



**COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
STRATEGY (CEDs) AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

**VIRGINIA'S REGION 2000**

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# PROJECT OVERVIEW

Business and community leaders from Virginia's Region 2000 have come together to update the region's five-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The new strategy will help elevate the region's competitiveness for new jobs and talent, guiding the region's investments in support of economic improvement and prosperity. Upon completion, it will ensure the region's continued eligibility for federal funding from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) in support of such investments. The four-phase research and strategic planning process will last roughly eight months, concluding in October 2016.

## PHASE I: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Effective strategies are well-informed strategies. Quantitative research about the region must be complemented by qualitative input; the knowledge and opinions of stakeholders and the public at large are invaluable when identifying the assets to leverage, challenges to overcome, opportunities to pursue, and relevant investments around which the region can unite. Accordingly, the first phase of the process seeks to engage key stakeholders and the public at large through a series of interviews, focus groups, and an online survey to inform all subsequent phases of the process.

## PHASE 2: REGIONAL ASSESSMENT

The Regional Assessment will provide a detailed examination of Region 2000's competitiveness as a place to live, work, and do business. The Assessment will present a set of "stories" that frame the issues facing Region 2000 as it seeks to further develop the area's economic prosperity and livability. Collectively, these stories will highlight the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges as identified by resident and business input and key trends in demographic, socioeconomic, economic, and quality of life indicators. The region's competitiveness will be benchmarked against other metropolitan areas with which it competes for both jobs and workers.

## PHASE 3: COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)

The third phase of the process carefully considers the strategic implications of the findings from the first two phases in developing a new five-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to guide collaborative initiatives and proactive investments that support the community's economic development objectives. Strategic recommendations will leverage and reference best practice programs, policies, and initiatives from communities and regions around the country when relevant and appropriate. The resulting CEDS will complement a variety of other plans and initiatives that collectively help define a roadmap for the region's preferred future.

## PHASE 4: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The final phase of the strategic planning process is the development of an Implementation Plan that supports the effective and efficient implementation of the various CEDS recommendations. Specifically, it will identify lead implementers, key partners, potential costs, and timelines for implementation of each recommendation. Performance metrics for gauging the effectiveness of implementation efforts will also be included.

# COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

## PROCESS: ESTABLISHING A VISION AND DEVELOPING GOALS

At the onset of this strategic planning process and during the first meeting of the CEDS Steering Committee, it was emphasized that this regional strategy must go beyond mere fulfillment of federal requirements. Specifically, there is an expectation that the CEDS will serve as foundational document in guiding the program of work for the newly-formed Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance (LRBA) as it seeks to fulfil a role as a catalyst for regional economic development. During its first meeting the Steering Committee also discussed the manner in which the region has changed in recent years, the most substantive challenges facing the region today, and its vision for a preferred future. This discussion centered upon a few key themes:

- ✓ Concerns about access to **economic and educational opportunities**
- ✓ Regional challenges associated with **infrastructure and connectivity**
- ✓ Desires to develop a more attractive **quality of place** with the amenities and built environment that appeals to **the next generation of workers**
- ✓ Frustration with the lack of a discernable **regional identity** or niche in the marketplace

Similar themes emerged when more than 1,100 residents responded to the following question on the community survey that speaks to their vision for a preferred future: *"Imagine that you went home, packed your bags, and didn't return to the Lynchburg region for ten years. What would you want to see different (if anything) about the community when you return?"* The Regional Assessment includes a word cloud illustrating the most frequently mentioned words when responding to this question. Echoing the sentiments of the Steering Committee, among the most frequently mentioned words by residents were:

- ✓ Words that speak to the need for continued **economic improvement**: words such as *opportunities, jobs, businesses, growth*
- ✓ Words that speak to **quality of place** and attributes that help **attract and retain talent**: words such as *downtown, shopping, restaurants, entertainment, river, activities*
- ✓ Words that speak to **connectivity and infrastructure**: words such as *transportation, airport, roads, bike, traffic*

All of the input received from the Steering Committee and residents – those that responded to the community survey, participated in interviews, and attended focus groups – was married with extensive quantitative analysis to produce the Regional Assessment, a narrative discussion of the where the region has been, where it stands today, and where it is headed in an increasingly competitive world for jobs and talent.

The eight stories that framed the quantitative and qualitative research findings in the Regional Assessment are as follows:

1. Image, Identity, and Influence: The Lynchburg Region and Liberty University
2. Regional Growth Dynamics
3. Attracting, Retaining, and Developing a Future Workforce
4. Quality of Life: What Makes Us "Family Friendly?"
5. Quality of Place: Relative Appeal to Young Professionals
6. Connectivity in Region 2000: Threats to Competitiveness
7. Economic Composition, Diversity, and Resiliency
8. Translating Regional Prosperity to Personal Well-Being

These eight stories collectively address a few common themes:

- ✓ the region's growth patterns and the manner in which these reflect its ability to effectively attract, retain, and develop a **sustainable workforce**;
- ✓ the degree to which **the region's image, quality of life, and quality of place** impact its ability to develop this sustainable workforce, and;
- ✓ the region's **effectiveness in nurturing a diverse, resilient, and prosperous economy** and the degree to which this prosperity is translating to **resident well-being**.

Following a review and discussion of the Regional Assessment, Steering Committee members responded to a survey that provided them with the opportunity to identify the specific findings and stories from the Regional Assessment that were most concerning to them personally. Responses were grouped according to key themes and Committee members were asked to evaluate these top concerns and, through interactive voting, identify the region's greatest priorities related to supporting economic growth and diversification from among these top concerns. Each Steering Committee member was allowed to vote for three priorities among nine themes that emerged from their feedback on the aforementioned survey. The Steering Committee's voting revealed the following priorities (numbers in parentheses reflect the number of votes received):

1. Developing **talent pipelines** that support key business sectors (13)
2. Enhancing **quality of place** (12)
3. Promoting a positive **image and identity** (9)
4. Improving **connectivity** (7)

Collectively, this information reviewed in the preceding discussion covering expectations for this strategy, and key themes emerging from Steering Committee discussions, resident input, and the Regional Assessment demonstrated that the region's strategy could reasonably be organized around four primary themes or goal areas:

1. Image and Identity
2. Economic Development Service Delivery (Business Attraction, Retention, and Development)
3. Workforce Sustainability (Talent Attraction, Retention, and Development)
4. Quality of Place (Infrastructure Provision and the Built Environment)

It was suggested to the Steering Committee that the CEDS could be guided by a vision statement emphasizing attributes that reflect strengths which residents and stakeholders wish to preserve, as well as the preferred future that they desire. Based on the words used by residents and Committee members when describing the region's key strengths and what they would like to see ten years from today, the Market Street team developed a few potential vision statements for the Steering Committee to consider. These vision statements were accompanied by a suggested set of goal statements that could communicate the manner in which the region will help advance its vision while providing structure to the CEDS recommendations. Steering Committee members reviewed the proposed vision statements and identified their most preferred attributes of the proposed vision statements. Committee members also broadly endorsed the four proposed goal statements and the themes that they addressed, while suggesting some potential augmentations in the structure and verbiage used to help improve clarity.

The vision statement which received the most votes from Steering Committee members in draft form was as follows: *"The Lynchburg region is an inviting, family-friendly, and well-connected region that is characterized by the diversity, resilience, and attractiveness of its workforce, communities, and economy."* Among other feedback, Committee members emphasized a desire to see words and themes such as inclusion, innovation, and creativity incorporated into the region's vision. It was also acknowledged that a more forward-looking, aspirational, and differentiated vision would be desirable.

This feedback informed the vision statement and goal statements that framed the first complete draft of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and eleven key initiatives included within it. Feedback received from Committee members has informed subsequent revisions to this vision statement, the overarching goal statements, and the tactics supporting the eleven key initiatives that comprise the CEDS. In total, four meetings of the Steering Committee have been devoted to the development and refinement of the CEDS: its vision, goals, and key initiatives.

*This CEDS incorporates a set of Implementation Guidelines for each of the eleven key initiatives and is accompanied by a complementary Implementation Plan. The various implementation guidelines that accompany each of the eleven key initiatives described herein identify lead implementers, supporting partners, a timeline for implementation, potential costs associated with implementation, and potential funding sources. The Implementation Plan comments on implementation roles and responsibilities, organizational and financial capacity to support implementation, implementation priorities, and performance metrics to gauge implementation success and impact. Collectively, these elements support the Strategic Direction and Action Plan components of the EDA's CEDS Content Guidelines.*

## STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS

*"Our vision is a prosperous, vibrant, and inclusive Lynchburg region recognized for the creativity of its workforce, the resilience of its economy, and its abundance of natural, cultural, and educational opportunities."*

Collectively, the Lynchburg region will help advance this vision through pursuit of five key goals:

1. *...projecting a positive image and cultivating our distinct identity;*
2. *...facilitating the growth and expansion of our business community;*
3. *...educating and developing a sustainable workforce;*
4. *...investing in the connectivity of our region, and;*
5. *...supporting the vitality of our diverse communities and downtowns.*

These five goals are interrelated and interdependent, reflecting the nature of comprehensive economic development today. The Regional Assessment illustrated the degree to which such issues as interconnected; the Lynchburg region could struggle to **develop a sustainable workforce** if it fails to adequately **project a positive image** and support the vitality of its diverse communities and downtowns. Similarly, the region would compromise its efforts to effectively **facilitate the growth and expansion of the business community** if it fails to adequately **educate and develop a sustainable workforce** and **invest in the connectivity of the region**.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND KEY INITIATIVES

These five statements reflect overarching goals that provide structure to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), its objectives, and a set of initiatives that support them. **Strategic objectives** define those issues that the region wishes to impact within a goal area and serve as guidance for the pursuit and refinement of key initiatives, both in this CEDS and in subsequent updates. **Key initiatives** are specific, actionable pursuits for the region and its implementation partners. They can be programs, services, events, or investments in physical developments. A series of "**best practices**" or "**case studies**" have been referenced throughout this document and described in an Appendix when relevant to a specific initiative. These best practices and case studies can help guide implementation.

While there is a desire among Committee members and regionals stakeholders to develop and implement a truly *comprehensive* and *holistic* economic development strategy, there has also been an acknowledgement that the region needs focus in its economic development strategy. This focus is appropriate given the recent changes in organizational structure and capacity supporting collaborative regional economic development – notably, the formation of the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance (LRBA). It is intended that such focus can be reinforced by narrowly focusing the region's strategy on these eleven key initiatives.

## KEY INITIATIVES: OVERVIEW

1. Form an Image and Identity Partnership to guide and implement a new collaborative Regional Branding and Image Campaign.
2. Implement a collaborative, regional Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program.
3. Implement a targeted economic development marketing and corporate recruitment program.
4. Launch a new regional Center for Entrepreneurship that can serve as a long-term anchor and catalyst for the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem.
5. Launch an Economic Gardening and Entrepreneur in Residence program to drive technology-based economic development.
6. Form a Regional Talent Coalition to coordinate sector-focused workforce development initiatives, address regional skills gaps, and enhance collaboration between the business community and educational institutions.
7. Establish a Regional Workforce Center on the campus of Central Virginia Community College (CVCC) to deliver necessary workforce training.
8. Update project priorities and implement the region's existing plans for transportation, broadband, and other infrastructure provision based on relevant takeaways from the Central Virginia Connectivity Study.
9. Develop and implement a regional Site Evaluation and Improvement Program to accelerate the preparation and availability of shovel-ready industrial sites in the region.
10. Advance a Regional Riverfront Vision that seeks to "unlock" the region's riverfronts, better connecting and integrating local communities with the James and Roanoke Rivers.
11. Expand the establishment of Arts and Culture Districts throughout the region to encourage and incentivize projects that improve the aesthetic, artistic, and cultural appeal of the region.

## GOAL I

*...projecting a positive image and cultivating our distinct identity*

### EXCERPTS FROM THE REGIONAL ASSESSMENT

*"The old adage 'perception is reality' is an apt description of one of the unmistakable truths of community and economic development – the way you are perceived by others matters. In a world where the competition for talent is as fierce today as the competition for jobs, regions are increasingly mindful of the ways in which they are perceived – positively and negatively – by the outside world. Communities and regions that fail to cultivate an authentic brand identity and proactively broadcast that identity to the world run the risk of being defined by external forces, or perhaps worse, having no definition at all. Many of the most competitive communities in the country have well-known economic and cultural identities that are reinforced over time."*

*Unfortunately, many public input participants lamented the lack of a strong regional identity and felt that this lack of brand recognition has adversely impacted its competitiveness for talent and corporate investment, as well as its prospects for future growth and propensity. This lack of a strong identity leads to the possibility of being mischaracterized in a manner that inhibits a community's ability to attract and retain residents, businesses, and visitors."*

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Ensure that our regional brand identity clearly communicates the region's geographic location, projects a positive image, and is embraced by the region's businesses, institutions, and communities.
- ✓ Cultivate the seeds of an authentic regional identity that can be recognized on a national and global scale.
- ✓ Effectively promote what differentiates and characterizes the region to prospective future residents and workers.
- ✓ Promote our economic identity and competitive advantages to targeted audiences.

## KEY INITIATIVE #1

Form an Image and Identity Partnership to guide and implement a new collaborative Regional Branding and Image Campaign.

Although contrived community brands are trivial in the realm of community improvement and economic development, authentic brand identities often reflect deep associations with a place and can heavily influence perceptions of a community. Whether it is Asheville's reputation as a progressive, cultural mecca amidst the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Research Triangle's reputation as an epicenter of higher education and research activity, or Nashville's reputation as the "Music City," authentic brand associations derived from a region's attributes can have a significant impact on its relative success in attracting and retaining certain businesses, residents, and visitors.

Stakeholders and input participants have repeatedly cited a desire to see the region develop and promote a new brand identity, one that reflects resident input and sources of pride while resonating with external audiences. At present, the region lacks a structure to advance a comprehensive branding and image campaign that leverages the expertise of a variety of professionals engaged in or with a vested interest in the marketing and promotion of the region, its communities to a variety of target audiences, notably existing and prospective future residents that represent the region's future workforce.

### **Assemble the Image and Identity Partnership.**

The Image and Identity Partnership would serve as a working partnership of organizations and professionals in the Lynchburg region that are somewhat engaged in or have a vested interest in the marketing and promotion of the region. This could include but it no means limited to representatives of economic development organizations, convention and visitors bureaus, young professionals organizations, downtown development organizations, arts and cultural organizations, higher education institutions, human resource departments, and other relevant partners. This Partnership would serve as a de facto Steering Committee in guiding the development and implementation of a comprehensive Regional Branding and Image Campaign (elements of which are described below). A subcommittee comprised of integrated marketing professionals from local creative agencies and firms (marketing, communications, advertising, branding, public relations, etc.) could potentially provide low-cost assistance in developing appropriate campaign elements.

### **Develop a grassroots, open-source brand identity for the region to serve as the foundation of the Regional Branding and Image Campaign.**

Stakeholders repeatedly emphasized that the region lacked a strong geographic identifier; some lamented confusion surrounding "Lynchburg" and the state in which it is located while others cited a lack of awareness, recognition, or support for the "Region 2000" moniker. Many of these same stakeholders referenced the successful open-source "RVA" brand and logo developed as part of the RVA Creates initiative. Indeed, the RVA Creates initiative could serve as a viable model or best practice to emulate. The Partnership should evaluate the most cost effective method of deriving a regionally-generated, open-source brand identity and pursue the identified approach. In developing the identity, some basic level of market research regarding external perceptions will need to complement the research conducted as part of this CEDS process, and any additional relevant research, related to the perceptions and associations of existing residents. All relevant research should be conducted through the lens of talent attraction and retention, and the degree to which the region's brand identity and external image support this objective.

**Develop and launch an internal resident pride initiative to promote adoption of the regional brand, and raise the visibility and patronage of existing amenities, attractions, and activities in the region.**

A new grassroots-driven brand identity and associated brand elements should reflect resident enthusiasm and pride; it should be capable of uniting and unifying diverse communities and constituents. Ultimately, brand associations reflect a collection of attributes that are known or perceived about a region. Stakeholders and committee members have emphasized that the region is already home to many great amenities, attractions, and activities that simply need greater visibility to both existing and potential future residents. The Image and Identity Partnership could evaluate and implement a variety of methods to promote resident, organizational, and commercial adoption and integration of the new brand as part of a comprehensive internal resident pride initiative. This could include but is by no means limited to: creative methods of incentivizing patronage by way of a regional loyalty program; the deployment of a social media campaign; a series of weekly columns or op-eds spotlighting various amenities; or a resident competition whereby residents are rewarded for being “most experienced” in certain categories such as nature and recreation, festivals and events, downtown merchants, arts and culture, and so forth.

**Engage a public relations consultant to promote positive stories about the region in targeted media outlets and markets.**

When it comes to raising awareness about a community or region, there is no substitute for authenticity. Earned media – news articles and opinion pieces that are published in respected media outlets – carries far more credibility and authenticity with prospective new residents and workers that does advertising or other forms of “owned media” (such as websites, blogs, and social media accounts). While these owned media outlets can help spread information about a community or region, earned media carries with it a much greater perception of impartiality and objectivity. A public relations consultant can help the region build upon its branding efforts by identifying and promoting positive stories from the region to targeted media markets and outlets that align with the region’s talent attraction objectives. Once new brand elements have been developed and adopted regionally, the Image and Identity Partnership can take on the task of developing a master narrative and a series of targeted narratives that resonate with relevant audiences. These narratives can help provide structure for a consistent and intentional effort to promote positive stories about the region – articles, op-eds, and other media placements that help advance the region’s image and identity – in major national media outlets, supported by the retention of a public relations consultant.

