

Bay Consortium Workforce Development Board

Employer Toolkit



Actionable Strategies to Recruit, Develop, and Retain Talent

JANUARY 2026



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Section I. Planning for Your Business	2
Goal Setting & Planning	3
Local Labor Data & Trends	4
Competitive Analysis	6
Partnerships Within Your Industry	7
Skill Gaps	9
Credentials for Workers	10
Tax Credits Available	12
Business Planning Checklist	13
Section II. Recruiting Top Talent	15
Hiring People From Varied Backgrounds	16
Second Chance Hiring	18
Rural Recruitment Strategies	19
Legal Concerns in Hiring	21
Workplace Accessibility	21
Section III. Talent Development & Retention	23
Onboarding Workers With Diverse Backgrounds & Experiences	24
Soft Skills	25
Retention Strategies & Leadership Development	27
Identifying Skills Gaps & Strengths	28
Career Pathways	29
Talent Pipelines	30
Mentorship	31
Retention Data & Analysis	32
Section IV. Training Workers	34
Work-Based Learning	35
Programs for Upskilling Workers	36
Industry Credentials	38
Digital Badging	39
Connections with Training Programs	40
Section V. Building a Modern & Supportive Workplace	41
Employer branding	42
Online Recruitment	43
Mental Health & Wellness	44
Automation	46
Human Resources Technology	47
Section VI. Industry Specific Resources	50
Aquaculture Industry Resources	51
Information Technology	53
Manufacturing	55
Construction & Skilled Trades Resources	57
Apprenticeships & Customized Training	58
Financial Incentives & Tax Credits for Employers	59
Employer Engagement Opportunities	61
Bay Consortium Workforce Development Board	63

Acknowledgements

The WorkED Consulting team extends its sincere appreciation to the Bay Consortium Workforce Development Board (BCWDB) individuals whose expertise, collaboration, and commitment made this toolkit possible. This document reflects the collective effort of professionals dedicated to strengthening the business community and advancing a resilient, skilled workforce within the Bay Consortium region and the Commonwealth of Virginia as a whole.

We offer special thanks to Keenan Allen, Steven Golas, and the entire Business Solutions Team at the BCWDB. Their leadership, subject-matter expertise, and deep understanding of employer needs were instrumental in shaping a resource that is both practical and responsive to the realities faced by businesses across their region but also for what they need to better serve their community. Their ongoing engagement with employers, education partners, and regional stakeholders continues to play a vital role in fostering sustainable workforce solutions.

This toolkit is intended to support Virginia's broader mission of strengthening business enterprises by equipping employers and the BCWDB team with actionable strategies to recruit, develop, and retain talent. It is designed to serve as a regionally grounded, employer-focused companion to the Commonwealth's recently released **Virginia Talent Solutions Guide**, expanding upon statewide frameworks by translating them into locally relevant insights, resources, and connections. Together, these materials provide a cohesive roadmap for employers linking state-level talent strategies with on-the-ground implementation and support.

The BCWDB remains committed to partnering with employers to build strong talent pipelines, promote inclusive hiring practices, and ensure that businesses across the region have the workforce they need to grow and succeed. We are grateful to all contributors whose dedication to workforce excellence continues to drive positive economic impact throughout the Commonwealth.



SECTION I.

Planning for Your Business

The Bay Consortium Workforce Development Board team is ready to help strengthen your business! Contact us to talk through any of these important topics to create stronger economic impact and becoming an employer of choice!

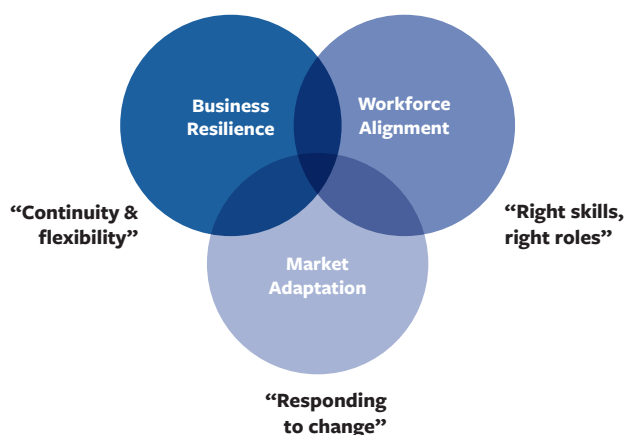
Goal Setting & Planning

Effective business planning includes setting clear goals that align your workforce, operations, and growth strategy.¹ Workforce development organizations and economic recovery programs recommend using structured goal-setting methods to help employers adapt to changing labor conditions and plan for sustainable growth. Strategies for effective goal setting include:

1. Using a Workforce-Informed Framework: WorkforceGPS, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, provides insight into how to center business goals and planning.² While there are many areas for consideration, the BCWDB team recommends focusing on the following:

- a. *Business Resilience*: ability to maintain operations during disruption
- b. *Workforce Alignment*: ability to attract, retain, and develop the right talent
- c. *Market Adaptation*: ability to respond to economic and industry shifts

Key Takeaway: Set goals that support all three, such as expanding training capacity, cross-skilling workers, or entering new markets based on regional labor projections.



2. Data-Driven Planning: The Virginia Office of Education Economics (VOEE) provides industry projections and regional employment trends that help employers:³

- a. Identify growing or declining occupations
- b. Compare local wages by occupation or industry
- c. Forecast skill and hiring needs over multiple years

¹ Virginia Career Works Talent Solutions Guide – <https://virginiaworks.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Talent-Solutions-Guide-V1.pdf>

² WorkforceGPS – https://www.workforcegps.org/resources/2015/06/01/10/35/Small_Business_Partnership_Toolkit

³ Virginia Office of Education Economics (VOEE) Data & Reports – <https://voee.org/data/>

Key Takeaway: Using this data can help set realistic hiring and talent development goals based on supply-demand conditions in their region.

3. Using a Performance-Based Goal Model: The WorkforceGPS Business Engagement Strategy Checklist encourages employers to structure goals through a performance lens.⁴ Key considerations include:

- a. Define the business need (e.g., lower turnover, expand sales)
- b. Identify which part of the workforce is connected to that need
- c. Specify clear, measurable objectives and target metrics

Key Takeaway: Instead of a broad goal like “improve retention,” a performance-based goal might be “reduce turnover in entry-level roles by 15% over 12 months by implementing onboarding and mentoring practices.”

4. Integrating Short- and Long-Term Goals: Economic recovery models (Pathway to Recovery, WorkforceGPS) recommend combining:⁵

- a. Short-term goals (0–12 months): addressing urgent needs (e.g., filling open roles, meeting compliance, adopting remote work practices)
- b. Long-term goals (1–5 years): building capacity and resiliency (e.g., growing talent pipelines, transitioning to new technologies, planning workforce retirement pathways)

Key Takeaway: Employers can use this dual lens to balance immediate efforts with sustained growth priorities.

Local Labor Data & Trends

Understanding labor market dynamics is critical to making informed decisions about hiring, compensation, skill development, and market expansion. Regional and statewide labor data can help employers benchmark their talent needs, identify competitive opportunities, and anticipate shifts in the workforce. Strategies in using labor market data include:

1. Analyzing Occupational and Industry Projections: State and regional labor market systems such as the VOEE offer long-term projections on employment trends.⁶ These insights can be used to:

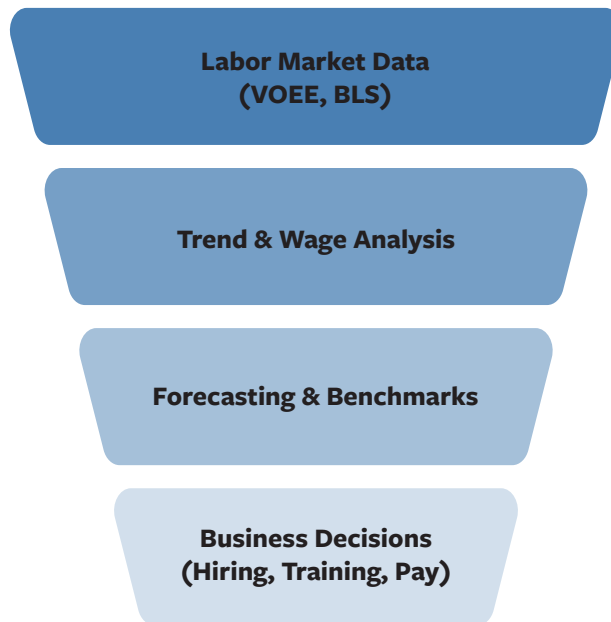
- a. Identify emerging occupations and occupations in decline
- b. Understand projected workforce supply vs. demand
- c. Forecast which industries may face future talent gaps

Key Takeaway: This information can help employers plan recruitment efforts or build internal training pathways for hard-to-fill roles.

⁴ WorkforceGPS Business Services: Business Engagement Strategy Checklist – <https://businessengagement.workforcegps.org/resources/2015/04/16/12/21/Business-Engagement-Strategy-Checklist>

⁵ WorkforceGPS – https://www.workforcegps.org/resources/2020/06/03/01/10/Pathway_to_Recovery_Resources

⁶ Virginia Office of Education Economics (VOEE); High Demand Occupations Dashboard – <https://voee.org/virginia-2024-high-demand-occupations-dashboard/>



2. Comparing Local Wages and Employment Demand: The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) provides dashboards allowing employers to explore local wage ranges and current job postings by occupation.⁷ This helps with:

- a. Benchmarking compensation and benefits against regional competitors
- b. Identifying pressure points where wage increases may be necessary
- c. Understanding which roles have the highest local competition

Key Takeaway: For example, employers can review wage and employment data across the 95 counties and independent cities tracked through Virginia’s Labor Market Information systems.

3. Tracking Workforce Participation and Unemployment Trends: Federal and state resources such as BLS Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) help employers track:⁸

- a. County-level unemployment rates
- b. Labor force participation changes
- c. Shifts in full-time vs. part-time employment patterns

Key Takeaway: Analyzing these indicators help anticipate future impacts on hiring pipelines and competitive pressures within the labor force.

⁷ Bureau of Labor Statistics – Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics Query System <https://data.bls.gov/oes/#/area/5100000>

⁸ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) – Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS): <https://www.bls.gov/lau/data.htm>

Competitive Analysis

Understanding how your business compares to others in your region or industry helps you identify strategic gaps and opportunities in compensation, benefits, workplace culture, and training investments. Workforce development and economic strategy frameworks recommend using labor market and business data to assess your competitive position in today's talent market. Strategies in establishing a competitive analysis include:

1. **Comparing Regional Wages, Benefits, and Occupation Demand:** Virginia's labor market and occupational data tools, including Virginia Works and VOEE, give employers the ability to compare:
 - a. Median wages for specific occupations across regional geographies
 - b. Employment concentration and projected job openings
 - c. Benefits norms and hiring requirements by industry

Key Takeaway: Using these sources, employers can evaluate whether their compensation aligns with prevailing rates in similar roles, especially for hard-to-fill occupations.



2. **Leveraging Business Demographic and Market Data:** The U.S. Census Bureau's Business Dynamics Statistics (BDS) and U.S. Small Business Association's HubZone offers valuable data for:^{9,10}
 - a. Comparing industry firm size, growth, employee locations, and survival rates
 - b. Assessing employee turnover in similar sectors
 - c. Analyzing industry-specific workforce demographics

Key Takeaway: This level of insight supports long-term planning and provides context for how your business stacks up among peers in the same region and NAICS sector.

9 U.S. Census Bureau – Business Dynamics Statistics (BDS) – https://bds.explorer.ces.census.gov/?year=2023&xaxis-id=sector&xaxis-selected=31-33,44-45,54,72&group-id=fage&group-selected=010,065,070,075,150&group-group=2&measure-id=job_creation&chart-type=bar

10 U.S. Small Business Association HubZone – <https://www.sba.gov/federal-contracting/contracting-assistance-programs/hubzone-program>

3. Examining Job Posting and Skills Trends: Tools such as the National Labor Exchange (NLx) and data analytics platforms like Lightcast (frequently used by workforce boards) allow employers to review:¹¹

- a. Competitor job postings and employer requirements
- b. In-demand skills and certifications based on aggregated postings
- c. Frequency of recruitment for similar positions in your region

Key Takeaway: This enables employers to adapt recruiting language, adjust role requirements, and identify emerging industry skillsets.

4. Mapping Your Market Position Using SWOT Frameworks: Business support resources such as the SBA Small Business Guide provide foundational strategic planning tools, including SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) strategies.¹² This structured approach helps employers:

- a. Identify internal strengths (e.g., benefits, workplace culture)
- b. Analyze external competitiveness (e.g., wage pressure, location)
- c. Consider future challenges and opportunities based on data

Key Takeaway: SWOT frameworks are frequently paired with regional labor insights to produce workforce-informed business strategies.

Partnerships Within Your Industry

Collaborating with other employers, education partners, and sector organizations can help businesses address shared workforce challenges, improve training pipelines, and align economic development strategies. Industry partnerships play a critical role in helping small and large employers adapt to talent shortages, align with credentialing pathways, and strengthen regional industry ecosystems. Strategies in creating partnerships within your industry include:

1. Engaging in Sector Partnership Models: The National Skills Coalition’s Sector Partnership Framework outlines a structured approach to developing industry sector partnerships to address shared needs.¹³

- a. Identifying industry-specific workforce needs
- b. Collaborating across employers on talent development
- c. Aligning training providers to industry standards and credentials

Key Takeaway: Bay Consortium’s region-based sector partnerships, particularly in fields like advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and IT, are designed to unify employers, education providers, and workforce boards to solve persistent workforce challenges.



11 National Labor Exchange (NLx) Research Hub – <https://www.usnlx.com/>

12 U.S. Small Business Administration: SWOT and Planning Resources – <https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/plan-your-business/market-research-competitive-analysis>

13 National Skills Coalition – “Sector Partnership Policy Toolkit” – <https://nationalskillscoalition.org/resource/publications/sector-partnership-policy-toolkit/>

2. Joining Industry Advisory Boards and Workgroups: Many Virginia community colleges, career and technical programs, and economic development partners maintain Employer Advisory Committees that:¹⁴

- a. Provide input on curriculum updates
- b. Share hiring and skill needs for current and future roles
- c. Support work-based learning and apprenticeship design

Key Takeaway: Participation in these forums helps employers shape the talent pipeline while building connections with educators and other businesses in the region.

