

GO Virginia: Region One Growth & Diversification Plan Community Meeting in Lebanon, 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 second of the meetings being held in Lebanon, 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 as well.

The top prioritized goals from the second community meeting in Lebanon include:

1. Leverage broadband infrastructure to promote the ability to work remotely, and introduce youth to technology operations early.
2. Foster regional collaboration for workforce and education of all ages and stages, including workforce rehabilitation.
3. Identify, cultivate, and retain next generation of leadership.
4. Diversify existing businesses and create adaptive manufacturing that responds to market needs.
5. Create a new identity for the region as a “culture of wellness,” beginning with agriculture and then to value-added manufacturing.

GO Virginia Region One is composed of 13 counties and three cities in Southwest Virginia. 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 harsh 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.

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 and strengthens the economy in every region of the Commonwealth. The coalition is comprised

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

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 Travis Staton shared the background and purpose of GO Virginia. He stressed the need to create high-paying jobs to replace the salaries from the coal industry. A participant asked how the group is defining high-paying jobs. Travis responded that a metric needs to be established.

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.

In addition, participants shared one word hopes for SWVA which included:

Collaboration, image, progressive, jobs, success, regional, prosperity, cross-pollination, tourism, reinvent, business opportunity, thriving, growth, diversification, green, safety, progress, creative, technology, pride, renaissance, stability, music, cyber, and joy

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 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, which were shared from the previous community meeting in Duffield (available in the combined executive summary of the

three meetings at the link above), 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 voting with four sticky dots per person, which were recorded with a tally of dots per idea to determine top ideas for each meeting. The full ideas of each small group are recorded below with the corresponding level of support noted by the number of votes received.

Group 1 priorities and supporting ideas *(with Michelle Workman as facilitator)*

1. Recruit businesses and jobs by coordinating efforts between workforce development and economic development agencies directly. (5 votes)
 - a. Support agency collaboration for better outreach and less duplication.
 - b. Streamline efforts to assist existing industries by organizing regular check-ins.
 - c. Opportunity SWVA could be a starting point and example for coordinating efforts.
2. Address drug use issue in the workforce.
 - a. Appalachian Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition (ASAPC) is working on this issue:
 - i. Connect Dustin Keith as a point person to coordinate with someone on workforce development staff and representatives from local businesses.
 - ii. ASAPC requires business involvement and work with chambers of commerce.

Group 2 priorities and supporting ideas *(with Rachel Patton as facilitator)*

1. Lack of infrastructure and funding for infrastructure development, both basic support and emergency services and technological infrastructure, are a hindrance to industrial approvals and accessibility. (5 votes)
 - a. Locate funding for infrastructure development.
2. Take a regional approach to business and industry recruitment.
 - a. Take advantage of being in several states for suppliers.
3. Find ways to support small business growth.
 - a. Examine whether SBDCs and grants are effective.
4. Bridge the gap between the business community and other stakeholders. (1 vote)
 - a. Having greater business community representation would be helpful.
 - b. Get businesses to the table by giving them a voice and ownership.
 - c. Include connections between business leaders and education system.
5. We need regional collaboration between workforce development and the education system. (10 votes)
 - a. Better utilize the Virginia community college system as an asset.
 - b. Work with industrial recruitment and coordinate with education in order to

- customize training.
- c. Workforce rehabilitation and training should continue as a focus.
- d. Look into example of Tennessee Promise scholarship program.

Group 3 priorities and supporting ideas *(with Shannon Blevins as facilitator)*

1. Create an identity for region as “culture of wellness.” (8 votes)
 - a. Connect farmers markets to grocers, school systems, hotels, hospitals, and food banks (gleaning “seconds” or produce that is still viable but might be blemished and unable to be sold).
 - b. Leverage new opportunities for cattle, heritage breeds, and legacy farms, and connect to new markets.
 - c. Recruit farm supply and packaging businesses into the area.
 - d. Explore new ways of growing things and niche markets like hydroponics, maple syrup, heritage breeds, and tilapia.
2. Create a culture of entrepreneurship. (4 votes)
 - a. Set up maker spaces and work-spaces.
 - b. Spread recruitment and energy focus beyond traditional industry.
 - c. Promote and expand Opportunity SWVA and the Entrepreneurship Challenges.
 - d. Explore creating peer-to-peer networks to create best practices.
 - e. Help entrepreneurs see gaps and assets.
 - f. Celebrate entrepreneurial successes!
3. Develop cyber opportunities and leverage broadband. (14 votes)
 - a. Promote cyber security jobs, IT jobs, and remote jobs.
 - b. Highlight the jobs waiting to be filled.
 - c. Market the fiber broadband network when applicable.
 - d. Develop funding and resources for K-12 grades in schools to hire a dedicated technology teacher (computer science).
 - e. Market to people who want to relocate to rural for telecommute jobs as “bring your own job to SWVA.”