## KEY INITIATIVE #1: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

POTENTIAL LEAD IMPLEMENTER(S):	CEDS Implementation Committee, Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance, Young Professionals of Central Virginia
SUPPORTING PARTNERS:	Downtown organizations and Main Street programs, RED team, Local Government Council, higher education institutions and students, human resource professionals, local chambers of commerce, convention and visitors bureaus, local governments, integrated marketing/advertising/branding agencies, business community, arts councils, historical societies, area nonprofits and community foundations
TIMEFRAME FOR IMPLEMENTATION:	Partnership formation in 2017; Campaign launched and deployed by 2019
POTENTIAL COST:	\$50,000-\$150,000 startup; \$50,000-\$100,000 annual
POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDING:	Partnership participants: public, private, and nonprofit sources
BEST PRACTICE OR CASE STUDY:	RVA CREATES (RICHMOND, VA)
BEST PRACTICE OR CASE STUDY:	RALLY ST. LOUIS (ST. LOUIS, MO)
BEST PRACTICE OR CASE STUDY:	“WE DON’T COAST” (OMAHA, NE)

## GOAL II

*...facilitating the growth and expansion of our business community*

### EXCERPS FROM THE REGIONAL ASSESSMENT

*"What is evident from (an) analysis of economic composition is the region's reliance on (the) manufacturing and education sectors...absent the growth observed in the Educational Services sector (3,947 net new jobs from 2005-2015), the Lynchburg region would have lost more than 2,100 jobs over the course of the last decade...The region's recent reliance on Liberty University for economic growth presents a major challenge for the region."*

*"Diverse economies are more likely to be resilient economies. Economic diversification helps to insulate communities from uncontrollable global trends that may affect certain industries in a particularly acute way. Additionally, economic diversification is important in providing adequate job opportunities to workers of various skills sets in a way that helps to establish ladders of economic opportunity and can help overall talent attraction and retention efforts. But perhaps most importantly, it can help insulate a region and its labor force from the potentially devastating effects associated with the closure of a single, large employer. In this respect, it is important that economic diversity not only be defined in terms of business sector composition but also business size."*

*"Regions with employment concentrated in a few major employers may not be viewed as resilient as another economy with employment dispersed across many smaller to medium sized employers. And given the narrative that has been presented herein regarding the influence of Liberty University, one might expect to see a region where a relatively large share of employment is concentrated in its largest employers. Interestingly, this is not the case in the Lynchburg region. In fact, the Lynchburg region is the least dependent upon major employers (those with 500+ employees) among all comparison geographies. Just 48.7 percent of regional employment is concentrated in these employers, whereas at least 55 percent of regional employment is concentrated in these employers in the three comparison metros. Nearly 31 percent of employment is concentrated in small employers with fewer than 50 employees; such employers represented no more than 24.3 percent of employment in the three comparison metros. This is a somewhat surprising but nonetheless remarkably positive finding: the region has a solid base of smaller to medium-sized employers that can potentially drive future economic growth and help insulate the regional economy from shocks that come from a single employer."*

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Retain and expand the region's existing business community.
- ✓ Attract new corporate investment in target sectors.
- ✓ Provide resources that help entrepreneurs and small business owners realize their potential.
- ✓ Pursue a model of regional economic development service delivery that is predicated upon collaboration and cooperation among local, regional, and state-level stakeholders.
- ✓ Promote economic diversification to support economic resiliency.

## KEY INITIATIVE #2

### Implement a collaborative, regional Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program.

Various studies have illustrated that expansions of existing businesses represent between 60 percent and upwards of 90 percent of a region's job creation. But when they face challenges, a layoff event or closure can be devastating to a region, impacting everything from unemployment to foreclosures to child poverty. The Lynchburg region is no stranger to the risk posed by such closures. A best practice, collaborative, regional Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program should seek to understand the challenges and opportunities facing existing businesses; help alleviate regulatory burdens and barriers to competitiveness and expansion; prevent existing business from relocating elsewhere; identify businesses poised for expansion; and support the maintenance of a competitive business climate.

The Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance (LRBA) should work with local economic development partners to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that clearly defines the protocols and operating procedures for a professionally-staffed, collaborative, regional Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program. Trust and confidentiality – both among regional economic development partnerships and the existing business community – are critical elements of a successful, collaborative BRE program. The program will ideally have a few core elements:

**Existing Business Response Team (EBRT):** The Existing Business Response Team would represent a group of partners from local economic development organizations, relevant local government departments (permitting, public works, etc.), workforce development agencies and higher education institutions, utilities, and other relevant organizations that can and should be engaged in responding to the needs of existing businesses. The EBRT would represent the backbone of the BRE program, with relevant individuals engaged as needed to respond to the unique needs of individual businesses as identified through a variety of outreach methods (site visits, surveys, industry councils, etc. as referenced below).

**Target Sector Councils:** Target Sector Councils would be convened to provide a forum for regular dialogue between businesses operating in specific sectors, enabling the identification of shared challenges from regulatory and legislative issues to workforce concerns to capital needs. These Councils can support and inform the efforts of the Talent Coalition (see Goal 3). They can help identify new partnerships for research and development, new buyer-supplier relationships, and other collaborative endeavors with colleges and universities or other institutions in the region. They can also help identify appropriate targeted marketing opportunities and/or corporate relocation prospects. Councils likely will not be necessary or sustainable in all target sectors (to be identified in a forthcoming Target Sector Analysis for the LRBA).

**Site Visits:** A site visit program is the core element of best practice Business Retention and Expansion programs. The EBRT should define an appropriate goal for the number of site visits to be conducted throughout the region in a given year, establishing parameters for determining the appropriate existing businesses to include in the site visit program. Many communities and regions focus exclusively upon their largest employers, best practice programs seek to align their BRE efforts with their target sectors while also seeking to identify medium-sized companies (varying definitions, often those from 50-250 employees) that are poised for growth and expansion. Site visits

**Information Management and Survey Deployment:** All information collected from site visits must be maintained in an organized customer relationship management (CRM) system, ideally one which has been customized for this specific purpose (such as ExecutivePulse or Synchronist). These systems are critical for ensuring that information is effectively recorded and tracked over time, businesses receive timely and relevant follow-up from various forms of outreach and

communication, and analysis can be conducted on individual businesses, sectors, and the existing business community at large to help identify trends, obstacles, and opportunities. A CRM system should be acquired with potential consideration given to a model where licenses are provided to local partners and/or certain members of the EBRT for consistency in data collection and dissemination. The chosen system should also be enabled to support the deployment of a customized survey questionnaire to the existing business community. This questionnaire should be targeted at those businesses who are not receiving site visits. They can help identify smaller businesses poised for growth and expansion or businesses that potentially need or merit a future site visit. They can also help gather broad information on the business climate and general business and economic trends, while broadening the reach of the region's existing Business Retention and Expansion outreach efforts.

**Key Accounts Visitation Program:** The LRBA and its regional and state partners in economic development should regularly evaluate opportunities to pursue cost-efficient travel to visit executives of major establishments that are headquartered outside of the region. These efforts can potentially be coordinated with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) and the Governor's Office, with a very limited number of opportunities (one or two trips) pursued each year. These trips can enable a small delegation of regional economic developers, elected officials, and other regional business and community leaders to meet with executives of major employers and attempt to understand the ways in which the region can continue to support the competitiveness of their operations and facilitate opportunities for expansion.

**Local-Sourcing Challenge:** Buy local initiatives are common in communities and regions across the country. These initiatives typically attempt to encourage local residents to purchase from locally-owned merchants and establishments to support their local economy. The LRBA could take this concept and create and launch an analogous challenge to the business community: identify at least one local alternative to a non-local supplier of a good or service, and make the switch. The potential economic impact of a coordinated local-sourcing initiative could be substantial. Through this initiative, existing business retention and expansion – the notion of “taking care of your own” – would become further embedded in the culture of the region's business community. Potential exists to pilot this challenge within a single target sector or other relevant economic sector in the region such as agriculture: local restaurants could be encouraged to identify at least one local farmer and/or food and beverage provider/distributor that is an alternative to a non-local supplier.

## KEY INITIATIVE #2: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

POTENTIAL LEAD IMPLEMENTER(S):	Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance and the RED Team
SUPPORTING PARTNERS:	Utilities, key local government departments (permitting, public works, etc.), elected officials, Workforce Development Board and the Regional Talent Solutions Team, Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Virginia International Trade Corporation
TIMEFRAME FOR IMPLEMENTATION:	2017 start; ongoing, annual implementation
POTENTIAL COST:	\$40,000-\$80,000 annual (not including any additional staff and associated salary); additional staff capacity would necessitate an additional \$60,000-\$80,000 in annual costs (see Implementation Plan section entitled “Implementation Capacity”)
POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDING:	Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance and associated fundraising; EBRT
BEST PRACTICE OR CASE STUDY:	BUSINESS FIRST GREATER RICHMOND (RICHMOND, VA)
BEST PRACTICE OR CASE STUDY:	MEMPHIS REGIONAL LOGISTICS COUNCIL (MEMPHIS, TN)

## KEY INITIATIVE #3

### Implement a targeted economic development marketing and corporate recruitment program.

Multiple stakeholders communicated during the input process that a clear expectation for the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance was an effective and targeted approach to economic development marketing and corporate recruitment. Development Counselors International (DCI) conducts a frequent survey of corporate decision-makers engaged in site selection and location to solicit their opinions on the effectiveness of various economic development marketing activities. Planned visits to corporate executives and decision-makers has consistently ranked as the most effective marketing technique, exceeding the effectiveness of advertising, trade show attendance, media relations, and other more traditional techniques. It has become evident that in economic development today, there is no substitute for face-to-face contact. Meetings with economic development organizations were perceived to be a more valuable source of information influencing an executive's perceptions of an area's business climate than their business travel, personal travel, or exposure to advertising.

In addition to face-to-face contact, digital communication and marketing are, not surprisingly, increasingly the focus of effective programs. The region should launch an intentional and targeted economic development marketing and corporate program that is predicated upon these best practice elements and customized based on the region's target sectors. Such a program should include the following components:

**Targeted Contacts:** The Target Sector Councils referenced in Key Initiative #2 can help refine marketing tactics by target sector. Specifically, they can help the Alliance begin by developing a network of internal (regional) and external (national or global) contacts relevant to the target sector. Internal contacts represent potential Target Sector Council members, whereas external contacts represent those individuals who are potentially valuable industry contacts supporting the region's targeted marketing and corporate recruitment efforts (business contacts that could be relocation prospects, brokers and site location consultants working in that sector, key contacts at VEDP and other economic development partners, key contacts at relevant publications and media outlets, key contacts at relevant trade and professional associations, etc.).

**Outbound Travel:** The Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance's economic development staff currently travels out of market to meet with site selection consultants and attend relevant industry trade shows and conferences. This travel is important as relationship development and maintenance is an important component of business prospecting. Moving forward, it will be important for the Alliance to develop a targeted approach to its outbound travel, pursuing only the most valuable opportunities with the highest potential return on investment. This will necessitate the development of a system for evaluating and communicating the returns on outbound travel to ensure that techniques are modified and augmented over time. Target Sector Councils can help identify outbound travel opportunities (specific relocation prospects, relevant and appropriate industry trade shows and conference, etc.) in a given sector, and can help economic development practitioners refine the region's message related to each target sector.

**Inbound Hosting:** Hosting of corporate decision-makers and relocation prospects, as well as the brokers and site selection consultants that influence their location decisions, is another valuable tactic. The region already pursues such inbound hosting and should continue to do so, capitalizing upon opportunities as they present themselves. However, potential exists for the region to formalize an approach to inbound hosting via three events each year:

- I. **Developer Day:** This inbound event would host developers from around the region and state to tour and showcase a limited number of available properties and redevelopment opportunities. Potential exists to rotate the event each year focusing on a different community/county.
- II. **Broker and Consultant Day:** This inbound event would host brokers from around the region and state, and site location consultants from potentially around the country, to showcase a limited number of commercial properties or industrial sites. Potential exists to rotate the event each year focusing on a different target sector.
- III. **Partner Day:** This inbound event would host project managers and other key economic development staff from the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), the Appalachian Power Company, and other relevant partners engaged in marketing various regions in Virginia. This event would seek to showcase available properties that are well-prepared or shovel-ready, as well as recent developments in the region (new assets, resources, infrastructure, etc.) that can support marketing and recruitment efforts.

**Integrated Digital Marketing:** The region's approach to economic development marketing cannot simply rely on relationship development and maintenance; it must proactively seek to educate target audiences and influence their perceptions of the region. A few key components of the region's approach to digital marketing merit discussion:

- I. **Economic Development Website and Target Sector Microsites:** The new [yeslynchburgregion.org](http://yeslynchburgregion.org) website (to be launched soon) will serve as the primary digital platform for communicating the region's economic identity and messages to relevant target audiences. This website must be oriented in a manner that appeals to those decision-makers seeking comprehensive, accurate, up-to-date, and readily-available information. A region's economic development website is often the first impression that it provides to such decision-makers and accordingly, it is important the region and the organization coordinating its collaborative economic development activities present itself professionally and demonstrate that it understands what this audience needs. This includes but is certainly not limited to: extensive information covering demographic, economic, and workforce attributes; GIS-enabled, easily navigable and searchable inventory of available sites and building; information on key business costs and available incentives; contact information and links to other relevant resources, and; targeted information relevant to specific sectors of the economy. The Target Sector Councils can help identify and define appropriate content and messages to include on a series of target microsites that provide customized information and messages to audiences interested in a specific target business sector.
- II. **Digital Advertising:** A very limited amount of digital advertising (and potentially some print advertising) could be justified in the early stages as the region seeks to raise awareness of the new Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance and drive traffic to the new [yeslynchburgregion.org](http://yeslynchburgregion.org) website. These expenditures should be minimized and targeted to specific publications that reach intended audiences (corporate decision-makers and site location consultants).
- III. **Earned Media:** Target Sector Councils can also help identify relevant industry and trade publications which the region could target for media placements. Executives and other Target Sector Council members that are subject matter experts could author articles and op-eds related to recent activities, initiatives, innovations, or business activities of interest to these target audiences, and which help promote the region and its economic messages.

**Supply Chain Mapping:** Existing businesses can often be a source of recruitment prospects. Potential exists to conduct supply chain mapping with the region's largest employers to evaluate opportunities for corporate recruitment; certain suppliers could benefit from co-location near a major buyer through shared labor forces, collaboration on research and development, reduced transportation costs, or a variety of other reasons. The region could most appropriately begin with its Nuclear Technology sector and its two anchor employers: AREVA and BWX Technologies.

**Conference and Trade Show Attraction:** The region's inbound hosting approach could also be completed by a collaborative effort with regional convention and visitors bureaus to attract conferences and trade shows that are relevant to the region's target business sectors. Great potential exists in aligning the region's tourism marketing and conference, trade show, and corporate meeting recruitment efforts (typically coordinated by CVBs) with its economic development marketing and corporate recruitment efforts. Hosting such events in the region can provide opportunities to increase the region's exposure to a relatively large pool of decision makers, workers, and innovators in the region's target sectors.

**Collaborative "Super-regional" Marketing:** Opportunities may exist for cost-effective "super-regional" marketing in partnership with the Roanoke region (specifically the Roanoke Regional Partnership) or other neighboring regions that are targeting other similar sectors of economic activity. Efficiencies could be gained in outbound travel, inbound hosting, digital marketing, or any number of other areas. Super-regional opportunities will need to be evaluated on a case-by-base, sector-by-sector basis once regional objectives are advanced.

### KEY INITIATIVE #3: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

POTENTIAL LEAD IMPLEMENTER(S):	Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance and the RED Team
SUPPORTING PARTNERS:	Business community and representatives from target sectors, local chambers of commerce, higher education institutions, convention and visitors bureaus, local governments, utilities, neighboring economic development entities (i.e. Roanoke Regional Partnership), Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Governor's Office
TIMEFRAME FOR IMPLEMENTATION:	Ongoing and underway; begin refinements in 2017
POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDING:	Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance and relevant regional partners (i.e. the RED Team, convention and visitors bureaus, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, etc.) when certain opportunities arise
POTENTIAL COST:	\$75,000-\$200,000 annually; budget should appropriately increase over time as product enhancements (i.e. industrial site improvements) are made, thereby increasing ROI on marketing efforts
BEST PRACTICE OR CASE STUDY:	"AUSTIN: THE HUMAN CAPITAL" (AUSTIN, TX)
BEST PRACTICE OR CASE STUDY:	EARNED MEDIA/PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY (CHATTANOOGA, TN)

## KEY INITIATIVE #4

Launch a new regional Center for Entrepreneurship that can serve as a long-term anchor and catalyst for the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Stakeholders and committee members have emphasized that the region needs a catalyst to drive the long-term evolution of the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem. A variety of resources exist to support more traditional, local-serving small businesses from the region's Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) to SCORE mentors and the local and regional chambers of commerce and business alliances to retail merchants associations. Other resources, including but not limited to the Center for Advanced Engineering and Research and the Lynchburg Business Development Centre (LBDC) provide varied resources to support technology-based entrepreneurship. Potential exists to develop a new umbrella organization that can help develop and implement a new collaborative and intentional approach to entrepreneurship in the region. In the same way that the Academy Center for the Arts and a restored, historic Academy Theater can serve as an anchor or catalyst for the region's arts and culture community, so too can a new Center for Entrepreneurship serve as a center of gravity for the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Continued feedback from the Steering Committee should help define and provide specific parameters for operation but the development of such a Center will unquestionably require a more in-depth study of potential operational models and partnerships, and the necessary program of work. The following guidelines can help initiate this process:

**Engage Regional Partners and Potential Stakeholders:** The first step is fully engage the spectrum of partners and stakeholders from the entrepreneurial community, including but not limited to providers of small business support services, higher education institutions, leadership development entrepreneurship education programs, and entrepreneurs themselves, in a discussion of the existing gaps in the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Preliminary research and input from this CEDS process validates that the region has a relatively large base of small-to-medium employers but lacks a regional body capable of coordinating and providing entrepreneurial programming and resources (including physical space and capital for startups) on a regional level. Engagement of regional stakeholders can help ensure that a mission is developed with consideration given to existing initiatives, ensuring that duplication is avoided, existing programs are amplified, and efficiency is pursued in designing the Center. Ultimately, the Center's professional staff would work with a range of partners to enhance existing resources, increase awareness of existing resources, and ensure that various components of the ecosystem are working well together while seeking to fill identified gaps in the ecosystem.