3. Leveraging Workforce Development Board Business Services: Local workforce development boards, such as the Bay Consortium Workforce Development Board, facilitate direct connections for employers who want to:¹⁵

- a. Collaborate on grant-funded training or upskilling initiatives
- b. Build talent pipelines from underrepresented or high-demand populations
- c. Align industry-recognized credentials with regional labor needs

Key Takeaway: These partnerships enable businesses to address shared challenges, such as high turnover or limited access to skilled workers, in a cost-effective, collaborative way.

4. Participating in Regional Talent and Industry Initiatives:

Statewide and regional industry-focused networks, including Growth & Opportunity (GO) Virginia, the Virginia Talent Accelerator Program, and regional chambers of commerce, promote structured industry collaboration in areas like:^{16 17}

- a. Expansion of registered apprenticeships
- b. Alignment of emerging technology and automation skills
- c. Addressing persistent or projected labor shortages

Key Takeaway: Employers who participate in these coalitions gain early access to training funds, workforce research, and sector-specific programming.

For Healthcare, email Ann Rector, BCWDB Health Care Talent Development Coordinator
ann.rector@baywib.org

For Aquaculture, IT and Manufacturing, email Keenan Allen, BCWDB Talent Development Coordinator
keenan.allen@baywib.org

For more Business Services information, email Jacob McCaleb, BCWDB Business Services Representative
jmccaleb@baywib.org

¹⁴ Virginia Community College System – Employer Engagement & Advisory Committees – <https://www.vccs.edu/workforce-development/employers/>

¹⁵ Bay Consortium Workforce Development Board – Business Services Overview – <https://www.baywib.org/>

¹⁶ GO Virginia – Workforce Development and Regional Talent Initiatives – <https://govirginia.org/>

¹⁷ Virginia Talent Accelerator Program – <https://www.vedp.org/incentive/virginia-talent-accelerator-program>

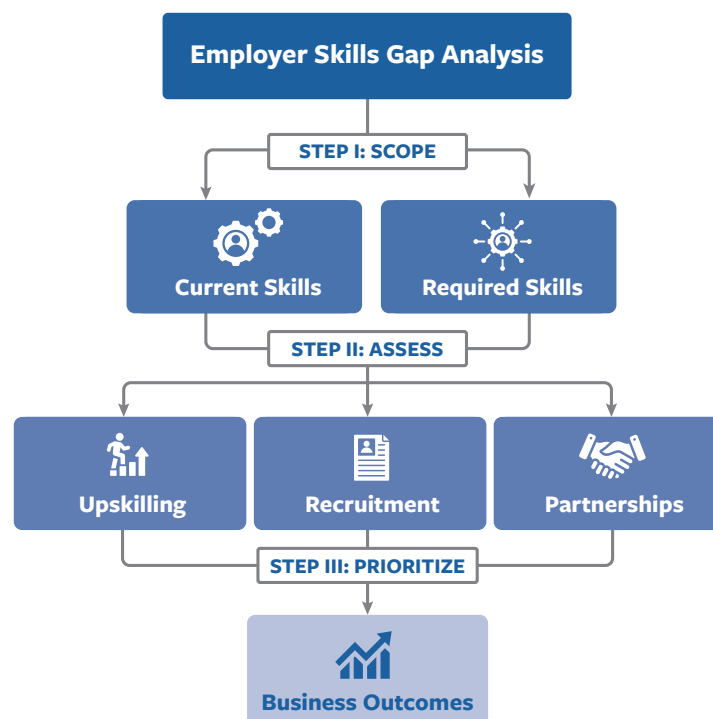
Skill Gaps

Skill gaps, where the skills your workforce has don't match the skills your business needs, pose a direct risk to productivity, competitiveness, and growth. Employers who systematically identify and close these gaps can better align talent, training, and business strategy. Strategies in addressing skills gaps within your industry include:

1. Conducting a Structured Skills Gap Analysis: Experts such as the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and organizations like Academy to Innovate Human Resources (AIHR) recommend a three-phase approach:^{18,19}

- Scope and Diagnose:* Identify which roles, teams, or business functions are impacted by changing requirements, and list the skills the organization needs.
- Assess Current State:* Examine which skills your workforce currently has through performance data, assessments, or job-analysis tools.
- Determine the Gap & Prioritize:* Compare the required skills with current skills, determine the size of the gap, and prioritize which gaps have the most business impact.

Key Takeaway: A skills gap analysis allows employers to clearly identify where workforce capabilities fall short of business needs, so training, hiring, or restructuring decisions can be made with precision instead of guesswork.



¹⁸ SHRM – “How to Conduct a Skills Gap Analysis” – <https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/hr-magazine/how-to-conduct-skills-gap-analysis>

¹⁹ AIHR – “Skills Gap Analysis: All You Need to Know [Free Template]” – <https://www.aihr.com/blog/skills-gap-analysis/>

2. Linking Skills Gaps to Business Outcomes: Rather than viewing skill gaps in isolation, map them into specific business performance indicators. For example:

- a. Roles where productivity lags or turnover is high
- b. New technologies or processes being introduced (e.g., automation, digital platforms)
- c. Growth areas where talent supply is limited

Key Takeaway: Skill gaps should be evaluated not in isolation, but in terms of how they impact operations, competitiveness, and growth, ensuring that workforce investments directly support business performance.

3. Leveraging Virginia-Specific Frameworks for Foundational and Emerging Skills: In Virginia, the Workplace Readiness Skills for the Commonwealth (22-skill framework) outlines foundational personal, interpersonal, and professional competencies. Employers can use this framework as a baseline when assessing soft skills and readiness for roles that may not require high technical credentials.²⁰

4. Developing a Dynamic Skills-Strategy and Training Plan: Once gaps are identified and prioritized, implement a plan that addresses them through:

- a. Upskilling or reskilling existing employees (via training, credentialing, etc.)
- b. Recruitment strategies that bring in missing skills
- c. Partnerships with education and workforce providers to align training with business need sources such as Chronus outline how to create upskilling roadmaps and integrate skills gap analysis into broader talent strategy.

Key Takeaway: Closing skills gaps requires an intentional plan that combines internal talent development, strategic recruitment, and coordinated partnerships with training providers to align workforce capabilities with long-term business goals.

Credentials for Workers

Credentials such as certifications, licenses, and industry-recognized credentials play a critical role in ensuring that your workforce is qualified, competitive, and ready to meet evolving business demands. By aligning workforce credentials with job requirements and industry expectations, employers can better signal competence, support advancement pathways, and improve workforce quality. Strategies for aligning credentials for your workforce include:

1. Defining What Counts and Align Credentials to Job Roles: The National Skills Coalition describes “stackable credentials” as industry-recognized certifications or certificates that build toward higher credentials and degrees.²¹ Use this framework to:

- a. Identify credentials relevant to the specific roles in your business (entry-level, technical, supervisory)
- b. Ensure credentials articulate upward (e.g., certificate → advanced certificate → degree)
- c. Confirm credentials are recognized by your industry and region

²⁰ Workplace Readiness Skills for the Commonwealth – <https://www.cteresource.org/resources/workplace-readiness-skills/>

²¹ National Skills Coalition – Stackable Credential Policy Toolkit – <https://nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Stackable-Credential-Policy-Toolkit-1.pdf>

Key Takeaway: Utilize this toolkit and the Bay Consortium Workforce Development business solutions team to identify opportunities to align your industry with pertinent credentials.



- 2. Leveraging Virginia-Specific Credential Programs:** The Virginia Department of Education tracks career and technical education industry credentials for high schools and includes state-issued licenses, industry certifications, and occupational competency assessments.²² These resources help you understand how credentials are defined and valued in Virginia’s education-to-workforce ecosystem.
- 3. Incorporating Credential Pathways into Talent Strategy:** Use the stackable credentials model and credential frameworks to embed credential attainment in your hiring, onboarding, and advancement practices. For example:
 - a. Map entry-level roles to foundational credentials, with advancement roles tied to higher-level credentials
 - b. Partner with training providers to deliver the credential programs that meet your criteria
 - c. Monitor workforce credential attainment and link them to performance or advancement metrics

Key Takeaway: Embedding credentials into hiring, onboarding, and advancement creates a structured talent pipeline where employees can upskill and progress while employers benefit from a more capable, future-ready workforce.

- 4. Communicating Credential Value and Support Uptake:** Credentials only add value if employees understand their purpose and the business supports them. Ensure your workforce:
 - a. Knows how a credential translates into job readiness or advancement
 - b. Has access to training, financial support, or pay-incentives linked to credential attainment
 - c. Sees how credentials align with your company’s goals and culture

Key Takeaway: Credentials are most effective when employees understand their purpose and have company-supported access to earn them; clear communication and financial or career incentives help turn credentials into engagement, retention, and productivity gains.

²² Virginia Department of Education – https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/k-12-standards-instruction/career-and-technical-education-cte/industry-credentialing?utm_source

Tax Credits Available

Tax credits allow employers to reduce the cost of hiring, training, or retaining workers while supporting workforce participation and economic development. Federal and Virginia programs offer credits for hiring targeted groups, retraining existing workers, investing in community development, and employing individuals with disabilities. Strategies for utilizing tax credits to strengthen your business include:²³

- 1. Using the Federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) for Targeted Hiring:** The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) provides federal income tax credits to employers who hire individuals from certain groups that face barriers to employment, including veterans, long-term TANF recipients, justice-involved individuals, and SNAP recipients. Employers may claim up to 40% of the first \$6,000 in wages, and more for certain veteran categories.²⁴ Virginia employers submit WOTC certifications through the state's online portal.²⁵ Please note that the former Welfare-to-Work Tax Credit has been fully consolidated into WOTC and now applies to the "Long-Term TANF Recipient" target group.
- 2. Claiming the Virginia Worker Retraining Tax Credit:** Virginia offers a Worker Retraining Tax Credit to employers who incur eligible expenses for retraining employees through approved apprenticeship, noncredit workforce programs, or instruction in manufacturing-related or high-demand fields.²⁶
- 3. Participating in the Neighborhood Assistant Program (NAP) for Tax-Credited Donations:** Businesses that contribute to approved nonprofit organizations serving low-income individuals may receive a Virginia state tax credit equal to up to 65% of the approved contribution value. Eligible contributions include cash, stock, real estate, goods, and professional services.²⁷
- 4. Planning Ahead to Maximize Eligibility and Claims:** Across all programs, employers benefit most when they:
 - a. Verify eligibility before hiring or training
 - b. Maintain documentation required for certification and tax filing
 - c. Align hiring, training, and community investment strategies with available programs
 - d. Coordinate with HR, accounting, and workforce partners to ensure credits are captured

Key Takeaway: Accurate record-keeping and early application are essential as many credits require employer action before or within 28 days of hiring.

²³ It should be noted that tax laws change and the BCWDB urges business to stay up to date on those changes which may not be reflected in this toolkit.

²⁴ U.S. Internal Revenue Service – Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) – <https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/work-opportunity-tax-credit>

²⁵ Virginia Works – WOTC Employer Certification System – <https://wotc.virginiaworks.gov/>

²⁶ Worker Retraining Tax Credit – <https://www.tax.virginia.gov/worker-retraining-tax-credit-guidelines>

²⁷ Virginia Tax – Neighborhood Assistance Program – <https://www.dss.virginia.gov/community/nap.cgi>

Business Planning Checklist

Goal Setting & Planning

- ☐ I have written down 3–5 specific business goals.
- ☐ I have identified 2–3 workforce goals that support those business goals.
- ☐ I have defined how I will measure success for each goal.
- ☐ I have separated short-term goals from long-term goals.
- ☐ I have at least one goal for resilience, workforce alignment, and market adaptation.

Local Labor Data & Trends

- ☐ I have reviewed Virginia or federal labor market data for relevant key jobs.
- ☐ I have noted which occupations that affect my business are growing or declining.
- ☐ I have checked local wage ranges for those jobs.
- ☐ I have looked at recent unemployment or labor force trends in my area.
- ☐ I have adjusted at least one staffing decision based on this data.

Competitive Position & Market Analysis

- ☐ I have compared my wages and benefits to similar local employers.
- ☐ I have reviewed competitor job postings and requirements.
- ☐ I have completed a brief workforce-focused SWOT.
- ☐ I have identified at least one change to stay competitive.

Partnerships Within My Industry

- ☐ I have identified at least one new workforce or industry partner.
- ☐ I have contacted Bay Consortium Workforce Development Board to discuss participation in sector partnership efforts, advisory group membership, or roundtable opportunities to share my insights.
- ☐ I have saved contact information for Bay Consortium Workforce Development Board staff (such as business services or talent development leads) and recorded how they can support my business.

Skill Gaps in My Workforce

- ☐ I have listed my most critical roles and written down the top technical and soft skills needed for each.
- ☐ I have compared those required skills against my employees' current skills by using performance data, supervisor feedback, or simple skills inventories.
- ☐ I have identified the top three skills gaps that, if addressed, would have the biggest impact on productivity, quality, or customer satisfaction.
- ☐ I have connected those skills gaps to specific business issues (for example, rework, downtime, errors, missed deadlines, or customer complaints).
- ☐ I have drafted a simple plan for addressing the highest-priority skill gaps through training, mentoring, or new hires.

Credentials for Workers

- ☐ I have listed all licenses, certifications, and industry credentials that are legally required or strongly preferred for my key positions.
- ☐ I have reviewed Virginia credential lists (such as Career and Technical Education [CTE] or other state-recognized credentials) to see which align with my workforce needs.
- ☐ I have identified which employees already hold needed credentials and which employees still need them.
- ☐ I have explored stackable credential options so employees can progress from entry-level to more advanced roles over time.
- ☐ I have discussed with at least one training provider or workforce partner how to help my employees earn these credentials more easily.

Tax Credits & Incentives

- ☐ I have checked whether my recent hires may qualify for the federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) based on the target groups listed in the toolkit.
- ☐ I have reviewed whether my training or retraining activities may qualify for Virginia's Worker Retraining Tax Credit or similar state incentives.
- ☐ I have considered whether donations or partnerships with qualifying nonprofits could make use of Virginia's Neighborhood Assistance Program tax credits.
- ☐ I have created or updated an internal process to collect required documentation (for example, forms and hire dates) within the time limits required for tax credits.
- ☐ I have consulted my accountant, payroll provider, or tax professional to ensure these credits and incentives are correctly claimed and reflected in my planning.

