

## Synthesis of the New River/Mount Rogers Launch Meetings

The following is a synopsis of the launch meetings held across six meetings in three key geographic locations in the region.

The first meeting set was held in Wytheville on February 24 and 25; the second was held in Galax on March 1 and 2; and the third was held in Fairlawn on March 16 and 17.

The purpose of the launch meetings was to introduce sector strategies and sector partnerships to a wide array of community partners and key businesses as a call to action to build a collaborative partnership. The partnership, made up of like industry businesses and community partners, will identify business needs to fill critical occupations with skilled and talented workers. The end outcome will create a talent pipeline for specific industry, beginning with manufacturing.

On the first day, community partners met together to understand their role in the sector partnership. They were asked specific questions that would help identify overall needs and possible outcomes from a partnership.

- Describe the ideal pathway to attain the talent businesses need?
  1. Engage employers to determine their talent needs and what their hiring practices are to establish a baseline
  2. Identify the skill sets needed to meet demand
  3. Identify the skills sets possessed by current incumbent workforce to understand transferrable skills
  4. Identify gaps between supply and demand and create strategies to close gaps
  5. Identify entry level jobs/occupations and their hiring requirements
  6. Engage employers to develop career pathways for entry level and new hires
  7. Engage economic development groups to understand their desired outcomes for industry in the region, and to help identify and invite key business leaders to the sector partnership
  8. Ensure secondary and post-secondary education is aligned to overall job demand
  9. Utilize the full set of community resources to ensure all workers have the ability to receive relevant training to secure jobs
  10. Educate the community on all occupation opportunities in the region
  11. Create a communications plan for employers and partners to share information seamlessly

- It's 5 (five) years from now, what has changed in the region that tells you talent needs are no longer a challenge?
  1. A diversified economy exists
  2. A talent pipeline is in place to meet demand
  3. The region has a skilled and talented workforce that meets business demands
  4. There is evidence that businesses are growing and are electing to stay in the region
  5. New business is attracted to the region due to the availability of a talented workforce
  6. The region's overall education attainment levels have increased
  7. Employers report their turnover rate has gone down and it has impacted their bottom-line
  8. Employers are hiring prepared talent coming from the partnership pipeline
  9. Career pathways are flourishing and businesses report a higher quality of job applicants
  10. The region has a sense of hope and opportunity to retain the younger population
  11. Average wages have increased due to more job opportunity
  12. Overall economic vitality of the region has increased
  13. Our region's population continues to grow
  14. Tax revenues have grown thus providing needed community resources to make our region a region of choice
  
- What do you want to happen next to move a sector partnership forward?
  1. Identify a convener to pull partners and businesses together
  2. Identify an employer champion to carry the message
  3. Identify who is missing from the table and engage them to bring them onboard
  4. Gain employer buy-in to the sector partnership as a long-term endeavor and not as a one and done
  5. Formally invite partners and employers and call for the meeting(s) to begin
  6. Create a formal communications strategy to engage partners and employers and to keep partnership members included in the process
  7. Call for the next meeting date

On the second day, both partners and employers met together to understand the roles of each as a sector partnership is developed. Again, a set of questions was asked of breakout groups to engage them in the critical items they will have to think through as a partnership.

- Significant Strategic Employer Engagement  
*Who are the right employers around the table and leading?*

- |                                       |                       |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. James Hardy                        | 15. BAE               |
| 2. Pascor Atlantic                    | 16. Hubbell Lighting  |
| 3. Pepsi/Gatorade                     | 17. Crenshaw          |
| 4. Sonic                              | 18. RADVA             |
| 5. ABB                                | 19. ADDECO            |
| 6. TRW                                | 20. Wolverine         |
| 7. Faulkner                           | 21. Celanese          |
| 8. Utility Royal Building<br>Products | 22. Emlex             |
| 9. Red Sun                            | 23. Magnolia          |
| 10. Volvo                             | 24. Vaughn-Basset     |
| 11. Korona                            | 25. Guardian          |
| 12. East River Metals                 | 26. Stewart Furniture |
| 13. JIDA                              | 27. McAllister Mills  |
| 14. Phoenix Packaging                 | 28. Moog              |
|                                       | 29. Hansen Turbine    |

- Accurate Labor Market Information

*Do you know your labor market?*

1. Utilize New River/Mount Rogers labor market information and their contract for skills gap information with Virginia Tech
2. Include information from:
  - a. Census Bureau
  - b. CEDs Reports
  - c. Economic development group sources
  - d. Interviews with employers
  - e. Commuting pattern data
  - f. Data through EMSI subscription
  - g. State level LMI information through VA Workforce Commission

- Alignment of Resources

*What resources exist? What is missing?*

1. Secondary (CTE programs) and post-secondary (community colleges and universities) education
2. Workforce Development Board and WOIA programs
  - a. Including incumbent worker, customized training, OJT, etc.
3. Community Action Agencies
4. Local economic development groups
5. Temporary employment agencies
6. VEC
7. DSS
8. VR

- Review of Policies & Procedures
  - Do your policies and programs support sector strategies?*
    1. Review employer hiring practices for barriers
    2. OSHA
    3. Fed and state level regulations that can hinder internship and apprenticeship opportunities
    4. Discrimination and age policies
    5. Job re-entry of previous felons
  
- Pilot Projects
  - Let's try a project! Brainstorm and suggest ideas!*
    1. Teamwork training
    2. Apprenticeship
    3. Workplace toolkit for prospective hires
    4. PLC programming course
    5. Finding assemblers – crosswalk other occupations to help recruit prospects
  
- What are we missing?
  - Who else should be here? Resources missing?*
    1. Other employer representatives, i.e., supervisor level, someone who understands the job
    2. Childcare and transportation providers
    3. Utilize partnership members to tour sector companies to gain an understanding of the business and their needs
    4. Chambers of Commerce (business intermediary and influencer)
    5. College completion project (look for low hanging fruit - missing 0-15 credits to graduate with a Bachelors or Associates degree); improves education attainment levels