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# Executive Summary

The Strategic Plans Assessment project is a partnership between the Center for Rural Virginia (Center) and the Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission (TIC). The project was a recommendation of the Joint Legislative and Audit Review Commission (JLARC) of the Virginia General Assembly, to conduct an analysis of the strategic economic development plans within the TIC footprint, conduct focus group sessions to build upon the plans and analyze their alignment with the TIC strategic plan.

An evaluation of the strategic plans throughout the TIC region provided an understanding of the geography, current economic conditions, workforce, assets, challenges and strategies for each PDC region. The goals, strategies and target industries were the primary focus of this analysis. Each PDC has outlined specific target industries to recruit to the region and grow from within. Identifying these target sectors allows each PDC to set a strategy to meet the needs of these industries by preparing the workforce, investing in necessary infrastructure, providing the quality of life for employers and their families and various other investments in their region.

The target sectors or clusters identified by each PDC in their regional strategic plan are: Southside PDC – wood products, data centers, advanced manufacturing, logistics and warehousing, and aviation and aerospace; Commonwealth Regional Council PDC - forestry and wood products, advanced manufacturing, information technology, and transportation and logistics; West Piedmont PDC – food and beverage processing, plastics and polymers, advanced manufacturing, data centers, healthcare and social assistance, biotechnology, tourism, retail trade and other service industries; Cumberland Plateau PDC – information technology, automotive, clean and alternative energy, advanced manufacturing, wood products and asset based development; Lenowisco PDC – technology, advanced manufacturing, cultural assets, and agriculture and forestry; Mount Rogers PDC – manufacturing, healthcare, retail trade, and transportation and warehousing; Crater PDC – logistics, advanced manufacturing, and healthcare; New River Valley PDC – business and financial services, energy, biomedical, information technology and telecommunications, and agribusiness; Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission – biomedical and biotechnical life sciences, construction, electrical equipment, appliance and component manufacturing subcluster, forest and wood products, glass and ceramics, healthcare, motor vehicle manufacturing, and transportation and logistics.

The focus group discussions provided the opportunity to review strategic planning goals and target industries outlined in each region's economic development strategy and to build upon that information by fostering a dialogue among community leaders and stakeholders. Each focus group was presented a list of economic drivers: Leadership and Community Capacity, Education and Workforce Development, Access to Quality and Specialty Healthcare, Infrastructure, Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development, and Regional Assets and Opportunities. Each focus group selected the top three drivers their regions are investing in and making a top

priority for economic development. Then a discussion around the challenges and strategies to address those three drivers was facilitated. While three drivers were selected for the discussion, each plays a significant role in economic development and was often raised.

Education and Workforce Development was the top economic driver chosen, Infrastructure was second, followed by Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development, fourth was Leadership and Community Capacity, followed by Regional Assets and Opportunities. Access to Quality and Specially Healthcare was not chosen as one of the top three drivers during any of the focus group meetings, but was often discussed as a priority.

Challenges and needs were identified within each of the categories as well as strategies and opportunities for economic development in these areas. Top strategies within each economic driver category include aligning education programs with the workforce needs of current and future employers, regional collaboration and investment to address infrastructure needs, creating an entrepreneurial culture to support startups, leadership programs in schools and the business community to grow regional leaders, regional branding and marketing initiatives to increase tourism and quality of life through regional assets, and increase healthcare jobs, facilities and innovations.

There are many goals, strategies and objectives aligning the TIC strategic plan and the strategic plans within the PDC regions. There are specific alignments regarding investments in education and workforce, infrastructure, entrepreneurship and innovation. In addition, there are several specific investments that were raised numerous times during focus group discussions as catalysts for the regions. These investments and initiatives provide the foundation for future growth and respond to needs outlined by the regions.

The first is broadband infrastructure and expansion. The TIC has invested significantly in broadband through the creation of Mid-Atlantic Broadband. This endeavor has provided the fiber backbone throughout the region to attract industry and businesses.

The second investment relates to technology and research and development throughout the region. The creation of the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research in Danville has established the region as a leader in research and development opportunities and is attracting companies and entrepreneurs to the facility.

The third investment that stands out is in the area of workforce development through the creation of the Centers for Excellence in Advanced Manufacturing, including the Commonwealth Center for Advanced Manufacturing in Prince George County. Considering that advanced manufacturing is a target sector for numerous PDCs within the region, having the facilities and programs throughout the region to provide innovative training to prepare the workforce for current and prospective employers provides significant opportunities for economic growth.

Details of the strategic plans, focus group discussions and overall alignment are outlined herein.

# Project Description

The Regions Strategic Plan Assessment grant will be a formal process to conduct and determine the economic development priorities for each of the Planning District regions in the TIC footprint. The process will be to solicit information from each of the nine planning districts in the TIC regions. The purpose will be to determine and document the strategic economic development plans of the regions to submit to the TIC Board for setting its priorities, revise its strategic plan and to develop region-wide economic development strategies. Past studies in the TIC regions point to gaps between the strategic plans by TIC and that of the strategic plans and investment from support organizations that assist the respective regions. The opportunity is to assemble the strategic plans of each region and evaluate those to the TIC Board strategic plans and determine how the VTC's existing investments in economic development, provide the necessary underpinning of the regions need while simultaneously responding to the needs of economic development. The project will biennially assemble key leaders in each PDC region and conducts focused evaluations of their respective strategic plans for economic development and identify their plans and actions for development. It will evaluate the findings and areas of the alignment and misalignment for future investments in economic and capacity development with those of the regions within the TIC footprint to provide to the TIC Board of Directors. By evaluating the strategic plans within the region and identifying needs of the regions related to the TIC Strategic Investment Plan, the TIC can better focus their investments to enhanced efficiency and value of economic development facilities and programs in the TIC footprint. Evaluate and highlight the drivers of economic development systems that impact current structural, system and personnel as it impacts the output of investments. The project will utilize the findings and data to submit to the TIC Board for setting priorities and aligning TIC strategic plans and investments to deliver for the TIC regions more competitive economic development.

# Methodology and Process

As outlined in the project description, the Strategic Planning Assessment project consists of an evaluation of the current strategic plans in place for each of the Planning District Commissions (PDCs), an extensive focus group research phase with each PDC and an assessment of the alignment between the TIC Strategic Plan and priorities and those set forth by the PDCs.

The TIC footprint consists of six Planning District Commissions (PDCs) with all of their respective geographic regions within the TIC footprint and three PDCs with only a portion of their region within the TIC footprint. Through consultation with TIC staff, it was decided that focus group meetings would be conducted for the six PDC regions with their territories all within the TIC footprint and an electronic survey would be distributed to gather data regarding the localities within the TIC footprint that are part of the three PDCs not completely within the region.

## Focus Group PDCs

The strategic planning process varies by region. Five of the six PDCs have current Comprehensive Economic Development (CEDs) plans. The one PDC without a current CEDs plan is located in the Virginia's Growth Alliance Region, which has a Stronger Economies Together (SETs) plan. The next section will provide an overview of the strategic plans currently in place.

In an effort to go beyond an analysis of those plans and solicit direct feedback through engaging regional leaders through discussion sessions, focus group meetings were conducted in each of the six PDCs within the TIC footprint. These sessions provided the opportunity to bring together representatives from various sectors throughout each region to discuss current economic development strategies and collect the most data possible through dialogue. The focus group meetings were designed to build upon the CEDs plans or other regional strategic planning work already conducted and to have an open discussion about future economic development strategies and needs for the region, to assist the TIC in their future strategic planning processes.

The focus group meetings brought together representatives of the planning district commission, economic developers, marketing organizations, business leaders, education leaders and stakeholders from across the region to discuss current economic development strategic plans. Approximately 25-35 people were invited to each meeting in an effort to keep the group small enough for meaningful discussion, yet ensure each sector of the community is represented. The PDCs played a large role in the invitations. While a template was provided to each PDC of the categories of invites for each meeting, the PDCs were asked to add to the list and help identify community leaders with vision, experience and extensive knowledge of the region.

Each focus group meeting began with a short overview of the Center for Rural Virginia and an explanation of the Strategic Plans Assessment project. Then there was a brief overview of the PDCs CEDs or other strategic planning work and findings. This overview included goals and target industries identified through the region's strategic planning process. Also, an overview of target industry information attained from other economic development plans, process or findings conducted by the Regional Economic Development Marketing Organization was given as well. This presentation provided the framework for the discussion by reviewing the work already completed and the strategies and industries identified to attract and retain economic development throughout the region. The presentations were designed to set the stage for the dialogue to follow which would build upon strategic economic development planning already conducted in the region.

The next portion of the presentation focused on the charge to the focus group for their discussion. Participants were provided a detailed explanation of six economic drivers the discussion would center around. As identified in the project description, this process would “evaluate and highlight the drivers of economic development systems that impact current structural, system and personnel as it impacts the output of investments”.

The six economic drivers identified are:

- 1) Leadership and Community Capacity which includes building the capacity of three interdependent elements which are individual leaders, organizations and the community as a whole;
- 2) Education and Workforce Development which includes all segments of the education pipeline including colleges, universities, community colleges, training programs, career and technical education and K-12 education;
- 3) Access to Quality and Specialty Healthcare including having access to diverse means of healthcare delivery through telehealth and other programs;
- 4) Infrastructure, including broadband, water, sewer, natural gas, transportation and capital construction;
- 5) Entrepreneurship and Small Business encompassing the business, community and regulatory climate to support startups and small business expansion;
- 6) Regional Assets and Opportunities including the elements that contribute to a regional identity including quality of life, tourism opportunities and downtown redevelopment.

The participants were asked to consider “which of the economic drivers they are investing in, planning for and making a top priority to grow the industry sectors identified by the regional strategic plan” as the sectors to attract and grow. Participants were then asked to “select the top three drivers that are the highest priority areas needed to maximize the retention, recruitment, and expansion of businesses in the region.”

After each participant selected their top three drivers, the three drivers with the most votes would then be the primary focus of the discussion for the remainder of the session. Either in smaller groups or as one group, depending on the number of attendees, the facilitator went through each of the three drivers individually asking the following questions: “Let’s talk about why you chose these three drivers. What are the challenges you see within these drivers to strengthen your economic development base?” After a discussion surrounding the challenges, the next question for each would be “What opportunities do you see to use these drivers to strengthen your economic development base?” The final question was “What are the strategies needed to optimize use of the region’s resources, assets and strength within those categories?” Often, strategies would come up during the discussion about opportunities and would be considered there. Also, often other economic drivers, outside of the top three would surface in the discussion, as each plays a role in regional economic development.

After approximately two hours of group discussion, the facilitator would recap the findings from the day and provide the opportunity for participants to add any important information they feel might have been missed. All findings were documented onsite via flip charts and facilitator notes.

Copies of the presentations given at each focus group meeting are documented in the appendix for review.

### Survey Participant PDCs

As previously stated, an electronic survey was created and distributed to gather data from the localities within the TIC footprint that are members of PDCs not completely within the footprint. There are three PDCs with at least one locality within the TIC footprint and they are the Crater Planning District Commission, New River Valley Planning District Commission and Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission.

The survey was developed using the Survey Monkey online tool and was designed to mirror the in person focus group sessions as closely as possible. The survey and invite lists were provided to the PDCs for their help in distribution in an effort to increase participation. The invite lists for the survey included all of the categories of the focus group meetings, but only for the localities within the TIC footprint. Regional organizations were also invited to participate. The complete survey is available in the appendix.

# Overview of Strategic Plans

The process of developing a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy as required by the Economic Development Administration brings together public and private stakeholders to conduct an inventory of current economic conditions, challenges and assets as well as set forth an economic development strategy for the future. The Stronger Economies Together process is similar and also brings together stakeholders to set economic development priorities and strategies for the future.

It is primarily the strategy development and path forward sections of the strategic plans that were the focus of this analysis and set the stage for the focus group discussions regarding regional strategic plans. In this section, there is an overview of the goals and target industries identified by each PDC or regional marketing organization through the CEDs or SETs planning process.

## Southside PDC

The Southside PDC region completed their most recent Comprehensive Economic Development Plan in 2012. The CEDs plan identifies various areas to address challenges identified during the CEDs process that are in need of innovative solutions. These include workforce training, infrastructure issues including last mile and wireless service, identifying target markets at the locality level, housing improvements and options, downtown redevelopment, tourism and agri-tourism projects, capital financing options, and diversifying the economic base.

The plan also outlines several goals within the following categories to reach economic prosperity: Business Development, Economic Development, Infrastructure, Quality of Life and Human Resources.

In addition to the CEDs plan, the Southside PDC region is within the Virginia's Growth Alliance region, which conducted a SETs plan in 2012-2013. Target markets for attraction, growth and retention identified during the CEDs and SETs process for the region include wood products, data centers, advance manufacturing, logistics and warehousing and aviation and aerospace.

## Commonwealth Regional Council PDC

The Commonwealth Regional Council does not currently have a CEDs plan, but is also within VGA's region and was involved in the development of that plan. Therefore, VGA's SETs plan was used to review the region's goals and target markets.

Four major goals were set forth in the SETs plan for the region. The first is attracting targeted industries through increased and coordinated marketing of the region to various consultants and suppliers, providing an inventory of sites and buildings that meet the needs of target industries, training workers with the skills needed for target industries, providing a business friendly

climate, and increasing support among localities for regional collaboration and economic development.

The second goal is creating an entrepreneurial environment that will support and grow small businesses. Objective within this goal include to provide mentoring, training and education for entrepreneurs, create an “entrepreneurship blueprint” of the services that support an entrepreneurial culture, and to provide financing options for business needs.

The third goal is to develop a 21<sup>st</sup> Century workforce for current and future employers. This goal encompasses expanding the curriculum of the education pipeline to align K-12, post-secondary and workforce development programs to meet the needs of target industries, developing training for unemployed and low skilled workers, marketing to citizens and parents the training and education opportunities that exist, improving the “Rapid Response” to all industry closings, and improving the communication between the business community and education and training providers regarding workforce needs.

The fourth goal is to increase the promotion and education about the tourism and quality of life assets of the region. This goal includes educating residents, leadership, businesses and frontline staff of the assets the region has to offer. Also, marketing tourism assets, developing “markers” to determine the return on investment of tourism in the region, developing small towns as tourism destinations and developing additional tourism venues and activities.

The target sectors identified through the SETs process are identified as “export industries” and are similar to those identified through the Southside PDC’s CEDs process. These target sectors include forestry and wood products, advanced manufacturing, information technology, and transportation and logistics.

Additionally, some regional marketing ideas outlined by the SETs plan include a Regional Education and Training Initiative and a Regional Entrepreneur Program, both are recommendations raised in other regions as well.

### West Piedmont PDC

The West Piedmont PDC region also identified some specific short and long term goals for economic development. Those goals are listed below.

Short and Long Term Economic Development Goals from the document:

1. *Enhance regional identity and vision*
2. *Retain and expand existing industries and small businesses*
3. *Advocate regional economic diversity*
4. *Provide the land development infrastructure needed to grow the region’s economy*
5. *Increase educational opportunities, especially with respect to technology that would include STEM-H initiatives*

6. *Strengthen connection between workforce skills and training programs*
7. *Advocate “pro-business” thinking*
8. *Further develop small and minority businesses*
9. *Improve overall quality of life*
10. *Improve regional transportation infrastructure*
11. *Create modern communications infrastructure*
12. *Preserve agricultural base and promote modern agricultural enterprises*

In addition to the short and long term goals, the CEDs reviews some strengths and opportunities for the region as well. These include its strategic location, low cost of doing business and tax rates, the economic development organizations in the region and the services they provide, small business and entrepreneurship assistance programs, the education system, available land, industrial parks, fiber backbone, utility infrastructure and tourism.

The target sectors identified in the CEDs as those industries to attract and retain as priorities for future economic development include food and beverage processing, plastics and polymers, advanced manufacturing, data centers, healthcare and social assistance, biotechnology, tourism, retail trade, and other service industries.

### Cumberland Plateau PDC

The Cumberland Plateau PDC’s 2014 CEDs strategic plan sets forth twelve specific goals and objectives setting an economic development plan for the region.

The first goal is economic development. This goal focuses on diversifying the region’s economic base in an effort to reduce dependence on the coal industry and focus on development in the following target industry sector areas: information technology, automotive, clean and alternative energy, advanced manufacturing, wood products and asset based development.

The second goal is the development of various types of infrastructure. The third is to build sustainable development, including asset based and value added businesses such as wood products, aquaculture, agriculture, tourism and outdoor recreation. The fourth goal is developing a transportation network and a public transportation system to improve access to industrial sites, trade markets and cultural assets.

The fifth goal is workforce development through each sector of the system including specifically the “K-12, public school system, WIB Programs, SWCC’s Fast Track Training Program and the programs and facilities of the Southwest Virginia Technology Development Center, UVA-Wise and Bluefield College.”

The sixth goal is supporting the proper use and development of natural resources for job creation and environmental stewardship. Also, supporting research projects and renewable technology is also a part of this goal.

The seventh goal is to increase the housing opportunities for citizens throughout the region. The eighth goal is attracting more tourists to the region through increased recreation facilities, cultural heritage initiatives and promoting outdoor recreation.