**Identify Lead Entities and an Operational Model:** Regional stakeholders should collectively identify a lead organization or organizations (either existing organizations or a potential new non-profit) to develop and operate the Center. An operational model should be identified after discussing appropriate stakeholders in the Center and evaluating other operational models from around the country. A variety of public-private partnership models exist around the country, with various levels of engagement and investment from the public, private, and non-profit (particularly higher education) sectors.

**Develop a Program of Work:** While the Center would not seek to absorb operations of various existing partners, it can serve as a coordinating body to attempt to develop and promote a more comprehensive, seamless entrepreneurial ecosystem in the region. The region's existing resources and support services are too numerous to list exhaustively but a program of work should clearly define the Center's operations with respect to:

- ✓ Services: What kinds of hands-on assistance, market research, or other services will be provided?
- ✓ Programs: What kinds of new events, programs, and partnerships can be developed to support entrepreneurship education, networking, and other objectives?
- ✓ Physical Space: What kind of space is needed by entrepreneurs and how can we efficiently and effectively fill any gaps.
- ✓ Capital: What kinds of capital do our entrepreneurs need and how can we efficiently and effectively fill any gaps?

**Identify Physical Needs and a Physical Location Strategy:** A number of input participants mentioned that, while the region is home to some incubation space to support startups, they generally feel that this space is not located in an area proximate to dense, walkable amenities that certain entrepreneurs demand and/or the physical space itself may not be particularly inviting or aesthetically attractive to these same entrepreneurs. Many communities and regions have established similar Centers for Entrepreneurship on or near their urban research university campuses, while others have placed these facilities prominently in their central business districts, understanding that visibility and access are important to the Center's viability and relevance. Stakeholders will need to develop a strategy for acquiring the necessary physical space to accommodate the Center's program of work. Potential exists to consider a single, centralized location (such as downtown Lynchburg) or a model whereby services are decentralized and potentially leverage existing facilities in the region (such as the Center for Advanced Engineering and Research and/or the Lynchburg Business Development Centre). A decentralized model could create "branch" campuses of the Center, focusing specific branches and the services they provide on target business sectors or other appropriate focused activities. A more centralized model could concentrate and co-locate a variety of services in a single location such as the James River Conference Center (JRCC), the new home of the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance (LRBA). If partners are interested, potential exists to evaluate existing real estate arrangements and long-term real estate needs with an eye towards eventual co-location of entrepreneurial support services in such a central location.

#### KEY INITIATIVE #4: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

POTENTIAL LEAD IMPLEMENTER(S):	CEDS Implementation Committee, Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance, Lynchburg Region's Technology Council
SUPPORTING PARTNERS:	Higher education institutions, Small Business Development Center, Lynchburg Business Development Centre, Center for Advanced Engineering and Research, SCORE, co-working spaces and other small business support providers, local chambers of commerce, Local Government Council
TIMEFRAME FOR IMPLEMENTATION:	Planning should ideally begin in 2018 with a goal towards securing funding, physical space, and program development by the conclusion of the implementation phase (2021)
POTENTIAL COST:	Highly variable depending upon factors such as the physical space identified, the staff hired, and the programs to be implemented. Similar facilities in other regions are multi-million dollar developments.
POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDING:	Economic Development Administration; public, private, and nonprofit contributions from supporting partners

## KEY INITIATIVE #5

### Launch an Economic Gardening and Entrepreneur in Residence program to drive technology-based economic development.

For nearly three decades, a handful of communities and economic regions have advanced an approach to economic development that emphasizes small business development over new firm recruitment. This approach has come to be known as “economic gardening,” a practice that attempts to provide companies poised for growth with low-cost access to otherwise expensive market and business intelligence. Many of the most refined and sophisticated economic gardening programs aim to help these companies identify new market opportunities, identify sales leads and develop new business relationships, and optimize their existing business and marketing plans, among other issues. Some communities, particularly some of the early adopters and innovators in the field of economic gardening, have adopted the principles of the program as their core economic development strategy; many others seek to incorporate economic gardening principles into a more comprehensive and holistic approach to economic development. Certain national non-profits, notably the Edward Lowe Foundation, have provided resources to communities and entrepreneurs to help advance economic gardening initiatives. These initiatives typically target second-stage companies or gazelles, characterized by their lifetime (less than five years old), recent growth (typically more than 20 percent annual revenue growth), and current size (typically 10 or more employees).

The region has an opportunity to launch a new, highly-targeted Economic Gardening Program to support technology-based economic development in the region. The initiative would most appropriately narrowly target resources and assistance to a limited number (no more than five) companies operating in one or more target sectors. Potential exists to pilot the program by focusing on one of the region's areas of technology specialization, including but not limited to Nuclear Technology or Wireless Infrastructure and Communications. The intersection of these two, and specific applications related to cybersecurity could be another area of opportunity; specifically, an effort could dovetail with the newly-established International Critical Infrastructure Security Institute (ICISI) at CAER, an organization whose mission is to “certify organizations' performance-based strategies from cyber-based threats” and catalyze innovation and business formation in the cyber security sector, particularly as it relates to nuclear energy. Specific program components – from technical resources to human resources to capital resources – should be defined based on the identified sector or technology of focus.

The Economic Gardening Program could potentially be housed at the recommended new Center for Entrepreneurship, an existing facility such as CAER, a higher education institution, or the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance. The program would be supported and led by an “Entrepreneur in Residence” (EIR) – an individual with extensive executive experience in the field/sector being targeted by the Economic Gardening Program, an academic researcher with experience commercializing relevant technologies, or a serial entrepreneur. The ideal “Entrepreneur in Residence” may not be an existing resident in the region and may need to rotate based on the focus of the program and the businesses that it currently serves.

In addition to a variety of local and regional partners, a variety of national nonprofits such as the Edward Lowe Foundation, an organization that supports entrepreneurship initiatives and specifically community and regional approaches to economic gardening, can provide supportive resources for program design and development.

## KEY INITIATIVE #5: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

POTENTIAL LEAD IMPLEMENTER(S):	CEDS Implementation Committee, Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance, Lynchburg Region's Technology Council
SUPPORTING PARTNERS:	Higher education institutions, Small Business Development Center, Lynchburg Business Development Centre, Center for Advanced Engineering and Research, SCORE, local chambers of commerce, Virginia Small Business Finance Authority, Virginia Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity, Edward Lowe Foundation
TIMEFRAME FOR IMPLEMENTATION:	Planning and program development should ideally begin in 2018 in concert with planning for Key Initiative #4 (Center for Entrepreneurship)
POTENTIAL COST:	Highly variable depending upon factors such as the physical space where the program is housed, the staff (EIR) hired, and the degree to which these factors are aligned with launch of a new Center for Entrepreneurship (Key Initiative #4) or an existing program/facility such as the Center for Advanced Engineering and Research or the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance. Significant cost savings can be incurred by co-locating various organizations and programs. A minimum expenditure of \$50,000 annually should be expected for market research and other resources that support economic gardening. Additional expenditure will also be associated with the hiring of an Entrepreneur-in-Residence.
POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDING:	Economic Development Administration; private and nonprofit contributions from the region; national nonprofits supporting entrepreneurship (such as the Kauffmann Foundation and the Edward Lowe Foundation)

## GOAL III

### *...educating and developing a sustainable workforce*

#### EXCERPTS FROM THE REGIONAL ASSESSMENT

*"The importance of talent in modern-day economic development cannot be overstated. Workforce sustainability can make or break a community's economy, and this harsh reality is even more-heightened in the current economic development landscape given national aging trends. Many communities will struggle in coming years to avoid worker shortages as members of the Baby Boomer generation age out of the workforce, and it will be the younger generation of workers who will be primarily responsible for filling these vacated jobs and providing much needed stability to the nation's workforce."*

*"As of 2014, just 22.1 percent of the region's population was aged 25-44. 4.6 percentage points lower than the share aged 45-64. This is a considerable concern for the region from a workforce sustainability standpoint. As Baby Boomers exit the workforce and this smaller cohort enters more senior positions, the region will need to considerably elevate its talent attraction and retention efforts if it wishes to continue to provide a workforce that is, at a minimum, comparable in quantity to the one that exists today."*

*"Over the five year period from 2009 to 2014, the Lynchburg region made more substantive improvements in the percentage of its population with a bachelor's degree or higher than all comparison geographies and the average American community. And while this rate of improvement is certainly laudable, it will need to continue if the region is to become more competitive for certain white-collar job opportunities that rely on a highly-educated workforce. As of 2014, the percentage of the adult population with a bachelor's degree in the Lynchburg region (27.2 percent) remained nearly three percentage points below the national average (30.1 percent)."*

*"Collectively, (the region's higher education) institutions are a tremendous advantage, and many regions would envy the position that the Lynchburg region finds itself in with such a sizeable college-aged population. But from the standpoint of regional workforce development, they are only a competitive advantage to the degree to which those graduates can be retained."*

#### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Proactively connect our education and training institutions with regional employers.
- ✓ Ensure that regional training and degree programs are aligned with the needs of regional employers and target sectors.
- ✓ Successfully retain graduates from our region's education systems.
- ✓ Attract talented graduates, young professionals, and experienced workers in occupations experiencing significant labor shortages.
- ✓ Raise awareness about the importance of public education to the region's family-friendliness, economic competitiveness, and workforce sustainability.

## KEY INITIATIVE #6

Form a Regional Talent Coalition to coordinate sector-focused workforce development initiatives, address regional skills gaps, and enhance collaboration between the business community and educational institutions.

Stakeholders have indicated that – while examples of strong partnerships certainly exist – the region generally lacks a framework to support intentional, consistent, and sector-focused collaboration between the business community and the educational and training institutions that are developing their current and future workforce. The Regional Assessment revealed that, at a high level, the region's degree production is not well aligned with the region's economic composition. Further, many of the nation's most rapidly-expanding occupations require no formal college degree, and their training and credential requirements are rapidly changing with the pace of technological innovation. The Regional Assessment also revealed that the region faces a variety of challenges in effectively attracting and retaining well-educated, young talent. A new Regional Talent Coalition can help coordinate the design, development, and implementation of workforce initiatives that attempt to create a more intentional and seamless approach to talent development, retention, and attraction. The Regional Talent Coalition would represent a formal partnership between the Region 2000 Workforce Development Board, the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance (LRBA), the regional business community, and its education and training institutions at all levels (from kindergarten through executive education). The Regional Talent Coalition could be supported by professional staff from a relevant coordinating entity but would largely be driven and supported by volunteers and paid staff from partner organizations that implement and fund variety of collaborative initiatives through a committee structure. Specifically, the Regional Talent Coalition could reasonably be organized around three issues or committees:

- I. **K-12 Pipeline:** Focused on delivery of programs and initiatives that seek to reduce dropouts, enhance college and university matriculation, and increase the pipeline of graduates with basic skills that are importance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy and demanded by our existing business community.

Specifically, the K-12 Pipeline Committee would support a variety of existing educational improvement initiatives around the region that could benefit from heightened volunteerism and/or support from the business community. This can include existing initiatives from Young Entrepreneurs Academy and the Mini Economy/Grow One initiative to the Future Focus initiatives and Partners in Education (PIE) programs. The K-12 Pipeline Committee would also help develop and launch collaborative new initiatives that can help address common challenges across regional school systems, or unique challenges facing individual school systems. Such new initiatives could include the launch of two new programs:

- i. **Reach Out to Dropouts:** This program would be modelled after a best practice initiative emerging from the Houston Independent School District. The program engages volunteers and community leaders who walk door-to-door in teams to visit the families of students that have not re-enrolled in school within the first few weeks of a new school year or failed to graduate the previous year for a variety of reasons. The program is simple yet remarkably successful at reenrolling dropouts, and has been replicated throughout the State of Texas and across the country.

### BEST PRACTICE OR CASE STUDY: REACH OUT TO DROPOUTS (HOUSTON, TX)

- ii. **Financial Aid Saturdays:** This program would be modelled after a best practice initiative that emerged in the Austin, Texas metropolitan area and coordinated by the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce. The program engages volunteers from the business community, area financial institutions, and members of the education community to provide free, hands-on assistance to families with the completion of college and financial aid applications. This assistance is provided on Saturdays at various high schools throughout the region. The program helps mitigate some fundamental yet surmountable obstacles to college matriculation: a lack of confidence, knowledge, or financial literacy sufficient for a family to complete the necessary applications that can enable their child to attend college or university.

### **BEST PRACTICE OR CASE STUDY: FINANCIAL AID SATURDAYS (AUSTIN, TX)**

- II. **Curriculum and Capacity:** Focused on reducing identified gaps in curriculum and training programs at the region's higher education and training institutions, and ensuring that regional employers are able to find qualified candidates locally for in-demand positions.

Specifically, the Curriculum and Capacity Committee would advance an intentional effort to promote long-term alignment between the region's higher education offerings and its economy, while helping identify flexible training solutions to meet more immediate needs – needs which can potentially be met by a recommended Workforce Training Center (see Key Initiative #7). The Committee would first conduct a comprehensive study of the skills gaps that exist in the region, measuring current and projected future demand for specific occupations as well as the current supply emerging from relevant degree and training programs which support them. This analysis should result in the identification of specific credential, training, certificate, and degree programs that need to be developed in the region in the coming years. Through appropriate representation and engagement, commitment from the region's diverse providers of higher education and training to new program development should be pursued when a need is identified. This Committee would also be tasked with identifying funding opportunities that can help the Talent Coalition and regional partners advance collaborative workforce solutions addressing identified skills gaps. The U.S. Department of Labor's TechHire initiative is an example of a federally-funded initiative for which regional partners have recently pursued grant monies.

The Region 2000 Workforce Development Board is advancing the implementation of new federal workforce development guidelines in compliance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This includes the in-progress formation of a Business Services Team and a Talent Solutions Team that will work to ensure that the region's workforce development efforts are appropriately aligned with economic development objectives and the needs of the business community. In this regard, the Workforce Development Board will essentially address the void that this Curriculum and Capacity committee is intended to fill, and accordingly, could simply assume responsibility for the actions identified herein. Creation of new volunteer structures with similar missions to the Workforce Development Board's efforts would be duplicative and inefficient. These teams coordinated by the Workforce Development Board Committee should most appropriately include one or more representatives from each of the Target Sector Councils (see Key Initiative #2) to ensure that skills gaps and strategies are analyzed and developed with target sectors in mind.

- III. **Talent Attraction and Retention:** Focused on initiatives that seek to retain the region's best and brightest graduates while also attracting former residents (including alumni) and other prospective new residents to the region.

Specifically, the Talent Attraction and Retention Committee would initially be responsible for advancing three initiatives:

- i. **Talent-Focused Website:** The first task would be the development a new website, leveraging the brand elements developed as part of Key Initiative #1, which intentionally targets prospective new residents and workers who are seeking information and the Lynchburg region and what it has to offer. As the lines between economic and workforce development have blurred, communities and regions are increasingly focused on the manner in which they present themselves to prospective talent and not simply prospective companies. Accordingly, they are reengineering their web presence so that key community and regional messages are directed appropriately. While no two regions should present themselves in the same manner, some best practice elements are beginning to emerge as necessary features of such a website: a clear connection to available job opportunities; information about the region's distinct neighborhoods and amenities; connections to a robust social media strategy, and; connections to real people living in the region that are able to engage with prospective new residents on some level. No region or community has developed the perfect, model website; rather, a variety of best practice elements are featured in various communities.

#### **BEST PRACTICE OR CASE STUDY: CARPE DM (DES MOINES, IA)**

- ii. **Internship Challenge:** Internships have been proven to be a tremendously effective tool for talent retention. They can create meaningful and lasting connections between a student and a regional employer, and between that student and a community. By providing employment opportunity and a wage before graduating, students can begin establishing roots – physically, socially, and economically – in a particular region. In fact, a recent survey of roughly 900 businesses by the National Association of Colleges and Employers indicated that more than half of all interns accept full-time employment with the company where their internship was completed. The Talent Coalition should issue a challenge to the business community to develop one or more internships targeting rising seniors and recent graduates from the region's colleges and universities. Some small incentive could be developed to help encourage internship creation. A portal on the recommended talent-focused website (see bullet above) would provide students with an opportunity to create a profile, upload their resume, and link to the LinkedIn account. The portal would help students find opportunities and help employers find potential interns.
- iii. **Alumni Reintroduction:** The Talent Coalition should also seek to take advantage of the immense alumni base that has emerged from the region's institutions of higher education. As these institutions grow, so too will the relative size of this alumni base. Many communities have recognized that alumni are particularly appropriate targets for talent recruitment – many refer to them as boomerangs – and the CEDS Steering Committee has recognized this opportunity as well. The Talent Coalition should seek to work with alumni offices, athletic departments, performing arts departments, and other relevant representatives from area colleges and universities to identify opportunities to engage alumni located outside of the Lynchburg region and "reintroduce" them to the Lynchburg region and what it has to offer a working professional. The Coalition can host a series of events in the region around key alumni weekends and events – events that engage alumni socially and expose them to new developments, amenities and happenings in the Lynchburg region. The Coalition can also potentially host a limited number of out-of-market events to engage alumni. For example, alumni in the Piedmont Triad could be invited to join a group of young professionals and community leaders at a Lynchburg Hillcats road game in Winston-Salem.

The Talent Attraction and Retention Committee would most appropriately be comprised of one or more representatives from the Image and Identity Partnership (see Key Initiative #1) that helped develop brand elements capable of supporting a regional talent attraction and retention campaign.

