

GO Virginia: Region One Growth & Diversification Plan Community Meeting in Duffield, Virginia

August 2, 2017
Meeting Summary



Executive Summary

Background

Three community meetings were held on August 2nd and 3rd, 2017 in Duffield, Lebanon, and Marion, Virginia, with the first of the meetings being held in Duffield, Virginia. The purpose of the meeting was to identify Southwest Virginia's regional strengths and opportunities for economic growth for the GO Virginia Region One Growth and Diversification Plan. Ideas and priorities were shared at each of the three community meetings, with separate summaries available for each meeting at this [link](#)¹. The top goals and priorities from each meeting were then combined after the meetings in a separate executive summary with six overarching goals, which is available at the link above.

The top prioritized goals from the first community meeting in Duffield include:

1. Strengthen existing and next generation leadership to help realize a compelling vision for the region.
2. Engage and grow existing businesses, and grow the manufacturing base.
3. Expand and market educational opportunities.
4. Grow information technology (IT) technology hubs; attract and support millennials.
5. Grow health and wellness as economic drivers.

GO Virginia Region One is composed of 13 counties and three cities in Southwest Virginia (SWVA). The Virginia Initiative for Growth and Opportunity in Each Region (GO Virginia) was initiated by Virginia's senior business leaders to foster private-sector growth and job creation through state incentives for regional collaboration by business, education, and government. Recognizing the effect of deep federal budget cuts on a Virginia economy that is overly dependent on public-sector jobs, they launched the GO Virginia campaign to work for regional cooperation on private-sector growth, job creation, and career readiness. In 2016, leaders in business and state government came together to create the GO Virginia legislative package. Now, the GO Virginia initiative is being implemented through legislation ([HB834](#) / [SB449](#)) and through the budget.

The GO Virginia Coalition provides support for the GO Virginia Board's efforts to create more higher paying jobs through incentivized collaboration and out of state investment that diversifies

¹ <http://www.uvawise.edu/GOVARegionOne>

and strengthens the economy in every region of the Commonwealth. The coalition is comprised of business and community leaders, partners in education and government, and interested Virginians from across the Commonwealth who support regional cooperation to enhance economic and workforce development. Bipartisan and business-led, the coalition supports state incentives to encourage collaboration among business, education, and government in each region, providing a framework for implementation of the private sector-focused growth strategies. For more information about GO Virginia, please visit www.govirginia.org.

Meeting Opening

Shannon Blevins of UVa-Wise (the University of Virginia's College at Wise) welcomed participants. Region One councilmember, Mike Quillen, shared the background and purpose of GO Virginia. He stressed the region's need to collaborate around ideas in order to replace the high-paying jobs that have been disappearing. He also emphasized the need to strategize on retaining the young workforce to avoid brain drain. Then, Christine Gyovai, the meeting facilitator with Dialogue + Design Associates, reviewed the meeting, agenda and developed meeting guidelines with participants including having cell phones on silent, brevity is welcome, explain acronyms the first time they are used, and all ideas are welcome.

Shannon Blevins then presented the findings of a regional survey, which had over 500 responses, as well as the initial quantitative economic analysis findings by Chmura Economics and Analytics. The presentation was also shared as a handout with participants. The handout also highlighted the initial findings as well as seven Action Teams, which emerged from the 2016 SWVA Economic Forum at UVa-Wise around key goal areas.

Small Group Discussion

After the presentation, participants divided into small groups to share and prioritize ideas around these key questions:

- What are SWVA's top strengths and opportunities for economic growth as a region?
 - Of the list, what are the most important ideas or what is missing?
- How can these opportunities be realized or created in SWVA?
 - Who needs to be involved?
 - How can these ideas be made a reality?

Meeting attendees were encouraged to build on the top ideas and to identify new ideas as well during the small group discussions. Participants were provided a handout with the questions that are listed above with space to reply to each question. Each of the small groups identified a facilitator and reporter, and group members took turns sharing their ideas and priorities. Next, the small groups discussed these ideas, and then created a prioritized list of top ideas. Participants shared their top ideas with the whole group after the large group reconvened.

The top ideas of all the small groups were collectively prioritized by raising 3, 2 or 1 fingers to

indicate the level of support for an idea in a test for consensus. Three fingers stood for full support, two fingers indicated that a participant supported the idea but might have some questions or concerns, and one finger meant that the participant had too many questions or concerns to support the idea. The rankings of the ideas were annotated high (H, H+, H-), medium (M, M+, M-), or low support (L, L+, L-). This allowed all the ideas to be heard and organized according to group priority with Christine tallying the votes in the large group. The full ideas of each small group are recorded below with the corresponding level of support noted.