The ninth goal is secondary and higher education which includes regional opportunities to improve K-12 education and the development of graduate schools to better prepare citizens for 21<sup>st</sup> century jobs. The tenth goal is improving the physical environment of the region, including the revitalization of downtowns.

The eleventh goal is to improve health care services in the region, including wellness initiatives and facilities. The twelfth goal is to support entrepreneurial initiatives and small business development.

### Lenowisco PDC

The Lenowisco PDC outlines specific development goals and current and future strategies to lay out a roadmap for economic development in their CEDs document.

The development goals include encouraging “a strong regional economy through a diverse base of business interests, including large employers and entrepreneurial startups;” developing and maintaining “a workforce adequately skilled to meet the challenges of today’s economy;” ensuring “the region has adequate infrastructure in place to support the growth of higher-wage industry clusters and to ensure regional, national and global connectivity;” maintaining and promoting “the region’s natural beauty and its cultural amenities, and seek sustainable growth opportunities;” targeting “existing underutilized commercial and industrial properties for redevelopment;” and projecting “a positive identity for the PDC region.”

The current and future strategies identified include working with regional partners and assets, industrial development, entrepreneurial development, tourism development, business district redevelopment, grass roots development and the following target industries: technology, advanced manufacturing, cultural assets and agriculture and forestry.

It is important to mention that in addition to the target industries listed above, the healthcare industry is also mentioned as a workforce priority to meet the needs of current and future citizens of the region.

### Mount Rogers PDC

The Mount Rogers PDC lays out a three level strategy for economic development in their CEDs document. This includes short term strategies around industry recruitment and workforce development and longer term strategies around industry support and advanced workforce development as well as small business development and regional quality of life improvements. Excerpts from the document are below, revised to limit the length.

### Short Term Strategies – Level 1 – Industry Recruitment and Basic Workforce Development:

- *Work to ensure the largest industrial parks have the infrastructure necessary to attract a tier one driver industry.*
- *Work with regional organizations in identifying tier one target industries.*
- *Continue assisting regional organizations involved in workforce training to prepare the workforce with basic skills and develop distance learning opportunities to train workers.*
- *Assist with the collaboration between industry and education to develop best practices to meet the workforce needs throughout the region.*
- *Explore the benefits of creating an existing industry liaison position for the region by working with regional organizations and local economic developers to investigate the potential and logistics of creating that position.*

### Long Term Strategies – Level 2 – Industry Support and Advanced Workforce Development

- *Recruit a tier one driver industry to one of the strategic industrial sites.*
- *Assist regional organizations, economic developers and state and local organizations to identify target supplier industries to support the tier one driver industries being recruited.*
- *Work with regional organizations involved in workforce training and community colleges to train workers for tier one target industries and begin efforts to train for the supplier and support industries.*
- *Invest in regional efforts to support driver industries, industrial parks and support industries of the driver industries.*
- *Develop medal levels of bronze, silver, and gold standards for localities in the region to strive to achieve. Award of a medal level will depend on the quality and infrastructure provided to support tier one industries. It also states that this “will be a factor in how projects are prioritized in future CEDS.”*

### Long Term Strategies – Level 3 – Small Business Development & Regional Quality of Life Improvements

- *Continue to invest in and improve infrastructure and workforce development associated with tier one industries.*
- *Improve entrepreneurial and small business support regionally by using a three tier method: “Expand general education and personal finance education opportunities. Encourage asset based development, particularly in downtowns and community centers. Support and invest in a small business-gap analysis of the Mount Rogers Planning District.”*
- *Support early childhood education and other youth educational opportunities that will lead to STEM-H careers.*

- *Encourage educators at all levels, particularly high school, to participate in the discussion of the region's industry and career needs.*
- *Show support for companies or organizations involved in developing or improving healthcare facilities to grow healthcare jobs in the region.*
- *“Create a Mount Rogers Planning District Commission Regional Strategic Plan that will expand on the economic development strategies of the CEDS to a more comprehensive plan that focuses on quality of life improvements for the Mount Rogers Planning District residents. Topics to consider covering in the Regional Strategic Plan will be land use planning, infrastructure (particularly communication), downtown redevelopment, housing, healthcare, childcare, transportation, school systems, asset based development, arts & entertainment, historical & cultural assets, local produce & food distribution, aging population, substance abuse, unemployment & work participation/work ethic issues, community planning participation, environmental integrity & sustainability issues, and agriculture & forestry.”*

Within the short and long term goals set for the region, the CEDs also identifies four industry sectors as those that “may hold the most potential as ‘target industries’ for the region”. These industries are manufacturing, healthcare, retail trade, and transportation and warehousing.

#### Crater PDC

Within the Crater PDC region, there are four counties and one city in the TIC footprint: Dinwiddie, Greensville, Prince George, Sussex and the City of Emporia. The Crater PDC has a five year CEDs plan for 2014-2019 to set strategy for the region. The region set forth four priority areas with corresponding goals for the region and identified logistics, advanced manufacturing, and healthcare as high growth sectors. From the document:

*Priority: A highly skilled and motivated workforce.*

*Goal 1: Provide accessible workforce training programs for the development of skills that match the needs of the region's current and prospective 21<sup>st</sup> century employers.*

*Priority: An expanded use of technology.*

*Goal 2: Diversifying the region's economy and increase the number of higher-skilled and higher-wage jobs by encouraging and facilitating job growth in advanced manufacturing, innovation, logistics and technology.*

*Priority: Strengthen and grow the small business base.*

*Goal 3: Increase the number of jobs created by small businesses by strengthening the existing small business base, attracting new businesses and encouraging entrepreneurial start-ups and small business expansions through innovative commerce-based initiatives.*

*Priority: Improve underlying infrastructure.*

*Goal 4: Encourage and facilitate the provision of well-planned, state-of-the-art public infrastructure that will attract higher-wage employers.*

#### New River Valley PDC

Floyd County and the Town of Floyd are the only localities in the New River Valley PDC region that is located within the TIC footprint. The PDC revised their five year strategic plan in 2014 and set forth seven priorities and corresponding goals for development. From the document:

##### *Priority 1: Support Small Business and Entrepreneurial Development*

*Goal: Establish an environment that fosters the growth of existing businesses and supports entrepreneurs from startup stage through maturation. Objective 1: Optimize existing resources for entrepreneurs and small businesses and promote collaboration between these resources. Objective 2: Increase the number of jobs created through entrepreneurial start-ups and expansions in the New River Valley.*

##### *Priority 2: Preparation and Continued Support of Qualified Workforce*

*Goal: Prepare the New River Valley workforce for present and future employment in growing employment sectors. Objective 1: Train and re-train workers for higher skills and productivity in the modern economy. Objective 2: Improve the industry/education interface at all levels.*

##### *Priority 3: Available Land, Quality Infrastructure, and Affordable Housing*

*Goal: Maintain existing and deploy additional infrastructure to meet the needs of businesses and residents. Objective 1: Create an affordable, accessible and interlinked public transportation network that connects population centers with major employment centers. Objective 2: Strengthen the economic position of downtown commercial districts. Objective 3: Improve the region's telecommunication network to attract new firms, assist existing firms, and educate citizens. Objective 4: Increase the energy efficiency of industrial and commercial buildings.*

##### *Priority 4: Attracting New Business to the Region*

*Goal: Attract new industries that will complement the region's economy, strengthen inter-industry linkages, and utilize the region's labor force. Objective 1: Develop and strengthen the role of international trade and commerce in the economy of the New River Valley. Objective 2: Increase the region's supply of ready and available industrial and other economic development properties.*

##### *Priority 5: Regional Marketing/Awareness to Promote the New River Valley*

*Goal: Expand the regional identity and brand to increase the marketability of the region for businesses and tourists. Objective 1: Improve the region's ability to market itself and respond to the needs of new industrial, research, and technological prospects. Objective 2: Realize the region's tourism development potential and ability to market itself as a culturally and naturally unique tourism destination.*

*Priority 6: Preserve Natural and Historic Areas*

*Goal: Preserve the natural and historic assets within the region to protect the character and quality of the regional environment. Objective 1: Manage the impacts of existing and future land uses in order to preserve the character and quality of the regional environment. Objective 2: Increase the development and support of local family farms.*

*Priority 7: Business Friendly Governance and Representation*

*Goal: Promote a business friendly environment through governments cooperating with businesses at the local level and advocating for them at the state and federal levels. Objective 1: Bring a voice to the policy table on behalf of the region. Objective 2: Ensure the safety of the region's citizens.*

Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission

The county of Franklin and the Town of Rocky Mount are both within the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission. The PDC updated their CEDs strategic plan in 2014 and outlined seven goals with corresponding objectives for the region's development and success. From the document:

*Goals and Objectives*

- 1. Encourage regional economic vitality through an increasingly diverse base of businesses including entrepreneurial startups and large employers. 1.1 Recruit businesses and industries in high-wage industry clusters. 1.2 Promote small and entrepreneurial businesses. 1.3 Retain and expand existing businesses in the region.*
- 2. Develop and maintain a skilled workforce ready to meet the challenges presented by the creative economy. 2.1 Improve literacy and graduation rates. 2.2 Promote cooperation between local higher education institutions and local public school districts to improve K-12 educational quality. 2.3 Promote career and technical education to address the growing needs of business. 2.4 Promote affordable lifelong education. 2.5 Pursue the development of additional specialized training, educational programs as appropriate to further develop higher wage industry clusters. 2.6 Actively attract and retain young professionals to work in the region.*
- 3. Ensure the region has adequate infrastructure in place to facilitate the growth of higher-wage industry clusters and to ensure connectivity with regions nationally and globally. 3.1 Pursue*

*development of appropriate commercial, industrial, and research-oriented parks and centers to facilitate growth of appropriate industry clusters. 3.2 Expand information technology infrastructure and telecommunications systems. 3.3 Pursue the maintenance and expansion of traditional infrastructure including water, sewer, natural gas lines, and transportation infrastructure in areas where such investments will improve economic development potential. 3.4 Promote innovative transit programs and expansion of existing transit services in the region where such investments will improve economic development potential. 3.5 Pursue development and/or improvement of 'quality of life infrastructure' including, for instance, arts and cultural amenities, outdoor amenities, and other related improvements.*

*4. Project a positive identity for the Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Region. 4.1 Pursue regional marketing initiatives to promote the region to select markets including site selection professionals and individuals. 4.2 Engage the public and media to inform and educate residents on the economic development initiatives being pursued in the region. 4.3 Seek to improve intergovernmental cooperation and collaboration as well as cooperation and collaboration between government and the private sector and other important stakeholders to enhance regional economic development.*

*5. Seek to maintain and promote the region's natural beauty as well as its cultural amenities, and seek sustainable growth opportunities. 5.1 Invest in appropriate natural and outdoor amenities to simultaneously preserve open space and outdoor quality while further promoting the region as a destination for outdoor activities. 5.2 Promote existing outdoor amenities (greenway networks, hiking trails, lakes, State and National Park lands, and the National Forest) to residents and external markets. 5.3 Promote the region's arts and cultural amenities. 5.4 Take necessary steps to ensure ongoing improvement and/or maintenance of healthy air and water quantity and quality.*

*6. Seek to reuse existing underutilized commercial and industrial properties and target them for redevelopment. 6.1 Direct investment to unused or underused properties and reduce the need for greenfield development. 6.2 Invest in infrastructure to increase the intensity of use in already developed areas. 6.3 Pursue revitalization of blighted areas. 6.4 Pursue redevelopment of brownfields and grayfields where appropriate and feasible.*

*7. Seek to ensure that the region offers a strong and diverse mix of housing opportunities. 7.1 Pursue the rehabilitation and preservation of existing housing stock. 7.2 Expand housing opportunities for all income levels. 7.3 Encourage the development of quality, affordable housing for workers entering the job market. 7.4 Encourage the development of housing for the elderly. 7.5 Encourage the development of market-rate housing. 7.6 Encourage the development of a second-home housing market.*

## TIC 2012 Strategic Plan

The TIC 2012 Strategic Plan also identifies various goals and objectives for economic development opportunities throughout the footprint. Since the Indemnification category was complete in 2013, the four major remaining categories are below as well as the “rationale, objectives, strategies, and outcome measures for each category.” The information below is directly from the document.

### Building Human Infrastructure

*Rationale: Education and training are prerequisites for full citizen participation in the highly competitive global economy and in a networked society. In order to advance productivity, innovation and entrepreneurship, knowledge workers are vital to the process of transforming the Southern and Southwestern regions.*

#### *Objectives*

- *Enhance workforce readiness through support for proven and/or innovative GED programs*
- *Maintain scholarship programs that enable Commission service area citizens to realize educational goals, to include non-credit learning required to meet workforce demands by businesses*
- *Encourage scholarship recipients to establish careers in the Commission service area*
- *Establish programs that integrate technology across educational content areas*
- *Focus Commission resources in relation to “gaps” between education supply and occupational demand with emphasis on post-secondary STEM-H\*.*

#### *Strategies*

##### *Education and Special Projects Committees*

- *Establish and support quality private sector industry-led workforce training/re- training programs*
- *Technology enriched learning and research “centers of excellence”*
- *GED initiatives*
- *Scholarships, internships and mentoring necessary for post-secondary academic readiness, to include non-credit learning required to meet workforce demands by businesses*
- *Establish and support programs for the professional development of instructors’ credentials in critical vocations and in the use of technology*

#### *Outcome Measure*

- *Number of students successfully completing GED, STEM-H\* academic certification and degree programs*

#### *Goal*

- *750 new STEM-H enrollees annually*
- *1,000 credentials awarded annually*

#### Building Conditions for Innovation Rationale

*Rationale: Innovation is itself an engine of economic growth that is essential for revitalization. Encouraging entrepreneurial activity requires the establishment of conditions that support risk-taking and creative approaches to economic revitalization. Emerging industry clusters that offer significant prospects for higher wage and skill employment and private sector capital investment should be targeted. Key ingredients in establishing conditions for innovation include: 1) establishing incentives that increase experimentation and applied research activity; (2) supporting early stage business formation; and, 3) allocating Commission resources in situations where risk effectively precludes private sector investment. In addition, the Commission must remain vigilant to satisfy the interests of larger, developed businesses that complement and enhance innovative developments. The Commission also recognizes healthcare as an element of the regional economy as both a creator of skilled employment opportunities and a provider of services for improving the health and productivity of the regional workforce.*

#### *Objectives*

- *Pursuant to Section 3.2-3108 (3), Code of Virginia, expand access to health care including support for “scientific research performed at one of the Commonwealth’s National Cancer Institute-designated research institutes ....”*
- *Utilize Research and Development Centers to encourage regional exchange of ideas and projects that capitalize upon competitive advantages, and showcase local initiatives and available resources*
- *Support centers for education and research*
- *Encourage technology-assisted community activities and entrepreneurial efforts consistent with the objectives of local leadership*
- *Support value-added agricultural research and implementation*

#### *Strategies*

- *Tobacco Region Opportunity Fund and Research and Development, Agribusiness and Special Projects Committees*
- *New regional marketing initiatives*
- *Feasibility assessments linked to potential Commission sponsored entrepreneurial development projects*

- *Entrepreneurial development programs, with emphasis on technology-assisted business development focused on exports of goods and services*
- *Existing industry initiatives to support business innovation and expansion or workforce readiness*
- *Support innovative business activities*
- *Dedicated financial resources for agribusiness*

*Outcome Measure*

- *Percentage of the goal realized during the current funding cycle*

*Goal*

- *\$200 million of private sector capital investment committed annually*
- *2,000 health related citizen beneficiaries annually*

Building Regional Development Capacity

*Rationale: Southern and Southwestern Virginia each have unique revitalization needs that reflect factors such as topography and differing political and social economies. One region or locale may face distinct challenges not present elsewhere that may require particular solutions not deemed appropriate for the entire Commission service area. Establishing conditions in which a revitalized economy develops requires ensuring that fundamental building blocks are present and support the underlying strengths of the regions.*

*Objectives*

- *Increase water, wastewater, broadband and other basic infrastructure capacity that supports new private capital investments and creation of direct jobs.*
- *Increase the inventory of fully served industrial sites (emphasis on mega-sites)*
- *Support workforce development center construction where there is a needs assessment based on business requirements and the participation of educational partners*
- *Expand broadband connectivity for business and education sites, and assist cost-effective last mile solutions for residents*
- *Encourage regional cooperation projects where revenues are shared by multiple localities*
- *Southern and Southwestern Economic Development Committees and Special Projects Committee*
- *TROF investments directly linked to direct employment and taxable capital investment*

*Strategies*

*Outcome Measure*

- *Percentage of goal attained*

## Goal

- *2,000 direct new or retained private sector jobs within three years after the current funding cycle*

## General Funding Policies

- *Commission funds should not be used to supplant other state or federal funds for which an applicant is eligible, and applicants for off-site utility infrastructure improvements are required at point of application to demonstrate that financing is not available from non-TICRC sources*
- *Commission funds should not be used to finance endowments.*
- *Commission funds should not be used for operations costs*
- *Commission funds should be invested in projects that generate substantial new economic activity in a region, and should not be used for projects that indirectly affect economic revitalization (e.g. community, childcare centers, 4H, YMCA, YWCA or recreation initiatives, airports, local arts and cultural activities, historic preservation, housing and retail development) unless it is demonstrated that the investment will produce economic impacts from outside the Commission service area*
- *Commission funds should not be used for regularly recurring local responsibilities (e.g. comprehensive plans, K-12 school funding*
- *Commission funds should not be used for project administration, indirect project costs or for activities initiated prior to grant*
- *Priority should be given to projects that leverage significant other financing*
- *Priority should be given to projects that are regional (i.e. governance, direct financial participation or service area*
- *Priority should be given to projects that can be replicated throughout the Commission service area.*
- *Priority should be given to projects demonstrating that all financing necessary to complete the project is available.*
- *Applicants should clearly describe the operational sustainability of the activity for which Commission financing is being requested.*
- *Applicants should describe and be prepared to measure the anticipated ROI (e.g. private sector capital investment, employment and wage outcomes, tax benefits) in relation to proposed Commission investments.*
- *Applications should be submitted in accordance with guidelines and deadlines established by the Commission, and should be reviewed by designated program staff.*

# Focus Group Discussions

The Center for Rural Virginia worked closely with representatives from the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to develop the format, questions, categories of invites and other details as the agency's representatives in Southern and Southwest Virginia work daily with leaders throughout the TIC region. Partnering with DHCD and other economic and community development groups including the PDCs and when applicable the Regional Economic Development Organizations, provided great insight into the communities and their leadership throughout the region. These partnerships also helped to build a focus group program to build upon the strategic planning work previously conducted which most of these leaders were an integral part.