## KEY INITIATIVE #6: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

POTENTIAL LEAD IMPLEMENTER(S):	Implementation Committee and Workforce Development Board
SUPPORTING PARTNERS:	Business community, higher education and training institutions, preK-12 public and private schools, human resource professionals, alumni associations, Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance, RED Team, chambers of commerce and their Partners in Education (PIE) programs, local education foundations, Future Focus Foundation, Lynchburg Region's Technology Council, Local Government Council, Young Professionals of Central Virginia, Young Entrepreneurs Academy, Adult and Career Education of Central Virginia, Virginia Department of Labor, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, Virginia Department of Education, Virginia Economic Development Partnership
TIMEFRAME FOR IMPLEMENTATION:	Coalition and subcommittee formation in 2017; begin implementation of specific tactics in 2018 taking care to implement one or two new tactics described above each year so as not to stretch the Coalition and its volunteer base thin during its early months and years
POTENTIAL COST:	Highly variable depending on the various tactics that the coalition decides to pursue. Complete implementation of the various tactics described herein (skills gaps analysis, Reach Out to Dropouts, Financial Aid Saturdays, talent-focused website, internship challenge, alumni reintroduction events, etc.), with certain activities phased in over time could reasonably necessitate annual expenditures for the Coalition and its various activities of \$20,000 (to support mostly volunteer-led efforts) to upwards of \$150,000 annually (to support tactics that may require contracted assistance such as website development, skills gap analyses, or event management).
POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDING:	Contributions from the private sector, local colleges and universities, Workforce Development Board and Lynchburg Regional Alliance funds, and federal and state funding opportunities
BEST PRACTICE OR CASE STUDY:	REACH OUT TO DROPOUTS (HOUSTON, TX)
BEST PRACTICE OR CASE STUDY:	FINANCIAL AID SATURDAYS (AUSTIN, TX)
BEST PRACTICE OR CASE STUDY:	CARPE DM (DES MOINES, IA)

## KEY INITIATIVE #7

Establish a Regional Workforce Center on the campus of Central Virginia Community College (CVCC) to deliver necessary workforce training.

The CEDS Steering Committee members identified the lack of a single point of contact for workforce training as detriment to the region's talent development, business retention, and business attraction efforts. Specifically, it was noted that CVCC's existing space for flexible, responsive industry training is inadequate and physically constrained.

A new Regional Workforce Center would attempt to alleviate these capacity concerns, enabling a more rapid and comprehensive response to the needs of existing and prospective future businesses. It would also serve as a physical "center of gravity" for workforce services, much like the recommended Center for Entrepreneurship and its role as a catalyst for the entrepreneurial ecosystem, or the role of the Academy Center of the Arts as a center of gravity for the arts and cultural community. In this respect, it could serve as the home for the Workforce Development Board's One-Stop services (also known locally as the Region 2000 Workforce Center) as well as the community college's targeted technical training programs.

The ideal space would not simply satisfy the region's and/or CVCC's physical requirements for technical training, but rather, would also seek to provide a welcoming "front-door" for both job seekers and employers. It would need to provide an adequate environment to support meeting between One-Stop service providers and job seekers, sufficient technology to enable job searches, and provide ample meeting space to support the needs of the community, including the recommended Talent Coalition (see Key Initiative #6). The Center would ideally be located at CVCC but operated independently.

### KEY INITIATIVE #7: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

POTENTIAL LEAD IMPLEMENTER(S):	Workforce Development Board, Central Virginia Community College
SUPPORTING PARTNERS:	Talent Coalition (see Key Initiative #6), higher education and training institutions, Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance, Local Government Council, RED Team, US Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, US Economic Development Administration, Virginia Department of Labor, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, Adult and Career Education of Central Virginia, K12 education partners
TIMEFRAME FOR IMPLEMENTATION:	Begin planning in 2019 following formation and successful operation of the Talent Coalition and implementation of certain activities by the Talent Coalition and the Workforce Development Board (i.e. skills gap analysis).
POTENTIAL COST:	Highly variable depending on the location chosen, the programs that are intended to be supported, and the physical space required to support those programs and provide long-term flexibility. Similar facilities in other regions are multi-million dollar developments.
POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDING:	Federal funding through EDA and ETA grant opportunities; state and local funding sources required for federal grant matching likely coming from higher education institutions and local and state government funding sources.

## GOAL IV

### *...investing in the connectivity of our region*

#### EXCERPTS FROM THE REGIONAL ASSESSMENT

*"According to business leadership (business owners, executives, and managers) who were surveyed on various business climate factors, the Lynchburg region's lack of interstate connectivity and air connectivity are seen as competitive disadvantages that have and will continue to inhibit economic growth. The disconnectedness of the Lynchburg region from major air and highway transportation assets was often mentioned in stakeholder input sessions as among the region's greatest competitive disadvantages...The overall roadway connectivity of the region and access to broadband internet service were also mentioned during input sessions as being noncompetitive and potentially disconnecting citizens in outlying parts of the region from economic opportunity. The qualitative input gleaned from the Lynchburg Regional Connectivity Study, running concurrently to this CEDS process, provides similar conclusions about how residents view the region's lack of highway and air connectivity as competitive challenges."*

*"...the region's connectivity challenges – from interstate access to direct flights to broadband – place considerable constraints on the types of economic activity that are likely to be attracted to the region relative to the abundance of other competitive communities and regions that companies are evaluating."*

*"...The relative lack of large, ready-to-go (infrastructure-served) sites places the region at a competitive disadvantage relative to many of its competitors which have inventories of industrial land that include multiple ready-to-go or partially-prepared sites over 100 acres...although the region is home to many smaller acreage opportunities, local, regional, and state level economic developers all cited the region's available sites and building – particularly large acreage parcels in the 100 – 200 acre range – as one the region's greatest barriers to new economic development projects in the region."*

#### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Facilitate the efficient movement of residents, workers, and visitors throughout our region.
- ✓ Facilitate the efficient movement of goods and raw materials throughout our region.
- ✓ Provide necessary infrastructure to accommodate desirable economic growth and development.
- ✓ Ensure that the region provides competitive, available sites and buildings to support the location and growth of existing and prospective new businesses.

## KEY INITIATIVE #8

Update project priorities and implement the region's existing plans for transportation, broadband, and other infrastructure provision based on relevant takeaways from the Central Virginia Connectivity Study.

Upon completion of the Central Virginia Connectivity Study, regional transportation, broadband, and other infrastructure plans and priorities should be reevaluated based on any new funding opportunities. This includes an update to this regional CEDS. This recommendation can be regularly updated by the CEDS Steering Committee – given appropriate guidance and support from the Local Government Council – with a list of relevant priority infrastructure projects with regional economic significance that could qualify for federal funding from the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) Public Works program, as well as any other relevant funding sources.

**Transportation:** The Local Government Council regularly updates the region's transportation plan – the Central Virginia Regional Long Range Transportation Plan (Plan 2040) – and can update its priority projects (with requisite input) if necessary based upon the findings of the Central Virginia Connectivity Study. A number of priority transportation projects from Plan 2040 and the Connectivity Study have been referenced below; these projects and others identified in these plans range from critical roadway infrastructure serving industrial parks to priority greenway projects supporting bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to enhancements of airport infrastructure. Accordingly, other regional transportation plans should be reviewed and evaluated for relevant projects that merit inclusion in this recommendation. This includes but is certainly not limited to local government Comprehensive Plans, the Lynchburg Regional Airport Master Plan, and the Region 2000 Greenways, Blueways, and Trails Plan.

At present, the draft Lynchburg Regional Connectivity Study recommends priority pursuit of a few key projects and strategies identified in the region's Long Range Transportation Plan (reference project number in parentheses, or HB2 reference number), in order to support inter- and intra-regional freight connectivity and labor market access:

- ✓ Implement downtown Lynchburg complete streets (LRTP 95)
- ✓ Roundabouts, road diet, rail to trail on Campbell Ave. from Edmund St. to Florida Ave. (LRTP 93)
- ✓ 5<sup>th</sup> Street from Taylor Street to NS Rail Bridge road reconstruction with added streetscape elements (LRTP 86)
- ✓ 5<sup>th</sup> Street from Jackson to Taylor streetscape improvements (LRTP 85)
- ✓ Route 622, Lynbrook Rd (HB2 523)
- ✓ Candler's Mountain Rd Widening and Capacity Extension (LRTP 91 and LRTP 94)
- ✓ South Amherst Highway (BUS 29)/ Route 163 interchange (LRTP 31)
- ✓ Lakeside Drive (221)/Lynchburg Expressway (501) (LRTP 88)
- ✓ Route 221 – intersection improvements (LRTP 90; HB2 595)
- ✓ Wards Road (US 29) access management, traffic ops, safety improvements (LRTP 67 and LRTP 68)
- ✓ Lynchburg Expressway (BUS 29)/Candler's Mountain Road Interchange (LRTP 84)
- ✓ US 501 Widening (LRTP 92)

Other priority transportation-related projects and investments identified in the draft Lynchburg Regional Connectivity Study include but are not limited to:

- ✓ Continue to work towards implementation of the CVMPO Priority Accommodation Corridors as identified in the Region 2000 Bicycle Plan.
- ✓ Work to improve digital and other wayfinding in the region.
- ✓ Support improved multimodal connectivity between institutions of higher education and (downtowns).
- ✓ Enhance outreach to the business community through partnerships between RIDE Solutions, the Region 2000 Workforce Development Board, and the LRBA.
- ✓ Consider implementation of an activity-based commuter rewards program.
- ✓ Work with the Greater Lynchburg Transit Company (GLTC) and major regional employers and higher education institutions to examine the feasibility of a transit pass program.
- ✓ Investigate opportunities for the region to benefit from the Department of Rail and Public Transportation's (DRPT) emphasis on expanding vanpooling in the region.
- ✓ Continue to market Amtrak service, particularly travel to and from northeast markets.
- ✓ Participate in state and multi-state level planning conversations regarding further rail service enhancements.
- ✓ Continue to build a coordinated regional narrative on the value of Lynchburg Regional Airport (LYH) relative to other alternatives (e.g. driving, using other airports).
- ✓ Advocate for service to Dulles in coordination with the Governor's 2017-2018 \$50 million incentive program to reduce cost per enplanement at Dulles and thus support expansion of the hub for United Airlines.
- ✓ In the very near-term, coordinate a region-wide conversation regarding potential startup incentives for United Airlines service to Dulles.
- ✓ Strengthen channels of communication between the economic development community (facilitated by LRBA) and the airport manager so that "leading indicators" can be communicated to airlines on an ongoing basis.
- ✓ Build awareness within the regional economic development community of funding available from the Rail Industrial Access Program administered by DRPT and the program's scoring criteria.

**Broadband:** In 2015, the Technology Council hosted a Broadband Summit whereby participants heard from a representative from the Center for Innovative Technology (a nonprofit whose mission is, in part, to facilitate broadband deployment) regarding recent statewide efforts to map broadband connectivity in all cities and counties, as well as information on resources available to support communities and regions seeking to develop a strategic plan to enhance broadband connectivity. Broadband coverage remains a challenge for much of the region's more rural areas, an issue identified in both the Regional Assessment and the Central Virginia Connectivity Study.

The draft Connectivity Study recommends the pursuit of a minimum target of 25 megabits per second (mbps) for coverage throughout the region, the pursuit of state and federal funding to support community-based broadband improvement efforts, and the consideration of publicly-owned utility models of service delivery.

Upon completion of the Connectivity Study and the corresponding identification of any relevant best practices for broadband deployment, the Local Government Council can evaluate interest among regional partners in starting a collaborative Regional Broadband Needs Assessment, potentially with support from the Virginia Office of

Telework Promotion and Broadband Assistance, and the Center for Innovative Technology. Such an effort would pool resources for maximum efficiency in assessing regional needs before transitioning to a process of local strategic planning and implementation. That is to say, a Regional Needs Assessment could be completed by LGC on behalf of all communities and counties in the region, enabling these communities and counties to pursue their own individual deployment strategies and pursue relevant and differentiated funding mechanisms. The LGC can support communities and counties with their strategic planning and deployment in a variety of ways, from the facilitation of inter-city visits and the study of deployment strategies in other regions in Virginia to the potential provision of financial and/or technical assistance to support local strategic planning efforts. A completed Regional Needs Assessment should inform a list of relevant broadband projects to include in the CEDS moving forward.

The One Amherst Economic Development Strategic Plan that has been developed concurrently with this CEDS process and which is under review as 2016 calls for a potential broadband needs assessment in Amherst County.

**Public Wireless:** The deployment of free public wireless internet in public parks, downtowns, and activity centers (the airport, major amenities, etc.) throughout the region can help attract customers to certain businesses, drive traffic to gathering places, and better enable live-work-play environments. Free public wireless internet can serve multiple purposes beyond infrastructure provision; deployment would support the region's positive image and identity, contribute to an entrepreneurial climate, and help engender more vibrant downtowns and activity centers.

The region should evaluate interest among local governments in advancing an initiative that could study the viability of deploying free public wireless internet in various locations throughout the region. Potential exists to identify a variety of potential corporate or non-profit partners; many corporations have sponsored wireless deployment in communities around the country, including but not limited to Toyota, Google, AT&T, and Comcast.. Potential also exists to engage organizations and associations such as the Retail Merchants Association (RMA) that could help coordinate sponsorships and/or technology deployment within specific areas. It should be noted that the 2013 Opportunity Lynchburg Strategy also calls for the deployment of free public wireless across the City of Lynchburg.

## KEY INITIATIVE #8: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

POTENTIAL LEAD IMPLEMENTER(S):	Local Government Council and the Central Virginia Metropolitan Planning Organization
SUPPORTING PARTNERS:	Local governments, Virginia Department of Transportation, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, Lynchburg Regional Transportation Advocacy Group, Mid Atlantic Broadband Cooperative, Lynchburg Regional Airport, Greater Lynchburg Transit Company, Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance, the RED Team, local chambers of commerce, US Department of Transportation, Economic Development Administration, utilities, elected officials at the local, state, federal level
TIMEFRAME FOR IMPLEMENTATION:	Ongoing
POTENTIAL COST:	Highly variable – project costs associated with each aforementioned project and any adjusted/revised project priorities following completion of the Connectivity Study should be incorporated into the CEDS, its annual updates, and its various status reports
POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDING:	Variable depending on the project type (broadband, transportation, etc.) and mode (road, transit, air, rail, etc.)

## KEY INITIATIVE #9

Develop and implement a regional Site Evaluation and Improvement Program to accelerate the preparation and availability of shovel-ready industrial sites in the region.

During the stakeholder input process, numerous individuals lamented the fact that the region is home to many industrial sites that are not shovel-ready (fully served by various forms of infrastructure, graded land, completed environmental and/or engineering assessments, etc.) and many others where private land owners do not see the value associated with enhancing their site to improve its marketability or sale price. The region should develop a Site Evaluation and Improvement Program to accelerate preparation of such sites to support near-term economic development projects. Not surprisingly, a relative lack of attractive, shovel-ready sites can drastically inhibit an area's ability to effectively recruit new corporate investments and, to a lesser degree, support the expansions of existing industries. A few steps should be taken to advance program development and implementation.

**Engage the Regional Economic Development Team (RED Team):** A regional Site Evaluation and Improvement Program can reasonably be coordinated by the LRBA with support from a variety of relevant partners. The LRBA should engage the RED Team, comprised of local economic developers from the region's various counties and communities, and assemble a small working group with other relevant partners (VEDP representatives, relevant local government staff and leadership, utilities such as Appalachian Power, etc.) to guide program development and implementation.

**Develop evaluation criteria:** The working group should discuss program objectives, review the region's site inventory, prioritize sites for evaluation, and develop evaluation criteria that are consistent with best practice Site Certification programs, particularly the requirements of the new Virginia Business Ready Sites Program. A system for prioritizing sites based on their readiness, and prioritizing necessary improvements to individual sites, should be established.

**Begin evaluations:** The assembled working group should determine the most appropriate and cost-effective method for completing evaluations in a timely manner. Potential exists to retain the services of a local engineering firm to perform an impartial assessment. Some national site selection consultants are willing and able to provide similar services.

**Identify priority projects, incorporate into the CEDS, and pursue funding:** Once evaluations are completed, the working group should develop a list of priority sites upon which to focus resources for preparation and shovel-readiness. These priority sites, and their associated priority improvements, should be reviewed with the CEDS Steering Committee and incorporated into this portion of this CEDS over time, consistent with annual updates required by the EDA. A variety of funding mechanisms for individual projects should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Some communities or counties may feel that capacity exists to finance multiple projects at once using local funding options while others may solely pursue available state and federal funds such as those available through VEDP, the Department of Rail and Public Transportation's (DRPT) Rail Industrial Access Program, the EDA, or other sources.

**Preparation of a 100+ acre VEDP-certified Business Ready Site:** The region currently lacks a large, highly-marketable, shovel-ready site to support major economic development projects. Such prepared sites of 100+ acres are rare in the Commonwealth of Virginia and VEDP has developed a program (the Virginia Business Ready Sites' Program, Site Characterization Grant) to help communities "assess the level of existing development at a site and the additional development required to bring the site to a level that will enable the site to be marketed for industrial or commercial economic development." Pursuit of this grant opportunity is a natural opportunity for the region to pursue as a component of this initiative.