The background is a solid blue color with several sets of white lines and dotted patterns. Some lines are solid and others are dotted, creating a complex geometric design that spans the entire page.

Section II.

Recruiting Top Talent

Recruiting top talent requires employers to be intentional, inclusive, and strategic in how they identify, attract, and engage applicants. With shifting workforce expectations and increased competition for skilled workers, employers must expand outreach, reduce barriers to entry, and utilize tools that support equitable hiring practices. By leveraging targeted recruitment strategies, tax incentives, and partnerships with workforce and community organizations, businesses can build a strong pipeline of qualified applicants who bring diverse experiences and perspectives to the workplace. The following subsections outline key strategies for strengthening recruitment while ensuring fair, accessible, and compliant hiring processes.



Veterans



Youth



**Justice-Involved
Individuals**



**Multilingual
Workers**



**Rural
Residents**

Hiring People From Varied Backgrounds

Hiring workers from varied backgrounds, including veterans, multilingual individuals, youth, and older workers, strengthens an employer's ability to meet diverse customer needs and adapt to workforce changes. Each of these groups brings unique experiences, transferable skills, and perspectives that enhance problem-solving, communication, and workplace culture. Employers who intentionally diversify their talent pools gain access to broader skill sets, improve retention, and build a more resilient workforce. Strategies for recruiting workers from varied backgrounds include:

- 1. Expanding Outreach to Underrepresented and Specialized Talent Pools:** Effective outreach ensures that job opportunities reach groups that may not typically see or apply for them, including transitioning service members, multilingual communities, young adults, and older workers with extensive experience. Employers can:
 - a. Connect with veteran-serving organizations (e.g., Recruit Military, Virginia Works) to recruit candidates with leadership and technical experience^{28,29}
 - b. Partner with ESL programs, immigrant/refugee resettlement groups, and community organizations to reach multilingual applicants
 - c. Engage youth through high schools, career centers, and work-based learning programs
 - d. Work with AARP Foundation, Mature Workers Programs, or local senior centers to reach older workers seeking part-time or full-time roles

Key Takeaway: Diversifying outreach expands the employer's access to skilled workers who bring valuable perspectives and abilities.

²⁸ Hire Vets – <https://recruitmilitary.com/>, <https://virginiaworks.gov/im-an-employer/hire/>

²⁹ Unlocking the Potential of Veterans in the Civilian Workforce – https://go.hirevets.com/Unlocking_Potential_of_Veterans_in_Civilian_Workforce

2. Reducing Barriers in Job Descriptions and Screening Processes: Inclusive hiring requires job postings and screening tools that recognize transferable skills and reduce unnecessary barriers for veterans, young adults, multilingual candidates, and older workers. Employers can:

- a. Translate military occupational specialties (MOS) into civilian roles using federal tools (e.g., O*NET for Veterans)³⁰
- b. Remove unnecessary degree requirements or jargon that excludes multilingual or nontraditional applicants
- c. Use competency-based interview questions that focus on skills, not age or background³¹
- d. Offer language-access supports (plain-language postings, translated materials, interpreters when needed)

Key Takeaway: Reducing screening barriers ensures employers evaluate talent fairly and recognize the strengths candidates bring from different life experiences.

3. Providing Tailored Onboarding and Early Support: Employees from varied backgrounds may benefit from additional clarity, mentorship, or onboarding support as they transition into new roles, especially youth entering their first job, multilingual workers adapting to workplace norms, veterans transitioning to civilian employment, and older workers returning to the workforce. Employers can:

- a. Pair veterans with mentors familiar with translating military experience into workplace practices
- b. Offer multilingual onboarding materials or visual instructions for employees learning job-specific vocabulary
- c. Provide youth with structured expectations, soft-skill coaching, and early check-ins
- d. Ensure older workers receive technology training or ergonomic support as needed

Key Takeaway: Tailored onboarding helps diverse employees feel supported from day one, improving confidence, performance, and long-term retention.



³⁰ O*Net Military Crosswalk Search – <https://www.onetonline.org/crosswalk/MOC/>

³¹ Guide to Inclusive Hiring Practices – https://www.talentful.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Talentful_Inclusive_Hiring_Practices_Talentful.pdf

Second Chance Hiring

Second-chance hiring expands an employer’s talent pool by providing job opportunities to individuals with prior justice involvement. Many returning citizens possess strong motivation to work, transferable skills, and prior industry experience with research consistently showing that second-chance employees have comparable or better retention rates than traditional hires. Employers who adopt fair-chance practices also strengthen their community impact and help address critical workforce shortages across Virginia. Strategies to support effective second-chance hiring include:



1. Partnering with Reentry and Workforce Organizations: Reentry programs and workforce development agencies help employers identify job-ready candidates, navigate hiring considerations, and offer supportive services that improve retention. Employers can:

- a. Work with Career One Stop, local reentry councils, and community organizations to source candidates³²
- b. Take advantage of the tax credits, bonding opportunities, and other benefits outlined by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce when hiring justice involved individuals³³
- c. Build relationships with transitional employment programs and pre-release job-readiness initiatives
- d. Participate in employer workshops that explain reentry supports, bonding programs, and tax incentives

Key Takeaway: Community and workforce partners help employers identify job-ready applicants and access resources that reduce hiring risk.

2. Reducing Barriers in Job Postings and Screening Processes: Fair-chance hiring involves evaluating candidates based on skills, experience, and job fit while avoiding blanket exclusions that prevent qualified individuals from being considered. Employers can:

- a. Use “ban-the-box” practices by delaying background checks until after a conditional offer^{34,35}
- b. Match background checks only to job-related requirements, avoiding overly broad screens
- c. Use structured interviews and skills-based hiring to focus on competencies, not history

Key Takeaway: Fair-chance screening allows employers to make informed, equitable decisions based on qualifications and job readiness.

³² Career One Stop Reentry Program Finder – <https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/EmploymentAndTraining/find-reentry-programs.aspx?location=VA>

³³ U.S. Chamber of Commerce – <https://www.uschamber.com/assets/documents/Second-Chancing-Hiring-Tax-Guide-PDF.pdf>

³⁴ National Employment Law Project – <https://www.nelp.org/insights-research/the-fair-chance-ban-the-box-toolkit/>

³⁵ Research Supports Fair Chance Policies – <https://www.nelp.org/app/uploads/2024/04/Research-Supports-Fair-Chance-Policies-Apr.2024.pdf>

3. Providing Supportive Onboarding and Retention Resources: Second-chance employees may benefit from early coaching, clear expectations, and workplace supports such as transportation assistance or mentorship.³⁶ These practices help stabilize employment during the first critical months. Employers can:

- a. Pair new hires with trained mentors or supervisors who understand reentry challenges
- b. Offer flexible scheduling or transportation support when feasible
- c. Connect employees to community-based supports (counseling, financial literacy, housing assistance)

Key Takeaway: Thoughtful onboarding and support systems help second-chance employees succeed, improving retention and workplace stability.

Rural Recruitment Strategies

Recruiting in rural communities across the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula requires employers to adapt to smaller labor pools, long travel distances, and limited broadband or transportation options. However, these same communities offer strong personal networks, long-term loyalty, and close ties to local schools and other community groups. Employers who tap into these networks and reduce access barriers can significantly improve recruitment outcomes.



³⁶ National Reentry Workforce Collaborative – <https://thenrwc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/1.-TRAINING-GUIDE-FAIR-CHANCE-EMPLOYER-ENGAGEMENT.pdf>

1. Building Partnerships with Local Schools, Colleges, and Community Networks: In rural regions, trusted institutions such as schools, nonprofits, faith-based institutions, and community groups play a critical role in connecting residents to employment. Employers who become visible community partners gain access to local jobseekers while strengthening their reputation. These partnerships are especially powerful throughout the Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck, where relationships drive hiring success. Employers can:

- a. Participate in career fairs and mock interviews with Rappahannock Community College (RCC)
- b. Collaborate with local high schools, CTE programs, and school counselors to promote internships and apprenticeships
- c. Build relationships with civic groups (Rotary, YMCA, local chambers of commerce) to spread awareness of job openings

Key Takeaway: In rural communities, visibility and trust are key as local institutions are often the most effective recruitment channels.

2. Reducing Geographic and Transportation Barriers in the Hiring Process: Long distances and limited transit options make it harder for rural jobseekers to attend interviews or accept positions requiring lengthy commutes. Employers who offer flexible arrangements such as virtual interviews, remote options where applicable, or transportation support significantly widen their applicant pool. These efforts also signal understanding of rural worker realities. Employers can:

- a. Offer virtual first-round interviews to reduce travel burdens
- b. Share transit information for Bay Transit and STAR Transit with candidates³⁷
- c. Provide flexible scheduling or mileage reimbursement for rural applicants

Key Takeaway: Reducing travel-related barriers helps rural candidates stay engaged through the hiring process.

3. Tailoring Job Postings to Highlight Local Relevance and Stability: Workers in rural regions often value job stability, community impact, and long-term employment more than rapid advancement.³⁸ Employers can attract more candidates by emphasizing reliability, predictable hours, strong team culture, and opportunities to serve the local community. This messaging resonates strongly in the Bay Consortium region's small, tight-knit towns. Employers can:

- a. Highlight job stability, team environment, and long-term growth
- b. Emphasize local impact (e.g., “serving your community,” “supporting local families,” etc.)
- c. Advertise through local media (radio, county newsletters, Facebook community groups)

Key Takeaway: Rural recruitment improves when employers tailor messages to local values and community identity.

³⁷ Bay Transit – <https://baytransit.org/>

³⁸ U.S. Department of Agriculture: Guide for Rural Workforce Development – <https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/o6o721-ic-ruralworkforceguide-final5o8.pdf>

Legal Concerns in Hiring

While we cannot offer legal advice to our clients, we are always happy to share resources that can be helpful in creating strong workplaces.

Workplace Accessibility

Accessible workplaces ensure all individuals, including workers with disabilities, older workers, and multilingual employees, can perform their jobs effectively. In rural regions like the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula, accessibility also includes overcoming communication barriers, transportation limitations, and lack of broadband access. Employers who take proactive steps strengthen retention and expand their talent pool.



1. Providing Reasonable Accommodations and ADA-Compliant Workspaces: Federal ADA law requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations unless it creates undue hardship. In rural workplaces where many facilities are older, small modifications such as ergonomic supports, flexible schedules, or assistive technology can have a big impact. The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) remains one of the best no-cost tools available.³⁹ Employers can:

- Use JAN resources to identify low-cost accommodations
- Provide accessible workstations, adaptive equipment, or modified duties
- Offer flexible scheduling for medical or disability-related needs

Key Takeaway: Small, low-cost adjustments often make workplaces more accessible and inclusive.

³⁹ Job Accommodation Network – <https://askjan.org/>

2. Supporting Multi-Lingual Workers Through Clear Communication Tools: Parts of the Bay Consortium region have significant multilingual and seasonal workforces. Employers can improve retention by ensuring safety instructions, onboarding materials, and workplace expectations are clearly communicated. Employers can:

- a. Provide translated onboarding documents or use visual instruction guides
- b. Partner with regional adult education programs (i.e., English as Second Language) for language support
- c. Use mobile translation apps or bilingual signage for safety-critical tasks

Key Takeaway: Clear and accessible communication improves safety, productivity, and new-hire confidence.

3. Ensuring Digital Accessibility for Training & HR Platforms: As more employers adopt online training, onboarding systems, or scheduling software, digital accessibility becomes essential. Workers in a variety of areas distant to employment opportunities may face additional challenges such as limited broadband access or older devices. Ensuring digital materials are accessible improves fairness and reduces frustration during onboarding.⁴⁰ Employers can:

- a. Ensure online training is mobile-friendly and accessible with screen readers
- b. Provide alternatives (printed materials, in-person orientation sessions) for workers with broadband gaps
- c. Use tools that meet WCAG accessibility guidelines

Key Takeaway: Accessible digital tools help all employees including those in remote rural areas, participate fully in training and workplace systems.

⁴⁰ Web Accessibility Initiative – <https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>

Section III.

Talent Development & Retention

Attracting talent is only the first step as long-term success depends on how effectively employers develop, support, and retain their workforce. Talent development and retention strategies help employees build skills, feel valued, and see a clear future within the organization, while helping employers maintain productivity, reduce turnover, and prepare for changing workforce needs. This section outlines practical, employer-focused strategies for onboarding workers from diverse backgrounds, strengthening soft skills, supporting effective leadership, identifying skills gaps, and building clear career pathways, mentorship structures, and talent pipelines that promote sustained engagement and retention.

Onboarding Workers With Diverse Backgrounds & Experiences

Effective onboarding is essential for retaining employees, especially those coming from varied cultural, educational, and workforce backgrounds. Inclusive onboarding helps new workers feel welcomed, supported, and confident in their roles. Strategies for onboarding workers with diverse backgrounds include:



1. Establishing a Structured and Consistent Onboarding Process: A well-designed onboarding plan is much more than orientation, it's a strategic process that integrates new hires into the culture, clarifies roles, fosters connection, and supports early success. The SHRM Foundation's Onboarding New Employees: Maximizing Success identifies the "Four C's" of onboarding (Compliance, Clarification, Culture, and Connection) as foundational.⁴¹

- Developing a written, time-phased onboarding roadmap (e.g., 30-, 60-, 90-day milestones) that addresses all Four C's
- Clearly documenting role responsibilities, performance expectations, and how the new employee's position connects to company values and goals
- Assigning a designated onboarding partner or "buddy" to help the new hire navigate cultural, social, and technical meet-ups during the first 90 days
- Planning and delivering regular check-ins at critical moments (e.g., end of week 1, end of month 1, end of month 3) to identify adjustment issues early and improve retention

⁴¹ SHRM Onboarding New Employees Maximizing Success Guide – <https://www.shrm.org/content/dam/en/shrm/topics-tools/news/talent-acquisition/Onboarding-New-Employees.pdf>

Key Takeaway: By treating onboarding as a multi-phase, organizational process rather than a one-time orientation, employers can accelerate a new hire's adjustment, boost role clarity and connections, and ultimately improve retention and performance.