## Southside Planning District Commission

The first focus group meeting was held on May 13, 2014 for the Southside Planning District Commission at Southside Virginia Community College's Alberta Campus. The Southside PDC region encompasses the County of Brunswick including the Towns of Lawrenceville, Alberta and Broadnax; the County of Halifax including the Towns of Halifax, Scottsburg, South Boston and Virgilina; and the County of Mecklenburg including the Towns of Boydton, Chase City, Clarksville, La Crosse and South Hill. The Center for Rural Virginia worked closely with leadership of the PDC and Virginia's Growth Alliance to identify attendees, target sectors and discussion topics as this was the first focus group planned for the project.

There were fifteen attendees at the meeting representing Southside PDC, Virginia's Growth Alliance, local government officials from Brunswick, Greensville, Mecklenburg, Emporia, Lawrenceville and Brodnax. Also, representatives from Southside Virginia Community College, Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) and Community Memorial Healthcare also attended. Attendees were divided into three groups for discussion.

Through review of the CEDs and SETs plans previously conducted for the Southside PDC region, the target sectors identified for discussion were wood products, data centers, advanced manufacturing, logistics and warehousing and aviation and aerospace. These industries are the sectors that leadership throughout the region have determined to be a good fit for the area, its assets and workforce.

While the Southside PDC and Commonwealth PDC focus group meetings involved dividing the participants, future meetings did not. It became clear that a more concise evaluation of the group could be conducted if they stayed together as one larger group. This provided the opportunity for participants to feed off one another's ideas and statements. Therefore, to provide a consistent analysis of the focus groups, the findings and information gathered from the groups at both the Southside PDC and Commonwealth Regional Council meetings have been combined to provide a consistent view of the drivers selected and the discussion surrounding each.

Combined: Overall selection by the three groups: 1) *Infrastructure* 2) *Education and Workforce Development* and 3) *Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development*.

- Infrastructure
  - Challenges/Needs: An end user is required to build needed infrastructure. Site readiness is also a challenge. Natural Gas distribution costs are a challenge while the demand is great. Overseas clients prefer it and top sectors such as wood, chemical and advanced manufacturing want natural gas as well. Other infrastructure challenges include broadband and last mile connections, aging infrastructure such as water and sewer, maintenance of roads and site readiness.
  - Strategies/Opportunities: Additional investments and funding needed to address the challenges. Programs to assist with funding like returning the up-front infrastructure capital costs once an end user is secured. Coordination among governments and stakeholders including collaborating on joint funding applications, creating water authorities, etc. In addition, having the necessary engineering work conducted and staying informed of provider development to identify opportunities for additional investment is a strategy to address infrastructure challenges.
- Education and Workforce Development
  - Challenges/Needs: Additional programs are needed to train workers for target markets. Education needs including increased pre-k investments, SOL revisions, and the challenge of encouraging youth to train for jobs that may not be here yet. Other education challenges include vocational and trade programs in high schools and the availability of equipment necessary for those programs. Workforce challenges include a lack of apprenticeships, work ethic and critical thinking skills. In addition, there are significant funding needs for education and workforce development. Lastly, bringing all stakeholders to the table, including school system participation in the planning process can be a challenge.
  - Strategies/Opportunities: Concentration on the education pipeline. Project based and group activity learning in classrooms. Career readiness and vocational programs in high school, including programs for welders and machinists. Increased advanced manufacturing training. Customized fast track training programs of six months versus two years and other flexible programs for workers. Convening stakeholders regionally to bring together public and private sector partnerships to address the education needs of existing businesses. Align programs with industry needs and coordinate between school systems and

community colleges and business and industry. Encourage the community colleges to visit local industries and businesses to enhance the dialogue.

- Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development
  - Challenges/Needs: Lack of funding, grants and capital for startups. Also, limited incubator space for startups. Mentorship opportunities and programs are limited. Also, a lack of high speed broadband connections challenges small businesses and entrepreneurs.
  - Strategies/Opportunities: Invest locally and consider regional programs like the Fields of Gold initiative in the Shenandoah Valley. Create revolving loan programs and opportunities for micro lending. Job creation will bring additional quality of life initiatives to the region. Focus on revitalization and downtown development. Create apprenticeship programs to assist those ready to start or expand a business. Create an entrepreneurial portal to connect entrepreneurs and support mentoring programs like big brother big sister to encourage and support youth. Also, research thriving rural communities for other strategy ideas.

#### Commonwealth Regional Council Planning District Commission

The second focus group meeting was held on May 14, 2014 for the Commonwealth Regional Council Planning District Commission at Southside Virginia Community College's Daniel Campus. The Commonwealth Regional Council PDC region includes the Counties of Amelia, Buckingham, Charlotte, Lunenburg and Prince Edward. Towns within the region are Dillwyn, Charlotte Court House, Phenix, Keysville, Drakes Branch, Kenbridge, Victoria and Farmville.

There were thirteen attendees at the meeting representing Commonwealth Regional Council PDC, Virginia's Growth Alliance, local government officials from Prince Edward, Amelia, Lunenburg, Cumberland, Mecklenburg and Drakes Branch. Also representatives from Hampden Sydney, Benchmark Community Bank, the South Central Workforce Investment Board and Senator Frank Ruff. Attendees were divided into two groups for discussion.

The Commonwealth Regional Council does not have a CEDs plan in place, but is in Virginia's Growth Alliance region which has a SETs regional plan. Therefore, the same targets sectors were identified as those set forth through the SETs plan. These are forestry and wood products, advanced manufacturing, information technology, and transportation and logistics.

Combined: Overall selection by the three groups is: 1) *Education and Workforce Development* 2) *Infrastructure* and a tie for 3) *Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development* and *Leadership and Community Capacity*. (Participants were divided into two groups for discussion)

and each group chose a different driver for their third choice. Therefore, there are four drivers reviewed in this section.)

- Education and Workforce Development
  - Challenges/Needs: There is a need for more advanced manufacturing curriculum in schools, funding for more vocational programs, short term training programs for workers, increased STEM education and overall more funding on education in the school systems. Graduates being adequately prepared with basic reading, writing and math skills. Soft skills including work ethic and motivation. There is a cultural lack of respect for education in the region. Need to encourage more youth involvement in the community. An aging workforce throughout the region. Substance abuse issues are challenging to the workforce and employers. The “brain drain” is a challenge to having a ready workforce as bright and talented youth move away and often do not come back. Also, healthcare jobs are limited for nurses, other than Registered Nurses. Finally, the methods of communicating opportunity with youth needs to evolve.
  - Strategies/Opportunities: Stories about the opportunities in the region have to come from organic peer to peer sharing, business to business and worker to worker. Must start engaging the workforce at a younger age and work with students in elementary school. Sixth and ninth grade self-identification opportunities for career paths. Expos and career fairs for middle school students to learn about careers in the region. More community collaboration and leadership development. Students and youth need to be involved in the leadership development activities to empower and engage youth. To reach new audiences, update marketing strategies to include social media. More programs like the Centers for Excellence. Career readiness certification opportunities and work based curriculums. Create a regional strategy for workforce and engage different stakeholders. Increased WIB funding. Need to motivate about vocational training and make sure people understand there is a good reward of a good paying job at the end. Community college leadership could encourage companies to offer jobs to top community college students. Create incentive based programs and apprenticeships. Additional education opportunities could include online classes and increased access to community colleges and leadership training opportunities at the community college level. Increase education and workforce funding. Soft skills and an improved work ethic are needed. Strategies to address economic or distressed families’ home environments including family values, structure and discipline. Community outreach should be conducted in the churches and community centers to reach parents and citizens. Parent engagement with the schools, teacher conferences and involvement through innovative solutions such

as the parent center built in Lunenburg, online training, short term training, and a building block of classes to provide information to parents about how to help their children. Take to the community, don't make parents come to school. Explore grant opportunities for outreach.

- Infrastructure
  - Challenges/Needs: Aging water and sewer systems and plants. Natural gas distribution to industrial parks. The need for increased broadband coverage for the last mile and cellular towers. Limited shell or industrial buildings for development. Capacity to borrow money. Adequate roads for industrial development.
  - Strategies/Opportunities: Conduct an analysis of the infrastructure in place for marketing purposes. There are several potential natural gas projects possible that need T's in place for service lines. A change in regulations for providers could help increase expansion because at this time the last mile is too expensive. Explore public private partnerships to address the broadband issue. Additional and innovative funding, including at the federal and state level, for shell buildings, broadband and cell towers to reach the last mile. Investments in regional infrastructure could include utility authorities, municipal bonds, pooling of funds, etc.
- Regional Assets and Opportunities
  - Challenges/Needs: There is not enough focus on the tourism and hospitality industries. There needs to be a cohesive message of the hospitality and service industries of the assets and opportunities. There are challenges and threats to downtowns that involve an aging population of business owners and a lack of succession planning.
  - Strategies/Opportunities: Identify a person or organization to focus on regional tourism opportunities and a central location to compile the region's assets. Regional branding of assets. Increase training for frontline staff of the region's assets and offerings. May need to consolidate some regional organizations. Encourage franchising. Create partnerships between Small Business Development Centers and regional marketing organizations for ongoing collaboration and partnering on specific projects. A specific recommendation was for VGA to invite the Longwood Small Business Development Center to join the VGA board and explore partnering on a downtown initiative.

- Leadership and Community Capacity
  - Challenges/Needs: Need a better understanding by elected officials about economic development. Leaders can be resistant to change. A specific challenge is the tax base not keeping up with costs for schools and leaders have to make the hard decisions to address this challenge. Uncertainty of the economy is a challenge because the region needs to retain youth for future leadership positions. It is successful businesses and industries that keep our young people in the region to become leaders and ultimately create a trained leader's pool.
  - Strategies/Opportunities: Create regional leadership programs, possibly through extension, that move around the region. Better marketing of local leadership program opportunities. Support mentorship programs like SCORE to tap into the retiree community. Create supportive communication opportunities bringing together business leaders regularly to address problems and communicate with other business leaders, like the VGA model. Strengthen volunteer community organizations. Encourage community service and volunteerism for youth in schools. Support and establish Junior Chambers in the community. Create more Governor's Schools. It was also recommended that a strategy to improve leadership and community capacity is to reduce partisanship among leaders.

#### West Piedmont Planning District Commission

The third focus group meeting was held on October 28, 2014 for the West Piedmont Planning District Commission at New College Institute in Martinsville. Counties within the West Piedmont PDC region are Franklin County, including the Town of Rocky Mount, Henry County, Pittsylvania County, Patrick County, and the Cities of Danville and Martinsville.

There were seventeen attendees at the meeting representing West Piedmont PDC, Southern Virginia Regional Alliance, local government officials from Martinsville, Franklin, Pittsylvania and Danville. Also representatives from Patrick Henry Community College, the Harvest Foundation, the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research, The Launch Place, Dan River Business Development Center, the West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board, Smith Mountain Lake Chamber of Commerce, and the Danville Regional Foundation. The Southern Virginia representative for DHCD was also present and helped to facilitate the meeting. The facilitators decided to keep the attendees together in one group for the discussion, so they could build off one another. This worked well and was used for all future meetings.

Through review of the CEDs plan conducted in 2014 for the West Piedmont PDC region, the target sectors identified for discussion were food and beverage processing. Plastics and

polymers, advanced manufacturing, data centers, healthcare and social assistance, biotechnology, tourism, retail trade and other service industries.

The top three economic drivers chosen by the attendees were first *Education and Workforce Development* and then a tie for the second and third choices *Leadership and Community Capacity* and *Regional Assets and Opportunities*.

- Education and Workforce Development
  - Challenges/Needs: In Southern Virginia people say workforce drives economic development. Regional mindset and culture can be challenging to education and workforce. The understanding that there are needs for various skill sets and the question whether the pathway to prosperity is through a four year degree, two year degree or can be attained in high school remains. Also, soft skills such as a lack of motivation are a challenge. Need to invest in workforce at the high school level. Determine a baseline skillset workers need and provide that, then they are ready for specialized training for any prospect or new company. An advanced manufacturing core curriculum is essential. Fund career and technical schools and a new medical school to meet the workforce and education needs of the region. Businesses are concerned about skill sets, substance abuse, transportation and workforce. There are training programs, which some believe satisfy the current job base, it is the employment opportunities and wages that are limited. The challenge is whether the training programs in place can meet the needs for prospective and future employers. Some say there is limited direct funding for workforce in Virginia and there is gap associated with funding opportunities since financial aid does not pay for workforce certifications. In North Carolina, they have programs to address this and as a competitor, they have the upper hand. Quality of life matters to companies and the image projected as a region is important. Many current residents do not value this region as a place of opportunity for their children.
  - Strategies/Opportunities: More coordination among organizations to present a collaborative message to the private sector. Create a package of incentives for workers and consider including housing opportunities. Consider a program that would provide certification and then require employees to work in the region for a certain amount of time. Fund customized training programs and remove the barriers for people wanting to increase certifications or training. Provide Dillon Rule exemption opportunities for localities wanting to work together on specific projects and initiatives. Lead a discussion on the state level on how to collaborate across the state line. Also, should incentivize community colleges to operate efficiently.

- Regional Assets and Opportunities
  - Challenges/Needs: To some tourism is not considered overall to be an economic development priority and there is no regional identify or marketing effort for it. Also, there is no coordination of cultural assets. Regional assets are vital to attracting employers. Prospects and entrepreneurs look at the school ratings, entertainment and night life opportunities for relocation consideration. The visual impression of housing and schools can be a challenge as well.
  - Strategies/Opportunities: Regionally branding and marketing a combination of venues would provide a great opportunity for development. This could include developing a package to market the quality of life in the region. Improve visual first impressions that demonstrate that citizens care about their region. Consider and encourage innovative programs that market the region in creative ways such as the concierge program instituted by The Launch Place to help new entrepreneurs with their transition to the region.
  
- Leadership and Community Capacity
  - Challenges/Needs: Regional collaboration and identifying the leadership that spans the region can be a challenge. Geographic boundaries do not always reflect working relationships. Leadership from the private sector region wide is a challenge and a great need. Also, there is a belief that funding at the state level does not reward collaboration and there are no incentives for regional partnerships. Another challenge in the region is that many in the workforce live in North Carolina. Also, there is a gap in generational leaders.
  - Strategies/Opportunities: Encourage and support people and leaders who will chose the overall success of the region over an individual locality. Incentivize or educate leaders about the rewards of regionally attracting businesses for their individual localities and communities. Encourage those that work in silos to bring others to the table. Create opportunities to connect people and keep them in the community. Focus on getting the younger general involved in the community through young professional groups to encourage them to stay. Integrate K-12 into industry for early career path interest and selection to grow and retain new leaders in the region. Create and support regional leadership programs with the understanding that private sector participation is key.

This focus group was energized about their discussion. As their conversation progressed through the economic drivers, the issue of regionalism continued to arise, so they wanted to talk specifically about that as well. Their comments regarding regionalism were that staffs work well together, but the leadership above the staff level sometimes do not understand the benefits of collaboration. The private for profit sector needs to take the lead on regional cooperation. It was recommended that regional organizations convene, but that the private sector must lead and elected officials need to be involved. The group planned to convene a working group out of this focus group to address some of the issues raised during the discussion.

### Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission

The fourth focus group meeting was held on November 5, 2014 for the Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission at the Southwest Virginia Community College in Cedar Bluff. The Cumberland Plateau PDC region includes Buchanan County and the Town of Grundy, Dickenson County and the Towns of Clintwood, Haysi, Clinchco and Nora, Russell County and the Towns of Lebanon, Cleveland and Honaker, Tazewell County and the Towns of Bluefield. Cedar Bluff, Pocahontas, Richlands and Tazewell.