Group 1 priorities and supporting ideas (with Emily Carlson facilitating)

1. Workforce training should start as early as preschool, continuing through middle school, high school, and extend after college. (H+)
 - a. Develop an awareness of trade and artisan possibilities from an early age.
 - b. Create a job pipeline to prevent brain drain (loss of educated youth).
 - c. Coordinate with teachers and guidance counselors to connect students with opportunities and identify gifts in students.
 - d. Development and market apprenticeships within the Department of Labor.
 - e. Create a SWVA Fellowship program to support budding young professionals to “learn and return”. Example programs: Generation WV and Impact WV.
2. SWVA needs a single organization to foster idea development, to be a clearinghouse for bringing these strategies to life. (M-H)
3. Connect businesses to federal defense contract opportunities. (M-L)
 - a. Capitalize on HUB zones.
 - b. Host trainings for interested businesses.
4. Stay ahead of the technology curve by developing early skills in education and anticipating infrastructure upgrades. (H+)
 - a. Anticipate upcoming upgrades in technological infrastructure such as a 5G network.
5. Develop opportunities for smaller companies to partner with larger companies to meet and address the needs of one another. (H+)
 - a. Reach out to companies like Aetna, Microsoft, or Amazon to see what their workforce and location needs would be to cultivate training opportunities.
 - b. Invite companies to come to SWVA and collaborate for workforce development and meeting company needs.
6. Develop and market a program similar to Georgia’s Quickstart Programs. (M-L)
7. Develop a business-to-business network to identify input or support needs that can be sourced locally to build the regional economy.

Group 2 priorities and supporting ideas (with Adam Wells facilitating)

1. Create IT tech hubs; attract and support millennials. (H+)
 - a. Foster business leadership.
 - b. Include renewable energy to attract large companies.
 - c. Expand IT training opportunities.
 - d. Promote quality of life for millennials.
 - e. Take advantage of geographic position with universities.
2. Support existing businesses and manufacturing and re-employ unemployed coal workers.

- a. Rethink advanced manufacturing to expand on existing skill sets in workforce.
 - b. Starts with trades training for workforce.
 - c. Keep in mind that we need many small solutions, not just one.
 - d. Capture diverse employment needs around manufacturing such as administration, engineering, and assembly.
 - e. Educate students on career possibilities K-12.
3. Focus on education.
- a. Use United Way resources and programming.
 - b. Investment in the workforce starts with quality childcare and as early as pre-school.
 - c. Treat educational institutions as economic drivers.
 - d. Connect students with opportunities and coordinate with prospective employers.

Group 3 priorities and supporting ideas *(with Mary Trigiani facilitating)*

- 1. Attract (“evangelize”) business leaders that are not in this room. *(H+)*
- 2. Start with immediate region and expand out into labor-shed and beyond. *(M)*
 - a. Test collaboration locally, and then tackle larger networks.
- 3. Grow existing business and advanced manufacturing base. *(H+)*
 - a. Adapt to emerging manufacturing needs.
 - b. Consider a coordinated shift from large employer base to build an entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- 4. Leverage higher education institutions as the central “hub with spokes”. *(H+)*
- 5. Integrate regional efforts by breaking down boundaries between towns and counties. *(M)*
- 6. Understand and communicate available resources. *(M)*
- 7. Create better access to capital for small businesses and entrepreneurial efforts. *(M)*
 - a. Encourage local investment.

Group 4 priorities and supporting ideas *(with Christine Gyovai facilitating)*

- 1. Strengthen leadership and communicate a clear, compelling vision. *(H+)*
 - a. Strengthen existing leaders.
 - b. Foster next generation of leadership.
- 2. Focus on education, developing system from pre-K through college graduation. *(H+)*
 - a. Grow awareness outside of region of educational resources and possibilities for growth as individuals and businesses.
 - b. Connect students to job opportunities.
- 3. Create synergy between natural resource and advanced manufacturing. *(M)*
 - a. Mining rare earth metals can serve as a base for advanced manufacturing and electronics.
 - b. Partner with forestry (polymers, fuels, chemicals) to incorporate into advanced manufacturing.
 - c. Look to example of Sweden burning trash as a resource.
- 4. Focus on the strength of SWVA culture. *(M-H)*
 - a. Ecotourism and cultural tourism such as Crooked Road Music Trail.
 - b. Outdoor recreation should be promoted as quality of life factor.