2. Providing clear expectations and job resources: By engaging workforce-program partners and their employer-services tools (such as CareerOneStop's Business Center), your organization can access under-represented talent pools, reduce hiring risk, and build a stronger onboarding pipeline.⁴²

- a. Identifying unique hiring needs defined by by your industry, business, and projected growth
- b. Understanding the various ways in which I can hire candidates
- c. Employing a variety of resources and tools that can help decide on a candidate that best suits my business needs

Key Takeaway: Partnering with workforce-program entities via CareerOneStop and regional job centers enables your business to tap into broader candidate pools, reduce risk for nontraditional hires, and link upfront recruitment with onboarding support ultimately creating a more equitable and robust talent pipeline.

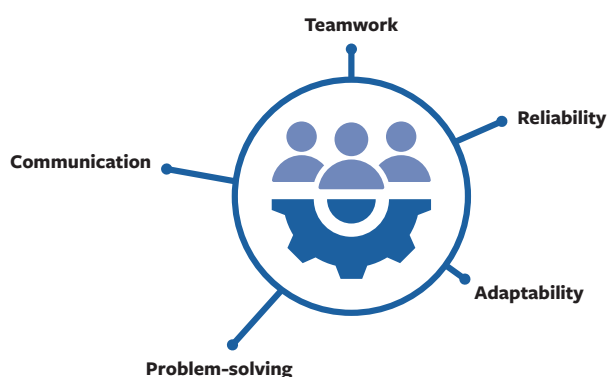
Soft Skills

Employers across Virginia consistently report that strong “soft skills”, also known as employability or durable skills, are just as essential as technical capabilities. These skills include communication, problem-solving, dependability, teamwork, adaptability, and professionalism. Soft-skill proficiency helps employees collaborate effectively, meet customer expectations, and navigate workplace challenges, making it a core component of long-term retention and performance. Strengthening soft skills within the workforce is especially beneficial when onboarding new hires from diverse backgrounds, career changers, and young workers entering the labor market.

1. Using Virginia's Workplace Readiness Skills Framework: Virginia's Workplace Readiness Skills (WRS) outline 22 foundational competencies that reflect what employers expect across industries such as communication, teamwork, time management, conflict resolution, and customer service.⁴³

- a. Set clear expectations for professional behaviors
- b. Align onboarding and performance evaluations
- c. Provide training tied to industry-recognized skills

Key Takeaway: Virginia's Workplace Readiness Skills provide a ready-made, employer-aligned framework that clearly defines the soft skills employees need to succeed from day one.



⁴² Career One Stop Business Center – <https://www.careeronestop.org/BusinessCenter/RecruitAndHire/recruit-and-hire.aspx>

⁴³ Virginia's CTE Resource Center – <https://www.cteresource.org/resources/workplace-readiness-skills/>

2. Incorporating Soft Skills Training into Onboarding: Soft skills can be strengthened early through structured onboarding that reinforces communication, teamwork, and professionalism. Employers can integrate short activities and real-world examples during the first 30–90 days to help new hires understand workplace expectations. The U.S. Department of Labor’s Skills to Pay the Bills curriculum offers free, activity-based lessons that can be used during onboarding to practice key soft skills.⁴⁴

Employers may:

- a. Use short activities from Skills to Pay the Bills to teach communication and teamwork
- b. Include soft-skill discussions or demonstrations during early check-ins
- c. Reinforce expectations with examples and supervisor coaching

Key Takeaway: Embedding soft-skills reinforcement into onboarding helps new hires build confidence, understand expectations, and adapt quickly to workplace norms.

3. Leveraging Free Federal Training Modules: Career One Stop offers employer-friendly soft skills resources, videos, and training modules suitable for workshops or self-paced learning.⁴⁵

- a. Use short video lessons to introduce topics such as teamwork, professionalism, and communication
- b. Assign modules as part of early onboarding or new-hire development plans
- c. Integrate clips or activities into staff meetings or refresher trainings

Key Takeaway: Free federal training modules offer an accessible way to teach foundational soft skills without needing to build in-house training from scratch.

4. Embedding Soft Skill Expectations into Job Descriptions & Advancement Pathways: Soft skills are reinforced when expectations are visible at every stage of employment. O*NET’s Soft Skills database provides nationally recognized definitions of communication, teamwork, professionalism, and other core competencies that employers can embed directly into job descriptions and advancement criteria.⁴⁶

Employers can:

- a. Add clear soft-skill expectations into job postings and descriptions
- b. Integrate soft-skill criteria into performance evaluations
- c. Tie promotions or advancement to demonstrated professional behaviors

Key Takeaway: Embedding soft-skill expectations into job descriptions and performance systems signals their importance and ensures consistent reinforcement across roles.

44 U.S. Department of Labor Skills to Pay the Bills – <https://pueblo.gpo.gov/CAARNG/ODEP/PDF/ODEPo13.pdf>

45 Career One Stop – <https://www.careeronestop.org/BusinessCenter/TrainAndRetain/EmployeeSkillNeeds/soft-skills.aspx>

46 O*Net Soft Skills Database – <https://www.onetonline.org/skills/soft/>

Retention Strategies & Leadership Development

Strong retention is closely tied to how supported, valued, and developed employees feel in the workplace. Employers who prioritize effective supervision, ongoing communication, and clear advancement pathways often see higher engagement and lower turnover. The following strategies can help strengthen retention and build confident, well-prepared leaders.



1. Implementing Stay Interviews & Regular Check-Ins: Stay interviews help employers identify what motivates employees to stay and what challenges may lead them to leave, allowing supervisors to address concerns early.⁴⁷ Employers can:

- a. Conduct stay interviews at least once per year
- b. Ask targeted questions about support, workload, and career interests
- c. Use responses to improve supervision, communication, or processes

Key Takeaway: Stay interviews provide early insights that help employers resolve issues before they lead to turnover.

2. Developing Supervisors Through Leadership Training: Frontline supervisors have the greatest day-to-day impact on employee satisfaction. Leadership training helps them build skills in communication, conflict resolution, coaching, and equitable management.⁴⁸ Employers can:

- a. Provide supervisor training on feedback, communication, and team support
- b. Offer coaching or mentoring to new or emerging leaders
- c. Integrate leadership expectations into performance evaluations

Key Takeaway: Investing in supervisory skills strengthens workplace culture and reduces turnover by equipping leaders to support their teams effectively.

⁴⁷ Care Compass Network Stay Interview Toolkit – https://care-compass.org/wp-content/uploads/Stay-Interview-Toolkit_FINAL-as-of-4.6.2023.pdf

⁴⁸ Effective Learning Interventions for Developing ECQs – <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/training-and-development/leadership-development/effective-learning-interventions-for-developing-ecqs.pdf>

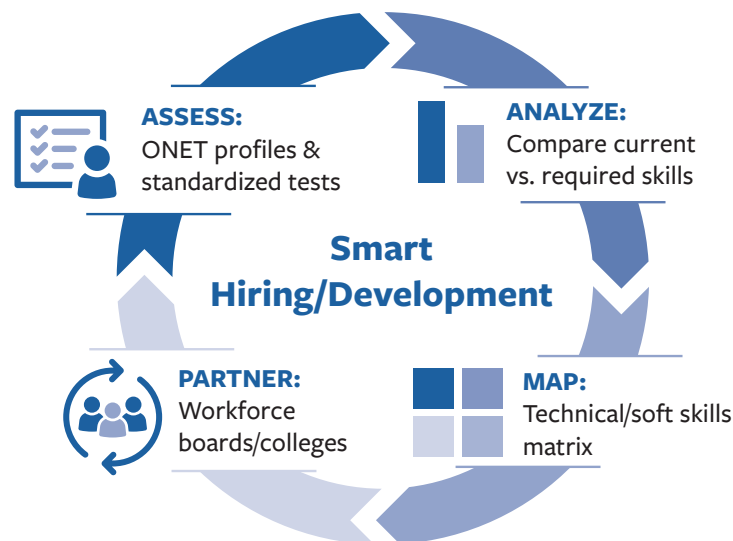
3. Creating Clear Advancement & Promotion Pathways: Employees who understand how they can grow within the company are more motivated, more engaged, and more likely to stay long-term. Employers can:

- a. Outline internal pathways that show required skills, credentials, and experience
- b. Tie advancement opportunities to demonstrated leadership and soft-skill growth
- c. Offer cross-training or stretch assignments to prepare employees for promotion

Key Takeaway: Clear, accessible pathways help employees see a future with the organization and understand how to advance.

Identifying Skills Gaps & Strengths

Understanding the skills your workforce currently has and the skills your business will need in the future, is essential for planning training, hiring, and advancement. A structured approach to identifying skill gaps and strengths allows employers to make informed decisions, improve performance, and align their workforce with changing industry demands.



1. Using Structured Skill Assessments & Competency Tools: Formal skill assessments help employers identify which competencies are strong within their workforce and which require development. Tools like ONET's competency lists provide clear, job-aligned benchmarks.⁴⁹ Employers can:

- a. Compare current employee skills against job-specific O*NET competency profiles
- b. Gather supervisor input using standardized evaluation rubrics
- c. Document strengths to leverage for stretch assignments or leadership development

Key Takeaway: Using validated competency models helps employers evaluate skill strengths and gaps objectively, rather than relying on assumptions.

⁴⁹ O*Net Cross Functional Skills – <https://www.onetonline.org/find/descriptor/browse/2.B/>

2. Conducting Internal Skills Gap Analyses: A skills gap analysis compares the skills employees currently have with the skills required for business goals, new technologies, or evolving job demands.⁵⁰ Structured gap analyses ensure training resources are targeted where they will create the greatest impact. Employers can:

- a. Identify roles or departments facing performance, efficiency, or technology-related challenges
- b. Map required skills (technical and soft skills) to current employee capabilities
- c. Prioritize gaps that directly affect productivity, safety, or customer satisfaction

Key Takeaway: A skills gap analysis shows exactly where capabilities fall short, allowing employers to plan hiring, training, or upskilling with precision.

3. Partnering with Workforce & Education Providers to Validate Skills Needs: Local workforce boards, community colleges, and training partners can help employers refine which skills matter most for current and future roles. These partners offer labor-market insights, curriculum alignment, and assessment tools. Employers can:

- a. Request support from Business Service Representatives to review workforce needs
- b. Collaborate with colleges or training providers to assess employee strengths
- c. Align internal training priorities with regional industry skill trends

Key Takeaway: Workforce and education partners can validate and refine your skills needs ensuring your internal assessments match regional labor market realities.

Career Pathways

Career pathways outline the skills, credentials, and experience employees need to advance within an organization. Clear pathways help workers understand how to grow professionally, while helping employers plan for future leadership, reduce turnover, and align training with business needs. Well-designed pathways also make it easier to onboard new talent, strengthen internal mobility, and support long-term workforce development. For more detailed information regarding specific career pathways in the Bay Consortium Workforce Development Board area, see Section VI. Industry Specific Resources. Strategies to support career pathways include:

1. Mapping Job Progression & Required Competencies:

Career pathways begin with clearly defining each role and identifying the competencies, credentials, and experience required to advance. The U.S. Department of Labor's Career Pathways Toolkit provides examples and templates employers can adapt.⁵¹



⁵⁰ SHRM How To Conduct a Skills Gap Analysis – <https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/hr-magazine/how-to-conduct-skills-gap-analysis>

⁵¹ U.S. Department of Labor Career Pathway Toolkit– https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/advisories/TEN/2015/TEN_17-15_Attachment_Acc.pdf

- 2. Aligning Training, Credentials, and Advancement Opportunities:** Strong pathways connect internal roles with the credentials, training, or experience needed to move from one level to the next. This allows employees to see a direct link between learning and advancement.
- 3. Partnering with Education & Workforce Providers to Build Pipelines:** Local community colleges, training providers, and workforce boards can help employers design pathways that align with regional labor market needs and emerging industry skills.

Talent Pipelines

A strong talent pipeline ensures that employers have access to a steady stream of qualified workers now and in the future. By partnering with education providers, engaging early with emerging workers, and aligning training with industry needs, employers can build a reliable workforce while reducing recruitment costs and turnover. Talent pipelines are especially critical in high-demand industries experiencing skills shortages or rapid changes in technology. Strategies to support talent pipelines include:

- 1. Partnering with Local Education & Training Providers:** Community colleges, high schools, adult education centers, and workforce organizations can help employers connect with students and adult learners preparing for in-demand careers.

- 2. Expand Work-Based Learning Opportunities:**

Work-based learning exposes future workers to industry expectations while developing job readiness and technical skills. These experiences help students and trainees transition seamlessly into full-time employment.⁵² Employers can:

- a. Offer internships, co-ops, job shadowing, or short-term work experiences
- b. Develop apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship programs
- c. Provide project-based assignments that build real-world skills

Key Takeaway: Work-based learning strengthens the pipeline by giving candidates hands-on experience that prepares them for successful onboarding and long-term employment.



⁵² Career One Stop – <https://www.careeronestop.org/BusinessCenter/TrainAndRetain/train-and-retain.aspx>

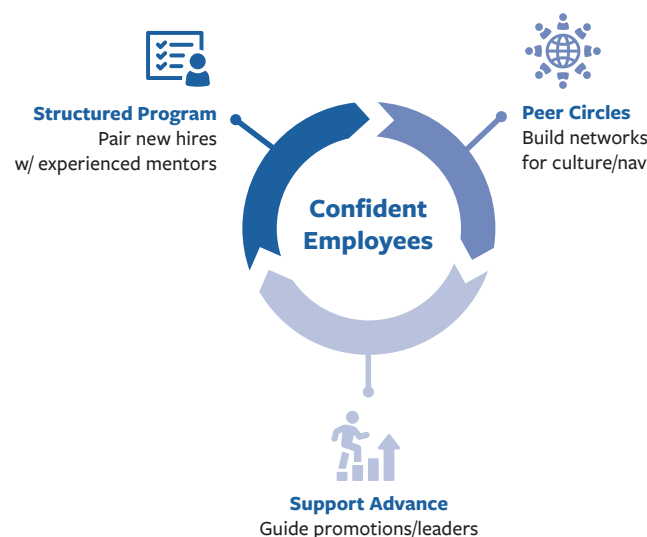
3. Engaging Early with Emerging Workers: Introducing young people to local career pathways helps spark interest in high-demand fields and encourages them to pursue relevant skills and credentials.⁵³ Employers can:

- a. Participate in career fairs, classroom presentations, or student competitions
- b. Offer mentorship programs for high school or college-age learners
- c. Provide early exposure opportunities that highlight career paths, workplace culture, and industry expectations

Key Takeaway: Early engagement helps employers build awareness of career opportunities, strengthening long-term interest and expanding future candidate pools.