There were eighteen attendees at the meeting representing Cumberland Plateau PDC, Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority, local government officials from the Town of Cleveland and Tazewell County. Also representatives from Southwest Virginia Community College, People Inc., Richlands Area Chamber of Commerce, Grundy National Bank, Southwest Virginia Workforce Investment Board, Southwest Small Business Development Center, Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens and Russell County Public Library. The Southwest Virginia representative for DHCD was also present and helped to facilitate the meeting.

Through a review of the CEDs plan conducted in 2014 for the Cumberland Plateau PDC region, the target sectors identified for discussion were information technology, automotive, clean and alternative energy, advanced manufacturing, wood products and asset based development.

The top three economic drivers chosen by the attendees were first *Education and Workforce Development*, second *Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development* and third *Infrastructure*.

- Education and Workforce Development
  - Challenges/Needs: The closure of some schools is causing overcrowding and creates a very long commute for children. Also, there are limited preschool opportunities throughout the region. In addition, there is a need for elementary and secondary education to be more involved with workforce needs. Trade skills and career and technical programs have been eliminated or reduced in high schools throughout the region. Need to get kids interested in career opportunities

like advanced manufacturing at a younger age through creative marketing at the middle school level. The youth need to understand that these are good paying jobs with growth opportunities. There is a mindset that you must go to college to get a good job. There needs to be more career counseling to help students understand the potential and opportunities. Also, producing graduates that are college ready is a challenge as many require development courses once they arrive at college. Another challenge is funding to assist the learning disability population. There needs to be more alignment of programs between schools and businesses. Community workforce readiness requires more communication between the sectors that are expanding and community college leadership. Other challenges include the soft skills and work ethic, communication skills, goals and objectives. Also, the culture of the family unit creates challenges. In addition, there needs to be realistic expectations for career salaries. There is still a mindset that manufacturing is not the sector of future growth and will not be around tomorrow. Education is needed about the advanced manufacturing industry and that the skills are buildable for other careers. In addition, other challenges include home and community based healthcare and limitations because of broadband infrastructure. Substance abuse issues are also a challenge. There is an aging population and a smaller workforce with limited succession planning for businesses. Also, funding continues to be a challenge to address these needs since a declining population means a declining tax base.

- Strategies/Opportunities: Regional collaboration is a great opportunity for partnerships among community colleges and other programs similar to the Centers for Excellence. Regional opportunities for distance learning is a strategy to address workforce needs. In addition, regional procurement for projects such as buses and transportation, downsizing of classrooms and sharing in expenses such as supplies. Other strategies should include apprenticeship programs, internships and other shadowing programs in high school and at the community college level which provide opportunities for skillset attainment and relationship building with potential employers. Stackable credentials and certifications will build the workforce skillsets. Conduct a skills gap study focused on the skill sets of coal industry workers and determine the skills needed to retrain for the other industry sectors. Create ways to increase communication from employers to better understand their needs. Think global and not just regional by exploring new markets. Work through the Small Business Development Centers to reach out to the business community to talk about opportunities. Assemble a short list of people and private investors ready to invest in new businesses. Explore crowdsourcing and crowd funding opportunities for business development. Create opportunities for diversification and succession planning before businesses start to

decline. In addition, support substance abuse programs including One Care of Southwest Virginia, the Governor's Task Force on Prescription Drug and Heroin Abuse and other programs. Also, work with local hospitals and healthcare providers to address this issue threatening the region's workforce.

- Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development
  - Challenges/Needs: Financing and startup funding opportunities as well as business planning, experience, training and technical assistance are limited. It is challenging to transfer your talent or trade from a hobby to the responsibility of a business owner working through onerous regulations. An entrepreneurial culture and community support is needed. Need a community environment to support and promote entrepreneurship which requires a community with broadband and last mile access. Challenges include new technology and internet marketing as well as issues like affordable insurance, entrepreneurial burn out because having to work more than one job to make ends meet while they work to get their business off the ground and finding supplies and raw materials in the small amounts that small entrepreneurs require.
  - Strategies/Opportunities: Major opportunities identified to develop small businesses include the tourism, hospitality and agriculture industries. Specifically, tourism, ecotourism, adventure tourism, agritourism, wineries, cultural heritage, music, artisans and trails were all detailed as future growth opportunities. To support these growing industries, strategies include supporting and expanding programs like the tourism curriculum at SWVA Community College and providing tourism scholarships. Tourism is bringing the population back to the region. There are opportunities for leaders to adapt regulations and laws to increase the tourist experience. Also, the region must build the brand of Southwest Virginia through regional cooperation and a unified message to market globally and attract visitors to the region. Create a pilot program for hospitality training to support the tourism industry by partnering with the Virginia Tourism Corporation, community colleges and Small Business Development. Another option to meet the industry workforce needs is to create programs to bring seasonal volunteers from the aging workforce for lodging and restaurants. Outside of branding, marketing and the tourism industries, other entrepreneurial and small business strategies recommended include the revitalization of the region's downtowns through loan funds and infrastructure development. Also, develop a business plan challenge for grant awards to encourage entrepreneurial development. In addition, identify loan funds to help startups through nonprofits, since they can often provide loans where banks may not be able. This can involve

some creative structuring, for example, People Inc. structures loan payments around a business' season. Review programs such as My Southwest Opportunity Challenge and the Pop Up Marion program for success stories to share around the region. Identify an organization that can provide training and funding opportunities to help entrepreneurs. Align community economic development strategies with the regional economic development strategy.

- Infrastructure
  - Challenges/Needs: Geographic and topographic challenges increase the cost associated with infrastructure throughout the region. In addition, regulations and requirements from the EPA increase costs as well as other mandates. Infrastructure needs include repairing and building roads, natural gas availability, rail sites, no regional airport, aging water and sewer infrastructure, housing stock and broadband, specifically high speed connections and 4G cell service. Other challenges include limited public transportation opportunities Affordable child and adult day care is limited, but necessary for workers and to attract young families. Funding is needed to address this problem.
  - Strategies/Opportunities: Create regional solutions to the infrastructure challenges through partnerships with the private sector and entrepreneurs. Partner and collaborate for grants and other funding opportunities. Increase funding to address the infrastructure needs already outlined. There is an opportunity for the PDC to provide some public works support that can be shared throughout the region, which existed in a previous program. To attract entrepreneurs and support business expansion, the infrastructure of broadband and 4G service is necessary. Invest in child care options to support entrepreneurs and draw workers to the region.

#### Lenowisco Planning District Commission

The fifth focus group meeting was held on November 6, 2014 for the Lenowisco Planning District Commission at Mountain Empire Older Citizens in Big Stone Gap. The Lenowisco PDC region includes Lee County and the Towns of Jonesville, Pennington Gap and St. Charles, Wise County and the Towns of Appalachia, Big Stone Gap, Coeburn, Pound, St. Paul and Wise, Scott County and the Towns of Clinchport, Duffield, Dungannon, Gate City, Nickesville and Weber City, and the City of Norton.

There were twenty five attendees at the meeting representing Lenowisco PDC, Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority, local government officials from the counties of Lee, Scott and Wise and the towns of Appalachia, Dungannon, Gate City and Pound. Also

representatives from Miners Exchange Bank, Virginia Employment Commission, Mountain Empire Older Citizens, USDA, Wise County Housing Authority, The Lane Group, Southwest Virginia Workforce Investment Board, Mountain Empire Community College, Lenowisco District of the Virginia Department of Health, Wise County Chamber of Commerce and regional representatives for U.S. Senator Mark Warner and Congressman Morgan Griffith. The Southwest Virginia representative for DHCD was also present and helped to facilitate the meeting.

Through a review of the CEDs plan conducted in 2013 for the Lenowisco PDC region, the target sectors identified for discussion were technology, advanced manufacturing, cultural assets, and agriculture and forestry.

Of the top three economic drivers chosen by the attendees, there was a tie for the first two selected, each with 17 votes, which were *Education and Workforce Development* and *Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development*. The very close third driver chosen, with 16 votes was *Infrastructure*.

- Education and Workforce Development
  - Challenges/Needs: Regional cooperation is needed to meet the needs of current and potential employers. Needs include the alignment of training programs from secondary to post-secondary to meet the needs of jobs in the region. There are currently a lack of technology jobs and jobs that require an advanced education to encourage the youth to stay. After being educated locally, they go elsewhere to work. There is a need for more private employers to diversify the economy beyond public sector and government facility jobs. There is an abrupt lifestyle change in the community as a result of the decrease in income from coal jobs to other industries. More education programs are needed in the recreation and hospitality industries that are growing throughout the region. Other challenges include a decrease in state funding for education and workforce programs. In addition, the attitude, perception and lack of culture surrounding education is a challenge. Disability is increasing in the region which certainly challenges the workforce as do substance abuse issues. There is also a transportation infrastructure challenge facing education which is the need to relieve congestion and access to UVA Wise and Mountain Empire Community College as well as the need for more access to Russell, Dickenson and Wise.
  - Strategies/Opportunities: Expand vocational and career path programs beyond middle and high school to expose elementary school students to the opportunities within the region, similar to a program in Wise County. Create a regional marketing program, working with the schools and extension, aimed at educating students, particularly at the high school level about career opportunities. Support

advanced manufacturing curriculum through the Centers for Excellence, UVA Wise and MECC. The regional strategy should include producing a trained workforce for core employment jobs and salaries to replace mining and natural gas jobs. The region should share the message with parents and schools that there is a change and shift in culture and many opportunities beyond those attainable through a four year degree. Jobs in the healthcare fields are an opportunity as well as trades jobs like welding and plumbing. To implement education and workforce strategies, the region should identify a central clearinghouse for programs, initiatives and marketing efforts to increase coordination. VCEDA can play a role in this and in revenue sharing across the region. In addition, regional assets such as arts, music and culture help to attract businesses and employers. Create an educational program for the tourism and hospitality industries, including recreational programs at the community college level. There is currently a program offered by the SWVA WIB, VTC, the Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority, the SBDC, SWVA Community College, and UVA Wise called Heart of Appalachia Hospitality Training on creating a spirit around the hospitality industry. Should consider expanding this program to meet workforce needs in the hospitality and travel industries. Other opportunities include mentorship programs such as the Aim Scholar program at MECC and offering dual enrollment opportunities within high school for mentoring other students. The agriculture and forestry industries also provide a great opportunity for the region and workforce, including a new veterinarian school for the region. Other agriculture and forestry growth opportunities could be explored through planning proposals developed through the new Agriculture Forestry and Industry Development Grant and the Tobacco Commission. Certainly agritourism and the winery industry is an opportunity for growth. Additionally, the Pop Up Marion program would be valuable to other areas in the region. Also, programs to attract military veterans to region to meet workforce needs would be valuable.

- Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development
  - Challenges/Needs: Challenges to entrepreneurship and small business development include the complex nature of creating a business plan, financing startups, the need for a culture of entrepreneurship, competition with big box retailers, and programs to support local businesses. The region has an aging population with high prescription costs making it difficult for residents to support new businesses. Other challenges include startup funding and facilities needed for the research and development of products. Also, there are limited educational opportunities for entrepreneurs and mentoring services as a resource.

- Strategies/Opportunities: There are various components to small business development that are necessary including tourism, education, broadband, core employment, supplemental employment and quality of life. There need to be niches for entrepreneurs outside of retail, including art and technology. Another important component is the region's downtowns and incubator space to encourage entrepreneurship. An opportunity to create a ten county region of Southwest Virginia pilot project of downtown redevelopment. One strategy could be to conduct an analysis of regional gaps in entrepreneurship and small business development. Funding opportunities for development could include creating small business revolving loan funds by using state funds to create other revolving funds, USDA funding for small business loan funds, DHCD funding opportunities, and business plan competitions. There should be a regional approach and strategy to attract entrepreneurs to the region. One recommendation was to collaborate with regional stakeholders on an application for federal Promise Zone designation. Also, must continue to utilize the assets at UVA Wise and MECC. Another coordinated effort should be to develop a marketing and advertising campaign to attract people to the region. Also, educate existing businesses on internet marketing opportunities to increase their reach worldwide and foster business expansion. Another strategy should be to address leadership challenges by developing leadership programs and opportunities for networking and collaboration. For example, Wise County has a leadership program that could be duplicated or expanded. Leadership initiatives should include the local chambers and increasing mentoring opportunities and programs.
  
- Infrastructure
  - Challenges/Needs: There are various challenges to infrastructure in the region. The geography and topography of far Southwest Virginia creates a disparity in the expense of infrastructure in the region versus other regions across the state. Broadband, specifically the last mile issue is a great challenge as well as available internet speeds. There are also significant transportation needs throughout the region as well as limited passenger rail opportunities and no mass transit. Other infrastructure challenges include aging water and sewer systems, limited housing inventory, zoning issues, EPA regulations and property maintenance. Additionally natural gas infrastructure is a challenge and is desired by industrial users for relocation or expansion.
  
  - Strategies/Opportunities: While there is robust fiber to industry, the goal should be wireless throughout the region through the Virginia Coalfield Coalition Authority. The region should work to educate citizens about the quality of life,

education and economic development benefits of broadband and that it is not a luxury. Additional funding to address the infrastructure challenges outlined above would be valuable.

- In addition to specific infrastructure strategies, the discussion also encompassed some quality of life strategies to meet overall needs of the region. These strategies include providing an enhanced quality of life for residents, businesses and visitors. The abruptness of the coal industry decline is more than the region can overcome alone. There is an internal self-perception problem and a negative perception of Appalachia. The region needs to brand itself and market identify itself to the world. For example, there is confusion about whether it is Southwest Virginia or South West Virginia. The region should apply for grants from the federal and state government to develop these strategies. In addition, funding to continue programs like Return to Roots would be valuable.

#### Mount Rogers Planning District Commission

The sixth focus group meeting was held on January 30, 2015 for the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission at their offices in. The Mount Rogers PDC region includes the Cities of Galax and Bristol, the County of Bland, Carroll, including the Town of Hillsville, Grayson County including the Town of Fries, Independence and Troutdale, the County of Smyth including the Towns of Chilhowie, Marion and Saltville, the County of Washington including the Towns of Abingdon, Damascus and Glade Spring, and the County of Wythe including the Towns of Rural Retreat and Wytheville.

There were twelve attendees at the meeting representing Mount Rogers PDC, Blue Ridge Crossroads Economic Development Authority, local government officials from Wythe, Washington, Smyth, Bristol, Marion and Troutdale. Also representatives from Wytheville-Wythe-Bland Chamber of Commerce and the Joint Industrial Development Authority of Wythe County.

Through a review of the CEDs plan conducted in 2013 for the Mount Rogers PDC region, the target sectors identified for discussion were manufacturing, healthcare, retail trade, and transportation and warehousing.

Of the top three economic drivers chosen by the attendees, there was a tie for the first two selected, each with ten votes, which were *Education and Workforce Development* and *Infrastructure*. The third driver chosen with eight votes was *Leadership and Community Capacity*.

- Education and Workforce Development

- Challenges/Needs: Challenges include engaging education with businesses to produce skilled labor to meet the needs of the industries the region is working to attract. Vocational training and career pathway opportunities early on for students. Also, there is a lack of an assessment process and career coaches to help students determine career paths. There are limited apprenticeship opportunities to support the vocations. There are unrealistic expectations among graduates of the types of jobs they can and should get including the pay. Also, soft skills including being on time, responsibility and attitudes towards the jobs that are available. It is challenging to find instructors with industry experience as well as trade professionals like plumbers, brick masons and others. There are cultural notions that create challenges including the idea that everyone has to go to college and you have to sacrifice to live in a rural area. The stigma of the “factory” must be addressed through education about current advanced manufacturing opportunities. Substance abuse is another challenge for the region. Finally, youth tend to leave the region and if they come back it is generally because of quality of life, family and the community. If they do not, it is usually because of low wage rates, the types of jobs available and entrepreneurship is risky.
  
- Strategies/Opportunities: Strategies include programs that will connect students and schools with businesses to meet the needs of the target sectors. This includes connecting community colleges with business leaders and providing community colleges with flexibility and resources to work with those leaders to develop programs to enhance workforce and economic development. This flexibility could include moving away from the semester hour requirement, which North Carolina has done. Also, the region should work to educate students early about the skills needed for jobs available in the region, how to attain those skills and that they do not have to go to college. The region needs to develop a simpler message about the workforce in Southwest Virginia and share that information. The way business is conducted has changed with broadband and teleworking opportunities. The new generation desires more than money, they demand a work life balance which this region can capitalize on. Historically, the region has enjoyed a strong agricultural industry and a cultural mentality that agriculture is a regional asset. Emerging agricultural opportunities include farmer’s markets, the healthy food movement and locally grown restaurants which all provide opportunities for agricultural economic development.

