

For Immediate Release

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GO Virginia Region 8 Awards Funding for Talent Solutions Strategy

Initiative will target filling middle- and high-skill workforce gaps.

HARRISONBURG (December 17, 2018) – The GO Virginia Region 8 Council has approved funding for the Shenandoah Valley Talent Solutions Strategy under the Enhanced Capacity Building category. Enhanced Capacity Building activities support analysis and planning for project development and implementation. Examples of projects include feasibility studies, assessment or planning studies, capacity building, and other initiatives that support successful project outcomes.

Northern Shenandoah Valley localities partnering on the Shenandoah Valley Talent Solutions Strategy are Frederick, Clarke, Page, Shenandoah, and Warren counties, and the city of Winchester. The initiative will study the obstacles that young adults and employers in the region face in entering or remaining in middle-skill and high-skill jobs. The focus will be current job seekers, university and community college graduates, and high school students, and the goal will be to identify targeted recruitment and retention strategies that will enhance the quality and quantity of available workers in the region.

The research will be comprised of focus groups of high school guidance counselors and college career professionals, in-depth interviews with human resources directors and other corporate stakeholders, a randomized, online survey and focus group of students, and determination of industry-specific needs and concerns. The Talent Solutions Strategy will cost \$134,800, with GO Virginia providing \$64,800 and the localities contributing \$70,000. The group is expected to secure consultants for the project in early 2019 with the intent of completing the work by the end of the 2019.

Frederick County's Economic Development Authority Executive Director Patrick Barker said about the initiative: "The availability of skilled labor remains a top factor in site selections by corporations. As such communities like Frederick County, VA are required now to effectively market to young adults to improve their retention and attraction, especially within the key industries we are targeting for business retention and attraction. This project will provide the first step in answering this mandate."

The Virginia Initiative for Growth and Opportunity (GO Virginia) is a voluntary, business-led, bipartisan initiative that was formed to foster private-sector growth and diversification across nine economic development regions in the Commonwealth of Virginia. State financial incentives designated for regional projects that encourage collaboration between private sector companies, workforce, education, and government are administered by the Virginia Growth and Opportunity Board. GO Virginia Region 8 covers a large area from Winchester to Lexington and includes ten counties and six cities in the Shenandoah Valley, with a combined population of 525,000. The 28-member council that oversees the GO Virginia program is made up of representatives from small and large business, higher and K-12 education, elected officials, and economic and workforce development organizations.

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