efforts across actors
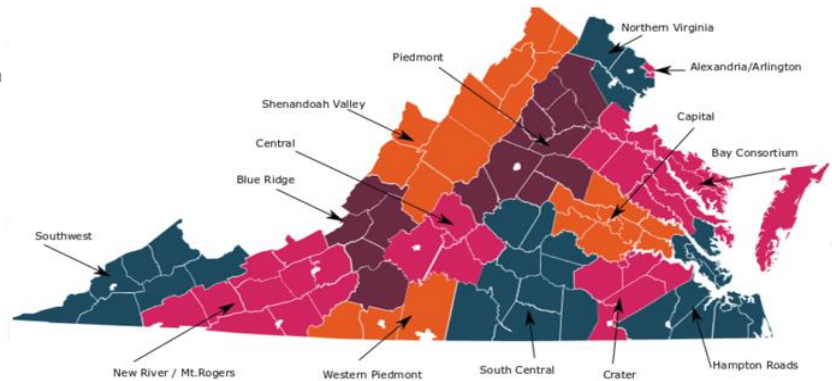
Section 4:
Appendix

Internal language alignment:
1. "The workforce development ecosystem" = workforce + VCCS + etc
2. Actors = those who are in the workforce development ecosystem, e.g., AJCs

SECTION 4:
Appendix

SECTION 4:
Appendix

APPENDIX 4.1
Map of LWDAs and Executive Directors

LWDA	Region	Executive Director
1	Southwest Virginia	Rachel Patton
2	New River / Mount Rogers	Marty Holliday
3	Blue Ridge	Morgan Romeo
4	Shenandoah Valley	Sharon Johnson
5	Crater Region	Tabitha Taylor
6	Piedmont	Sarah Morton
7	Central Region	Traci Blido
8	South Central Region	Terra Napier
9	Capital Region	Brian Davis
10	West Piedmont	Tyler Freeland
11	Northern	David Hunn
12	Alexandria / Arlington	Dave Remick
13	Bay Consortium	Jackie Davis
14	Hampton Roads	Shawn Avery

Internal language alignment:
1.   "The workforce development ecosystem" = workforce + VCCS + etc
2.   Actors = those who are in the workforce development ecosystem, e.g., AJCs

SECTION 4:
Appendix

APPENDIX 4.2
Interviews and Site Visits

Interviews

Group	Total	Example Organizations
Executive Directors and LWDBs	15	Interviewed all LWDB Executive Directors, including interim Executive Directors
Partners	15	Virginia Works, DARS, DOE, DSS, VEC, local economic development entities, Goodwill Rappahannock, VEDP, WorkED Consulting
VCCS and community colleges	9	VCCS system office, Virginia Western CC, Virginia Peninsula CC, CCWA (joint venture of Reynolds and Brightpoint CCs)
Data	4	VAWC, Virginia Works staff
Employers	3	Amazon, BWX, Newport News Shipbuilding
Job seekers	3	Individuals who visited AJCs

Site Visits

Group	Total	Sites
LWDAs	8	Alexandria / Arlington Bay Consortium Blue Ridge Capital Crater Hampton Roads New River/ Mt. Rogers Northern Virginia
Community Colleges	2	Brightpoint (Community College Workforce Alliance) Virginia Western

Internal language alignment:
1.   "The workforce development ecosystem" = workforce + VCCS + etc
2.   Actors = those who are in the workforce development ecosystem, e.g., AJCs

SECTION 4:
Appendix

APPENDIX 4.3
How workforce is governed at the state and local levels

The Commonwealth's workforce system is governed by the Governor, Virginia Board of Workforce Development (VBWD), chief elected officials, the Secretary of Labor, Virginia Works, and the LWDBs. The Governor receives federal funding for workforce development programs and activities, which is then allocated to the state or local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) based on Virginia's Combined State Plan.

The VBWD, whose members are appointed by the governor:
- Approve the state plan
- Review and improve existing statewide workforce policies and activities
- Organize within-state distribution of funds for adult and youth programs
- Prepare some performance reports to DOL.

By law, the majority of the state board's members represent businesses, with the remainder being chief elected officials, labor representatives, apprenticeship program representatives.

At the local level, the LWDBs and chief elected officials run workforce development. Each LWDA has a LWDB that is appointed by the chief elected officials. The LWDBs have a similar composition to the state board, with members mainly representing local educational institutions, training organizations, and governmental and economic development organizations.

Once appointed and certified, the LWDBs and chief elected officials:
- Delegate local workforce responsibilities between the two entities and jointly set policy for the local area
- Develop the 4-year local strategic plan
- Select eligible training providers

LWDBs are independently responsible for soliciting and obtaining grants other than federal funds, developing one-stop-operator budgets, overseeing WIOA Title I, and conducting local market analysis.