- Infrastructure
  - Challenges/Needs: Resources for infrastructure development are particularly challenging in the region because of the geography and topography of Southwest Virginia. Infrastructure needs include aging infrastructure and the need to improve roads and bridges, passenger rail, water and sewer systems, broadband availability, housing inventory, site and building development and even the availability of the supplies to construct infrastructure. Decisions involving infrastructure investment require leadership at the national, state and local levels. Broadband needs include redundancy for businesses, cellular service for recruitment and last mile development. The trunk lines are in place because of investments by the TIC, DHCD and others, but wireless is still needed. Other infrastructure needs include the availability of green sites, shell buildings and site development which all require additional funds. Transportation needed to connect product and supplies needed for manufacturing is a challenge. Also, healthcare fits into infrastructure as well. There is a shortage of doctors and patients are having to be transported outside the region for treatment. People will not come back or locate to the area without adequate healthcare services. Helicopters and ambulance companies are selling insurance door to door to cover residents because transport out of the region happens so frequently.
  - Strategies/Opportunities: Must address infrastructure regionally to pool resources and build relationships. The region has three mega sites ready. Should explore building a freight airport and rail yards to help attract distribution hubs. Also, having an intermodal facility would be an opportunity since the closest facilities are currently in Greensboro and Front Royal. A natural gas power generation station in the region would be an opportunity. Also, an increase in sewer capacity could attract large industrial users. Additional opportunities for infrastructure development involve housing and increasing the inventory of condos, apartments and rental properties like the creative cluster project in Abingdon to meet the needs of the aging community and those that don't want the commitment of home ownership. Lastly, challenges in the healthcare arena create an opportunity to grow the sector through home-based care, telemedicine centers throughout the region and through medical education such as a medical school in the region.
- Leadership and Community Capacity

- Challenges/Needs: As mentioned in the infrastructure section, leadership is a priority for the region. Challenges facing leadership in the region include a lack of participation, communication, a changing political climate and leaders that understand the short term and long-term implications of their decisions, resources and regional cooperation. Additionally, there is a cultural distrust of government among citizens when they do engage with their government. Communication between government leadership and citizens is challenging partly because resources are limited.
- Strategies/Opportunities: Regional cooperation is a key strategy to improve leadership throughout the region. Each community and locality has something to offer the region overall. Having leaders that understanding their unique community and remain true to core principles and strengths, yet be flexible will be an asset to the region. The region should create initiatives to provide the opportunity for open communication with leadership. Also, initiatives to engage young leaders and identify the next generation of leaders through organizations like the chamber's young professional group to get them excited and involved in the region. Also, strategize ways to improve the citizenry experience when interacting with government.

As the discussion evolved, the group turned to branding and perception of the region as a priority they wanted to discuss. As often happens, other economic drivers are discussed throughout the conversation as each driver is important to overall economic success of a community and region. The group discussed the need for branding and marketing Southwest Virginia to identify itself and make clear, it is not a corridor of West Virginia.

# Survey Responses

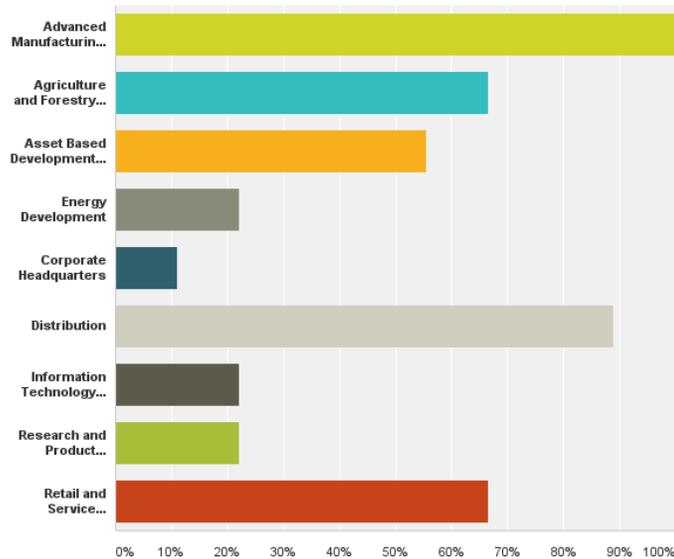
Planning district commissions participating in the survey were provided an online survey tool built to closely reflect the questions and discussion provided to in person focus group attendees. Survey participants were first asked to select the target industries their region has identified through economic development strategic planning as those industries to attract and grow. All survey participants were provided the following list of industry sectors and asked to check all that their region has identified as priority sectors in their regional economic development planning processes.

Industry sector options provided were Advanced Manufacturing (including aviation and aerospace, automotive, food and beverage, plastics and polymers, etc.); Agriculture and Forestry (including wood products); Asset Based Development (including cultural assets and tourism); Corporate Headquarters; Distribution; Energy Development; Research and Product Development (including biotechnology, life sciences, etc.); Information Technology (including data centers, unmanned systems, etc.); and the Retail and Service Industry.

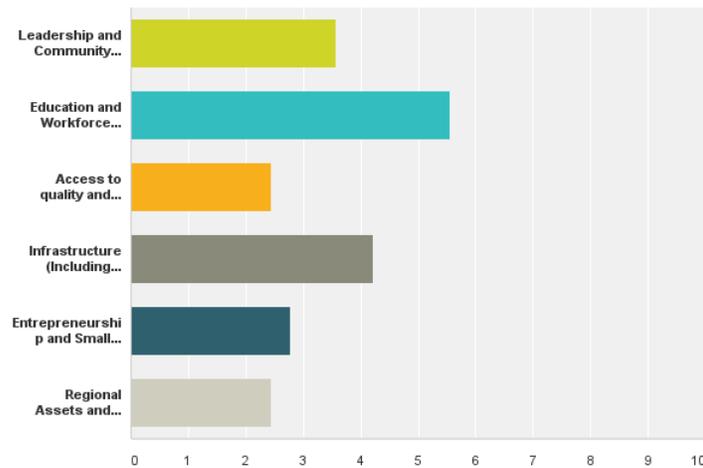
Next, participants were asked to rank the economic drivers in order of importance to determine their top three drivers, just as the in person focus groups had selected.

## Crater Planning District Commission

### Target Industry Sectors



## Economic Drivers



Participants were then asked to provide the challenges/needs and strategies/opportunities for their top three economic drivers. The top three economic drivers chosen by the nine survey participants were first *Education and Workforce Development*, second *Infrastructure* and third *Leadership and Community Capacity*. Survey responses are below.

- Education and Workforce Development
  - Challenges/Needs:
    - I believe the courses are there for those who want them, but the timeframe of completing certifications and training prohibits new clients from finding the workforce quickly. There should be a happy medium where a prospective employee can receive fast track training but not necessarily a "degree".
    - Affordable Education
    - Better SOL scores
    - No real regional STEM-H initiatives
    - Need to develop basic skills sets to support industry who want to locate here.
    - Lower college costs.
  - Strategies/Opportunities:
    - Marketing a "fast track" training course to let clients know they can have a customized educated workforce in 90 days or 6 months is a great opportunity. Cooperation and communication between community college and industry, existing and proposed.
    - New business in the area. Community awareness.
    - CCAM will be developing an Apprentice Academy. John Tyler Community College will be hiring a STEM-H Coordinator to establish a

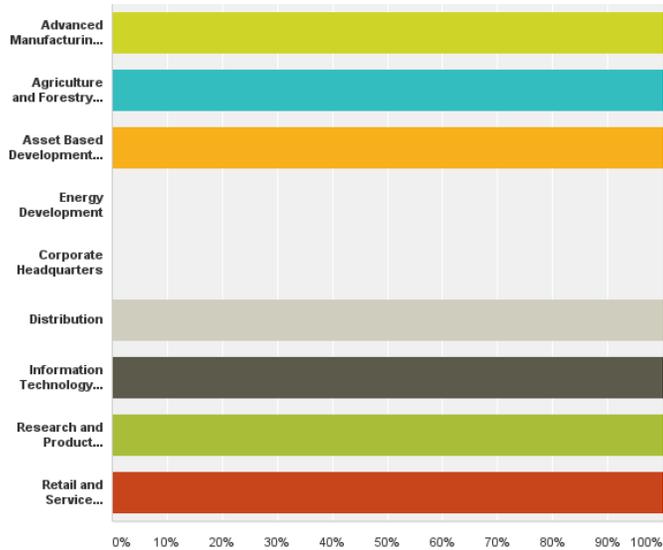
regional initiative. The Commonwealth's STEM-H Coordinator is actively involved within the region.

- Develop a pipeline of skilled workers, two sides of the same coin ED / WD. Comprehensive plan that involves world class industry, developing the jobs of the future measured by world class standards.
- Educational grants and scholarships. Business scholarships.
- Infrastructure
  - Challenges/Needs:
    - Funds to develop infrastructure to prepare a site prior to the client's search.
    - Finding the funding to build the infrastructure.
  - Strategies/Opportunities:
    - Utilities in place attract fast track clients, which are more common now than before. Sites need to be ready to go! Partnerships between utility providers and localities to build infrastructure on a speculation basis. If not a full build out, at least the engineering/design so the build out timeframe is completely understood.
    - Federal and state funding. Legislation.
    - For those jurisdictions within the TCR footprint funding is less of an issue. Better coordination between and among local jurisdictions concerning major infrastructure needs that impact multiple local jurisdictions or funders are looking for regional solutions.
- Leadership and Community Capacity
  - Challenges/Needs:
    - Leadership development
    - Budget reductions.
    - Aligning common interests.
    - Better communications and participation.
  - Strategies/Opportunities:
    - Training and Education. Opportunity.
    - County's industrial sites. Have all localities in the region come to the table with their piece of the pie.
    - Strengthening workforce development will strengthen economic development. Analyzing the jobs of the future.
    - Community Town halls. Local leadership.
- Other economic drivers survey participants chose:
  - Access to Quality and Specialty Healthcare
    - Challenges/Needs:
      - Lower healthcare cost.
      - Too far to drive to receive quality healthcare.

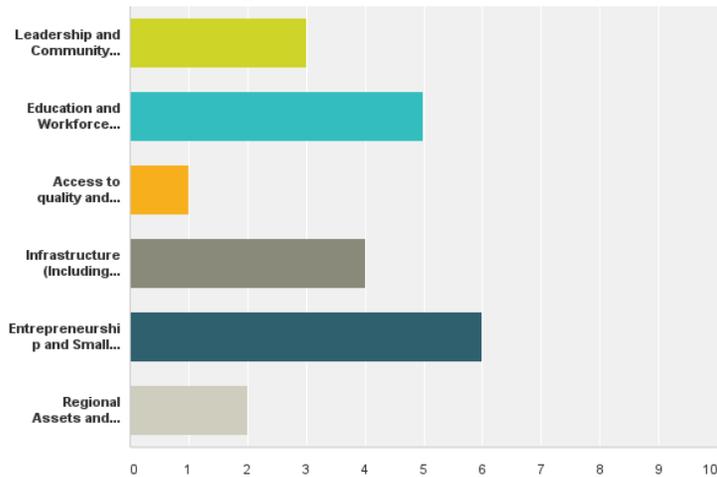
- Strategies/Opportunities:
      - Legislative action on Affordable Care Act and Medicare.
      - Any specialty types of medical practice could locate here
  - Regional Assets and Opportunities
    - Challenges/Needs:
      - Localities need to see this as a region, view it like employers do.
      - Many of the challenges of marketing a region have been overcome in the last two or three years. Our locality sees the benefit of an industry's success, even if it isn't in our jurisdiction. Financially supporting another jurisdiction's project is a bit touchy but the advantages are starting to become clear.
    - Strategies/Opportunities:
      - Better K-12 education system strengthens all aspects. Common forum or political structure that allows all to participate.
      - Regional projects tend to receive more funding than local. Working together tells a greater story with numerous assets.
- Additional information provided by survey participants:
  - Better cooperation between regional business and regional community.
  - Crater PDC region is home to a major military presence which require constant vigilance. Also the presence of two R&D Centers (Commonwealth Center for Advanced Manufacturing and Commonwealth Center for Advanced Logistics Systems) offer the ability to advance the region's technology-based workforce training initiatives as well as help to grow technology based companies within the region.

## New River Valley Planning District Commission

### Target Industry Sectors



### Economic Drivers



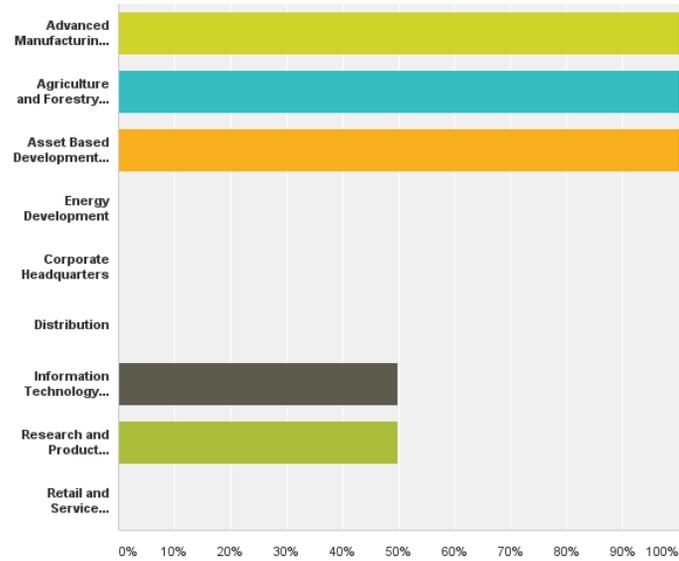
There was only one respondent to the survey from the New River Valley PDC region. The top three economic drivers chosen were first *Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development*, second *Education and Workforce Development* and third *Infrastructure*.

- Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development
  - Challenges/Needs:
    - Access to capital for mid-size companies (growing from start-up phase).
  - Strategies/Opportunities:

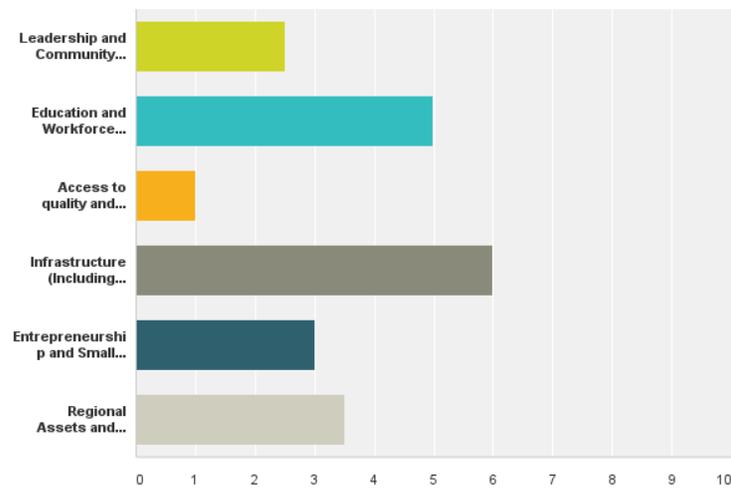
- Increasing linkages with VT/RU/Community College will help market area as region fully supportive of small business/tech firms.
- Education and Workforce Development
  - Challenges/Needs:
    - Lack of direct steps from K-12 to employment opportunities in the region.
  - Strategies/Opportunities:
    - If residents can see a connection to employment and firms know the structure exists, we are likely to have more people employed and more firms willing to relocate/retain. Consortium of K-12 superintendents, Community College leadership, Higher Education leadership and Workforce Investment Board leadership.
- Infrastructure
  - Challenges/Needs:
    - Lack of broadband to residential areas and lack of broadband providers which contributes to higher prices due to lack of competition.
  - Strategies/Opportunities:
    - Public investment in broadband planning; municipal conduit planning so private firms can pull fiber with reduced install prices. Free wifi in downtowns; planning for conduit install; provider meetings to discuss areas that need assistance.
- Additional information provided:
  - Robust marketing of the rural regions of Virginia is needed to break some of the stereotypes and communicate the opportunities that exist.

## Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission

### Target Industry Sectors



### Economic Drivers



There were two participants in the survey from the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission region. Both participants chose *Infrastructure* as the top choice and *Education and Workforce Development* second. The two participants chose different drivers for their third pick, *Regional Assets and Opportunities* and *Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development*.

- Infrastructure
  - Challenges/Needs:

- Rural areas lack competitive infrastructure, particularly interstates and natural gas. While there are workarounds to such factors, it is difficult to get companies to understand when there are so many alternatives available that meet this kind of criteria.
    - Lack of funding to properly develop business park sites, utilities, etc.
  - Strategies/Opportunities:
    - Rural areas have land and large plots of it which are getting more difficult to find in more urbanized areas. Rural areas adjacent to more urbanized areas are at the greatest advantage in leveraging available infrastructure. Partner with neighboring jurisdictions on infrastructure projects.
    - We have everything necessary to compete successfully for new jobs and investment but are stymied because we do not have the sites, buildings, and infrastructure in place to be involved in many site searches. County is buying a new business park with many infrastructure pieces in place but we need funding for site development and certain utility extensions.
- Education and Workforce Development
  - Challenges/Needs:
    - A proactive rather than reactive approach to differentiate a locality. A rural locality with a community college in its midst is better positioned to take advantage of educational resources. Also, improve secondary achievement.
    - Need to do more to train citizens for the advanced jobs being sought in the area.
  - Strategies/Opportunities:
    - Scholarship programs.
    - An opportunity is a great workforce center in the County and strong partner in VWCC. A strategy is the construction of a new high school career and technical center and greater utilization of the local workforce training center by VWCC.
- Regional Assets and Opportunities
  - Challenges/Needs:
    - Elected officials have difficulty seeing regional assets as economic drivers.
  - Strategies/Opportunities:
    - Take what is unique to your locality, package it into a consumer experience, and promote it. The public is eager for experiences. Make sure the message is true. Don't try to be something you're not. 1. Convince your own citizens that your community has valuable assets.