- c. Market the resiliency in culture as an asset.
- d. Showcase the existing skillsets and people's desire to work.
- e. Need to focus on skilled mining workforce where not that much re-training is needed.

Group 5 priorities and supporting ideas *(with Martha Necessary facilitating - many of the similar ideas of this group were combined with others and ranked together).*

1. Develop workforce certifications and trainings.
 - a. Start training and exposure in middle and high school.
 - b. Focus on displaced miners and workers.
2. Focus on broadband and data storage.
 - a. Keep infrastructure up to date and open data centers.
3. Promote growth of colleges and institutions.
 - a. UVa-Wise to expand to masters degrees and Mountain Empire Community College (MECC) expansion.
4. Focus on health and wellness as economic drivers.
 - a. Important to balance stigma of drug problems and despair with the assets of good people, culture, and quality of life.
 - b. Promote good parts of SWVA people and culture to employers.

Large Group Discussion and Prioritization for Top Collective Ideas

After each group reported their top ideas out, meeting attendees clarified the ideas as a large group, and then did a test for consensus around priorities. The top ideas are included below.

- 1. Strengthen existing and next generation leadership to help realize a compelling vision for the region. (H+)**
 - a. Strengthen existing leaders and foster opportunities for leaders to create and communicate a compelling vision for the future of the region with community members.
 - b. Foster the next generation of leadership.
- 2. Engage and grow existing businesses, and grow the manufacturing base. (H+)**
 - a. Assess market trends and identify where existing businesses could expand and new businesses emerge, taking advantage of the technical skillset of unemployed or underemployed miners.
 - b. Develop a business-to-business network to identify input or support needs that can be sourced locally to build the regional economy.
 - c. Create an entrepreneurial ecosystem – create an environment with resources for new entrepreneurs and emerging businesses, including access to capital.
 - d. Develop opportunities for smaller companies to partner with larger companies to meet and address the needs of one another.
- 3. Expand and market educational opportunities. (H+)**
 - a. Market SWVA community colleges, UVa-Wise, and specialty schools on a regional, state and national level.

- i. Expand educational offerings and programs to include graduate-level studies and to focus on the trades.
 - b. Grow youth and education programs that prepare students for regional career opportunities, including a focus on the trades and workforce development.
- 4. Grow information technology (IT) technology hubs; attract and support millennials. (H+)**
 - a. Expand IT training opportunities.
 - b. Promote quality of life factors to attract millennials.
 - c. Include renewable energy opportunities to attract large companies.
- 5. Grow health and wellness as economic drivers. (H+)**
 - a. Promote, grow and market a high quality of life of SWVA.
 - b. Tell and share the story of the SWVA's culture in a positive way.
 - c. Promote the strength of SWVA culture and people to employers.
 - i. Promote regional outdoor recreation assets.

Meeting Conclusion

At the conclusion of the meeting, participants were encouraged to share any additional ideas, thoughts, or examples of models that they were aware of with meeting organizers by email, or to sign up for continued engagement and communication in the GO Virginia effort. Shannon also noted that the Region One Growth and Diversification Plan would be complete by August 25th, and shared future meeting dates. These included Board meetings on September 7th at Wytheville Community College at 10:00 am, and on December 7th at Bluefield College at 10:00 am. One participant noted that it would be helpful to video cast the meetings. Finally, participants were thanked for their participation and encouraged to hand in their handouts to share additional ideas and participant contact information.

Meeting Participants

Brian Becker, Center for Natural Capital

Shannon Blevins, UVa-Wise

Crystal Brown, United Way of SWVA

Dale Clark, Wellmont Hospital

David Cox, Wise County admin

Jason DeLacra, DLC Strategies LLC

Zetta Ferguson, LENOWISCO PDC

Jason Gallikers, Dominion Power

Lisa Green, United Way

Donna Henry, UVa-Wise

Becki Joyce, UVa-Wise

John Kilgore, Scott County IDA

Robyn Lee, UVa-Wise

Martha Necessary, UVa-Wise

Travis Perry, UVa-Wise

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Sandy Ratliff, Virginia Community Capital

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John Schoolcraft, MECC

Mike Stollings, Electro-Mechanical Corp

Mary Trigiani, New Peoples Bank

Adam Wells, Appalachian Voices

Mike Quillen, chair for GO Virginia

Sam Wolford, Gen Edge

Emily Carlson, Dialogue + Design Associates

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