**KEY INITIATIVE #9: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES**

POTENTIAL LEAD IMPLEMENTER(S):	Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance and the RED Team
SUPPORTING PARTNERS:	Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, Appalachian Power, utilities, railroads, local governments and relevant departments (public works, urban planning, etc.), elected officials, Local Government Council, private property owners and the development community, local chambers of commerce, US Economic Development Administration,
TIMEFRAME FOR IMPLEMENTATION:	Evaluation program development should begin immediately in 2017 with evaluation and improvements pursued aggressively along with associated funding
POTENTIAL COST:	Evaluation program design costs will primarily be staff time for LRBA; evaluation costs will vary by site and be dependent upon the current state of site or property preparation, and any previously completed evaluation, environmental studies, etc.; improvement cost will be highly variable by site and dependent upon the outcome of regional site evaluations
POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDING:	Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance for program development; local governments and development authorities for evaluations, with potential state or utility support; local governments, relevant state economic development entities (VEDP, DRPT, etc.), utilities, private property owners, and federal sources (EDA grants) for appropriate site improvements

## GOAL V

*...supporting the vitality of our diverse communities and downtowns*

### EXCERPTS FROM THE REGIONAL ASSESSMENT

*"...the location decisions of companies in a variety of sectors are increasingly driven by access to talent...(and) communities are increasingly investing in creating a sense of community and "quality of place" that attracts and retains this talent. In a country that gets more diverse (racially, ethnically, and culturally) with each passing day, tangible and intangible cultural factors are increasingly considerations that influence the location decisions of the talented individuals being sought after by both communities and companies."*

*"While 82 percent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the region is an attractive place to raise a family, and more than 75 percent felt that it is a desirable place to retire, just 37 percent felt that it was an attractive and desirable place for young professionals. The region's counterparts in the Louisville (66 percent), Indianapolis (70 percent), Atlanta (75 percent), and Nashville (92 percent) metropolitan areas all have much more positive outlooks on their region's attractiveness to this coveted demographic."*

*"It is difficult to look at survey results regarding key quality of life and quality of place amenities without seeing the role that downtown Lynchburg – and other downtown areas and activity centers in the region – must play in the discussion. After all, vibrant downtowns are those that contain a host of nightlife, entertainment, shopping, and cultural amenities – all categories that received generally low marks in the community survey. Furthermore, it is impossible to ignore the overwhelming amount of evidence that is being observed in regions around the country as people of all ages and backgrounds are flocking to center cities and dense activity centers in search of the benefits that accrue from proximity between one's place of residence, place of work, and the lifestyle amenities that are more concentrated in the denser urban areas."*

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Support development patterns and projects that encourage mixed-use, walkable, and well-connected environments.
- ✓ Support the redevelopment and revitalization of the region's downtowns.
- ✓ Effectively leverage the region's natural resources and recreational assets for community vitality.
- ✓ Increase the visibility and patronage of the region's amenities, arts and cultural institutions, and other assets that contribute to the region's quality of place.

## KEY INITIATIVE #10

Advance a Regional Riverfront Vision that seeks to “unlock” the region’s riverfronts, better connecting and integrating local communities with the James, Roanoke, and Staunton Rivers.

While the region’s communities present a variety of redevelopment challenges and opportunities, residents, particularly young professionals, are overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the potential of the region’s downtowns, most notably downtown Lynchburg. With a number of recent successes and evidence of new commercial and residential investment, there is a palpable feeling of momentum in downtown Lynchburg. Perhaps the greatest asset to downtown’s potential growth as an anchor of mixed-use activity is the James River and the natural amenity, beauty, and recreational opportunities that it affords those who live, work, and visit downtown Lynchburg. The same can be said for other downtowns in the region – notably Alta Vista and Brookneal. In downtown Lynchburg, the riverfront is physically disconnected from the core of Lynchburg’s downtown by two rail lines. On the other side of the river (Madison Heights and Amherst County), and throughout the region, opportunities may exist for further recreational development along the riverfront.

Many other communities around the country have developed highly ambitious visions for their downtowns’ revitalization; examples include the removal of two dams and decades of work to convert the Chattahoochee River in Columbus, Georgia into the largest urban whitewater course, and efforts in Springfield, Illinois to relocate miles of heavily-travelled rail lines to the eastern edge of downtown to improve connectivity, revitalize a key corridor, and improve access to the medical district for emergency personnel. Many communities yearn for an accessible waterfront or riverfront that can serve as a natural amenity for residents and tourists; the Lynchburg region should leverage these natural assets for their maximum recreational and economic potential. Given that residents highlighted the region’s natural beauty and recreational opportunities among its greatest strengths, and cited downtowns more frequently than any other issues when discussing their vision for the future, it is reasonable to pursue a regional vision that seeks to unlock the region’s riverfronts and effectively utilize them as a catalyst for downtown revitalization efforts. A few efforts are central to this initiative.

The City of Lynchburg’s Downtown and Riverfront Master Plan was last updated in 2000. Much has changed in downtown Lynchburg and the competitive environment in which it operates; today, downtowns are experiencing an influx of residents, business, and new investments as urban areas are capturing an increasingly large share of metropolitan growth across the country. These realities in addition to the abundance of new activity and investment, including major new infrastructure projects, necessitate an update to the Downtown and Riverfront Master Plan. This update should ideally consider methods for promoting accessibility to and utilization of the James River as a recreational asset and natural amenity.

Lynch’s Landing, the organization tasked with coordinating revitalization efforts in downtown Lynchburg, has recently hired a new Executive Director and intends to embark upon a new strategic planning process for the organization. Such a process would naturally complement and support the implementation of certain portions of an updated Downtown and Riverfront Master Plan. An updated strategic plan for Lynch’s Landing should ideally include a strategic focus on methods to further promote engagement and interaction with the James River.

Efforts to update the City of Lynchburg's Downtown and Riverfront Master Plan and the Lynch's Landing strategic plan should give consideration to potential collaborative planning and implementation with relevant stakeholders in Amherst County. Activation of the James River and its riverfront in and around downtown Lynchburg should appropriately consider development opportunities, amenities, and accessibility on both sides of the river.

Outside of downtown Lynchburg other communities in the region have recently advanced a variety of initiatives to enhance their downtowns. This includes the Brookneal Downtown Revitalization Project in 2012, which focused heavily on issues of urban design, façade improvement, and signage and wayfinding. Alta Vista has made a number of enhancements to its historic downtown over the years, and the river remains an important asset to the vibrancy of the community.

Potential exists for the Local Government Council (LGC) or some other regional organization to support a series of planning grants that can enable evaluations of riverfront potential – recreational, residential, or commercial development opportunities – throughout the region. These evaluations can inform the inclusion of appropriate projects in updated downtown, comprehensive, and organizational plans, as well as this portion of the CEDS.

Potential also exists to advance a series of discussions with higher education institutions in the region regarding their physical needs and planned capital expenditures, seeking to identify any opportunities to concentrate new developments (instructional space, student housing, performance spaces, etc.) in and around the region's downtowns and riverfronts to assist with downtown and riverfront activation strategies.

## KEY INITIATIVE #10: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

POTENTIAL LEAD IMPLEMENTER(S):	Local Government Council and local governments with support from the Implementation Committee
SUPPORTING PARTNERS:	Lynch's Landing and other downtown organizations, arts and cultural organizations, James River Arts and Cultural District, James River Association, Roanoke River Basin Association, Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance, local chambers of commerce, business community (particularly downtown and riverfront merchants), convention and visitors bureaus, higher education institutions, area nonprofits and community foundations, railroads, relevant federal agencies and departments (Corps of Engineers, Fish and Wildlife, etc.)
TIMEFRAME FOR IMPLEMENTATION:	Discussions related to certain riverfront planning (specifically, an update to the City of Lynchburg's Downtown and Riverfront Master Plan, and the development of a new strategic plan for Lynch's Landing) should ideally begin as soon as possible (2017). This timing should necessitate elevating regional riverfront planning (and associated coordination between local governments (such as the City of Lynchburg and Amherst County).
POTENTIAL COST:	Planning and implementation costs will be highly variable.
POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDING:	Local governments and the Local Government Council can support most planning and implementation with complementary funding from area nonprofits and the private sector when specific developments and initiatives align with their missions.
BEST PRACTICE OR CASE STUDY:	UPTOWN COLUMBUS REVITALIZATION (COLUMBUS, GA)

## KEY INITIATIVE #11

Expand the establishment of Arts and Culture Districts throughout the region to encourage and incentivize projects that improve the aesthetic, artistic, and cultural appeal of the region.

In 2010, the Lynchburg City Council adopted a resolution to create the James River Arts and Cultural District to “improve the economic conditions of (the) geographic area” and to “encourage the participation of citizens and arts & cultural organizations to conduct projects, events and activities to further the arts and culture in Lynchburg.” The District provides incentives, notably grants up to \$5,000, to eligible projects – “events, activities, capital investments, promotions, improvements, displays or like pursuits that serve to further arts and culture...”

The establishment of similar districts through the region can potentially enable the development of complementary arts and cultural amenities in and around the region’s downtowns; many communities already seek to advance such activity as part of their downtown revitalization efforts. The formation of new districts would simply provide a more formal mechanism for delivering incentives and programming to this end.

Communities can carve out a distinct niche through implementation of distinct district strategies. While some may focus on event encouragement, others may focus on the physical environment. One of the most glaring opportunities for the region to further develop as it relates to arts and culture is the deployment of public art projects. While a variety of installations exist and intentional efforts have expanded these installations in recent years, the region has an opportunity to use public art to not only support the arts community and its cultural objectives, but also to enhance the region’s image and identity through beautification and public art, while also enhancing quality of place. A variety of potential public art initiatives could be advanced. These include but certainly are not limited to:

- I. **Sculpture Trail:** a sculpture trail could feature installations along one or more existing trail systems throughout the region that intersects an existing or potential future Arts and Culture District.
- II. **Mural Project:** a mural project could be modeled upon countless best practice programs around the country and emerge as the key façade enhancement and downtown identity program for one of the region’s communities.
- III. **Annual Student Installation:** an area college or university could embed a new course offering in its art department whereby students are tasked with the collaborative design, development, and installation of a piece of a public art (mural, sculpture, or otherwise) in the region as a capstone project and donation to the community.

These new initiatives – such as a sculpture trail, a mural project, or a student-led installation series – could potentially be supported by a new financing mechanism to complement incentives made available through the establishment of Arts and Culture Districts: the formation of a corporate-sponsored beautification program. Under such a program, communities would create a matching grant program, potentially supported by and delivered through newly-established Arts and Cultural Districts, to provide matching funds for community beautification projects funded by corporate sponsors. Alternatively, a more narrowly-focused corporate-sponsored public art program could be developed.

**KEY INITIATIVE #11: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES**

POTENTIAL LEAD IMPLEMENTER(S):	Local Government Council and local governments with support from the Implementation Committee
SUPPORTING PARTNERS:	Downtown organizations and Main Street programs, arts and cultural organizations such as the Academy Center of the Arts, James River Arts and Cultural District, Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance, local chambers of commerce, business community (particularly downtown merchants), convention and visitors bureaus, higher education institutions, area nonprofits and community foundations, relevant state and national organizations supporting the arts (Virginia Commission for the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, etc.)
TIMEFRAME FOR IMPLEMENTATION:	Discussions with local governments regarding the establishment of new districts should be advanced by the Local Government Council and the Implementation Committee following the start of all other initiatives contained within this CEDS, as this initiative received the lowest priority marks by Steering Committee members. If the Local Government Council and the Implementation Committee believe that they can effectively advance this initiative earlier in the implementation schedule without compromising focus and/or resources devoted to other higher-priority initiatives, it could begin at their discretion and/or as opportunities present themselves in individual communities.
POTENTIAL COST:	District planning and formation costs should be negligible relative to other implementation costs; program costs within districts (i.e. grant programs and other incentives for arts and cultural enhancements) will vary based on the scale and scope determined by the district and its participating public, private, and nonprofit establishments.
POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDING:	Local governments and the districts themselves will fund district activities and the incentives they support. Amusement taxes – as levied by the City of Lynchburg upon businesses charging admission to an event or activity – help support the incentives and grants offered by the districts. Arts organizations, higher education institutions, and other area nonprofits can help support specific projects within districts.
BEST PRACTICE OR CASE STUDY:	TULSA BEAUTIFICATION FOUNDATION MATCHING GRANT (TULSA, OK)
BEST PRACTICE OR CASE STUDY:	ARTSKC FUND (KANSAS CITY, MO)

# IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that precedes this Implementation Plan defines eleven key initiatives, each comprised of many specific tactics, that will help Virginia's Region 2000 fulfill its vision for economic development and competitiveness. This complementary Implementation Plan briefly discusses a few key considerations related to ensuring that the CEDS' initiatives are effectively and efficiently implemented. This includes but is not limited to brief commentary on the roles and responsibilities of specific organizations and entities in support of implementation, the financial and organizational resources that are necessary to support these roles and responsibilities, the appropriate schedule for implementation based on Committee prioritization, and the necessary mechanisms for performance measurement supporting implementation evaluation.

*In addition to the initiatives and corresponding implementation guidelines that accompany each initiative in the preceding Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, this Implementation Plan supports the EDA's CEDS Content Guidelines for the Action Plan component.*

## Implementation Roles and Responsibilities

While every community and region is different, with varying organizational capacities and working partnerships to support CEDS implementation, the communities and regions that are most effective in their implementation efforts are those that, by and large, adopt a truly collaborative model of implementation. That is to say, they create an expectation that the CEDS is a strategy for a community or region, and not a strategy for a single organization. They support shared accountability as it relates to implementation roles and responsibilities, and expect that CEDS implementation will be a "team sport." In this regard, successful communities and regions have acknowledged that, just as it has taken a collaborative group (the CEDS Steering Committee) to develop a truly *Comprehensive* Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), it will take a collaborative group to translate those ideas into actions.

And so, these communities and regions have demonstrated over time that there is value in maintaining a structure to support ongoing collaboration and cooperative action among those organizations that will be actively engaged in implementing the various CEDS initiatives; in many instances, such structures include a core group of participants from the CEDS Steering Committee that studied the region and developed appropriate recommendations. The most successful communities and regions understand that this network of collaborative organizations and implementers needs day-to-day staff support. They invest in dedicated staff that can ensure that this collaborative network has the necessary support and access to resources to effectively and efficiently implement the CEDS.

## CEDS IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

During its September 2016 meeting, it was acknowledged that the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance (LRBA) would assume a substantive leadership position in the implementation of the CEDS' recommendations. However, the CEDS Steering Committee also acknowledged that it would be important for a collaborative group of business and community leaders to remain engaged in some capacity to help

LRBA advance implementation. It was recognized that such a collaborative group would be necessary to move the needle on certain initiatives for which the staff and financial resources at LRBA may be insufficient to support effective implementation. Accordingly, it is recommended that a CEDS Implementation Committee be convened immediately following the conclusion of the CEDS strategic planning process.

**PURPOSE AND OPERATIONS:** The Implementation Committee should fulfill multiple roles in supporting the implementation of the CEDS. First and foremost, the members of the Implementation Committee should be champions of the strategic planning process, its recommendations, and their implementation. They will need to invest time in informing and educating various organizational, community, and business leaders that have not been actively engaged in the strategic planning process but whose support – financial, organizational, or otherwise – is critical to the CEDS' successful implementation. They must constantly remind themselves and the region's leadership that the CEDS and its key initiatives were derived from extensive research and public input, including the opinions of more than 1,200 residents and employers in the region.

The primary role of the Implementation Committee will be to serve as a catalyst. While staff with the LRBA and other regional organizations will assume a leadership position in the implementation of certain initiatives, many initiatives will require considerable buy-in and commitment from a variety of other organizations and institutions in the region; accordingly, the Implementation Committee will be the primary convener of such implementation partners. But, it cannot simply be a convener; it must also be an activator of the CEDS' recommendations. In partnership with the LRBA, the LGC, and other critical implementation partners, the members of the Implementation Committee will need to create shared accountability for the implementation of certain initiatives. While many regions have a tendency to continually discuss their challenges and opportunities, the Implementation Committee must recognize that, while continued dialogue is valued, it cannot inhibit the process of *doing*. The Committee must remain focused on activating the various recommendations with the assistance of professional staff from various implementation partners, particularly the LRBA and the LGC.

Finally, the Implementation Committee should track progress, evaluate the success of implementation efforts, and regularly communicate these results to relevant stakeholders and the public at-large in collaboration with the LRBA and LGC. The Committee should evaluate past year successes on an annual basis, adjusting priorities and tactics as necessary but remaining committed to the eleven key initiatives and the objectives that they support in the region's CEDS. Successes should be communicated internally, within the region, via annual reports while certain external reporting (most notably, the submission of updates to the Economic Development Administration) will also need to be conducted on an annual basis with support from LRBA and LGC staff. The final section of this Implementation Plan covers performance measurement related to CEDS implementation.

**COMMITTEE COMPOSITION:** The Implementation Committee will ideally be comprised of many of the core members of the CEDS Steering Committee, understanding that many who helped author the CEDS and its recommendations are also representatives of necessary implementation partners and can be among the CEDS' greatest champions as the region attempts to move seamlessly from strategic planning to implementation. However, it is important to acknowledge that the composition of the CEDS Implementation Committee should necessarily differ from that of the CEDS Steering Committee; many Steering Committee members may be unable to commit to continued volunteer service while others in the region may not have

been engaged in the strategic planning process (and accordingly, served on the Steering Committee) but will need to be actively engaged in the implementation of one or more key initiatives (and accordingly, serve on the Implementation Committee). In this regard, continued service on the Implementation Committee should be encouraged but optional for Steering Committee members, with expectations regarding future time commitments clearly communicated.

An ideal working partnership will be comprised of between 25 and 40 key business, community, and organizational leaders who are willing and able to commit time and resources to the advancement of the CEDS' recommendations, and whose participation is vital to the effective and efficient implementation of the CEDS' recommendations.

