



## GO Virginia Region One

### Target Industry Working Group Meeting

### Information and Emerging Technology

*June 19, 2019*

In Attendance: Stephen Mullins, Jeff Rowlett, Ashvin Raj, John Kilgore, Craig Belcher, Jim Baldwin, Jonathan Belcher, Melinda Leland, Angela Costagliola, Kirk Lortz, Mark Eschle, Shannon Blevins, Esther Bolling, Josh Sawyers, Robyn Lee

Via Phone: Keith Perrigan, Mary Trigiani, Vickie Ratliff, Rob Stolle

#### **Recap of May 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

Robyn Lee provided an overview of the last IT Working Group meeting on May 20<sup>th</sup> to include a review of the Chmura focus groups, outcomes from stakeholder engagement, and discussion of specific ideas focused on k-12 education capacity building, mobile labs, and a 276 seed fund for entrepreneurial ventures. The main topics related to k-12 education are the importance of programming and coding in schools. The Working Group concluded that all three project topics are connected. The group discussed combining the K-12 capacity building project with the Mobile Lab project and perhaps a makerspace. As a result of these discussions, the group determined it would be best to focus the next meeting on discussion related to k-12 education and mobile labs, which could eventually lead to support an entrepreneurial aspect.

#### **Project Discussion (K-12 Education & IT Mobile Lab)**

Kirk Lortz reported to the group that several of the IT firms involved in the IT Working Group met prior to the meeting to discuss the possibility of implementing programming in the region's school systems, connecting to the idea of building capacity in k-12. Kirk noted that the challenge is finding workforce available to teach the courses in the school systems. There is not only a need to build the pipeline of workforce to teach these programs, but also for students to participate in such programs. The challenge is also on the supply and demand side, which points to solving the supply issue in order to fix demand. Kirk reported that a strategy to do this is to implement IT programming in k-12, beginning in high schools first, giving students a fundamental base of skills. Students would take the classes in high school, earning an entry level credential in order to start them on the path to an IT career, connecting with the higher education institutions in the region and increasing the number of students in those programs.

Vickie Ratliff mentioned the Governor's G3 Initiative, "Get Skilled, Get a Job, Give Back," in which 5M has been allocated for Virginia Community Colleges. The funding is proposed to provide financial assistance to community colleges for training in high demand and high wage occupations. Vickie announced that the training would be basic level and would lead to a career studies

certificate. Students in high school can choose a field and credits from these classes would feed into a career studies certification, Associates, or even a 4-year degree. Specifically for the IT sector, Cyber Security, Network Foundations, and IT Foundations were chosen as class topics. The curricula is expected to be developed in September 2019. Several Working Group members inquired as to how these three topics were chosen, to which Vickie responded that it was a decision at the state level. Working group members indicated that IT companies are specifically looking for skills in programming, coding, and IT foundations. United Way of SWVA's recent credential study may be helpful to consider when developing the curricula and credentials earned.

Vickie stated that the G3 Initiative is expected to be implemented in the spring and MECC will request funding to cover dual enrollment.

The Working Group discussed making sure that members connect to the initiative and ensure that efforts are promoting IT careers. IT employers should partner to ensure that programming is included in the curricula.

Looking specifically at how GO Virginia funds may assist with this effort, the group agreed that the IT Mobile Lab may not be a first step. The schools have what they need right now and they are unsure of what this will bring to the table. Some possibilities for uses of GO Virginia funds may include education for teachers and/or guidance counselors on encouraging IT careers, professional development for teachers to teach dual enrollment courses and IT classes, and development of an IT Roadmap for students partnering with UWSWVA's Ignite program. The group also discussed providing incentives to the schools to focus on IT education.

With the region's schools teaching different IT courses, the group agreed that a leader should step up to direct the schools on the appropriate IT courses for students to earn foundational skills. One action item is for the group to collect information from the community colleges on what dual enrollment courses are offered and work with UWSWVA and k-12 school systems to inventory IT courses offered. With this inventory, the group can identify gaps to determine next steps. The group also discussed the importance of collecting data from existing employers and prospective employers concerning their workforce needs.

Mark Eschle offered to share a case study on a program implemented in Lafayette which has seen success. Josh Sawyers also mentioned a program in Mecklenburg called Microsoft TEALS - [http://www.thenewsprogress.com/news/article\\_ab0dd708-3030-11e7-87d5-0357af375b85.html](http://www.thenewsprogress.com/news/article_ab0dd708-3030-11e7-87d5-0357af375b85.html)

#### **Next Meeting Date:**

The next meeting will continue k-12 education capacity building discussion. The group proposed inviting an Amazon representative to share insight on the skills they are looking for and to weigh in on capacity building efforts in the IT sector. A Doodle Poll determined that **August 19, 2019 at 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM** will work best for most of the group. The group will meet in Abingdon at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Room 222.