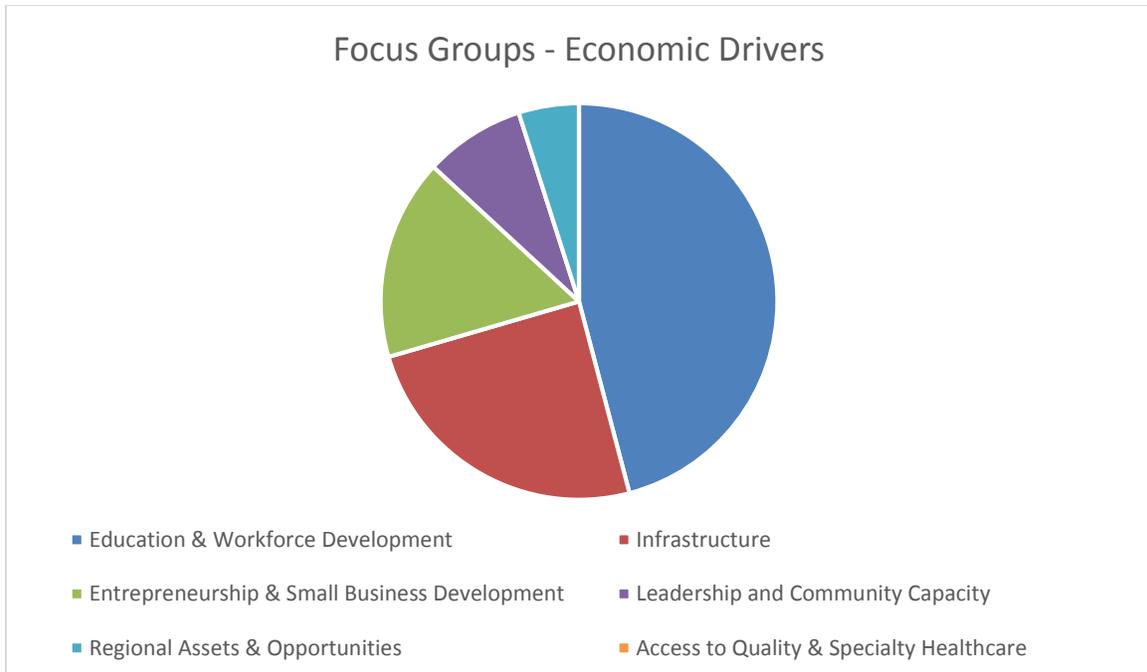
- Compile, package, and communicate those assets. 3. Enhance those assets with other complementary efforts. 4. Keep track of efforts and make every effort to track and quantify impact.
- Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development
  - Challenges/Needs:
    - Lack of funding for small businesses and startups to begin operations and to move from a microbusiness to a small business
  - Strategies/Opportunities:
    - Opportunity is a strong demand for entrepreneurs in the community and leadership's understanding of its importance. A strategy is getting an Enterprise Zone and setting up an entrepreneurship assistance fund.

# Common Themes & Findings

The Comprehensive Economic Development plans currently in place for five out of the six Planning District Commissions completely within the TIC footprint detail the current status of the region and outline priorities for the future. The three PDCs participating in the survey portion of the project also have detailed CEDs plans outlining the goals and strategies for their regions. While all different in detail, each strategic plan provides information on their organization, demographics of the region, market information on labor, wages, income, retail, etc. Also, a portion of the CEDs focus on the employment and industry sectors throughout the region, the current inventory of infrastructure including industrial parks, buildings, energy and broadband as well as current assets. Finally, the CEDs provide information on the goals and strategies for future economic development as well as target industries for growth, recruitment and retention.

It is primarily the goals and strategies for future economic development that was a focus of the Strategic Plans Assessment project. To build upon the work previously conducted, this information was provided to each focus group for discussion including the target sectors identified for future attraction and growth. This provided the opportunity to discuss the challenges and needs to attracting and growing these sectors as well as the opportunities and strategies for sector growth.

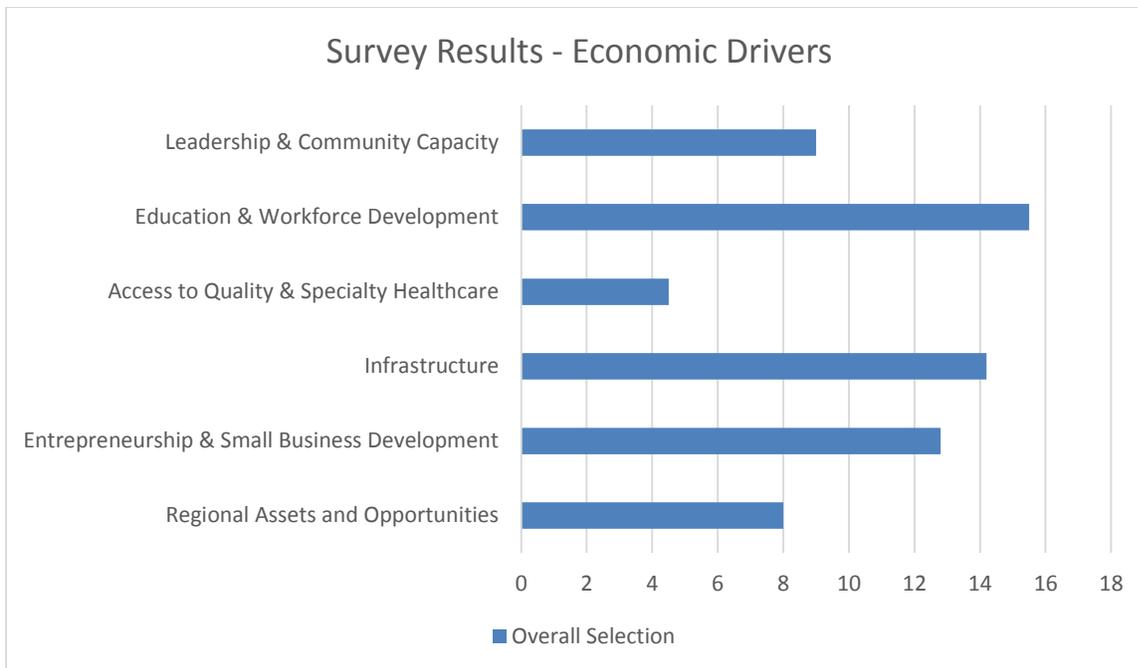
During these discussions, several of the economic drivers presented to the focus groups quickly rose to the top of the list. The chart below documents the selection rates of each economic driver chosen during focus group sessions.



Education and Workforce Development was chosen in the top three by all six focus groups. It was the top choice three times and tied for the top choice twice. Infrastructure comes in second as the most chosen economic driver. Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development was the third overall chosen driver. Leadership and Community Capacity comes in fourth, with Regional Assets and Opportunities fifth. Access to Quality and Specialty Healthcare did not make the top three choices at any of the focus group meetings. While the number of votes for each of these drivers varied, each made their way in to the discussions throughout the focus group meetings demonstrating that each plays an important role in an overall successful community economic development strategy.

Of the three PDCs participating in the survey, the overall top choice was Education and Economic Development, second was Infrastructure, Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development was third, the fourth overall choice was Leadership and Community Capacity, fifth was Regional Assets and Opportunities and Access to Quality and Specialty Healthcare was sixth.

Interestingly, the overall selections were the same for both the focus groups and the survey participants demonstrating a clear vision of the economic driver priorities affecting economic development throughout the TIC footprint.



### Education and Workforce Development

Common themes among the focus groups emerged regarding the challenges and opportunities with education and workforce development.

Challenges and needs that were mentioned by three or more of the PDC focus groups included:

- Funding for education and workforce programs
- Lack of vocational and trades programs in high schools
- Work ethic and soft skills
- Substance abuse
- Participation and communication by the school systems and community college system with the business community
- Employment opportunities and wages
- Training programs specifically for target industry sectors and markets

Other challenges raised by more than one PDC:

- Pre-K investment and opportunities
- Apprenticeships
- Critical thinking and math skills
- Aging workforce
- The “Brain Drain” as young adults leave the community for school and do not return
- Regional STEM-H programs

- Cultural issues and a lack of respect for education and a negative mindset about manufacturing
- Mindset that a four year degree is required for a successful career

Strategies and opportunities raised by multiple PDCs to improve education and workforce development within their regions include:

- Convene stakeholders regionally to develop a regional workforce strategy beyond the local level to reduce silos and increase regional collaboration - this should include a regional marketing effort and message about the workforce the region has to offer to present to the private sector
- Increased communication between educators and businesses to better align education programs to meet workforce needs
- Exposing elementary and middle school students to industries and opportunities within the region through expos, career fairs and other programs
- Create and increase fast track training programs and career readiness certificates
- Increase High School career readiness programs and work based curriculums
- Bring back programs for welders, plumbers and other trades professions
- More online training and classes
- Create incentive based programs to produce the workforce for current and future jobs
- Increase apprenticeships and internship program opportunities
- Conduct a skills gap analysis for coal industry workers and others displaced to determine the best and quickest way to get them back into the workforce
- More flexibility at the community college level to meet the needs of businesses
- Create and market fast track training programs

Other strategies and opportunities recommended include:

- Requiring employees to work in the region if they receive certifications through a regional program
- Provide exemptions as needed from the Dillon Rule to encourage localities to work together
- Lead a state discussion on collaborating across the state line
- More stackable credentials and certificates
- More substance abuse programs and work with local healthcare providers to create innovative ways to address substance abuse
- Create more tourism, hospitality and recreation programs at the community college level to meet the workforce needs of this growing industry
- More mentorship programs, including creating a dual enrollment program in high school for mentoring students - this would encourage youth to stay in the region - MECC has a mentorship program to consider

- More entrepreneurship programs like MECC offer
- Programs and initiatives to attract military veterans to the region
- Better utilize workforce training centers
- More agriculture and forestry workforce training and marketing programs
- Create a consortium of education leaders at all levels to address education pipeline needs

## Infrastructure

Common themes among the focus groups emerged regarding the challenges and opportunities with infrastructure.

Challenges and needs that were mentioned by three or more of the PDC focus groups included:

- Limited funding and resources for infrastructure
- Aging water and sewer systems
- Limited natural gas infrastructure
- Broadband – primarily a last mile and cellular coverage concern as well as the challenge of available speeds
- Need for site readiness and shell buildings
- Maintenance of roads and bridges
- Limited housing options throughout the regions
- Limited rail, both freight and passenger

Other challenges and needs raised by focus groups:

- Topography and geography of some regions create a disparity of expense in infrastructure
- Limited public transportation
- Lack of adult and child daycare options for workers
- EPA regulations
- Access to the supplies needed to build infrastructure
- Healthcare

Strategies and opportunities raised by multiple PDCs to improve infrastructure within their regions include:

- Regional coordination and collaboration for funding and projects - creating utility authorities seeking grants and bonds

- State and federal funding for broadband expansion, including last mile and cellular service

Other strategies and opportunities to address infrastructure needs:

- Innovative ways to fund the expansion of broadband and cell service
- Change in regulations for broadband providers
- State funding for a shell building program
- Additional funding for site development
- More public private partnerships to fund infrastructure investments
- Increased focus on crowdfunding opportunities
- Creative housing opportunities, for example a cluster housing project like Abingdon
- Healthcare sector is an opportunity since there is a current shortage - medical school, telemedicine and home-based care are all opportunities to expand the healthcare industry throughout the regions
- Broadband provider meetings to discuss areas in need and opportunities

### Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development

Common themes among the focus groups emerged regarding the challenges and opportunities with infrastructure.

Challenges and needs that were mentioned by two or more of the PDC focus groups included:

- Lack of funding, grants, capital, incubator space for entrepreneurs
- Limited mentoring programs connected successful business leaders and entrepreneurs with those wanting to enter the startup space
- Having access to high speed internet connections is a challenge for entrepreneurs looking to start a business - it makes it difficult to get information, understand requirements and regulations, have access to supplies and markets and limits sales opportunities
- Having a community environment to support an entrepreneurial culture can be challenging

Other challenges raised regarding entrepreneurship during focus group meetings are:

- The burdens of starting and owning a business including regulatory burdens, insurance, etc.
- Access to supplies and materials in small quantities
- The regional economic climate, it's challenging for residents on a fixed income to support new businesses. Also, price tends to drive people to big box retailers
- Burnout among entrepreneurs working multiple jobs trying to launch a businesses

Strategies and opportunities to address challenges for entrepreneurs and small businesses

- Apprenticeship programs and mentorship opportunities for startups
- Revitalization and downtown development - specifically, creating a regional pilot project on downtown revitalization was suggested
- Global marketing branding initiatives to present a regional unified message
- Funding opportunities for startups including revolving loan programs, micro lending, grants, etc. - also creative funding mechanisms for example, People Inc. structures loan repayment around a business' prime season
- Programs focused on investing locally like the Fields of Gold program in the Shenandoah Valley
- Develop a research initiative to research thriving rural communities for successful and innovative programs and strategies
- Support cultural heritage and tourism as it is a thriving and growing economic development sector throughout the regions - create more tourism programs
- Adapt regulations and laws to increase the tourist experience
- Conduct more business plan challenges for startups
- Align local economic development strategies with the region's economic development strategies
- Collaborate on a regional effort for Federal Promise Zone designation
- Create a regional entrepreneurial culture of communities that support and encourage startups and small business expansion
- Innovative initiatives to appeal to entrepreneurs - for example, The Launch Place hired a concierge to help entrepreneurs transition to the region.
- Enterprise zone designation

### Leadership and Community Capacity

Challenges and needs raised during discussion regarding leadership and community capacity include:

- Lack of understanding and experience among elected officials regarding economic development
- Regional cooperation and the notion that geographic boundaries do not always reflect working relationships - regional leadership can be a challenge
- Citizen frustration and distrust of government - also communication between the government and citizens is difficult because of limited resources
- State funding does not reward collaboration
- Need a trained leaders pool
- Tax base not keeping up with costs for schools, etc.
- Young and future leaders move away and don't come back
- There is often resistance to change among leaders

Strategies and opportunities to address challenges in leadership and community capacity raised by multiple focus groups include:

- Create programs encouraging community service and volunteerism opportunities in schools to engage young leaders
- Support and establish junior chambers of commerce
- Facilitate a regional opportunity for business leaders to meet and communicate - private sector involvement is key
- Create regional leadership programs that move throughout the region by partnering with business, chambers, extension, etc.
- Incentivize and encourage regional partnerships and collaboration among leaders

Other strategy recommendations for leadership and community capacity

- Strengthen volunteer community organizations
- Increase and support mentoring programs like SCORE to tap into the retiree community
- Improve and simplify the citizenry experience with government
- Increase leadership development programs similar to the Forward Wise County Leadership Development Program
- Conduct community town halls to engage local leadership

### Regional Assets and Opportunities

Challenges and needs:

- Regional branding or unified message from the hospitality and travel industry - also a lack of coordination of assets.
- Many localities do not have a tourism director or leader focused on expanding and supporting the tourism industry
- Lack of succession planning for older business owners
- Tourism is not seen by some as an economic development priority
- Visual impression of housing and schools in the regions
- Lack of entertainment and nightlife offerings for visitors and young entrepreneurs
- Some officials do not see regional assets as economic drivers

Strategies and Opportunities:

- Regional branding of assets and a package that can be marketed to visitors regarding the quality of life of the regions
- An organization or person focused on regional tourism beyond the local level
- Consolidating regional organizations

- Incorporate Small Business Development Centers into the regional economic development and marketing efforts
- Encourage franchising
- Improve visual first impressions of the region
- Capitalize on what is unique to a locality or region and transform it into an experience
- Support ecotourism, adventure tourism, agritourism and wineries, cultural heritage, music, artisans and trails to attract visitors and residents.
- Develop a program for tourism and hospitality training. Work with VTC and Small Business Administration or SBDCs.
- Understanding that regional assets attract business, employers and employees.
- Agriculture is a regional asset. People want farmers markets, locally grown foods and healthy options. Develop a planning proposal through the AFID program and the TIC for a regional marketing program for agritourism and a veterinarian school to support the agriculture industries.
- Educational programs to support the arts like glass blowing.
- Address the internal self-perception problem to increase pride in the region.

# Alignment and Future Recommendations

Evaluation of the strategic plans and the focus group discussions brings many specific needs, goals, strategies and objectives to the forefront between the PDCs and the TIC. In the Building Human Infrastructure section of the TIC Strategic Plan, there are specific objectives and goals that align with the objectives of numerous PDCs. These include encouraging scholarship recipients to establish careers working within the TIC footprint. Another goal that aligns well and was mentioned at each meeting is focusing resources on the gaps between education supply and employer demand. This also includes a focus on STEM-H education and industries. The issue of conducting an analysis of the gap between skill sets and current and prospective employer needs came up at many focus group meeting. This is a significant workforce need that the TIC has also identified in their strategic plan for addressing and funding.