Mentorship

Mentorship strengthens employee confidence, accelerates skill development, and improves long-term retention. New hires, especially those entering from diverse backgrounds or non-traditional pathways, benefit from having a supportive peer or leader who can answer questions, model workplace expectations, and provide professional guidance. Employers who build structured mentorship systems often see stronger engagement, improved performance, and smoother transitions for new employees. Strategies to support mentorship include:



1. Establishing Structured Mentorship Programs: A structured mentorship program provides new employees with clear guidance, expectations, and support during their early months.⁵⁴ Employers Can:

- a. Pair new hires with experienced employees for their first 60–90 days
- b. Provide mentors with a simple checklist or conversation guide
- c. Include regular touchpoints to discuss expectations, culture, and questions

⁵³ U.S. Department of Labor; Employment and Training Administration – <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/youth>

⁵⁴ Mentor: Workplace Mentoring – https://www.mentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Workplace-Supplement-to-EEPM_Public.pdf

Key Takeaway: Structured mentorship helps employees feel supported early on, improving confidence and reducing turnover during the critical first months.

2. Building Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Networks: Peer mentoring fosters connection, belonging, and shared learning. It is especially valuable for entry- and mid-level employees who benefit from informal support.⁵⁵ Employers can:

- a. Create peer support circles for new hires or department teams
- b. Encourage informal “buddy systems” for navigating workplace norms
- c. Rotate peer mentors to broaden learning and collaboration

Key Takeaway: Peer networks strengthen workplace culture and provide ongoing support beyond formal supervision.

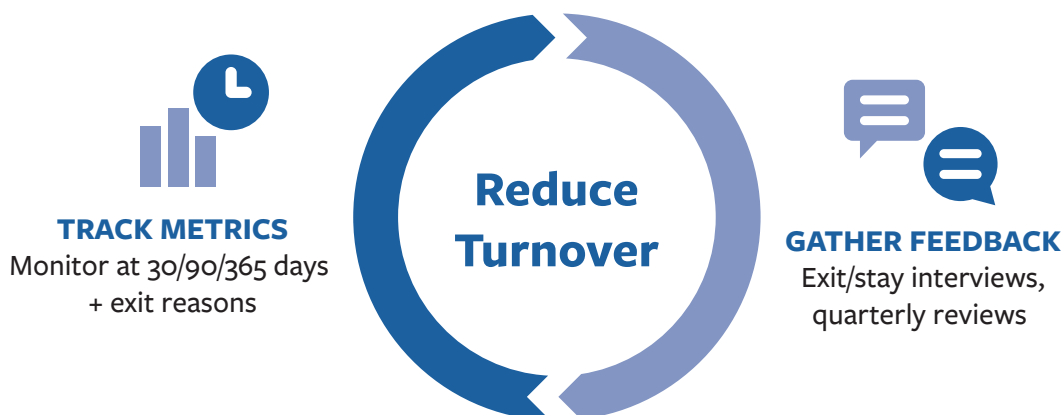
3. Using Mentorship to Support Advancement & Leadership Development: Mentorship plays a powerful role in preparing employees for promotion and building future leaders from within the organization.⁵⁶ Employers can:

- a. Pair high-potential employees with supervisors or senior staff
- b. Use mentorship to guide employees through advancement pathways
- c. Include leadership shadowing or project-based learning opportunities

Key Takeaway: Mentorship accelerates professional growth and helps employers develop a future-ready leadership pipeline.

Retention Data & Analysis

Understanding why employees stay or leave is essential for strengthening workplace culture, improving supervision, and reducing turnover costs. Retention data helps employers identify patterns, pinpoint challenges, and make informed decisions about hiring, onboarding, and leadership. By collecting and analyzing a small set of key metrics, employers can develop strategies that directly support long-term employee engagement. Strategies to support retention data analysis include:



⁵⁵ Together Platform – <https://4467140.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/4467140/Whitepapers/Starting%20a%20peer%20mentorship%20program%20guide.pdf>

⁵⁶ U.S. Department of Education – <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED517965.pdf>

1. Tracking Core Retention & Turnover Metrics: Basic retention and turnover metrics provide insight into where problems may be occurring and how workforce trends change over time. Employers can:

- a. Monitor retention at 30-, 90-, and 365-day intervals to identify critical drop-off points
- b. Compare turnover rates across departments, shifts, or supervisors
- c. Track reasons for leaving using standardized categories

Key Takeaway: Regularly tracking retention metrics reveals where turnover is concentrated and whether interventions are working.

2. Using Exit Interviews, Stay Interviews, and Feedback Loops: Collecting qualitative data from employees, both those staying and those leaving, helps identify underlying issues that metrics alone cannot show. Employers can:

- a. Use consistent exit interview questions to identify themes
- b. Conduct stay interviews to surface concerns before employees consider leaving
- c. Review feedback quarterly to inform training or leadership improvements

Key Takeaway: Structured interviews provide insight into workplace culture, supervision, and employee needs allowing employers to address issues proactively.

The background of the page is a solid blue color. Overlaid on this background is a complex pattern of thin, white, dashed lines. These lines are arranged in several sets of parallel lines that intersect each other at various angles, creating a sense of depth and movement. The lines are most prominent in the upper and lower portions of the page, framing the central text area.

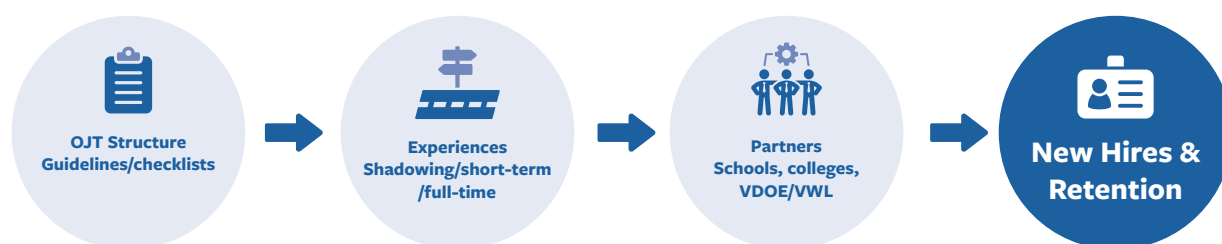
Section IV.

Training Workers

Developing the skills of your existing workforce helps employers remain competitive, improve productivity, and retain employees in a rapidly changing labor market. Effective training strategies combine work-based learning, upskilling opportunities, credential pathways, and strong partnerships with training providers.

Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning allows employees to build new skills by participating directly in hands-on, job-relevant experiences. These opportunities strengthen both technical and professional skills by allowing workers to learn in real workplace environments while contributing to actual business needs. For employers, work-based learning creates a reliable talent development pathway, supports career advancement, and helps retain workers by demonstrating a clear investment in their growth. Strategies to support effective work-based learning include:



1. Implementing Structured On-the-Job Training (OJT). OJT provides employees with guided instruction while they perform actual job duties. Employers benefit from training workers in real time while reinforcing organizational standards. Example OJT guides and policies are available for reference.^{57,58,59} Employers can:

- a. Develop a written OJT plan outlining tasks, timelines, and competencies to be gained
- b. Pair new workers with skilled mentors or supervisors for hands-on demonstrations
- c. Use OJT to transition employees into new roles or technologies

Key Takeaway: OJT allows employees to build relevant skills quickly while ensuring training aligns directly with workplace processes.

⁵⁷ U.S. Department of Labor – https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/tradeact/pdfs/TAA_OJT_FAQ.pdf

⁵⁸ Workforce Central OJT Policy – <https://workforce-central.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/ojt-policy-rev.-4.pdf>

⁵⁹ Workforce Central Guidance Manual – <https://workforce-central.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/wfcojtguidancemanualfinal6.pdf>

2. Offering Internships, Job Shadowing, and Short-Term Learning Experiences. Short-duration work-based learning activities help new workers explore roles, understand job expectations, and build familiarity with equipment and workflows.⁶⁰ These experiences also help employers assess fit, build early connections with future talent, and reduce hiring risk. In 2024, the Tennessee Department of Education published a comprehensive work-based learning implementation guide that can be scaled and implemented in a variety of states.⁶¹ Employers can:

- a. Partner with high schools, colleges, or training programs to host interns
- b. Provide job-shadowing opportunities for individuals exploring career options
- c. Offer project-based learning assignments tied to real business needs

Key Takeaway: Internships and short-term experiences help emerging workers gain exposure to your industry while giving employers an early look at potential hires.

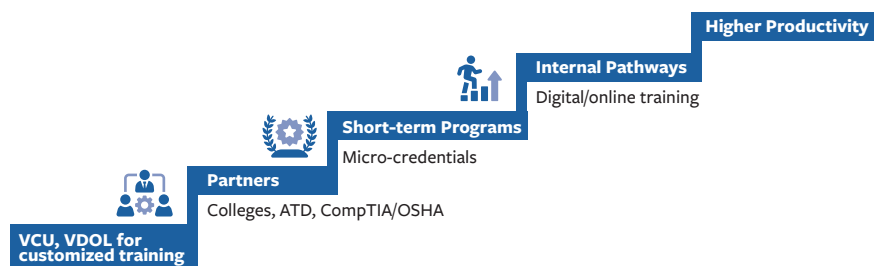
3. Establishing Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships. Registered apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships provide structured pathways into skilled roles through a combination of paid work experience and formal training.⁶² These programs are especially effective for filling hard-to-recruit positions, building long-term retention, and a variety of indirect benefits (i.e., improved company culture, improved pipeline of skilled workers, etc.).⁶³ Employers can:

- a. Work with the Virginia Works to establish or join an apprenticeship program
- b. Align classroom instruction or online modules with hands-on job competencies
- c. Use pre-apprenticeships to prepare entry-level workers for full apprenticeship tracks

Key Takeaway: Apprenticeships create a reliable pipeline of skilled workers while reducing turnover by offering clear, supported career progression.

Programs for Upskilling Workers

Upskilling helps employees strengthen their capabilities, adapt to changing workplace demands, and prepare for advancement. As industries evolve through new technologies, processes, and regulatory expectations, workers must refresh or expand their skill sets to remain effective. Employers that invest in structured upskilling programs benefit from higher productivity, increased retention, and reduced hiring costs as internal workers advance into higher-skilled roles. Strategies to support effective upskilling include:



60 U.S. Chamber of Commerce – <https://cte.ed.gov/wbltoolkit/>

61 Tennessee Department of Education – https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/ccte/wbl/wbl_implementation_guide.pdf

62 Virginia Works – <https://virginiaworks.gov/explore-registered-apprenticeship/>

63 U.S. Department of Labor – <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/sites/default/files/aai-infographic-employers-11-11-22.pdf>

- 1. Developing Structured Internal Training Pathways.** Internal upskilling allows employers to build talent from within, helping workers gain new technical, digital, or supervisory skills through company-designed programs. These pathways can incorporate on-the-job learning, classroom-style training, or digital modules aligned with business needs. The Association for Talent Development implemented a Talent Development Capability Model that outlines the various considerations when designing, delivering, and sustaining effective upskilling programs across an organization.⁶⁴ Employers can:
- a. Outline internal training sequences that help workers develop specific competencies (e.g., supervisory skills, equipment certifications, digital literacy)
 - b. Offer short-term workshops or micro-learning modules to strengthen targeted skills
 - c. Provide job rotation or cross-training opportunities to broaden workers' abilities

Key Takeaway: Structured internal pathways allow employers to develop future talent while improving employee engagement and organizational resilience.

- 2. Supporting Employees through Tuition Assistance & Credential Programs.** Tuition support helps workers gain technical or academic training through colleges, online learning platforms, or credential providers. These opportunities empower employees to advance into higher-skilled roles while ensuring employers have a more capable and competitive workforce. Employers can:
- a. Offer tuition reimbursement, scholarships, or stipends for approved programs
 - b. Encourage workers to pursue high-value certificates (e.g., CompTIA, OSHA, NCCER, AWS)
 - a. Provide paid study time or flexible scheduling during credential programs

Key Takeaway: Tuition assistance strengthens both recruitment and retention by demonstrating a long-term commitment to workers' professional growth.

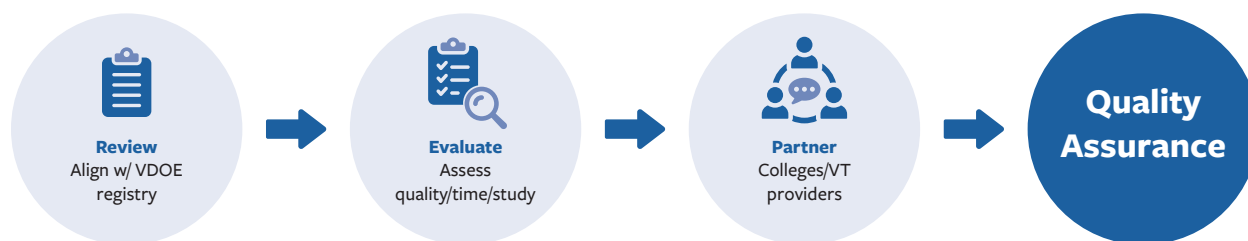
- 3. Partnering with Training Providers to Deliver Customized Upskilling.** Training partners including community colleges, workforce boards, and industry groups can tailor courses to employer needs. These partnerships allow businesses to build training aligned to emerging technologies, safety requirements, or specialized equipment. Employers can:
- a. Work with local colleges to design customized training or incumbent-worker programs
 - b. Access workforce funding through Virginia Career Works for employer-specific upskilling
 - c. Align training content with industry standards or credentialing bodies

Key Takeaway: External partnerships expand training capacity and ensure upskilling efforts closely match industry expectations and future skill needs.