Two or three chairpersons (co-chairs or tri-chairs) should be identified to serve in a leadership position for a term of at least two years. These chairpersons should be community and business leaders who are able to inspire commitment and cooperation within the Implementation Committee, between organizations, and across jurisdictional borders. Given the substantive role that the LRBA will have in leading and supporting implementation of many initiatives within the CEDS, and the associated staff and financial resource requirements that will be placed upon the LRBA, it is appropriate to ensure that there is a clear relationship and leadership connection between the Implementation Committee and the governance structure of the LRBA. Specifically, it would be appropriate for one of the Implementation Committee's co-chairs to be either the current or incoming chairperson of the LRBA. Given the responsibilities and time commitment associated with chairing the Board of Directors at the LRBA, it would be logical to ask the incoming chairperson of the LRBA to serve as one of the current chairs of the Implementation Committee. This would help ensure that each chairperson of the LRBA will have previously served for at least one year in a leadership capacity related to the implementation of the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Accordingly, they will be well informed of the manner in which the LRBA has been engaged in and supportive of the region's collaborative approach to economic development, and mindful of the initiatives and investments that will emerge as priorities during their time of service as LRBA chair.

**WORK GROUPS AND AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEES:** As the Implementation Committee begins operation, it will be logical for smaller working groups or subcommittees to be birthed, as needed, to help advance one of the eleven key initiatives, or a specific component of one initiative. Such ad hoc committees can be created as needed and dissolved when their collaborative work has been completed. In fact, the CEDS calls for the formation of a few such working groups that could reasonably be subcommittees reporting to the CEDS Implementation Committee. Examples of such opportunities include but are not limited to the Image and Identity Partnership recommended in Key Initiative #1 to help design and deploy a Regional Branding and Image Campaign; the Talent Coalition recommended in Key initiative #6; and a potential working group to help get a new regional Center for Entrepreneurship (Key Initiative #4) off the ground.

Although a pre-existing construct and one which does not need to report to the CEDS Implementation Committee, the region's Regional Economic Development Team (also more commonly known as "The RED Team") is a good example of an existing working group that meets regularly to advance common objectives and which could serve as a model for other work groups moving forward.

**MEETING SCHEDULE AND CONDUCT:** During its first year of operation (2017), the Implementation Committee should, at a minimum, meet quarterly and consider continuation of its monthly meeting schedule in the immediate near-term until capacity is built and certain initiatives are off the ground. Greater frequency can help activate high-priority initiatives from the CEDS while also helping staff at the LRBA, LGC, and other implementation partners accomplish certain startup tasks.

The strength of a region's first-year implementation effort is a strong predictor of its long-term success in activating its economic development strategy and preventing it from becoming the clichéd document-on-a-shelf. Getting started is often the hardest but most impactful task. Many communities lose momentum following the strategic planning phase; any amount of delay could cause some individuals involved in the strategic planning process to lose interest, disengage, and view the process as "all talk and no action." Accordingly, it is recommended that an initial meeting of Steering Committee members that are willing and able to commit to continued service on an Implementation Committee be scheduled for no later than December 2016. The purpose of this meeting should be to identify those individuals representing implementation partners that have not been engaged to-date but who should be invited to serve on the Implementation Committee. These individuals should be invited to a meeting in January 2017 as the first official meeting of the CEDS Implementation Committee. At that time, the Implementation Committee can review its roles and responsibilities, the high priority initiatives to advance in the first year, and determine the subcommittees and meeting schedule that are necessary to help advance these priorities.

The Implementation Committee – and particularly its chairpersons – will need to determine the appropriate ways to structure, facilitate, and conduct meetings. Chairpersons can appropriately serve as meeting facilitators, ensuring that the committee remains on track and follows the agenda for that meeting. The chairpersons can work with staff from the LRBA and/or LGC (the identified "Implementation Coordinator" – see section entitled "Staff Resources") to develop and circulate meeting agenda.

A common format for meetings is to utilize the first half to allow Committee members to provide updates on implementation efforts that their organization and/or subcommittee have advanced in recent months. The second half becomes a work session to discuss the tasks and responsibilities of the Committee – both collectively and as individuals – in activating specific initiatives in the months ahead. Meetings can begin by taking a look back at the work that is in progress and/or has been accomplished in recent months, and conclude with a look forward at the work that needs to be accomplished in the coming months. These work sessions can identify the need to form any ad hoc subcommittees while also developing clear "to-do lists" for individuals or subcommittees. There will be times when certain individuals and/or subcommittees are more heavily involved than others as necessitated by their subject matter expertise, interest level, or role within organizations that are working with the Implementation Committee to advance a specific initiative.

**In summary, the Implementation Committee can serve as a "keeper of the goals" and the principal entity responsible for creating shared accountability, developing collaborative solutions, and overcoming barriers to effective implementation of the CEDS key initiatives.** The Committee can and should appropriately defer implementation of certain initiatives to organizations and the paid staff that supports them (such as Key Initiatives #2 and #3), but others (such as Key Initiatives #1, #4, and #6, among others) will require considerable collaboration among a diverse group of regional stakeholders – the Implementation Committee – to advance implementation and develop the appropriate tactics to do so.

## LYNCHBURG REGIONAL BUSINESS ALLIANCE (LRBA)

In 2016, the Lynchburg Regional Chamber and the Region 2000 Business and Economic Alliance merged to create the new Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance (LRBA). The new organization brings the region's historical chamber of commerce functions and its regional economic development efforts together under a single roof.

At the onset of the CEDS strategic planning process, the LRBA's leadership demonstrated a commitment to the CEDS and its implementation as a guiding document and core component of the new organization's program of work. And throughout the strategic planning process, business and community leaders serving on the Steering Committee continued to emphasize the role and responsibility of LRBA as it relates to implementation; an expectation that – through committed leadership, dedicated staff support, and devoted financial resources – the LRBA will help ensure that the CEDS is a strategy that gets implemented, and is not simply a strategy developed to satisfy federal requirements.

The CEDS identifies eleven key initiatives across five broad goal areas. The Steering Committee, inclusive of leadership from critical implementation partners, has helped identify the most appropriate organizations to lead and support the implementation of each initiative. The LRBA has been identified as a necessary partner in every initiative but certain initiatives will be almost exclusively led by LRBA staff in partnership with the Regional Economic Development Team (also known as "The RED Team"), a working group of local economic development practitioners in the region.

Specifically, it is anticipated that the LRBA and its staff will lead implementation of the following initiatives:

- ✓ Key Initiative #2: Existing Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program
- ✓ Key Initiative #3: Regional Marketing and Corporate Recruitment Campaign
- ✓ Key Initiative #4: Regional Entrepreneurship Center
- ✓ Key Initiative #5: Technology-Based Economic Gardening and Entrepreneur-in-Residence
- ✓ Key Initiative #9: Industrial Site Evaluation and Improvement Program

The aforementioned initiatives are wholly aligned with the LRBA's stated mission and comprise foundational elements of a regional economic development program. However, as illustrated throughout the research and strategic planning process, effective economic development in today's climate goes far beyond the traditional legs of the economic development stool: business attraction, business retention and expansion, and new business development. Effective economic development, ideally advanced via the region's CEDS, necessitates attention on a variety of other factors that influence the relative attractiveness and competitiveness of a region for prospective and existing businesses; this includes but is certainly not limited to efforts to enhance the quality of place (i.e. Key Initiatives #10 and #11), to elevate educational attainment and workforce preparedness (i.e. Key Initiatives #6 and #7), and to prepare adequate infrastructure to support the movements of people and goods (i.e. Key Initiative #8). The LRBA will also assume a key role in helping to convene the recommended Image and Identity Partnership tasked with developing a new Regional Image and Branding Campaign (Key Initiative #1).

Filling this leadership role in advancing the region's CEDs will necessitate the acquisition of new resources at LRBA, both staff capacity and new financial resources will be needed to support new program implementation and expansion of existing programs in alignment with the CEDs' recommendations. A brief discussion of the necessary financial and staff resources to support CEDs implementation are covered in the section entitled "Implementation Capacity."

**In summary, the LRBA can serve as the principal organization responsible for staff-driven implementation of relevant CEDs key initiatives.** It will serve as the external "face" of the region's collective economic development community, and as such, the commitment of its staff and volunteer (board) leadership will be essential to the success of the implementation effort. But the LRBA should not be expected to lead in all areas of the CEDs or advance certain initiatives in isolation. Furthermore, it cannot be reasonably expected to provide the necessary financial or staff resources to execute each element of the CEDs. These limitations in capacity highlight the importance of the Implementation Committee and the ongoing support that can be provided by the Local Government Council (LGC).

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL (LGC)

The Region 2000 Local Government Council (LGC) serves as one of the Commonwealth's 21 planning districts, which are established to encourage and promote local government cooperation and regional planning as it relates to a district's physical, social, and economic challenges and opportunities that are of regional significance. The LGC is responsible for maintaining and updating the region's CEDs with the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA), ensuring that the region and its local governments remain eligible for certain federal funding opportunities and forms of planning or technical assistance afforded by the EDA's Economic Adjustment Assistance and Public Works programs.

During the strategic planning process, the LGC demonstrated a commitment to uphold its role as the organization responsible for maintaining the region's CEDs and submitting regular updates to the EDA to ensure compliance and continued eligibility for regional funding opportunities. It has also demonstrated a commitment to maintain the provision of staff support to the CEDs Steering Committee over time, including support for a new Implementation Committee that will be derived in part from the existing CEDs Steering Committee. In this regard, the LGC can provide important staff support to the business and community leaders who have convened as an Implementation Committee to collaboratively advance the initiatives outlined in the CEDs. The LGC can and should also maintain its role as a communicator of CEDs impact, providing regular updates to the region and its leadership regarding progress towards key measures of performance and competitiveness (see section entitled "Performance Measurement"), and overall implementation progress. This includes but is not limited to updating and maintaining the existing Region 2000 Local Economy Dashboard ([www.region2000dashboard.org](http://www.region2000dashboard.org)). It can also help local governments pursue certain federal funding opportunities, authoring statements of support and/or grant application assistance.

**In summary, the LGC can serve as the principal organization responsible for providing administrative and technical staff support to the Implementation Committee (including assistance with meeting scheduling, logistics, communications, etc.), communicating implementation progress, and serving as the liaison between the region and the EDA for the purposes of CEDs updates and annual reports, EDA grant applicants, and other relevant matters.**

## IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

The Implementation Guidelines included for each initiative in the CEDS identify various implementation partners that can and should be engaged by the CEDS Implementation Committee, the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance, and the Local Government Council in their efforts to advance implementation of the eleven key initiatives and their many tactical elements. The table below is a non-comprehensive list of the many partners that are mentioned in those implementation guidelines for each initiative. The Implementation Committee can regularly update this table as implementation progresses to reflect the collective and collaborative nature of the implementation effort, and to recognize sponsors and supporters of various initiatives.

Organization	Organization
Academy Center of the Arts	Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance
Appalachian Power	Lynchburg Regional Transportation Advocacy Group
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Virginia	Lynchburg Region's Technology Council
Business Community	Lynchburg Retail Merchants Association
Center for Advanced Engineering Research	Lynch's Landing
Chambers of Commerce in the Region	Main Street Programs
Colleges and Universities	Parks and Recreation Departments
Convention and Visitors Bureaus	Region 2000 Business Services Team
Economic Development Administration	Region 2000 Talent Solutions Team
Export-Import Bank of the United States	Regional Economic Developers ("RED Team")
Future Focus Foundation	Small Business Administration
Governor's Office	Small Business Development Center
Greater Lynchburg Transit Company	State Council for Higher Education in Virginia
Human Resource Professionals	State and Federal Elected Representatives
International Trade Administration	United Way of Central Virginia
James River Association	Utilities
James River Council for the Arts and Humanities	Virginia Center for the Creative Arts
K-12 Public School Districts	Virginia Department of Education
Kaufmann Foundation	Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
Leadership Lynchburg	Virginia Department of Transportation
Local Education Foundations	Virginia Economic Development Partnership
Local Government Council	Virginia International Trade Corp.
Local Governments	Virginia Small Business Finance Authority
Lynchburg Business Development Centre	Workforce Development Board
Lynchburg Regional Airport	Young Professionals of Central Virginia

## Implementation Capacity

Implementation of the region's CEDS will undoubtedly require new resources, both in the form of new staff and new financial resources to support specific investments and initiatives. This section will briefly discuss the staff and financial resource requirements that may be necessary to support effective implementation of the CEDS' initiatives.

### STAFF RESOURCES

As previously discussed, the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance (LRBA) will assume a leadership role in the implementation of various initiatives outlined in the CEDS, specifically:

- ✓ Key Initiative #2: Existing Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program
- ✓ Key Initiative #3: Regional Marketing and Corporate Recruitment Campaign
- ✓ Key Initiative #4: Regional Entrepreneurship Center
- ✓ Key Initiative #5: Technology-Based Economic Gardening and Entrepreneur-in-Residence
- ✓ Key Initiative #9: Industrial Site Evaluation and Improvement Program

The CEO of LRBA, with support from the Director of Marketing and others on staff, and in partnership with the RED Team (local economic developers), principally executes the organization's economic development marketing program. Given the degree to which the effectiveness of economic development marketing efforts relates to the strength of relationships between a community or economic developer and a prospect or site selector, it is appropriate for the CEO to maintain a lead role in the execution of this portion of the organization's strategy. The LRBA's CEO has developed and maintained certain relationships over time and it is important that these relationships be leveraged in the near-term, particularly as the organization seeks to establish strong brand recognition for its new identity and structure, communicate new programmatic objectives and investments related to this CEDS, and refocus its marketing and corporate recruitment efforts in alignment with a recently completed Target Sector Analysis. Accordingly, it is recommended that no additional staff capacity be added to support Key Initiative #3 in the near-term.

However, it is recommended that the LRBA add staff capacity in the coming year to support the effective implementation of Key Initiative #2 (Existing Business Retention and Expansion Program) – a high priority initiative as identified by the CEDS Steering Committee. Existing business outreach is a labor-intensive endeavor. The LRBA should conduct a search in early 2017 for an **Existing Business Program Manager** to design (in accordance with the CEDS recommendations) and deploy the region's collaborative approach to existing business retention and expansion outreach. The ideal candidate will have similar experience in existing business retention and economic development project management, as well as existing relationships with relevant contacts in the field (particularly those at VEDP, area utilities, and other partners supporting existing business expansion projects). This individual could also be responsible for overseeing the development of the Industrial Site Evaluation and Improvement Program (Key Initiative #9). It should be expected that total annual costs for this position (inclusive of salary, benefits, and employer taxes) lie within the range of \$60,000-\$80,000 depending upon qualifications.

The LRBA recently conducted a search to fill a position for a Vice President of Technology and Economic Development but did not fill position. This individual was envisioned to play a critical role in advancing Key Initiatives #4 and #5 in partnership with the Lynchburg Region's Technology Council and other relevant implementation partners serving on the CEDS Implementation Committee. While there would unquestionably be value in having this position filled as soon as possible, other initiatives from the CEDS have emerged as slightly higher priorities, and accordingly, greater attention and focus should be placed on ensuring that these initiatives – principally Key Initiatives #1 (Regional image and Branding Campaign) #2 (Existing Business Retention and Expansion program), and #6 (Talent Coalition) as successfully launched and effectively resources, both in terms of staff commitments and financial resources. A search for the Vice President of Technology and Economic Development could begin again around the conclusion of 2017, once LRBA fundraising (see next section entitled "Financial Resources") has been completed and implementation priorities have been advanced. Consideration should be given to the ability of this individual to potential serve multiple roles and/or transition into the position of **Director for the Center of Entrepreneurship** (Key Initiative #4). Consideration must also be given to the manner in which this individual will interface with the recommended **Entrepreneur-in-Residence** and the technology-based economic gardening initiative that they anticipated to support (Key Initiative #5). Both positions will require an individual with considerable experience as a successful entrepreneur and/or advisor to and funder of technology-based startups. Attracting the right candidate could necessitate a substantive salary and compensation package.

Finally, it will be important for the region and the work of the CEDS Implementation Committee to be supported by an **Implementation Coordinator**. This role can potentially be filled by existing staff capacity at the Local Government Council (LGC). The LGC has committed to provide ongoing administrative support to the CEDS Implementation Committee by way of communications, meeting scheduling, and coordination of necessary updates to the CEDS. Potential also exists for the LGC to provide assistance to local governments in submitting grant applications to the EDA to support specific initiatives and projects outlined in this CEDS (particularly those identified in Key Initiative #8). It is appropriate for this role to be housed at the LGC for the moment given its role as regional liaison to the U.S. Economic Development Administration, and given that LRBA should ideally focus its current and potential new resources (to be derived from a forthcoming fundraising campaign; see subsequent section entitled "Financial Resources") on filling the aforementioned staff positions that directly support the organization's mission and program of work, including implementation of the initiatives outlined above for which it will lead implementation. Many larger metropolitan regions devote a full-time position to coordinating the work of volunteers and partners as it is related to strategy implementation and communicating progress to relevant audiences. At present, such a full-time position would be unwarranted but the region should carefully consider if such full-time capacity would be helpful and viable, perhaps at the conclusion of the first year implementation effort (early 2018).

## FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The various Implementation Guidelines that are included in the description of each of the eleven Key initiatives outlined the CEDS include rough estimated of cost ranges for these initiatives and the tactics supporting them. In many cases, these costs are noted to be “highly variable” given the nature of certain recommendations and the work that remains to secure financial and organizational commitments from various implementation partners and other sources of funding, and the degree to which those commitments influence the viability, scale, and scope of certain initiatives. Further, while some initiatives are core economic and workforce development programs that require budgets of a few hundred thousand dollars, other initiatives outline potentially multi-million dollar investments (such as transportation infrastructure projects outlined in Key Initiative #8, or physical developments such as a new Center for Entrepreneurship in Key Initiative #5). For these reasons, it is unreasonable and unproductive to attempt to derive a total cost estimate for the implementation of a region's CEDS.