Strategies identified in the Building Human Infrastructure section of the TIC strategic plan also address education and workforce needs that were raised during focus group discussions. Public private partnerships for workforce training through private sector industry led workforce programs was identified by several PDCs as a strategy to address challenges. The Centers for Excellence model was praised throughout the footprint for the opportunities the centers will to the regions within the footprint to grow their workforce and attract advanced manufacturing companies. Another strategy frequently mentioned by the PDC focus groups was mentorship, internship and scholarship programs for post-secondary academic readiness, as outlined in the TIC strategic plan to meet workforce needs by businesses. Additionally, several focus groups recommended apprenticeship programs and mentorship opportunities for high school students and in some cases middle and elementary students as well to expand their exposure to the careers available in the region and peak their interest early. The Mount Rogers PDC focus group specifically mentioned the need for vocational instructors, as laid out in the Building Human Infrastructure section of the TIC strategic plan.

The next section of the TIC strategic plan is Building Conditions for Innovation. Support for creating an entrepreneurial culture and small business development was identified as a priority for the PDC regions. Some identified it as one of their top three economic drivers and those that did not, certainly discussed it in the context of other driver areas. Specific alignment between the TIC's rationale for investing in these areas include supporting early stage business formation and investing in areas that are needed, but where financial risk prevents the private sector from doing so. The latter part of this statement within the TIC plan aligns closely with the PDCs call for broadband expansion. Broadband infrastructure was identified as a priority by each PDC focus group. There was acknowledgment that broadband investments through fiber and Mid-Atlantic Broadband have provided significant opportunities for the region and it is TIC's vision and their resources to thank for that infrastructure investment. The backbone investment through the creation of MBC has provided the foundation for diverse economic development that would not have been possible otherwise. Additionally, as communities throughout the regions struggle

with ways to address the last mile and cellular coverage challenges, these may be areas to explore for further investment.

As identified in the TIC strategic plan, several PDC focus groups identified healthcare as a key ingredient of the regional economy. A shortage of healthcare providers and facilities threaten the regions welfare and ability to attract and retain businesses. The research and development aspect of healthcare is also an important factor and the investment in the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research in Danville is a great example of TIC investments establishing a foundation for future growth and opportunity in the region.

In addition education, research and development are key components of expanding many of the target sectors identified by the PDC regional plans. Technology and research were often mentioned for agricultural and entrepreneurial opportunities around technology and development.

Another strategy aligned between the TIC and PDCs is the need for new regional marketing initiatives. Branding, marketing and creating an identity for each region came up in each focus group as a strategy to attract new residents, workers, businesses, retain youth and instill pride in the regions. In addition, entrepreneurial development programs as outlined by the TIC strategic plan were often raised and needs for the regions to assist startups, encourage small business development and attract entrepreneurs to the regions. Specifically, the emphasis on “technology-assisted business development” and focusing on the “exports of goods and services” aligns well with the strategies PDCs identified as needs for the regions.

Also in the entrepreneurial realm, the TIC strategic plan identifies a strategy to dedicate resources for agribusiness. Support for agribusiness and agritourism initiatives aligns well with the strategies of several PDCs focused on growing the value added industries associated with agriculture including the farm to table movement, wineries and other quality of life and asset based attractions in the regions associated with the agriculture sector.

Supporting “business innovation and expansion or workforce readiness” for existing industries also aligns with strategic plans for the PDCs to include workforce programs to meet current and prospective employers which was raised at each focus group meeting.

The next section of the TIC strategic plan is Building Regional Development Capacity which establishes conditions for the investment in “fundamental building blocks” for the footprint. Objectives of this strategic plan section that align particularly well with the PDCs strategic plans include increasing infrastructure capacity for economic development, including water, wastewater, broadband and industrial sites. The TICs willingness to invest in workforce development center construction meets a major need of the PDCs as education and workforce were chosen by each focus group as one of their top three economic drivers. Expanding broadband connectivity is a priority in each PDCs region and each region identified solutions for the last mile challenge as a top priority. In addition, PDCs also identified 4G cellular service as a

need to attract businesses, workers and visitors to the region as well as a potential last mile solution.

Encouraging regional cooperation and revenue sharing is a priority and strategy that aligns closely between the TIC strategic plan and the PDCs economic development strategies. The focus groups identified regional cooperation as an opportunity and strategy to address many of the challenges facing their communities in each of the economic driver categories. Additionally, revenue sharing was mentioned primarily as an opportunity to address education and infrastructure needs.

The last section of the TIC strategic plan is the General Funding Policies section which lays out the parameters of TIC funding and priorities. There is one parameter outlined in this section that states “Commission funds...should not be used for projects that indirectly affect economic revitalization (e.g. community, childcare centers, 4H, YMCA, YWCA or recreation initiatives, airports, local arts and cultural activities, historic preservation, housing and retail development) unless it is demonstrated that the investment will produce economic impacts from outside the Commission service area.”

Several of the specific items listed above as “indirectly” affecting economic revitalization were raised during focus group discussions as priorities for economic development. These include the workforce need for adequate childcare, the infrastructure need for airports and housing options, and the identification of asset based economic development as a target industry which includes recreation, arts and culture. This may be an area of focus for future TIC strategic plan discussions.

# Appendix

Exhibit A. Focus Group Session Agenda	63-64
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Exhibit D. Electronic Survey	77-80
Exhibit E. Focus Group PowerPoint Presentations	81-92

## Exhibit A. Focus Group Session Agenda

1 pm

### Introductions and Explanation of Process

- Overview of Strategic Plans Assessment Project
  
- Review Economic Drivers Identified for Discussion
  1. Leadership and Community Capacity
    - a. Building the capacity of three interdependent elements – individual leaders, organizations, and the community as a whole
  2. Education and Workforce Development
    - a. Education Pipeline: Colleges, universities, community colleges, training programs, career and technical education and K-12 education
  3. Access to quality and specialty healthcare
    - a. Having access to diverse means of delivery. Ex: telehealth programs
  4. Infrastructure
    - a. Broadband, water, sewer, natural gas, transportation and capital construction
  5. Entrepreneurship and small business
    - a. Business, community and regulatory climate to support startups and small business expansion
    - b. Regional assets and opportunities
    - c. Elements that contribute to a regional identity including quality of life, tourism opportunities and downtown redevelopment
  
- Review of Economic Development Priorities and Target Sectors of the PDC region, identified through previous economic development strategic planning
  - Example: Southside PDC has identified the following as their primary sectors for growth:
    - Wood products
    - Data centers
    - Advance manufacturing
    - Logistics and warehousing
    - Aviation and aerospace
  
- Review questions posed to the focus groups
  1. Which of the economic drivers are you investing in, planning for and making a top priority to grow these identified sectors? What would be three priority areas to maximize the retention, recruitment and expansion of businesses in the region?
  2. Let's talk about why you chose those:
    - a. What are challenges you see within these drivers to strengthen your economic development base?

- b. What opportunities do you see to use these drivers to strengthen your economic development base?
- c. What are the strategies needed to optimize use of the region's resources, assets and strength within those categories?

- 1:30 pm      Focus group discussion
- Each group member identifies their top three economic drivers
  - The top three drivers overall are then the focus of the facilitator's questions for discussion and feedback
  - The group facilitator will ask the questions and record answers, feedback and discussion on the flip charts
- 3:30 pm      Present and review findings
- 4:00 pm      Wrap up and thank you

## Exhibit B. Attendee Categories

The Virginia Rural Center worked with the Department of Housing and Community Development and others to develop the categories of invitees. For each focus group meeting, VRC works with the PDC to identify leaders within the community to participate in the focus group and encourages the PDC to follow up with the invitees to encourage their participation. The goal is to keep attendance under 30 attendees, allowing for good discussion among the group.

- Planning District Commission – Executive Director and Chairman
- Economic Development Marketing Organization, Executive Director
- Local Government Officials from each locality within the PDC region
  - County Administrators
  - Chair of the Board of Supervisors
  - Economic Development Director
  - Town Mayors
  - Town Managers
- Industrial Development Authority
- Educational Institutions (Presidents or their designee)
  - Community Colleges
  - 4-Year Colleges
  - Other higher or advanced educational institutions
- School system representative
- Workforce Investment Board
- Local Chambers of Commerce
- Private Sector Leaders
- Advanced Manufacturing Centers
- State Agency representatives working in the region
  - Department of Housing and Community Development
  - Virginia Tourism Corporation
  - Virginia Economic Development Partnership
- Other Regional Business or Economic Development Organization
- Lending Programs

- Foundations
- Business Incubators
- Research and Development Parks/Organizations

## Exhibit C. Focus Group Participants

<b>SOUTHSIDE PDC MEETING PARTICIPANTS</b>			
<b>Project:</b>	Strategic Plans Assessment Project	<b>Meeting Date:</b>	May 13, 2014
<b>Facilitator:</b>	Center for Rural Virginia and Southside PDC	<b>Place/Room:</b>	SVCC Alberta Campus

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Company/Locality</b>
Ben Spence	Manager	Town of Brodnax
Charlotte T. Woolridge	County Administrator	Brunswick County
Jeff Arnold	VP – DCC	Danville Community College
Joan Moore	Executive Director	Brunswick County ID
Scott Burnette	President/CEO	CMH
Ramona Chapman	Community Planner	DHCD
Matt Weaver	Community Policy Analyst	DHCD
Michelle Jones	Office of Community Capacity Building	DHCD
Natalie Slate	Economic Development Director	Greensville County
Angie Kellett	Economic Development Director	Mecklenburg County
Jan Harrell	Economic Development Director	Emporia
Gail Moody	Executive Director	Southside PDC
C.J. Dean	Town Manager	Lawrenceville
Wendy Wright	Executive Director	Brunswick Chamber
Catherine Pack	Business Expansion Manager	VEDP
Debra Smiley	Director, Workforce Development	SVCC

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Company/Locality</b>
Mary Jane Elkins	Executive Director	SVCC

## COMMONWEALTH REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING PARTICIPANTS

<b>Project:</b>	Strategic Plans Assessment Project	<b>Meeting Date:</b>	May 14, 2014
<b>Facilitator:</b>	Center for Rural Virginia and Commonwealth Regional Council	<b>Place/Room:</b>	SVCC Daniel Campus

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Company</b>
Andre Gilliam	Community Development Planner	Commonwealth Regional Council
Wade Bartlett	County Administrator	Prince Edward County
Sharon Carney	Economic Development	Prince Edward County
Taylor Harvie	County Administrator	Amelia County
Roscoe Eubanks	Town Council	Drakes Branch
Beverley Hawthorne	Economic Development	Lunenburg City
Jeff Reed	Executive Director	VGA
Dale Jones	Vice President	Hampden-Sydney College
Jennifer Roberts	Economic Development	Cumberland County
Vivian S. Giles	County Administrator	Cumberland County
Debra Crowder	Executive Director	WIB
Wayne Carter	County Administrator	Mecklenburg County
Lee Minix	Vice President Business Banking	Benchmark Community Bank
Senator Frank Ruff	15 <sup>th</sup> Senate District	Senate of Virginia
Ramona Chapman	Community Planner	DHCD
Michelle Jones	Office of Community Capacity Building	DHCD

## WEST PIEDMONT PDC MEETING PARTICIPANTS

<b>Project:</b>	Strategic Plans Assessment Project	<b>Meeting Date:</b>	October 28, 2014
<b>Facilitator:</b>	Virginia Rural Center and West Piedmont PDC	<b>Place/Room:</b>	New College Institute

Name	Title	Company
Dr. Angeline Godwin	President	Patrick Henry Community College
Leah Manning	Interim Executive Director	WPPDC
Nancy Cox	Senior Program Officer	Harvest Foundation
Wayne D.P. Knox	Assistant City Manager	City of Martinsville
Julie Brown	Director	IALR
Varun Sadana	Deputy Director	The Launch Place
Leon Towarnicki	City Manager	City of Martinsville
Michael Burnette	Economic Development	Franklin County
Steve Bridges	Director	Southern Virginia Regional Alliance
W. Ralph Hogg	Director	Dan River Business Development Center
Lisa Fultz	Executive Director	WPWIB
Philip Wenkstern	Grants Administrator	WPWIB
Adam Lynch		SML Chamber of Commerce
Leigh Cockram	Business Development	IALR
Greg Sides	Assistant County Administrator	Pittsylvania County
Karl Stauber	President & CEO	Danville Regional Foundation
Corrie Teague	Program Manager	City of Danville

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Company</b>
William C. Wampler, Jr.	Executive Director	New College Institute
Michelle Jones	Office of Community Capacity Building	DHCD

## CUMBERLAND PLATEAU MEETING PARTICIPANTS

<b>Project:</b>	Strategic Plans Assessment Project	<b>Meeting Date:</b>	November 5, 2014
<b>Facilitator:</b>	Virginia Rural Center and Cumberland Plateau PDC	<b>Place/Room:</b>	Southwest VA Community College

Name	Title	Company
Deborah S. Wagner	Director	People Inc.
Ginger Branton	Executive Director	Richlands Area Chamber of Commerce
Shane Farmer	Planner	CPPDC
Debbie Milton	Planner	CPPDC
Wayne Johnson	Town Council	Town of Cleveland
David Sutherland	Mayor	Town of Cleveland
Lyn Tatum	Coordinator, CWES	SWCC-CWES
Diane Rasnake	AVP	Grundy National Bank
Darrell Blankenship	Executive Director	SWVA WIB
Patricia Green	Deputy Administrator	Tazewell County
Rachel Patton	Business Services Coordinator	SWVA WIB
Margie Douglass	Program Manager	SBDC-SW
Barbara Fuller	VP of Academic & Student Services	SWCC
Jean Jordan	Funds Administrator	VCEDA
Regina Sayers	Executive Director	Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens
Jim Baldwin	Executive Director	CPPDC
Jennifer Bundy	Technical Services Librarian	Russell County Public Library

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Company</b>
Ginger Branton	Executive Director	Richlands Area Chamber of Commerce
Doug Jackson	Office of Community Capacity Building	DHCD

## LENOWISCO MEETING PARTICIPANTS

<b>Project:</b>	Strategic Plans Assessment Project	<b>Meeting Date:</b>	November 6, 2014
<b>Facilitator:</b>	Virginia Rural Center and Lenowisco PDC	<b>Place/Room:</b>	Mountain Empire Older Citizens

Name	Title	Company
Mark Freeman	Economic Development Director	Gate City
Vickie McGregor	Assistant VP	Miners Exchange Bank
Mike McGregor	Assistant VP	Miners Exchange Bank
Diana Collier	Manager	Virginia Employment Commission
Kathie Noe	County Administrator	Scott County
Debra Horne	Mayor	Dungannon
Fred Luntsford	Town Manager	Appalachia
George Dean	Mayor	Pound
Michael Wampler	Executive Director	Mountain Empire Older Citizens
Dwight Pierson	Rural Development Area Specialist	USDA
Monty Salyer	Executive Director	Wise County Housing Authority
Jeff Cochran	Senior Project Manager	The Lane Group
Darrell Blankenship	Executive Director	SWVA WIB
Dave Poe	County Administrator	Lee County
Frank Kibler	Senior Planner	Lenowisco PDC
Carl Snodgrass	Economic Development Director	Wise County
Shannon Scott	County Administrator	Wise County

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Company</b>
Scott Hamilton	President	Mountain Empire Community College
Susan Copeland	Marketing Coordinator	VCEDA
Drew Lumpkin	Regional Director	U.S. Senator Mark Warner
Nick McDavid	Field Representative	Congressman Morgan Griffith
Larry Vicars	Chairman	Lenowisco PDC
Reisa Sloce	Business Manager	VDH – Lenowisco Health District
Rick Collen	Executive VP/CEO	Wise County Chamber of Commerce
Skip Skinner	Executive Director	Lenowisco PDC
Doug Jackson	Office of Community Capacity Building	DHCD

## MOUNT ROGERS PDC MEETING PARTICIPANTS

<b>Project:</b>	Strategic Plans Assessment Project	<b>Meeting Date:</b>	January 30, 2015
<b>Facilitator:</b>	Virginia Rural Center and Mount Rogers PDC	<b>Place/Room:</b>	Mount Rogers PDC

Name	Title	Company
Jennifer Atwell	Executive Director	Wytheville-Wythe-Bland Chamber of Commerce
Timothy A. Reeves	Chairman, Board of Supervisors	Wythe County
Brian Reed	Deputy Director	Mount Rogers PDC
Whitney Bonham	Deputy County Administrator/Economic Development Director	Washington County
Cellell Dalton	County Administrator	Wythe County
Michael Carter	County Administrator	Smith County
Ken McFadyen	Regional Director	BRCEDA
Guy Odum	City Council	Bristol
Ken Heath	Director of Community and Economic Development	Marion
David Manley	Executive Director	Joint IDA of Wythe County
Greg Vanncy	Regional Planner	MRPDC – Town of Troutdale
Aaron Sizemore	Executive Director	Mount Rogers PDC

## Exhibit D. Electronic Survey

#1



COMPLETE

### PAGE 1: Target Sectors

Q1: Please select the target industry sectors that your region has identified as priority sectors in your regional economic development planning processes. Please check all that apply.