⁶⁴ Association for Talent Development – <https://capability.td.org/>

Industry Credentials

Industry-recognized credentials provide a standardized way to verify that employees have the skills and competencies needed to perform specific roles safely and effectively. These credentials help employers maintain quality, meet regulatory requirements, and ensure consistency across positions. For workers, earning a credential provides a clear milestone for advancement and increases their value within the organization and the broader labor market. Strategies for integrating industry credentials include:



1. Identifying High-Value Credentials Aligned to Key Roles: Credentials vary widely by industry, so employers must identify which certifications, licenses, or assessments are most relevant to their operations. Aligning roles with recognized credentials ensures that workers meet industry expectations and strengthens hiring decisions. In Virginia, the Department of Education maintains a board-approved list of industry credentials that align CTE courses with workforce-recognized certifications, ensuring that students and workers can earn credentials that signal job-ready skills and meet industry standards.⁶⁵ Employers can:

- a. Review state credential databases to identify credentials matched to job functions
- b. Consult industry associations or regulatory bodies to confirm required or preferred certifications
- c. Incorporate required credentials directly into job postings, onboarding plans, and advancement criteria

Key Takeaway: Aligning roles with recognized industry credentials ensures that workers have the competencies needed to perform safely and effectively.

2. Supporting Employees in Earning and Maintaining Credentials: Credential attainment depends on access as time, cost, preparation, and employer support all influence whether employees can successfully complete certification requirements. Employers who support workers through this process benefit from higher competency, stronger performance, and improved retention. The National Skills Coalition's Non-Degree Credential Quality Imperative report provides guidance on what makes a credential high-quality, including industry relevance, transparency, and clear labor-market value, helping employers prioritize the most meaningful credentials for their workforce.⁶⁶ Employers can:

- a. Offer financial support for exam fees, study materials, or renewal costs
- b. Provide structured study time or mentorship from credentialed staff
- c. Track credential expiration dates and schedule renewal training proactively

⁶⁵ Virginia Department of Education – https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/k-12-standards-instruction/career-and-technical-education-cte/industry-credentialing?utm_source

⁶⁶ National Skills Coalition – https://nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/The-NDCQ-Imperative-report_fnl2-1.pdf

Key Takeaway: Supporting credential attainment signals a commitment to employee development and helps maintain compliance and quality across the workforce.

3. Partnering with Training Providers to Deliver Credential-Aligned Programs. Community colleges, technical centers, and workforce organizations often deliver courses aligned to industry credentials.⁶⁷ These partnerships create smooth pathways for employees to earn the qualifications needed for advancement. Employers can:

- a. Collaborate with local colleges to design training that prepares workers for credential exams
- b. Use employer advisory boards to ensure training reflects real-world job expectations
- c. Participate in credential-based apprenticeships or fast-track training programs

Key Takeaway: Partnerships with training providers expand access to credential preparation and ensure that training aligns with industry standards.

Digital Badging

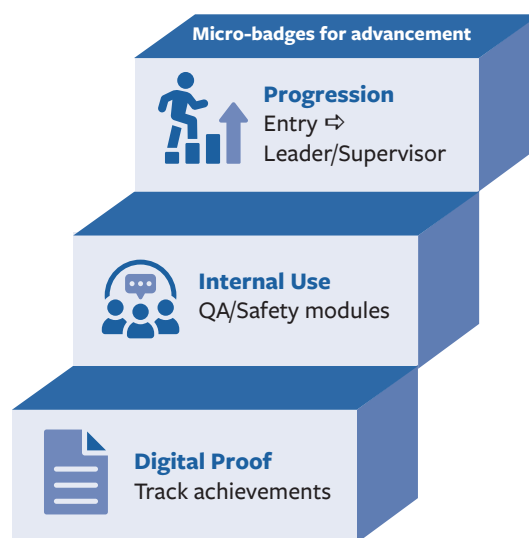
Digital badging provides a modern, verifiable way to document and recognize skills that employees gain through training, workshops, or on-the-job experience. Because badges can be earned for both technical and soft skills, they offer employers a flexible tool for signaling competency and tracking progress across different levels of a role. For workers, digital badges create a portable, stackable record of learning that supports career advancement and increases visibility of achievements. Strategies for integrating digital badges into workforce development include:

1. Using Digital Badges to Recognize Internal Training:

Digital badges can be issued for completing internal training modules, safety courses, customer-service workshops, or leadership development on platforms such as QA Commons and Cred.^{68,69} They create an easily trackable system for validating learning and encourage workers to participate in ongoing development. Employers can:

- a. Award badges for completing required onboarding or safety modules
- b. Recognize soft-skill development (teamwork, communication, problem-solving) through micro-badges
- c. Build tiered badge pathways that reflect growth from entry-level to supervisory roles

Key Takeaway: Digital badges provide a transparent and motivating way to recognize employee learning while making internal training achievements easy to document and track.



67 Credential Finder – <https://credentialfinder.org/>

68 QA Commons – <https://theqacommons.org/>

69 Credly by Pearson – <https://info.credly.com/>

2. Integrating Digital Badges Into Career Pathways and Advancement. Badges allow employers to visually map how skills build toward higher-level roles.⁷⁰ When tied to advancement criteria, they help employees understand exactly which competencies and experiences are needed to move into the next position. Employers can:

- a. Align badges to advancement steps (e.g., “Lead Worker Badge,” “Supervisor Readiness Badge”)
- b. Require specific badges for promotion or higher-responsibility assignments
- c. Use badges to validate cross-training or mastery of equipment or tasks

Key Takeaway: Integrating badges into advancement systems clarifies expectations and makes progression more attainable and transparent for employees.

Connections with Training Programs

Strong connections with training providers help employers build a responsive, future-ready workforce. Community colleges, workforce boards, apprenticeship programs, and industry training partners offer access to skill-aligned instruction that can be customized to meet changing business needs. These partnerships allow employers to shape curriculum, streamline onboarding, and create talent pipelines that support both entry-level and incumbent workers. Strategies for building effective connections with training programs include:

1. Partnering with Community Colleges and Technical Centers: Colleges and training centers provide certificate programs, customized contract training, and industry-aligned courses that strengthen worker skills. Through employer partnerships, these institutions can tailor training to reflect real workplace needs.⁷¹ Employers can:

- a. Collaborate with local colleges to design training aligned with current equipment, technology, or processes
- b. Participate in employer advisory committees to influence curriculum updates
- c. Utilize incumbent worker training programs to upskill existing employees

Key Takeaway: College partnerships ensure training aligns with industry standards and helps employers build a steady supply of skilled workers.

⁷⁰ A Comprehensive Guide to Digital Badges – https://www.agc.org/sites/default/files/users/user41724/%7Be4b1626a-1d29-4615-ab76-8d51721a6625%7D_A-Comprehensive-Guide-to-Digital-Badges-Accredible.pdf

⁷¹ Virginia Community College System – <https://www.vccs.edu/job-training-certificates/>

Section V.

Building a Modern & Supportive Workplace

A positive work environment is built intentionally through employer branding, accessible recruitment, supportive leadership, workplace trust, and modern HR technology. Employees stay longer and perform better in cultures where expectations are clear, well-being is prioritized, and teams feel respected and supported. The following subsections provide practical strategies employers can implement to strengthen workplace culture, engagement, and hiring appeal.

Employer Branding

Employer branding shapes how current and future employees perceive your organization. Consistent, values-driven branding attracts talent, boosts applicant trust, and reinforces retention when internal culture matches the external message.

1. Display your Organization's Value to

Employees. Employees commit more strongly when they understand organizational mission, employee value, and workplace priorities beyond task-level responsibilities.⁷² To strengthen a brand, employers can:

- a. Highlight mission and workforce investments in job descriptions, interview conversations, and onboarding
- b. Employ strategies that build your business brand⁷³
- c. Publicly show employer support for skill growth, mobility, and community commitment

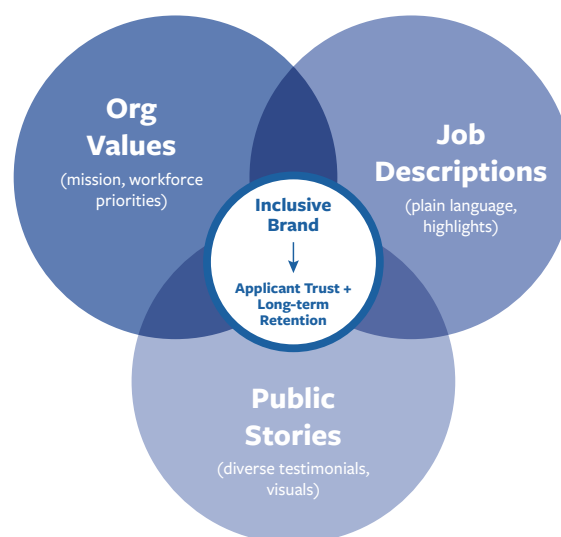
Key Takeaway: Consistent message alignment between hiring, onboarding, and leadership builds trust and long-term retention.

2. Using Plain-Language Messaging for an Inclusive Employer Brand.

Avoiding exclusionary or overly technical language helps multilingual, youth, and non-degree applicants see themselves in your workplace. Employers can:

- a. Audit brand messaging for readability and access
- b. Avoid exclusionary jargon in job descriptions, career pathways, or benefits summaries⁷⁴
- c. Use visuals and testimonials from workers in marketing content

Key Takeaway: Consistent message alignment between hiring, onboarding, and leadership builds trust and long-term retention.



72 Reinventing Employee Communication & Engagement – <https://www.aliconferences.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/reinventing-employee-communication-and-engagement.pdf>

73 How to Combat the Talent Shortage by Building Your Employer Brand – <https://fs.hubspotusercontent00.net/hubfs/2969551/eBook/Employer%20Brand/How%20to%20Combat%20the%20Talent%20Shortage%20By%20Building%20Your%20Employer%20Brand.pdf>

74 Inclusive Hiring Made Simple: A Step-by-Step Practical Guide for Employers – <https://employabilities.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Inclusive-Hiring-Made-Simple-Guide.pdf>

3. Aligning Branding with Workplace Culture. Retention suffers when branding promises don't match internal realities. Employers should align messaging with actual workplace experience.⁷⁵ Employers can:

- a. Use employee testimonials to reflect real workplace conditions
- b. Train supervisors to model brand values (belonging, support, advancement)
- c. Reinforce internal recognition practices that match external messaging claims

Key Takeaway: A strong employer brand must reflect the actual employee experience.

Online Recruitment

Online recruitment enables employers to connect with qualified applicants across wider geographies while clarifying expectations before interviews or offers. When job postings include plain language, competency signals, and early learning expectations, applicants arrive better prepared and adapt more quickly during onboarding. Using modern digital recruitment tools also helps employers scale sourcing, improve candidate fit, and expand access for rural, multilingual, veteran, youth, and experienced applicants.

1. Posting Jobs Where Talent Already

Searches. Posting consistently across multiple platforms improves visibility, increases applicant flow, and reduces sourcing bottlenecks, especially where commuting distance or degree filters shrink rural talent pools. Employers can also reinforce role expectations early by including clear skill signals before interviews and offers.⁷⁶ Employers can:

- a. Post openings on statewide workforce career centers, job hubs, and virtual recruitment events
- b. Feature soft-skill expectations (dependability, communication, teamwork) in postings
- c. Share realistic role previews before interviews

Key Takeaway: Meeting candidates on familiar platforms increases applicant volume and readiness.



Postings

Job centers, online portals



Skills Filters

Plain language,
skill-based



Virtual Events

Low-cost fairs

Diverse Talent Pathways

Structured Questions

⁷⁵ How to Use Archetypes to Design, Align, and Transform Workplace Culture – <https://culturetalk.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Design-Align-Transform-PDF-11.23.pdf>

⁷⁶ The Ultimate Guide to Job Posting – <https://www.workable.com/ebooks/workable-ultimate-job-posting-guide.pdf>

2. Optimizing Job Postings with Skills-Based Language. Job posting language can unintentionally exclude strong candidates when technical jargon, non-role degree requirements, or overly precise experience filters narrow applicant flow. Skills-based postings allow employers to evaluate candidates more fairly by emphasizing competencies instead of assumptions about education or background.⁷⁷ Using standardized occupational skill descriptors also improves screening relevance and helps applicants understand role success expectations from day one. Employers can:

- a. Remove unnecessary degree or jargon barriers in digital postings
- b. Use standardized soft-skill and competency language for role clarity
- c. Align job requirements to actual workplace success metrics

Key Takeaway: Skills-based posting language expands equitable reach and improves candidate alignment.

3. Using Virtual Recruitment Events to Build Early Trust. Virtual hiring events reduce friction in rural hiring by allowing candidates outside of commuting range to participate in early recruitment conversations without travel cost or scheduling barriers. These events also allow supervisors to evaluate soft skills live through structured questions and industry framing conversations instead of assumptions. Offering virtual interviews or screening steps also signals fairness, accessibility, and modern recruitment practices, which improves trust for candidates entering through nontraditional or rural talent pathways. Employers can:

- a. Host or join virtual job fairs and early screening events
- b. Offer remote interview options during first candidate screens
- c. Evaluate soft skills live through structured competency questions

Key Takeaway: Virtual recruitment expands candidate reach while improving supervisor insight and applicant trust.

Mental Health & Wellness

Supporting mental health in the workplace is essential for maintaining productivity, trust, retention, and overall employee well-being. Workers who feel psychologically safe and supported are better able to manage stress, communicate effectively, and adapt to the demands of their roles. By investing in mental health strategies, employers strengthen team morale, reduce turnover, and create an environment where employees from all backgrounds can thrive.

Reduce Stress



Training
Recognize
burnout/pathways



**Accessible
Resources**
EAPs, MHFA



Culture Priority
Conversations,
manager training

Engaged Workforce

⁷⁷ The Skills-Based Hiring Handbook: Transform Your Talent Strategy – <https://downloads.ctfassets.net/vztl6sohp3ro/4HK1P286QILJ1YPL4WspPu/e3187d48a33f6dd1084c597b36b4e595/02-SBH-handbook-transform-your-talent-strategy-v3.pdf>

1. Training Supervisors to Recognize and Respond to Employee Well-Being Needs. Supervisors play a pivotal role in employee mental health, often noticing signs of stress, burnout, or emotional strain before formal systems do. The 2025 State of Workforce Mental Health Report emphasizes that work-related stress is the top mental health challenge globally, with 44% of employees identifying stress as their primary concern and 73% reporting that mental-health struggles negatively affected their job performance.⁷⁸ Supervisors trained to identify early warning signs and respond without stigma help reduce these risks and reinforce psychological safety in the workplace. Research from the report also shows that organizations prioritizing mental health literacy and psychologically safe communication experience stronger engagement and higher retention rates. Employers can:

- a. Offer supervisor training focused on mental-health literacy, early recognition of burnout, and stigma-free communication
- b. Provide scripts or structured guidance for empathetic check-ins
- c. Establish clear referral pathways to HR, employee assistance programs, or mental-health benefits

Key Takeaway: Supervisors trained in mental-health literacy and supportive communication help prevent burnout, reduce workplace stressors, and ensure employees access the right resources at the right time, strengthening retention, productivity, and overall well-being.