However, when possible, it is important to identify any financial resource deficiencies within organizations that will be tasked with leading implementation of many initiatives, most notably, the LRBA. The Implementation Guidelines that accompany each of the eleven initiatives also include references to potential funding sources, identifying LRBA as the primary financial supporter for multiple initiatives. The LRBA is currently conducting a feasibility study associated with the implementation of a new five-year program of work, of which a large portion is appropriately derived from the CEDS initiatives. Upon completion of the feasibility study, the LRBA will launch a new fundraising campaign to raise the necessary resources to effectively implement its program of work, inclusive of various CEDS initiatives. Prior to the launch of the fundraising campaign, it should be ensured that fundraising targets consider the full spectrum of potential costs and recommended staff resources at LRBA included herein.

Aside from augmentations to the LRBA's budget by way of a new fundraising campaign, the CEDS will require aggressive pursuit of grant monies from regional, state, and national institutions – be they public entities (such as the Economic Development Administration) or nonprofits with missions that align with certain CEDS initiatives (such as the Edward Lowe Foundation or the United Way). Many communities and regions leave hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars on the table due simply to lack of pursuit. The CEDS is written not only to encourage regional collaboration but also to enable a region, its local governments, and its institutions to seek available funding opportunities from the federal government. While the grant application and review process can be time consuming and disappointing if monies are not awarded, these are not excuses for choosing not to pursue available monies that can greatly impact the CEDS implementation effort.

Perhaps most importantly, effective implementation will require a commitment from local governments to invest in their future: their people, the institutions that enhance their well-being, and the assets that enable economic growth and resilience. The overwhelming majority of available grant opportunities will require a local match, and local governments will need to demonstrate their willingness to fund certain initiatives before the federal government (or certain nonprofits) will consider awarding funds to the region. But absent available grant monies, the region's local governments will nonetheless need to demonstrate a willingness to invest in infrastructure and assets that enable the region to be more competitive for economic development projects and which enhance the return on investment associated with economic development marketing expenditures, talent attraction and retention efforts, and other initiatives within the CEDS.

## Implementation Schedule and Priorities

The CEDS outlines eleven key initiatives, each of which will necessitate a variety of different activities to advance over time. While some initiatives are already underway to some degree and the CEDS recommendations reflect realignment or repositioning of these existing efforts (such as the region's approach to targeted corporate recruitment), the overwhelming majority are new initiatives that will require a series of intentional actions to advance. And while there is enthusiasm for all of the CEDS initiatives among Steering Committee members, there is acknowledgement that the region cannot attempt to do everything at once. Certain initiatives will require capacity – either financial or staff, or both – to execute, while others will require additional tactical planning by a collaborative group of community leaders: the Implementation Committee and any relevant, necessary subcommittees.

This portion of the Implementation Plan provides a recap of the Steering Committee's prioritization of the eleven key initiatives, some brief commentary on the timing of implementation as it relates to this prioritization, and a general overview of some key milestones during the implementation phase.

### IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

Upon reaching consensus on the CEDS initiatives, Steering Committee members were provided with two opportunities to communicate their opinions regarding the relative priority of each initiative according to its perceived importance and impact: a dot voting exercise and a follow-up online survey. During the September 2016 meeting, the 26 Steering Committee members present were given the opportunity to assign four votes to twelve initiatives outlined in a draft of the CEDS. Through this prioritization exercise, it was revealed that little support persisted for one initiative – the deployment of free public wireless internet – with this one initiative receiving just one vote out of the 104 votes cast (4 votes for each of the 26 Committee members). The online survey then allowed all Committee members, particularly those who were not able to be present at the September meeting, with an opportunity to prioritize the remaining eleven initiatives. The results of these two prioritization exercises are as follows.

#### PRIORITIZATION: DOT VOTING (MOST VOTES = HIGHEST PRIORITY)

Key Initiative	Total Votes
Key Initiative #6: Regional Talent Coalition	17
Key Initiative #1: Image and Identity Partnership/Campaign	16
Key Initiative #2: Existing Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program	16
Key Initiative #8: Priority Transportation, Broadband, and Other Infrastructure Projects	11
Key Initiative #3: Regional Marketing and Corporate Recruitment Campaign	8
Key Initiative #7: Regional Workforce Center	8
Key Initiative #4: Regional Entrepreneurship Center	7
Key Initiative #9: Industrial Site Evaluation and Improvement Program	6
Key Initiative #10: Regional Riverfront Vision	6
Key Initiative #5: Technology-Based Economic Gardening and Entrepreneur-in-Residence	5
Key Initiative #11: Expansion of Arts and Culture Districts	3

**PRIORITIZATION: SURVEY RESULTS (1 = TOP PRIORITY; 11 = LOWEST PRIORITY)**

Key Initiative	Avg. Rating
Key Initiative #6: Regional Talent Coalition	4.1
Key Initiative #2: Existing Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program	4.3
Key Initiative #1: Image and Identity Partnership/Campaign	4.7
Key Initiative #4: Regional Entrepreneurship Center	5.4
Key Initiative #3: Regional Marketing and Corporate Recruitment Campaign	5.8
Key Initiative #7: Regional Workforce Center	5.9
Key Initiative #8: Priority Transportation, Broadband, and Other Infrastructure Projects	6.0
Key Initiative #9: Industrial Site Evaluation and Improvement Program	6.7
Key Initiative #5: Technology-Based Economic Gardening and Entrepreneur-in-Residence	6.9
Key Initiative #10: Regional Riverfront Vision	7.4
Key Initiative #11: Expansion of Arts and Culture Districts	8.8

While there is some variation between the results of the two exercises, there are important similarities and areas of consensus at the two ends of the spectrum:

- ✓ Key Initiatives #1, #2, and #6 were evaluated as the three highest priorities in both exercises
- ✓ Key Initiatives #5, #10, and #11 were evaluated as the lowest priorities in both exercises

A few additional observations regarding prioritization and the manner in which these priorities relate to an appropriate implementation schedule are warranted.

Although Key Initiative #9 – the intentional evaluation and improvement of industrial sites throughout the region – was evaluated to be a relatively low priority by Steering Committee members (7<sup>th</sup> out of the 11 initiatives), it could be argued that these efforts should be prioritized above others that received higher marks (notably Key Initiative #3 – the Regional Marketing and Corporate Recruitment Campaign). Simply put, the effectiveness of any regional economic development marketing and corporate recruitment efforts are compromised in the Lynchburg region given the availability and preparation of the region's industrial sites. Return on investment associated with these tactics contained within Key Initiative #3 will be greatly enhanced if the region has quality "product" (marketable sites) to sell to prospective employers evaluating the region as a potential site location.

Similarly, it could be argued that Key Initiative #10 – the advancement of riverfront developments and enhancements throughout the region – should be elevated to a higher priority. It is important to recall from the Regional Assessment that when asked to identify what they would like to see different about the region in ten years, the most frequently mentioned word by the more than 1,100 residents that responded to the online survey was "downtown." This reflects the fact that residents – the region's workforce – are seeking improvements in the quality of place, improvements that can increase the likelihood that they (and others like them) will want to live and work in the Lynchburg region.

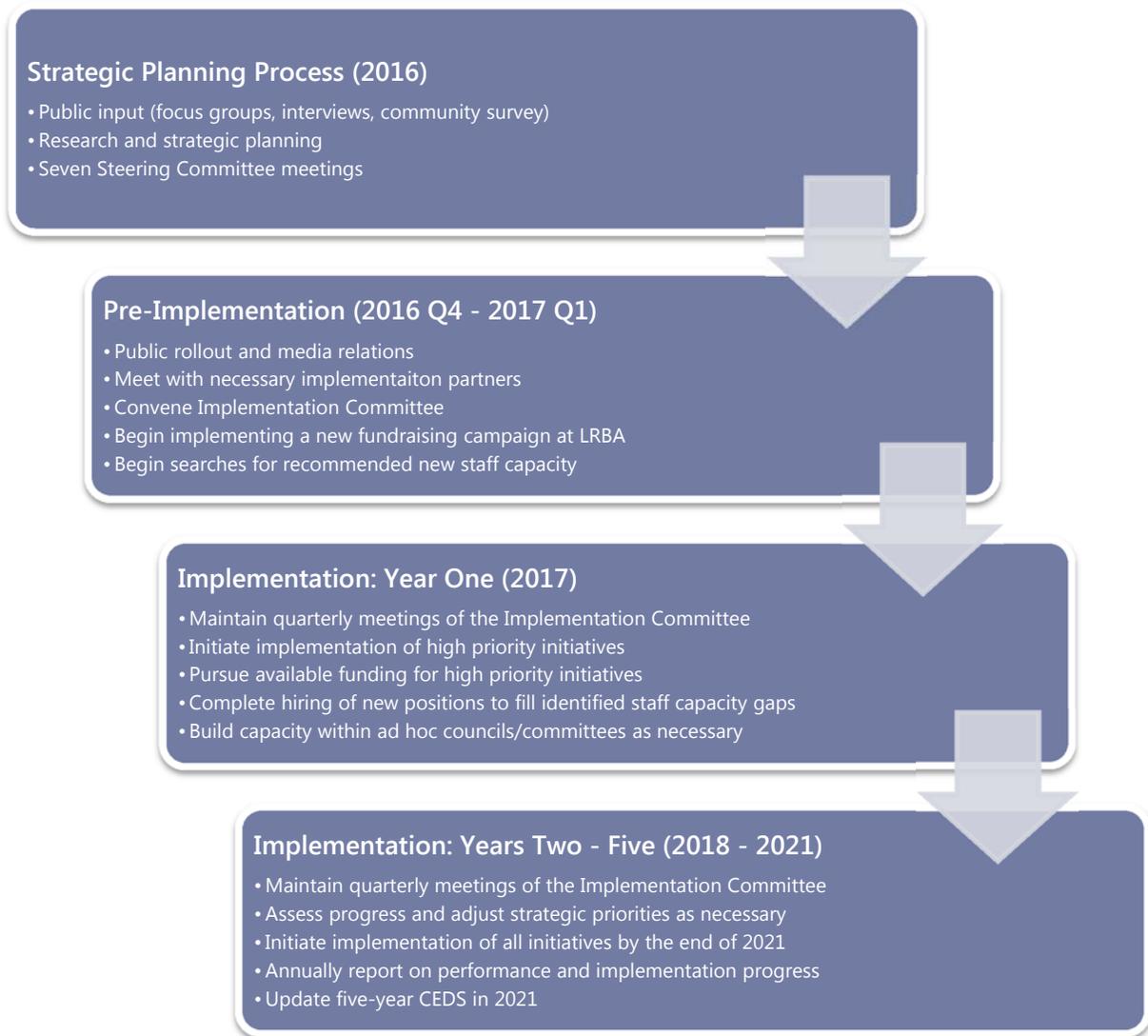
SURVEY QUESTION: "IMAGINE THAT YOU WENT HOME, PACKED YOUR BAGS, AND DIDN'T RETURN TO THE LYNCHBURG REGION FOR TEN YEARS. WHAT WOULD YOU WANT TO SEE DIFFERENT (IF ANYTHING) ABOUT THE COMMUNITY WHEN YOU RETURN?"



Source: Market Street Services, Region 2000 Community Survey (2016)

## OVERVIEW: IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Successful communities and the organizations that support them never stop planning. But successful communities and organizations also do not allow the processes of conversing and strategic planning – as important as they are – to impede the process of doing. The following graphic provides a high-level overview of the planned implementation effort and a few key milestones along the way.



## Performance Measurement

Performance measurement is critical to any economic development or community improvement initiative. The process of establishing and tracking performance metrics will allow the region and the CEDS Implementation Committee to assess and effectively communicate progress towards implementing the CEDS. Performance measurement can help determine if implementation is having the desired impact and producing the desired return on investment.

Many regions must start from scratch in designing their performance metrics and the mechanisms for communicating those results and outcomes to specific audiences and the general public. Fortunately, the Lynchburg region already has a viable mechanism for communicating performance as it relates to CEDS implementation: the Region 2000 Local Economy Dashboard ([www.region2000dashboard.org](http://www.region2000dashboard.org)). The dashboard has been used by the LGC to track regional performance in a variety of indicators that align with the region's CEDS.

Following this update to the region's CEDS it is logical to continue utilization of the dashboard to communicate regional outcomes, but it is also necessary and appropriate to revise the dashboard in a manner that aligns with the updated CEDS, its goals, and its key initiatives. At present the dashboard provides data for the region, as well as state and national benchmarks when available, for a limited set of indicators in six thematic areas. It is recommended that the dashboard can be revised in the following manner:



- A. Design a new landing page that provides a visual overview of a key indicators of Regional Competitiveness: a concise set of performance metrics that relate to the findings of the Regional Assessment, the initiatives advanced by the CEDS, and the outcomes that they wish to affect. Similar to the content that is presented on the existing dashboard, this landing page would communicate and visualize performance towards this concise set of indicators that speak to “Regional Competitiveness” and reflect issues of economic performance and resilience, workforce sustainability, and the well-being of residents and workers in the region. Annual updates would be made to this section as relevant publicly-available data is often released on an annual basis. Recommended metrics to track on this landing page include:

1. Total employment
2. Employment by target sector
3. Employment by firm size (% of employment in establishments with fewer than 50 employees)
4. Unemployment rate
5. Average annual wages
6. Per capita income
7. Poverty rate
8. Net migration
9. Educational attainment (% of adults with at least a two-year college degree)
10. Age composition (% of population aged 25-44)

- B. Realign the areas of focus and top navigation on the dashboard to align with the five goal areas of the updated CEDS, utilizing abbreviations denoted in parentheses as follows:
1. ...projecting a positive image and cultivating our distinct identity (Image and Identity)
  2. ...facilitating the growth and expansion of our business community (Business Growth)
  3. ...educating and developing a sustainable workforce; (Workforce Sustainability)
  4. ...investing in the connectivity of our region, and; (Regional Connectivity)
  5. ...supporting the vitality of our diverse communities and downtowns. (Community Vitality)
- C. Adjust the focus of each of the five aforementioned pages such that they communicate the activities that are planned, underway, or completed by the Implementation Committee and the partners that are leading implementation of certain initiatives within the CEDS. Quarterly updates would be made to this portion of the website following each Implementation Committee meeting, or when relevant updates are available. These updates can also be used to inform the production of annual reports.

## ESTABLISHING GOALS FOR PERFORMANCE METRICS

The practice of establishing long-term goals associated with economic development strategy implementation (i.e. "create 7,000 jobs in the next five years" or "increase per capita income to \$45,000 by 2018") has become commonplace in the economic development field. These kinds of long-term goals are often perceived to be necessary by organizations, fundraisers, and at times, investors, who want to know that the strategy in which they are investing and supporting will have substantive regional impact. The limitations of this long-term goal-setting approach often outweigh the potential benefit; simply put, it is difficult, nearly impossible, to establish a meaningful goal for certain metrics given the uncertainty that surrounds a variety of external factors influencing such metrics. The impact of the Great Recession provides a perfect example. Countless economic development organizations had established lofty job creation goals (and similar goals for a variety of other metrics) in the years immediately preceding the Great Recession. Once the national financial crisis took hold, these organization's had little hope of hitting their established goals as business investment and expansion dried up nationwide.

Furthermore, there is often such a substantial lag in the release of publicly-available data. This lag often means that organizations and regions must wait up to two or three years after the conclusion of their implementation phase to measure the degree to which they achieved certain goals or pre-established metrics, they. So, for example, a region that established measureable goals for 2021, a five-year strategy to be implemented from 2017-2021, could have to wait until 2023 or 2024 to collect the necessary data to fully evaluate the degree to which they reached their pre-established goals. By this point, most of these organizations are in the midst of another implementation cycle, and have necessarily already completed any associated fundraising for which such performance metrics might help communicate return on investment from past fundraising and implementation efforts.

Rather than establish specific goals that often have little value to the implementation effort, it is recommended that the Implementation Committee, with support from the LGC and LRBA, annually track the metrics recommended in the preceding section and provide context for the region's performance by appropriately benchmarking regional performance against the Commonwealth and the nation, as currently executed on the Region 2000 Local Economy Dashboard.

## APPENDIX: BEST PRACTICES

### RVA CREATES (RICHMOND, VIRGINIA)

RVA Creates is an initiative in Richmond, Virginia to develop and deploy an “open-source experiment in identity and creativity” that would result in a brand that the community can embrace and own. However, it is described by the various project partners as “sort of a brand, without the catchy slogans and formal rules that accompany most brands.”

RVA Creates is the brainchild of Venture Richmond, Richmond’s downtown development organization. Through a partnership with various community entities – The Martin Agency, VCU Brandcenter, West Cary Group, J H I, Elevation and The Hodges Partnership – Venture Richmond and the City of Richmond developed the aforementioned “experiment” to engage the community and advance “RVA.” In 2009 and 2010, Venture Richmond worked with these partners and others to discover that the acronym RVA, a longstanding identifier for the region, was a concise and effective moniker for the area. The partners wanted to provide residents with an opportunity to make the RVA moniker and brand reflect their sense of place. ITO do so, they advanced an open-source platform that allowed residents to upload images and customize their version of a simple RVA logo. To support mass adoption of the RVA brand an initial order of 5,000 RVA stickers was placed. By the end of 2011, more than 50,000 stickers had been printed and distributed throughout the region based on surprising demand.

Another open-source element – a contest soliciting submissions for a television advertisement promoting downtown Richmond – was deployed in 2012.

The RVA brand is widespread today with stickers and a variety of other merchandise visible throughout the region, the state, and wherever the area’s residents travel, promoting the region’s brand around the world. Numerous organizations and businesses have adopted the RVA acronym in their name, marketing materials, advertisements, or other attributes and operations. By providing a basic level of ownership and input into shaping the brand identity, and by investing in resources (stickers) that would help disseminate the brand by way of the area’s residents, RVA Creates was able to create a successful branding initiative that reinforced pride and sense of place among those who can be a region’s greatest ambassadors: its current residents.