Group 4 priorities and supporting ideas *(with Emily Carlson as facilitator)*

1. Focus on IT infrastructure.
 - a. Strengthen to utilize telecommuting option in healthcare, etc.
 - b. Create opportunities to work from home and promote this to millennials that want a flexible work schedule.
2. Build and integrate leadership within community.
 - a. Develop training such as a regional leadership academy.
 - b. Utilize Tri-Cities Business Journal to highlight young business professionals.
3. Invest in trades education. (3 votes)
 - a. De-stigmatize the idea that trade jobs are less valuable than academic jobs, starting with families.
 - b. Build credentialing.
 - c. Keep money in programs in order to keep them cutting edge and current.
4. Diversify and expand manufacturing. (6 votes)

- a. Help retrain skilled incumbent workforce.
- b. Focus on training for retention and internal advancement.

Group 5 priorities and supporting ideas (with Martha Necessary as facilitator)

- 1. Identify the next generation of leadership. (9 votes)
 - a. Start cultivating leadership in high school and engage them in the community.
 - b. Create a “stickiness” of engagement and leadership.
 - c. Foster mentorship with millennials through programs.
 - d. Work with obvious, existing leadership.
- 2. Grow existing business base. (3 votes)
 - a. Approach manufacturers and identify what suppliers could come into region and build that business locally.
 - i. Identify if that supplier’s needed source already exists locally
 - ii. Diversify within existing businesses and add new businesses within region.
 - iii. Develop job training for diversification.

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.

Top Identified Ideas

- 1. Leverage broadband infrastructure to promote the ability to work remotely, and introduce youth to technology operations early.** 14 votes
 - a. Promote the ability to work remotely with creating desirable communities and available broadband.
 - b. Develop an inventory of “things to do” that would be attractive to young professionals. This could be marketed as: “Bring your own job with you and move to SWVA.”
 - c. Develop funding and resources for K-12 grades in schools to hire a dedicated technology teacher (computer science).
 - d. Promote openings that are available today and emphasize the available salaries.
- 2. Foster regional collaboration for workforce and education of all ages and stages, including workforce rehabilitation.** 13 votes
 - a. Focus on K-12 opportunities including placing an emphasis on the trades.
 - b. Develop partnerships to work with industrial recruitment and coordinate with educational opportunities creating a hand-in-hand pipeline for job recruitment.
- 3. Identify, cultivate, and retain next generation of leadership.** 9 votes
 - a. Cultivate leadership and mentoring opportunities with community members and local business leaders and students in elementary school through college, and engage them in the community.
 - i. Focus on opportunities to develop student leaders.
 - b. Develop training and resources such as a regional leadership academy and

celebrating successes.

4. **Diversify existing businesses and create adaptive manufacturing that responds to market needs.** 9 votes
 - a. Determine regional manufacturing needs and connect with new business and contracting opportunities.
 - b. Match job training to skilled workers.
 - c. Identify workforce talents of the existing workforce and provide opportunities for training and advancement to aid in retention of employees.
5. **Create a new identity for the region as a “culture of wellness,” beginning with agriculture and then to value-added manufacturing.** 8 votes
 - a. Connect farmers markets to grocers, school systems, hotels, hospitals, and food banks (gleaning “seconds” or produce that is still viable but might be blemished and unable to be sold).
 - b. Leverage new opportunities for cattle, heritage breeds, and legacy farms, and connect to new markets.
 - c. Recruit farm supply and packaging businesses into the area.
 - d. Explore new ways of growing things and niche markets like hydroponics, maple syrup, heritage breeds, and tilapia.

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. A participant voiced interest in connecting with capacity-building training for accessing grant-writing tools to assist small communities. Travis shared welcome news that they will be hosting a large jobs fair expo and career fair at Washington County Fair Grounds in September, which will expose students to regional career opportunities. Finally, participants were thanked for their participation and encouraged to hand in their handouts to share additional ideas and participant contact information.

Meeting Participants

Rita Baker, Thompson and Litton

Amelia Bandy, Virginia Department of Health

Brian Becker, Center for Natural Capital

Shannon Blevins, UVa-Wise

Chris Cannon, SWVA Cultural Heritage Commission

Paul Conoco, Bristol IDA

Pat Green, Tazewell County Administrator

Bob Harrison, St Paul IDA

Jean Jordan, Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority

Becki Joyce, UVa-Wise

Dustin Keith, Stuart & Associates Realty + Appalachian Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition

Preston Keith, Revitalization Committee

ABee Moseley, UVa-Wise

Martha Necessary, UVa-Wise

Rachel Patton, SWVA Workforce Development Board

Charlie Perkins, Cumberland Plateau

Travis Perry, UVa-Wise

Cindy Snyder, Virginia Community Capital

Aleta Spicer, Russell County

Travis Staton, United Way

Mike Thompson, Tazewell County IDA

Bill Wallace, St. Paul IDA

Michelle Workman, Tobacco Indemnification Commission

Christine Gyovai, Dialogue + Design Associates

Emily Carlson, Dialogue + Design Associates