2. Developing Accessible Wellness Programs for All Employees. Workplace wellness programs give employees structured opportunities to manage stress, build resilience, and maintain well-being, helping them balance work demands with personal and home responsibilities. The MHA Workplace Mental Health Toolkit provides ready-made resources (sample policies, wellness event guides, internal communications templates, multilingual and accessible formats) that employers can adopt immediately.⁷⁹ By offering inclusive wellness supports, employers meet employees where they are and help ensure mental-health resources are available to everyone, from entry-level to senior staff, across languages and job types. Employers can:

- a. Provide short wellness breaks, stretching sessions, or mindfulness activities
- b. Offer resources in multiple languages to support multilingual team members
- c. Include wellness reminders in shift huddles, team meetings, or internal communications

Key Takeaway: Wellness programs that are simple, inclusive, and easy to access help all employees maintain balance and reduce stress.

⁷⁸ Lyra Health: State of Workforce Mental Health – <https://www.lyrahealth.com/resources/report/2025-state-of-workforce-mental-health-report/>

⁷⁹ Mental Health America Toolkit – <https://mhanational.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Workplace-Toolkit.pdf>

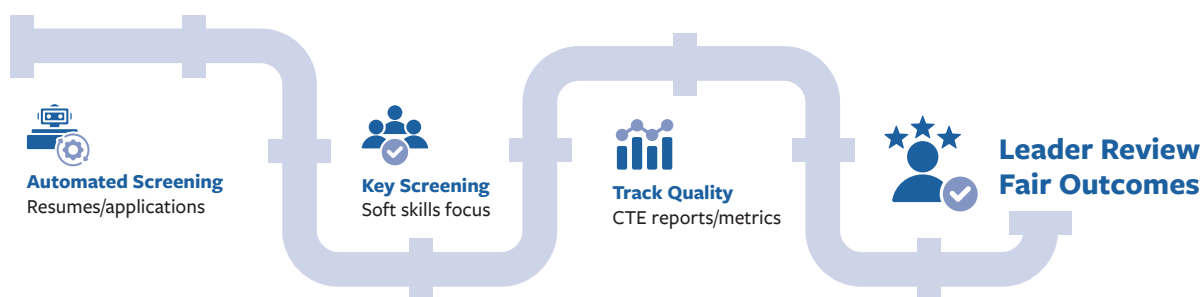
3. Building a Culture that Prioritizes Mental Wellness Safety. A psychologically safe environment encourages employees to speak openly, ask questions, and raise concerns without fear of punishment or stigma. This is especially important for new workers, youth, multilingual employees, or anyone adjusting to a new role. Employers who reinforce respect, transparency, and supportive communication build trust that strengthens retention and overall team cohesion. Employers can:

- a. Encourage open communication by modeling calm, respectful dialogue
- b. Reinforce that mistakes are part of learning when addressed constructively
- c. Include mental health and communication norms in onboarding and team agreements

Key Takeaway: Psychological safety helps employees feel valued and supported, resulting in stronger engagement and long-term retention.

Automation

Automation tools streamline repetitive tasks, reduce administrative workload, and allow supervisors to spend more time coaching and supporting employees. When implemented thoughtfully, automation improves hiring efficiency, strengthens onboarding quality, and helps reduce preventable turnover, particularly in small or rural organizations with limited HR capacity. Automation is especially valuable for reinforcing consistent practices such as check-ins, document tracking, and communication across teams.



1. Automating Onboarding Tasks and New-Hire Milestones. Automating reminders, forms, and milestone check-ins helps employers maintain consistent onboarding quality, especially during busy seasons or when supervisors manage multiple new hires.⁸⁰ Automated workflows ensure employees receive timely information, complete required trainings, and feel supported during their first 30–90 days which are critical periods for engagement and retention. Reducing manual follow-up also frees leaders to spend more time mentoring and answering role-specific questions. Employers can:

- a. Use automated onboarding platforms to send reminders for paperwork, training modules, and safety requirements
- b. Schedule automated 30-, 60-, and 90-day check-in prompts for supervisors
- c. Provide digital access to onboarding materials in multiple languages or formats

Key Takeaway: Automating early onboarding steps builds consistency and reduces the risk of new hires slipping through the cracks.

⁸⁰ Integrify: Automating Employee Onboarding – <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/610486/automating-employee-onboarding-integrify.pdf>

2. Streamlining Recruitment Through Automated Screening Tools. Automation can help employers sort applications more efficiently by focusing on key competencies, soft skills, and role-aligned indicators, reducing the time supervisors spend manually reviewing resumes. Tools that match skills to job requirements support more equitable hiring by prioritizing abilities rather than unnecessary credentials.⁸¹ Automated scheduling tools also remove friction by allowing candidates to pick interview times without back-and-forth communication delays. Employers can:

- a. Use screening tools that highlight essential skills rather than degrees or tenure
- b. Automate interview scheduling to improve candidate experience and speed
- c. Apply structured scoring or keyword-based reviews to ensure fairness and consistency

Key Takeaway: Automated screening strengthens hiring quality while reducing bias and administrative burden.

3. Tracking Compliance, Certification, and Performance Milestones Automatically. Automating the tracking of employee credentials, certifications, and renewal requirements helps employers maintain compliance and support career growth without relying on manual record-keeping. The Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL) provides a standardized way to describe credentials, including renewal cycles, required competencies, assessment requirements, and related occupations allowing employers to integrate clear credential data into HR systems.⁸² Using CTDL-aligned tools or registries ensures that credential information remains accurate, comparable, and easy to automate across roles and departments. Employers can:

- a. Use systems that rely on CTDL-standardized credential data to track expirations, required trainings, and competency benchmarks
- b. Automate notifications for upcoming renewal deadlines or required safety/compliance courses
- c. Utilize CTDL-linked skill and credential information to align advancement pathways with verified competencies

Key Takeaway: CTDL-aligned automation improves accuracy, reduces compliance risk, and helps employers maintain up-to-date workforce credentials tied to real competency data.

Human Resources Technology

Human resources (HR) technology provides employers with tools to streamline hiring, onboarding, training, and ongoing workforce development. Modern HR systems help centralize employee data, track skills and credentials, support internal mobility, and automate routine processes ultimately freeing supervisors to focus on coaching and employee engagement. When used thoughtfully, HR technology increases consistency, reduces administrative burden, and strengthens fairness and transparency across the employment cycle.

81 Digital GovHub: AI & Inclusive Hiring Framework – <https://digitalgovernmenthub.org/library/ai-inclusive-hiring-framework/>

82 Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL) – <https://credentialengine.org/credential-transparency/ctdl/>

4. Centralizing Employee Data and Skill Profiles Through HR Platforms. HR technology systems allow employers to maintain a unified record of each worker’s skills, certifications, training history, and performance milestones. Centralization helps supervisors quickly understand employee strengths and development needs, especially in environments with high turnover or multiple worksites. It also reduces errors and ensures that hiring, evaluation, and advancement decisions are based on consistent, up-to-date information. Suggest platforms are listed below:

Platform	Website	Notes
BambooHR	https://www.bamboohr.com	Known for intuitive dashboards, onboarding workflows, training tracking, and document storage.
Credly	https://www.credly.com	Tracks digital badges and certifications; integrates with HRIS platforms.
Cornerstone OnDemand	https://www.cornerstoneondemand.com	Robust learning management + credential tracking + career development pathways.
Degreed	https://www.degreed.com	Skill-profile platform that shows skill levels, learning completions, and internal mobility paths.
Gusto	https://gusto.com	HR + payroll + onboarding with basic document management and checklists.
Paylocity	https://www.paylocity.com	Strong compliance tracking, training modules, and employee self-service tools.
Paycor	https://www.paycor.com	Popular with small/medium
TalentGuard	https://www.talentguard.com	Specifically designed for skills mapping, competency frameworks, and career pathways.
UKG	https://www.ukg.com	Offers certification tracking, learning libraries, and supervisor dashboards.
Workday	https://www.workday.com	Industry-leading skills cloud and competency mapping;

5. Supporting Career Mobility with Technology-Enabled Skill Pathways. Organizations are most successful when they adopt a skills-based approach to career development, using technology to map the competencies needed for different roles and to guide internal mobility.⁸³ HR technology platforms can help employees see how existing skills transfer to new roles, identify gaps, and access personalized learning pathways that support advancement. This approach strengthens retention by giving employees a clear, structured understanding of how to progress within the organization. Employers can:

- a. Implement HR systems that map skills and competencies to specific career pathways, helping employees understand which abilities align to higher-level roles
- b. Use technology-enabled tools such as digital badges, micro-credentials, or LMS-based learning plans to help workers document progress and build the skills required for promotion
- c. Provide personalized learning recommendations or curated training modules aligned to the competencies identified in the skills pathway system

Key Takeaway: HR technology strengthens internal mobility by making career pathways visible, attainable, and tied to clear competency data.

6. Enhancing Compliance and Workforce Readiness Through Automated HR Tools. HR technology systems can automatically track certification renewals, training deadlines, and regulatory requirements reducing compliance risk and improving employee readiness. Automation ensures that supervisors and employees receive timely reminders for required trainings, while digital logs create reliable documentation for audits or inspections. This reduces administrative workload and ensures workforce qualifications stay aligned with industry standards. Employers can:

- a. Use HR software to automate credential-tracking and renewal notifications
- b. Store compliance records digitally for easy retrieval during audits
- c. Integrate learning management systems (LMS) to ensure required training modules are completed on time

Key Takeaway: Automated HR tools strengthen compliance, reduce risk, and ensure employees maintain the skills and certifications required for safe and effective performance.

83 World Economic Forum – https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Towards_a_Reskilling_Revolution.pdf

Section VI.

Industry Specific Resources

Beyond general business planning and hiring information, Bay Consortium WDB also provides a wealth of industry specific information and resources for some of the largest industries within the state of Virginia, including Aquaculture, Information Technology, and Manufacturing.

Aquaculture Industry Resources

Top Occupations in Demand

Occupation	Entry Education	Mean Wage	Growth
General & Operations Managers	Bachelor's	\$140,090	High
First-Line Supervisors	HS Diploma	\$74,420	High
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	HS Diploma	\$65,280	Moderate

Regional Education Providers

Education Provider	Programs	Learn More
Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS)	Oyster Aquaculture Training (OAT) – 5-month hands-on program	https://www.vims.edu/engage/college/oat_redirect/
	Marine Advisory Program – Shellfish specialization	
Virginia Seafood AREC (Virginia Tech)	Seafood processing & safety training	https://www.arec.vaes.vt.edu/arec/virginia-seafood.html
	HACCP workshops	
Virginia Cooperative Extension	Aquaculture development programs	https://www.ext.vsu.edu/aquaculture
	Fish health certifications	
Rappahannock Community College – Workforce Programs	(Only include RCC if you want aquaculture-adjacent courses like safety, logistics, or environmental programs.)	https://www.rappahannock.edu/explore-programs/programs/workforce-solutions.html

Additional Aquaculture Training Programs

Education Provider	Programs	Learn More
Promoting Careers in Aquaculture 2.0 (Virginia Tech/GO Virginia)	Summer program with online modules, site visits, and paid internships	https://cece.vt.edu/projects/careers-in-aquaculture/program-overview.html
	Expanded to Hampton Roads in 2025	
	Engages 60+ students and 30+ teachers annually	
	Contact: Mallory Tuttle, VT Newport News Center	
Certification for Aquaculture Professionals (CAP) – Auburn University	Web-based certification program	https://agriculture.auburn.edu/research/faas/cap/
	Covers production, food safety, animal welfare, environmental management	
	Globally recognized credential	
Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) Certification	Only certification covering entire seafood production chain	https://www.bapcertification.org/
	Covers: hatcheries, farms, feed mills, processing plants	

Aquaculture Training Pathway (Employer Quick Guide)

Entry-Level	Intermediate	Advanced
ServSafe → HACCP Segment 1 → Intro farm tasks	Full Seafood HACCP (Segments 1 & 2) → Shellfish operations	FAA Part 107 Drone License → Stock assessment & site mapping

Industry-Recognized Credentials

Credential	Provider	High Demand	Testing/Delivery	Learn More
Seafood HACCP	Seafood HACCP Alliance	Yes	Online + Segment 2 workshop	https://seafoodhaccp.cornell.edu/
ServSafe Food Protection Manager	National Restaurant Association	Yes	In-person/Online	https://www.servsafe.com/
FAA Part 107 Remote Pilot	Federal Aviation Administration	Yes	PSI Testing Centers	https://www.faa.gov/uas/commercial_operators/become_a_drone_pilot

Information Technology

Top Occupations in Demand

Occupation	Entry Education	Mean Wage	Growth
Software Developers	Bachelor's	\$142,230	Very High
Information Security Analysts	Bachelor's	\$136,680	Very High
Customer Service Representatives	HS Diploma	\$43,560	Moderate

Regional Education Providers

Education Provider	Programs	Learn More
Germanna Community College	CompTIA A+, Network+, ITF+ preparation	https://germanna.edu/
	Mechatronics certificates	
Cyber Bytes Foundation (Stafford)	Rapid Ascent Cybersecurity Program	https://cyberbytesfoundation.org/
	CyberpunX & Preppy IT/Cyber programs	
Google Career Certificates	IT Support, Data Analytics, UX, Project Management	https://grow.google/certificates/
AWS Academy / AWS Cloud Training	AWS Cloud Practitioner & Solutions Architect	https://aws.amazon.com/training/

Additional IT & Cybersecurity Training Programs

Education Provider	Programs	Learn More
Commonwealth Cyber Initiative (CCI) Cybersecurity Traineeship	7-week bootcamp + 12-week paid apprenticeship	https://cyberinitiative.org/talent-development.html
	Covers data analytics, networking, Python, AWS	
	Placed graduates with Peraton, TikTok, AWS	
	Contact: sshayes@vt.edu	
CCI Project-Based Learning Program	CCI funds student stipends	https://cyberinitiative.org/talent-development/project-based-learning-program.html
	Employers design real projects and evaluate potential hires	
	Win-win for companies and students	
Cyber Fusion Competition & Job Fair	Annual capture-the-flag competition at VMI	
	Connects employers with top cybersecurity talent from VA colleges	
	Open to NSA-designated Centers of Academic Excellence	