### RALLY ST. LOUIS (ST. LOUIS, MO)

Rally St. Louis is an online platform, born out of the “St. Louis Doesn’t Suck” campaign that was launched in an effort to change the negative perception outsiders had about St. Louis. The campaign sought to bring attention to and highlight the positive aspects of the community – the low cost of living, quality education options, plentiful employment opportunities, and the recreation and cultural resources. Through the suggestions and opinions of ways to market St. Louis’ positive aspects, the online platform, Rally St. Louis, was created in November 2012. The online avenue allows for all residents to participate in community development and more accurately portrays the diverse region’s needs by giving residents that typically aren’t in positions of power to make such decisions, an opportunity to voice their opinions and desires for the community.

The success and popularity of the platform rests on this fact that, rather than rely on a singular organization to decide what is best for the community, St. Louis residents all have an outlet to submit their own ideas on how to improve and market their community. A board, made up of community stakeholders, social organizations, and local businesses, sifts through all the submitted ideas and posts those that they feel would potentially best benefit the area. The platform empowers residents to take an active part in the bettering of their community and further allows for easy access to then vote on which ideas they support. The ideas citizens submit are categorized in a range of topics that includes beautification projects, educational programs, marketing ideas, and non-profit organizations. Those ideas with the top number of votes then go through a funding phase after the budgeting committee has estimated the costs and resources needed to complete the project. Residents and organizations can then support the idea through a donation on the website to fund the project. Several projects have materialized including a children's exhibit at the airport and an urban community garden, among others.

### "WE DON'T COAST" (OMAHA, NEBRASKA)

Largely to overcome Omaha's "flyover" community perception, the Greater Omaha Chamber launched a regional brand and image initiative based upon extensive research showing that Omaha ranks highly against other metro areas across the country but lacked an identity. The Chamber convened thousands to create a cohesive, recognizable brand that sought to communicate the region's attributes, character and "can do" spirit. We Don't Coast was launched as a multi-faceted campaign to use across the region to share greater Omaha's story; positively communicate its character; and grow, retain, and attract business and talent. The campaign was presented a 2015 ACE: Award of Excellence by the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives. Though it is not exclusively an internal brand, the We Don't Coast initiative in Omaha was nevertheless intended to serve both an external and internal awareness-building purpose to positively commute the attractiveness and distinctiveness of the greater Omaha region.

### BUSINESS FIRST, GREATER RICHMOND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP (RICHMOND, VA)

Launched in 2006, Business First is a collaborative, regional, existing business retention and expansion (BRE) program of the Greater Richmond Regional Partnership and its local government partners. Professional economic development staff and trained volunteers from the business community interview CEOs and other top company officials to fully understand the company's competitiveness and its long-term prospects for growth. Interviews cover a wide range of topics and findings include hiring prospects for the next year, perceptions of the regional workforce and specific skill shortages, projected sales, and business climate issues. The data allows the GRP to gauge the health of the regional economy, develop an early warning system to foretell potential future layoffs, and provide targeted solutions to existing businesses. Companies reached by the program receive a high level of customer service and access to a wide variety of resources. The program also responds to specific requests for assistance. By partnering with local government entities, the program leverages the full suite of available resources and provides customized service to businesses.

Thousands of face-to-face interviews have been conducted with business owners and chief executives throughout the region since 2006, collecting a tremendous amount of valuable information and feedback

on everything from regulatory issues to expansion plans to workforce needs. The Partnership works with a network of partners to provide a variety of support in areas such as local government services, finance, workforce development, international trade and business planning. All participant responses are confidential and used to provide direct assistance where needed. Information is also aggregated to help develop a better understanding of critical business issues facing the region at-large.

Since 2006, the program has helped create more than 2,000 new jobs from employer expansion and retain more than 2,500 jobs that were at risk of elimination from workforce reductions, closures, or relocations. During the height of the national recession (FY 2010–2011), Business First staffers and volunteers met with 567 companies. Assisted companies created 1,045 jobs, invested \$68 million in capital investment, and retained 172 jobs during the year. The program has been recognized by the Virginia Chamber of Commerce for its significant contributions to economic development. The Partnership produces a detailed annual report specifically devoted to the Business First program and its successes, and has its own website which helps convey the program's intent and allow staff to "get their foot in door." This annual report and the Business First program have received numerous awards from organizations such as the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) and the Southern Economic Development Council (SEDC).

## MEMPHIS REGIONAL LOGISTICS COUNCIL (MEMPHIS, TN)

The Memphis Regional Logistics Council (RLC) was established in 2004 by the Memphis Regional Chamber as a way to strengthen both the Memphis metro area and the tri-state region as a whole. By addressing Memphis' ever-growing, ever-changing role in global distribution and logistics, the council works to establish the Memphis region as a leader in the industry, and to better tap into its role as "America's Distribution Center." The RLC is comprised of logistics and distribution professionals who lend their insights to the region's myriad logistics and distribution issues. Members include trucking and drainage companies, freight forwarders, steamship lines, railroads, air carriers, contractors, developers, barge lines, warehouses, and distributors.

At meetings, professionals are encouraged to share their ideas and expertise regarding how to improve Memphis' ability to be a logistics center. The council includes four main committees: infrastructure, marketing, workforce development, and strategic alliances.

The infrastructure committee recently helped execute the contract for the region's new Memphis: America's Aerotropolis strategy. The marketing committee works to brand the community and promote Memphis' assets and support the Chamber's ongoing marketing efforts, including but not limited to the targeted in-house publication HUB magazine with a circulation exceeding 20,000; hosting editors of major logistics and supply sector trade publications for the Logistics Tour of Memphis; full advertising supplemental section to Inbound Logistics; and the maintenance of a frequently updated and interactive website promoting regional logistics capabilities.

The workforce development committee focuses on promoting the city's economy by improving the quality of its workforce. The strategic alliance committee works to develop partnerships critical to logistics growth. The committee builds relationships with national and international logistics hubs, trade associations, and corporations, from the Port of Savannah to the American Railroad Association.

## "AUSTIN: THE HUMAN CAPITAL" (AUSTIN, TX)

One of the key findings from Market Street's 2003 Opportunity Austin strategic process was the perception in the economic development community that Greater Austin was not "in the game" of employment growth and quality recruitment. With unemployment at near-record lows and the job market flush, regional public and private leadership did not want to risk a cannibalization of skilled workers that would result from robust job-creation efforts. As a result, economic development marketing efforts were almost non-existent prior to Opportunity Austin implementation.

A key strategic recommendation to announce to the economic development world that Greater Austin was refocused on strong employment and wage growth led to recharged efforts to "get the word out" to corporations, site selection and corporate relocation professionals, and the national media that metro Austin was again "open for business."

The result of the Greater Austin Chamber's strong push into external marketing was a new brand and tagline ("Austin: The Human Capital"), a refreshed website, and a new, multi-channel marketing effort complete with direct mail, horizontal and vertical trade publication advertising, on-line advertising, trade-show visitation, location advisor-hosting events, public relations-coordinated media placements, target-specific marketing materials, and other tools.

As a component of Opportunity Austin implementation, the Greater Austin Chamber completely redesigned its website and created an additional site specific to the technology and innovation economy. Chamber officials have received positive feedback from prospects and site-selection professionals on the comprehensiveness of the main site's data, navigability and user-friendliness, and provision of support services information. Because of the efficacy of the website, Chamber officials said they are being called later in the game by site consultants who have short-listed Austin based on web-provided information alone.

In addition, the Greater Austin Chamber contracts with a New York/Dallas-based communications firm to handle proactive media placement, crisis communications, arrangement of out-of-market interviews, and other selected services. The firm secured Austin-centered stories in such influential publications as the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Economist, Business Week, Business 2.0, and other publications.

In 2011, a survey of both site selectors and C-level executives in Austin's target sectors found that while site selectors knew about and liked Austin's "Human Capital" campaign, C-level executives had very low awareness of the slogan, although they did have strong knowledge of Austin and Texas' favorable business, talent, and quality of life rankings. The survey and phone interviews found that C-levels preferred peer-to-peer contact in making location decisions and shaping their impressions of regions for business-friendliness.

As a result, the Chamber worked to ramp up its public relations efforts to target C-levels, seeing placement in targeted industry publications read by executives—for example, Information Management—and enhancing industry segments for national and international news story ideas. These renewed efforts also leverage Austin's business leaders as the "faces" to the metro's positive rankings and position top CEOs in the region as experts and national industry leaders.

## EARNED MEDIA/PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY (CHATTANOOGA, TN)

Ever since Walter Cronkite called Chattanooga the “dirtiest city in America” in the 1970s, the community has been focused on changing both its local realities and also external perceptions. Beginning in the 2000s, the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, partnering with the region’s Convention and Visitor’s Bureau, contracted with a national public relations firm to try to change the outside perceptions of Chattanooga as a declining industrial city with few modern assets for companies, talent, or visitors.

Focusing on strengths such as its revitalized downtown, America’s first city-wide gigabit fiber network, emerging entrepreneurial climate, and other assets, the public relations (earned media) strategy has seen notable success. Since implementing the strategy, the Chattanooga region has been featured in hundreds of business media placements with more than 1 billion impressions worldwide in a wide range of national, regional trade and online outlets including The Wall Street Journal, New York Times, The Economist, Fortune, CNN, Fox Business News, CNBC, and The Huffington Post. The tourism and visitation campaign was also effective, with nearly 1 billion impressions showcasing Chattanooga in outlets such as ABC News, Birmingham Parent, Baltimore Sun, Chicago Tribune, Delta SKY, Forbes.com, Georgia Magazine, National Geographic Weekend, Preservation, and Southern Living.

## REACH OUT TO DROPOUTS (HOUSTON, TEXAS)

The Houston Independent School District first implemented a program in 2004 that sought to re-engage students who had recently dropped out of high school. This program – Reach Out to Dropouts – has been tremendously successful in its short history and has been adopted by other surrounding communities in Texas as well as other school districts nationwide. The program is supported by volunteers from throughout the community (concerned citizens, teachers, administrators, business leaders, and the United Way) who walk door-to-door in teams to visit the families of students that have not re-enrolled in school within the first few weeks of a new school year or failed to graduate the previous year for a variety of reasons.

During the 2008 walk in Houston, nearly 1,200 volunteers made contact with more than 680 students or parents, and 60 students began the re-enrollment process on the day of the walk. Many more re-enrolled in the following days with subsequent follow-ups by volunteers. The Fort Bend Independent School District replicated Houston’s program in 2009. With only one participating high school, 68 volunteers visited 106 homes, contacted 72 students or parents, and re-enrolled 20 students. The Lamar Consolidated Independent School District, also in Fort Bend County, visited 65 homes, spoke with 37 families, and re-enrolled 26 students.

The initiative has since been expanded to at least 13 school districts in the Houston metropolitan area, with many other Texas communities joining in recent years, including but not limited to Dallas, Fort Worth, El Paso, and San Antonio. Similar efforts have been coordinated in Des Moines, Iowa and other parts of the country.

## FINANCIAL AID SATURDAYS (AUSTIN, TEXAS)

While the Austin metro area has one of the most educated workforces in the nation, the Greater Austin Chamber recognized that much of the highly-educated population was the result of in-migration for high-technology sector jobs and University of Texas - Austin enrollment. With the support of three local school districts, six higher education institutions, and 12 community organizations and companies, the Greater Austin Chamber worked in the first phase of its "20,010 by 2010" program to boost local higher education enrollment by 30 percent over 48 months. The goal is to grow total regional enrollment in institutions of higher education to 20,010 by 2010.

A component of this effort was a program called Financial Aid Saturdays. In order to help meet increased higher education enrollment goals, the Chamber provided support to Austin, Round Rock, and Manor Independent School Districts (ISDs) to increase FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) submission by 15 percent for students graduating in 2007. The Chamber organized and trained volunteers to make calls, answer questions, and walk students and their families through the process of applying for financial aid. In the first phase of the program, the Chamber's more than 200 volunteers assisted over 500 families in filing FAFSA applications.

## CARPE DM (DES MOINES, IA)

Found at the address [www.SeizeDesMoines.com](http://www.SeizeDesMoines.com), Carpe DM is an online portal developed by the Greater Des Moines Partnership as a landing pad for existing and potential talent interested in the region. The Partnership built the central content with links to a comprehensive database of information on moving to and/or discovering Des Moines. Much content is expected to be user-generated, with local volunteers serving as site coordinators for various functions and topic areas.

The site launched in early 2014 with information and links to finding a career; starting a business; local primary, secondary, and higher education; housing options, including rentals and real estate broken down by community; transportation in the metro and outside of it; volunteer and network opportunities for students, young professionals, career-minded adults, families, and empty nesters; local farmers markets, health care, spiritual communities; local arts, sports, politics, entertainments, and news; and area professional organizations and leadership programs.

## UPTOWN COLUMBUS REVITALIZATION (COLUMBUS, GA)

Sharing certain similarities to the Lynchburg region and its downtown (slow historical population growth, lack of direct interstate access, presence of a river downtown, presence of a major university but not located downtown, etc.) the story of Uptown Columbus' revitalization is one that is particularly relevant to the Lynchburg region.

The City of Columbus, Georgia began its comprehensive downtown revitalization efforts in the 1980s by forming Uptown Columbus, Inc. and starting a Business Improvement District (BID), a self-taxing district that would devote funds to beautification, streetscaping, and public safety enhancements that improve the vitality of Uptown Columbus.

Just a few years later, the City opened the first phase of the Chattahoochee RiverWalk, a 22-mile paved walking and biking trail that follows the Chattahoochee River through the Columbus region and serves as an anchor amenity (a riverfront boardwalk) in Uptown Columbus. Shortly thereafter, Phenix City, Alabama (located across the Chattahoochee River from Columbus) opened a 3,500 seat riverfront amphitheater in 1996 directly across the river from Uptown Columbus, a first step in many towards bi-state, regional collaboration on riverfront activation.

That same year the Olympics were hosted in Atlanta, Georgia, just 90 minutes away from Columbus. At the time, a suitable venue for Olympic whitewater canoeing/slalom was not available in Georgia and an alternate location was secured in nearby North Carolina. This sparked a vision among John Turner, the third-generation leader of W.C. Bradley Company, based in Columbus: what if the Chattahoochee River could be transformed into the world's greatest urban whitewater experience? What began as a seemingly infeasible idea was advanced over the course of many years of diligent conversations with various local, state, federal stakeholders including two state governments, two city governments, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration among many others. Nearly fifteen years later work began on the conversion of the river to an urban whitewater course. Two dams were removed and the river was rerouted during construction. The roughly \$24 million project was financed by \$13 million in private contributions, \$5 million from the City of Columbus, and \$5 million from the Corps of Engineers. The final result – the largest urban whitewater course in America at 2.5 miles completed in 2013 – has received global acclaim, won the American Planning Association's Excellence in Economic Development Planning Award in 2014, and has been featured in numerous national publications.

Meanwhile, Uptown Columbus was undergoing another transformation driven by immense investment from its largest institution of higher education. Columbus State University is home to nearly 7,000 undergraduate students. The University's main campus is located roughly six miles from Uptown Columbus. The University intended to develop new facilities to support its performing arts program, and realized that Uptown Columbus - outside of its main campus - could be a potential location for new facilities.

In the early 2000s, the City and the private sector were partnering to develop a new performing arts center, the \$86 million RiverCenter for Performing Arts. After much planning, the University relocated its Art, Music, Theatre departments to Uptown Columbus, co-locating with the new RiverCenter. The University built student housing for these students and relocated additional departments in subsequent years, including Communications, History, and Geography. At present roughly 500 students currently reside in university student housing in Uptown Columbus today. The student presence has helped create a nighttime population, encourage other residential reinvestment in Uptown, and supported the opening of many new businesses from coffee shops to bookstores to restaurants and nightlife. The University also partnered with the City to create new greenspace in Uptown, Woodruff Park, which serves as a gateway to the Chattahoochee RiverWalk. Adjacent to the park and the RiverWalk are a few major revitalization projects, including the conversion of the old Eagle and Phenix Mill into condos, apartments, and a restaurant space located above the old mill's water wheel in the middle of the Chattahoochee River, and accessible via pedestrian bridge.

The City is currently working to establish a tax allocation district (TAD) that will encompass Uptown and provide another financing mechanism to support redevelopment efforts. TADs freeze property values at a

certain level within the boundaries of the district and devote all future incremental property tax revenues to support redevelopment and infrastructure needs in the district.

## TULSA BEAUTIFICATION FOUNDATION MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM (TULSA, OK)

Established in 2009, the Tulsa Beautification Foundation Matching Grant Program aids neighborhood and homeowners' associations with funding beautification programs. The program provides a dollar-for-dollar match to locally-raised funds. The program is intended to incentivize local groups to raise money, engage in partnerships with businesses, and encourage a culture of local volunteerism.

In order to be eligible a project must improve or beautify a neighborhood or public space; involve neighborhood and community residents; have long-standing and sustainable benefits; have a plan before work begins; and provide a maintenance plan for upkeep of the project. Further, in addition to locally-raised money, the program allows for 35 percent of the match to be volunteer hours, which are valued at \$16.19 per hour. The program requires projects to be completed within a 90 day timeline.

One of the grants in 2010 was made to the Shadow Ridge Homeowners Association (SHRA). The SHRA received \$2,800 to beautify the entrance to their neighborhood, which included new trees, lighting, and a Memorial Tree to honor neighborhood residents who had passed away.

## ARTSKC FUND (KANSAS CITY, MO)

The ArtsKC Fund is a united arts fund run by the ArtsKC Regional Arts Council that provides grants to artists, arts organization, and arts programs in Kansas City's five-county, bi-state metropolitan region. The ArtsKC Fund is supported 50 percent by workplace giving campaigns and 50 percent through businesses, corporate, and national foundations, local government agencies, and individual donors. Grants are divided into three categories: Ovation Grants, Catalyst Grants, and Inspiration Grants. Ovation Grants are reserved for a group of Kansas City's most well-established arts organizations, Catalyst Grants are tailored towards small to mid-sized nonprofits for either project or mission support, and Inspiration Grants are awarded to individual artists and arts professionals for projects or career development.