Advanced Manufacturing (including aviation and aerospace, automotive, food and beverage, plastics and polymers, etc.)

Agriculture and Forestry (including wood products)

Asset Based Development (including cultural assets and tourism)

Corporate Headquarters

Distribution

Energy Development

Information Technology (including data centers, unmanned systems, etc.)

Research and Product Development (including biotechnology, life sciences, etc.)

Retail and Service Industry

PAGE 2: Economic Drivers

Q2: Please rank the economic drivers in order of importance by moving the categories into the order that reflects your view of the most important at the top to the least important at the bottom.

- Leadership and Community Capacity (Including individual leaders, organizations and the community as a whole) 4
- Education and Workforce Development (The education pipeline preparing the workforce of today and tomorrow) 2
- Access to quality and specialty healthcare (Including a diverse means of delivery) 6
- Infrastructure (Including broadband, water, sewer, natural gas, transportation and capital construction) 3
- Entrepreneurship and Small Business (Business, community and regulatory climate to support startups and small business expansion ) 1
- Regional Assets and Opportunities (Elements that contribute to a regional identity including quality of life, tourism opportunities and downtown redevelopment) 5

PAGE 3: Your Top Economic Drivers

Q3: We will begin with your top economic driver...

Which economic driver did you rank first?

\_\_\_\_\_

What are the challenges you see within this driver to strengthen your economic development base?

\_\_\_\_\_

What opportunities do you see to use this driver to strengthen economic development?

\_\_\_\_\_

What are the strategies \_\_\_\_\_  
needed to optimize use of  
the region's resources, assets  
and strengths within this  
economic driver?

PAGE 4: Top Economic Drivers, continued....

Q4: What was your second economic driver...

Which economic driver did you rank second? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the challenges you see within this driver to  
strengthen your economic development base? \_\_\_\_\_

What opportunities do you see to use this driver to  
strengthen economic development? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the strategies needed to optimize use of the  
region's resources, assets and strengths within this  
economic driver? \_\_\_\_\_

PAGE 5: Top Economic Drivers, continued....

Q5: What was your third economic driver...

Which economic driver did you rank third? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the challenges you see within this driver to  
strengthen your economic development base? \_\_\_\_\_

What opportunities do you see to use this driver to  
strengthen economic development? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the strategies needed to optimize use of the  
region's resources, assets and strengths within this economic  
driver? \_\_\_\_\_

PAGE 6: Final Thoughts

Q6: Please provide additional information here.

PAGE 7: Contact Information

Q7: Contact Information

Name

Title

Company/Organization

Address

City/Town

State/Province

ZIP/Postal Code

Planning District Commission Region

Email Address

Phone Number

## Exhibit E. Focus Group PowerPoint Presentations

### Southside PDC



*The Collective Voice of Rural Virginia*

1

### Joint Mission

- Work with policymakers, practitioners and stakeholders to create innovative solutions and expand entrepreneurial opportunities to ensure economic prosperity for all regions of the Commonwealth.



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### Agenda

- 1:00 p.m. Overview of the Center for Rural Virginia and Strategic Plans Assessment Project
- 1:30 p.m. Break into Focus Groups
- 3:30 p.m. Group Leaders Present Findings
- 4:00 p.m. Wrap up



2

### Strategic Plans Assessment

- Virginia Tobacco Indemnification Commission grant
- Conduct an assessment of the 9 Planning District Commissions within the TIC region
- Engage stakeholders to conduct a thorough review
- Report findings to TICR for use with their Strategic Plan update throughout 2014



9

### History and Organization

- Center for Rural Virginia
  - Rural Prosperity Commission
  - General Assembly created in 2004
- Council for Rural Virginia
  - 2002 Farm Bill
  - State Rural Development Council
- Legislative Rural Caucus
  - 66 General Assembly members



5

### Regional Strategic Planning

- Gail Moody, Executive Director, Southside Planning District Commission
- Virginia's Growth Alliance



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## Economic Drivers

- Leadership and Community Capacity
  - Building the capacity of three interdependent elements – individual leaders, organizations, and the community as a whole
- Education and Workforce Development
  - Education Pipeline: Colleges, universities, community colleges, training programs, career and technical education and K-12 education
- Access to quality and specialty healthcare
  - Having access to diverse means of delivery. Ex: Telehealth programs
- Infrastructure
  - Broadband, water, sewer, natural gas, transportation and capital construction
- Entrepreneurship and small business
  - Business, community and regulatory climate to support start ups and small business expansion
- Regional assets and opportunities
  - Elements that contribute to a regional identity including quality of life, tourism opportunities and downtown redevelopment



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## Questions for Consideration

- Which of the economic drivers are you investing in, planning for and making a top priority to grow these identified sectors? What would be three priority areas to maximize the retention, recruitment, and expansion of businesses in the region?
- Let's talk about why you chose those?
- What are challenges you see within these drivers to strengthen your economic development base?
- What opportunities do you see to use these drivers to strengthen your economic development base?
- What are the strategies needed to optimize use of the region's resources, assets and strength within those categories?



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## Identified Sectors

- Through the CEDs and other regional strategic planning processes, the following have identified as the top economic development priority sectors:
  - Wood products
  - Data centers
  - Advance manufacturing
  - Logistics and warehousing
  - Aviation and aerospace



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## Virginia Rural Center

[www.cfrv.org](http://www.cfrv.org)

Center for Rural Virginia  
600 E. Main St., Suite 300  
Richmond, VA 23219

Council for Rural Virginia  
2265 Kraft Dr.  
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Christy T. Morton  
Executive Director  
(804) 371-7141  
[christy.morton@cfrv.org](mailto:christy.morton@cfrv.org)



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## Cumberland Plateau PDC



*The Collective Voice of Rural Virginia*

1

### What We Do:

- Policy Development & Advocacy
- Strategic Public/Private Partnerships
- Grassroots Outreach
- Leadership Development
- Research & Data Assessment
- Entrepreneurship & Innovation
- Staff to the Rural Caucus



7

### History and Organization

- Center for Rural Virginia
  - Rural Prosperity Commission
  - General Assembly created in 2004
- Council for Rural Virginia
  - 2002 Farm Bill
  - State Rural Development Council
- Legislative Rural Caucus
  - 66 General Assembly members

3

### Strategic Plans Assessment

- JLARC Report 2011
- Virginia Tobacco Indemnification Commission grant
- Conduct an assessment of the 9 Planning District Commissions within the TIC region
- Engage stakeholders to conduct a thorough review
- Build the discussion upon current economic development strategies
- Report findings to TICR for use with their Strategic Plan update throughout 2014



9

### Joint Mission

- Work with policymakers, practitioners and stakeholders to create innovative solutions and expand entrepreneurial opportunities to ensure economic prosperity for all regions of the Commonwealth.

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### Agenda

- 1:00 p.m. Introductions and Overview of Regional Economic Development Priorities
- 1:30 p.m. Break into Focus Groups
- 3:30 p.m. Group Leaders Present Findings
- 4:00 p.m. Wrap up

11

## Regional Strategic Planning

- Andre Gilliam  
Commonwealth Regional Council
- Jeff Reed  
Virginia's Growth Alliance
- Michelle Jones  
Virginia Department of Housing and  
Community Development

13

## Questions for Consideration

- Which of the economic drivers are you investing in, planning for and making a top priority to grow these identified sectors? What would be three priority areas to maximize the retention, recruitment and expansion of businesses in the region?
- Let's talk about why you chose those:
  - What are challenges you see within these drivers to strengthen your economic development base?
  - What opportunities do you see to use these drivers to strengthen your economic development base?
- What are the strategies needed to optimize use of the region's resources, assets and strength within those categories?

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## Economic Drivers

- Leadership and Community Capacity
  - Building the capacity of three interdependent elements – individual leaders, organizations, and the community as a whole
- Education and Workforce Development
  - Education Pipeline: Colleges, universities, community colleges, training programs, career and technical education and K-12 education
- Access to quality and specialty healthcare
  - Having access to diverse means of delivery. Ex: Telehealth programs
- Infrastructure
  - Broadband, water, sewer, natural gas, transportation and capital construction
- Entrepreneurship and small business
  - Business, community and regulatory climate to support start ups and small business expansion
- Regional assets and opportunities
  - Elements that contribute to a regional identity including quality of life, tourism opportunities and downtown redevelopment

15

## Virginia Rural Center

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Center for Rural Virginia  
600 E. Main St., Suite 300  
Richmond, VA 23219

Council for Rural Virginia  
2265 Kraft Dr.  
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Christy T. Morton  
Executive Director  
(804) 371-7141  
[christy.morton@cfrv.org](mailto:christy.morton@cfrv.org)



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## Identified Sectors

- Through the SETs and other regional strategic planning processes, the following have identified as the top economic development priority sectors for this region:
  - Wood products
  - Data centers
  - Advance manufacturing
  - Logistics and warehousing
  - Aviation and aerospace

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## West Piedmont PDC

### Strategic Plans Assessment

West Piedmont Planning District Commission  
October 28, 2014



### Agenda

- 1:00 p.m. Overview of Strategic Plans Assessment Project & Economic Development Priorities of the PDC region
- 1:30 p.m. Break into Focus Groups
- 3:30 p.m. Group Leaders Present Findings
- 4:00 p.m. Wrap up



### Virginia Rural Center

- Partnership
  - Center for Rural Virginia
  - Council for Rural Virginia
  - Virginia General Assembly Rural Caucus
- Mission
  - To work with policymakers and stakeholders to create innovative solutions and expand entrepreneurial opportunities to ensure economic prosperity for all regions of the Commonwealth.

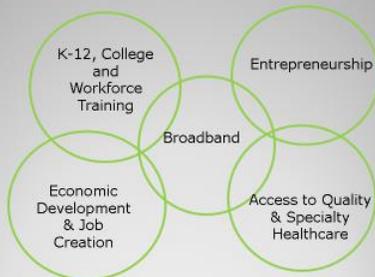


### Project Details

- Virginia Tobacco Indemnification Commission grant
- Conduct an assessment of the 9 Planning District Commissions within the TIC region
- Engage stakeholders to conduct a thorough review
- Report findings to TIGR for use with their Strategic Plan update



### VRC Priorities



### Regional Strategic Planning

- Target Sectors:
  - Food & Beverage Processing
  - Plastics & Polymers
  - Advanced Manufacturing
  - Data Centers
  - Healthcare & Social Assistance
  - Biotechnology
  - Tourism
  - Retail Trade
  - Other Service Industries



## Economic Drivers

- Leadership and Community Capacity
  - Building the capacity of three interdependent elements – individual leaders, organizations, and the community as a whole
- Education and Workforce Development
  - Education Pipeline: Colleges, universities, community colleges, training programs, career and technical education and K-12 education
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  - Having access to diverse means of delivery. Ex: Telehealth programs
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- Regional assets and opportunities
  - Elements that contribute to a regional identity including quality of life, tourism opportunities and downtown redevelopment



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## Thank you



Christy T. Morton  
Executive Director  
Virginia Rural Center  
Cell: 804-815-5173  
Email: christy.morton@cfvr.org  
www.cfvr.org



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## Questions for Consideration

- Which of the economic drivers are you investing in, planning for and making a top priority to grow these identified sectors? What would be three priority areas to maximize the retention, recruitment, and expansion of businesses in the region?
- Let's talk about why you chose those?
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## Cumberland Plateau PDC

### Strategic Plans Assessment

Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission  
November 5, 2014



### Project Details

- Virginia Tobacco Indemnification Commission grant
- Conduct an assessment of the 9 Planning District Commissions within the TIC region
- Engage stakeholders to conduct a thorough review
- Report findings to TICR for use with their Strategic Plan update



### Virginia Rural Center

- Partnership
  - Center for Rural Virginia
  - Council for Rural Virginia
  - Virginia General Assembly Rural Caucus
- Mission
  - To work with policymakers and stakeholders to create innovative solutions and expand entrepreneurial opportunities to ensure economic prosperity for all regions of the Commonwealth.

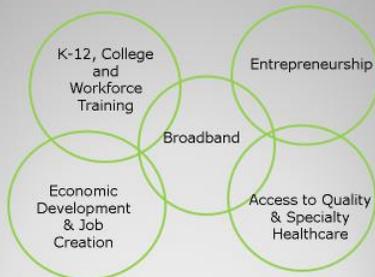


### Agenda

- 1:30 p.m. Overview of Strategic Plans Assessment Project & Economic Development Priorities of the PDC region
- 2:00 p.m. Break into Focus Group(s)
- 4:00 p.m. Review Findings
- 4:30 p.m. Wrap up



### VRC Priorities



### Regional Strategic Planning

- Goals:
  1. Economic Development (Sectors)
    1. Information Technology
    2. Automotive
    3. Clean and Alternative Energy
    4. Advanced Manufacturing
    5. Wood Products
    6. Asset Based Development
  2. Infrastructure Development
  3. Sustainable Development
  4. Transportation



## Regional Strategic Planning (cont.)

- Goals (cont.):
  5. Workforce Development
  6. Natural Resources
  7. Housing
  8. Tourism
  9. Secondary and Higher Education
  10. Physical Environment
  11. Healthcare
  12. Entrepreneurship



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Executive Director  
Virginia Rural Center  
Cell: 804-815-5173  
Email: christy.morton@cfcrv.org  
www.cfrv.org



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# Lenowisco PDC

## Strategic Plans Assessment

Lenowisco Planning District Commission  
November 6, 2014



Partnership of the Center for Rural Virginia and the Council for Rural Virginia

1

## Project Details

- Virginia Tobacco Indemnification Commission grant
- Conduct an assessment of the 9 Planning District Commissions within the TIC region
- Engage stakeholders to conduct a thorough review
- Report findings to TICR for use with their Strategic Plan update



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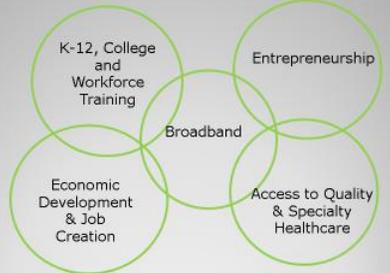
## Agenda

- 1:00 p.m. Overview of Strategic Plans Assessment Project & Economic Development Priorities of the PDC region
- 1:30 p.m. Break into Focus Group(s)
- 3:30 p.m. Present Findings
- 4:00 p.m. Wrap up



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## VRC Priorities



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## Regional Strategic Planning

- Development Goals:
  - Encourage a strong regional economy through a diverse base of business interests, including large employers and entrepreneurial startups;
  - Develop and maintain a workforce adequately skilled to meet the challenges of today's economy;
  - Ensure the region has adequate infrastructure in place to support the growth of higher-wage industry clusters and to ensure regional, national and global connectivity;
  - Maintain and promote the region's natural beauty and its cultural amenities, and seek sustainable growth opportunities;
  - Target existing underutilized commercial and industrial properties for redevelopment;
  - Project a positive identity for the PDC region.



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## Regional Strategic Planning (cont.)

- Current and Future Strategies:
  - Regional Partners and Assets
  - Industrial Development
  - Entrepreneurial Development
  - Tourism Development
  - Business District Redevelopment
  - Grass Roots Development
- Additional Issues and Opportunities:
  - Technology
  - Advanced Manufacturing
  - Cultural Assets
  - Agriculture and Forestry



13

## Questions for Consideration

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Christy T. Morton  
Executive Director  
Virginia Rural Center  
Cell: 804-815-5173  
Email: christy.morton@cfvr.org  
www.cfrv.org



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# Mount Rogers PDC

## Strategic Plans Assessment

Mount Rogers Planning District Commission  
January 30, 2015



1

## Project Details

- Virginia Tobacco Indemnification Commission grant
- Conduct an assessment of the 9 Planning District Commissions within the TIC region
- Engage stakeholders to conduct a thorough review
- Report findings to TICR for use with their Strategic Plan update



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## Virginia Rural Center

- Partnership
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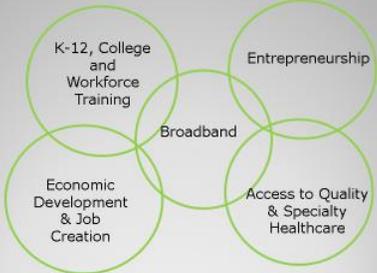
## Agenda

- 10 a.m. Overview of Strategic Plans Assessment Project & Economic Development Priorities of the PDC region
- 10:15 a.m. Group Discussion
- 11:45 a.m. Review Findings
- 12 p.m. Wrap up



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## VRC Priorities



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## MRPDC CEDs

- **Regional Vision**
  - Offer a high quality of life for all residents in the Mount Rogers Planning District by increasing the number and quality of jobs throughout the region through initial focus on industrial and workforce development.
- **The Three Level Strategy**
  - Level 1-Tier 1 Industry Recruitment and Basic Workforce Development
  - Level 2-Tier 1 Industry Support and Advanced Workforce Development
  - Level 3-Small Business Development & Regional Quality of Life Improvements



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## MRPDC CEDs (cont.)

- “These four industry sectors may hold the most potential as ‘target industries’ for the region”:
  - Manufacturing
  - Health care
  - Retail trade
  - Transportation and warehousing



## Thank you



Christy T. Morton  
Executive Director  
Virginia Rural Center  
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