Education Provider	Programs	Learn More
Cyber Vets Virginia	Free training pilot with Cisco, AWS, ISC2 for veterans	https://cybervets.virginia.gov/
	Resources to help veterans enter cybersecurity workforce	
TCC Cybersecurity Apprenticeship	First registered cybersecurity apprenticeship in Virginia	https://www.tcc.edu/
	Positions: Information Security Analyst, Computer Forensics Analyst	

IT Training Pathway (Employer Quick Guide)

Entry-Level	Mid-Level	Advanced
Google IT Support → CompTIA ITF+ → CompTIA A+	Network+ → Security+ → AWS Cloud Practitioner	Cisco CCNA → CompTIA CySA+ → AWS Solutions Architect

Industry-Recognized Credentials

Credential	Provider	High Demand	Testing	Learn More
CompTIA A+	CompTIA	Yes	Pearson VUE	https://www.comptia.org/certifications/a
CompTIA Network+	CompTIA	Yes	Pearson VUE	https://www.comptia.org/certifications/network
CompTIA Security+	CompTIA	Yes	Pearson VUE	https://www.comptia.org/certifications/security
Google IT Support Certificate	Google	Yes	Online	https://grow.google/certificates/it-support/
AWS Cloud Practitioner	Amazon AWS	Yes	Online + Pearson	https://aws.amazon.com/certification/certified-cloud-practitioner/
Cisco CCNA	Cisco	High	Pearson VUE	https://www.cisco.com/site/us/en/learn/certifications/ccna/index.html
CompTIA CySA+	CompTIA	Growing	Pearson VUE	https://www.pearsonvue.com/us/en/cisco.html
Microsoft Azure Fundamentals	Microsoft	Growing	Pearson VUE	https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/credentials/
Microsoft 365 Fundamentals	Microsoft	Growing	Pearson VUE	https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/credentials/

Manufacturing

Top Occupations in Demand

Occupation	Entry Education	Mean Wage	Growth
First-Line Supervisors	HS Diploma	\$74,420	Moderate
Welders, Cutters, Solderers	HS Diploma	\$58,250	High
CNC Tool Operators	HS Diploma	\$47,460	Moderate

Regional Education Providers

Education Provider	Programs	Learn More
Rappahannock Community College	Welding (MIG, Stick, TIG)	https://www.rappahannock.edu/explore-programs/programs/workforce-solutions.html
	Advanced Manufacturing	
Virginia Peninsula Community College	Mechatronics	https://www.vpcc.edu/
	Siemens SMSCP Level 1	
	Industrial Maintenance	
FANUC Robotics CERT Schools	Robotics programming	https://www.fanucamerica.com/education
	CNC machining	

Additional Manufacturing Training Programs

Training Program	Benefits	Learn More
AMMORAP – Advanced Manufacturing Machine Operator Apprenticeship	FREE to participants & employers!	https://manufacturingskillsinstitute.org/training/registered-apprenticeship-program/machine-operator-apprenticeship/
	\$3,000 in training per person covered	
	One-year registered apprenticeship connecting job seekers with manufacturers	
	Contact: Wes Smith, 804-655-2353, wsmith@msi-workforce.com	
Military2Manufacturing (M2M)	Helps transitioning service members obtain industry credentials	https://vamanufacturers.com/workforcedevelopment/
	Competency-based, stackable credentials for manufacturing careers	
Accelerated Training in Defense Manufacturing (ATDM)	Approved VA apprenticeship provider	https://www.ialr.org/
	Programs: Welding, CNC machining, quality control inspection, non-destructive testing, additive manufacturing	
	Prepares workers for Navy shipbuilding careers	

Manufacturing Training Pathway (Employer Quick Guide)

Entry-Level	Mid-Level	Advanced
OSHA-10 → MSSC CPT 4.0 → Basic shop safety	AWS MIG/TIG Welding → NIMS Machining → CNC Setup	Siemens SMSCP-L1 → FANUC Robotics CERT → Automated systems

Industry-Recognized Credentials

Credential	Provider	High Demand	Testing/Delivery	Learn More
GMAW (MIG) Welding	American Welding Society	Yes	RCC	https://www.aws.org/certification
SMAW (Stick) Welding	American Welding Society	Yes	RCC	https://www.aws.org/certification
MSSC CPT 4.0	Manufacturing Skill Standards Council	Yes	Online + Performance	https://www.msscusa.org/certification/production-certification-cpt/
NIMS Machining Credentials	NIMS	High	Performance-based	https://www.nims-skills.org/credentials/
OSHA 10/30	OSHA Outreach	Yes	Online/In-person	https://www.osha.gov/training/outreach
Siemens Mechatronics (SMSCP L1)	Siemens	High	Partner Colleges	https://www.siemens.com/global/en/products/services/digital-enterprise-services/training-services/sitrain/smscp.html
FANUC Robotics CERT	FANUC	High	CERT Schools	https://www.fanucamerica.com/education/nocti-certifications-robotics
Lean Six Sigma Yellow Belt	Various	Growing	Online/In-Person	https://www.vhcc.edu/six-sigma
Lean Six Sigma Green Belt	Various	Growing	Online/In-Person	https://courses.cpe.vt.edu/lean-six-sigma

Construction & Skilled Trades Resources

Top Occupations in Demand

Occupation	Entry Education	Mean Wage	Growth
Electricians	HS Diploma + Apprenticeship	\$60,040	High
Plumbers	HS Diploma + Apprenticeship	\$59,880	High
HVAC Technicians	HS Diploma + Apprenticeship	\$51,390	High
Carpenters	HS Diploma + Apprenticeship	\$52,850	Moderate

Training Providers & Apprenticeship Resources

Training Provider	Programs	Learn More
NCCER (National Center for Construction Education & Research)	Industry-recognized curriculum for all building trades	https://www.nccer.org/
	Portable, nationally recognized credentials	
	Available at many Virginia community colleges	
ABC Virginia (Associated Builders & Contractors)	4-year apprenticeship programs in electrical, HVAC, plumbing, carpentry	https://www.abcva.org/apprenticeship/
	Hands-on training with NCCER curriculum	
	Earn while you learn	
Virginia DPOR Tradesmen Licensing	Regulates electricians, plumbers, HVAC, gas fitting	https://www.dpor.virginia.gov/Boards/Tradesmen
	Journeyman and Master level certifications	
	Apprenticeship completion can waive exam requirements	

Industry-Recognized Credentials

Credential	Provider	High Demand	Pathway	Learn More
NCCER Core	NCCER	Yes	Foundation for all trades	https://www.nccer.org/
NCCER Electrical Levels 1-4	NCCER	Yes	Apprenticeship RTI	https://www.nccer.org/craft-catalog/electrical/
NCCER HVAC Levels 1-4	NCCER	Yes	Apprenticeship RTI	https://www.nccer.org/craft-catalog/hvacr/
NCCER Plumbing Levels 1-4	NCCER	Yes	Apprenticeship RTI	https://www.nccer.org/craft-catalog/plumbing/
EPA 608 Certification	EPA	Yes	Required for HVAC refrigerant	https://www.epa.gov/section608

Apprenticeships & Customized Training

Training Provider	Benefits	Learn More
Virginia Works Registered Apprenticeship		https://virginiaworks.gov/im-an-employer/hire-and-retain/registered-apprenticeship-and-on-the-job-training/
US DOL Registered Apprenticeship		https://www.apprenticeship.gov/
Customized Employer Training – Bay Consortium	Bootcamps	https://www.baywib.org/
	Upskilling for incumbent workers	
	Training tailored with RCC, Germanna, VPCC, Cyber Bytes	

Additional Apprenticeship Resources

Resource	Benefits	Learn More
HIRED Apprenticeship Fund (Virginia Works)	\$4,000 for Registered Apprenticeship Training per apprentice	Learn more: https://virginiaworks.gov/apprenticeshipfund/
	\$2,000 for Supportive Services (transportation, childcare, uniforms, tools)	
	Sectors: Manufacturing, healthcare, clean energy, early childhood education, teacher education	
	Contact: Michael.Alley@virginiaworks.gov	
Youth Registered Apprenticeship Youth Registered Apprenticeship (YRA) integrates Career and Technical Education (CTE) curriculum with on-the-job training for high school students ages 16-17.	Benefits for Employers: ● Build your future workforce while students are still in school ● Students receive Related Technical Instruction from high school CTE programs at no cost to employer ● Apprentices can continue as adult apprentices after graduation ● OJT hours count toward adult apprenticeship completion Program Structure: ● Minimum 280 OJT hours per school year earns student one credit ● 144 hours of Related Technical Instruction per year from CTE ● Paid employment at progressive wage scale ● Available in 1,200+ occupations Contact your Virginia Works Registered Apprenticeship Consultant to get started.	https://virginiaworks.gov/registered-apprenticeship/youth-registered-apprenticeship/

Funding Resources for Training

Program	Purpose	Coverage	Learn More
FastForward	Short-term, in-demand credentials	Up to 2/3 tuition	https://fastforwardva.org/
WIOA	Training funds & supportive services	Full training assistance	https://www.baywib.org/
On-the-Job Training (OJT)	Wage reimbursement for new hires	Up to 50% of wages	https://www.baywib.org/

Financial Incentives & Tax Credits for Employers

Hiring Incentives

Program	Description	Benefits
Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)	Federal tax credit for hiring individuals from 10 target groups facing employment barriers (veterans, ex-felons, SNAP recipients, etc.) https://wotc.virginiaworks.gov/	\$1,200 - \$9,600 per eligible employee
Virginia V3 Employment Grant	Grant for V3-certified employers hiring veterans	\$500,000 annual pool statewide

Training & Retraining Incentives

Program	Description	Benefits
Virginia Jobs Investment Program (VJIP)	Customized funding for companies creating new jobs or retraining existing workforce. Administered by VEDP.	Custom budget based on project
VJIP Small Business Program	For companies with 250 or fewer employees creating 5+ new jobs with \$100K capital investment https://www.vedp.org/incentive/virginia-jobs-investment-program-vjip Contact VEDP: 804-545-5706	Custom training budget
Worker Training Tax Credit	State tax credit for training that results in workforce credentials or apprenticeship	35% of costs; up to \$500-\$1,000/employee
Incumbent Worker Training	Workforce board funds for upskilling current employees. Contact Bay Consortium WDB.	Up to 90% for small employers (<50 employees)

No-Cost/Low-Cost Training for Employees

Training Program	Benefits	Learn More
G3 Tuition Assistance Program	The Get Skilled, Get a Job, Give Back (G3) program covers tuition and fees at Virginia community colleges for eligible residents. • Eligibility: Virginia residents with household income under ~\$100,000 (400% FPL) • Covered Industries: Manufacturing, IT, Healthcare, Public Safety, Early Childhood Education • Programs: Certificates, associate degrees, and short-term credentials • Employer Benefit: Refer employees for FREE skills upgrading – no cost to employer	https://viriniag3.com/
FastForward Workforce Credentials (Expanded Details)	Short-term (6-12 weeks) credential training at Virginia's community colleges. • Cost Structure: Students pay 1/3, state pays 2/3 (or FREE with financial assistance) • Average out-of-pocket cost: \$801 • Results: Over 52,900 credentials awarded since 2016; 95% completion rate • Employer Benefit: Quick upskilling for incumbent workers; employers can pay 1/3 to fast-track training	https://fastforwardva.org/

Industry Association & Networks

Connecting with industry associations provides networking opportunities, legislative advocacy, and access to workforce development resources.

Association	Focus	Website/Contact
Virginia Manufacturers Association (VMA)	Legislative advocacy, workforce development, Made in Virginia program, networking for manufacturers statewide	vamanufacturers.com 804-643-7489
Manufacturing Skills Institute (MSI)	Industry credentials, customized training, apprenticeship support	Dr. Victor Gray vgray@vamanufacturers.com
Commonwealth Cyber Initiative (CCI)	Cybersecurity workforce development, research, innovation across Virginia	cyberinitiative.org
Shellfish Growers of Virginia	Legislative advocacy for aquaculture industry, member support	Contact through VIMS MAP
Virginia Watermen's Association	Commercial fishing industry promotion, watermen culture preservation	Local chapters
GENEDGE Alliance	Manufacturing extension services, Industry 4.0 adoption, business transformation	genedge.org

Employer Engagement Opportunities

There are many ways employers can engage with workforce development programs to build their talent pipeline.

Opportunity	Focus
Host Paid Internships	Partner with Promoting Careers in Aquaculture for summer interns at aquaculture operations
	Connect with CCI internship programs for cybersecurity/IT students
	Work with community colleges for career pathway internships
Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership (V-TOP)	V-TOP is a state initiative to expand paid and credit-bearing internships and work-based learning opportunities. The program connects students, employers, and higher education institutions.
	Free Resources for Employers • Virginia Employer Readiness Toolkit • Free online “Developing an Internship Program” training modules • Regional V-TOP representatives to assist with program development • Matching grants for small employers (150 or fewer employees) covering 50% of intern wages • Free virtual mentor training through MENTOR Virginia partnership

Opportunity	Focus
	Key Statistics • 57.6% of interns convert to full-time positions • Top competencies sought: communication, teamwork, critical thinking • Learn more: https://virginiatop.org/
Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) Internship Program	The VEDP Virginia Internship Program connects employers with talented students across the Commonwealth, providing hands-on work experiences that build career pathways while supporting business talent needs. Learn more at https://www.vedp.org/internshipsva .
Serve on Advisory Boards	Join community college program advisory committees to shape curriculum
	Participate in Bay Consortium WDB industry sector partnerships
	Engage with GO Virginia regional initiatives
Provide Guest Instruction & Mentorship	Teach specialized industry modules at technical centers or community colleges
	Mentor students in career pathway programs
	Speak at career exploration events
Participate in Job Fairs & Events	CCI Cyber Fusion capture-the-flag competition and job fair
	Virginia Career Works hiring events
	Virginia Aquaculture Conference trade show (biennial)
	VMA Manufacturing Day events
Equipment Donations & Facility Tours	Donate equipment to support hands-on training at technical centers
	Host facility tours for students and educators
	Provide work-based learning sites
Customized Training Partnerships	Work with RCC or ESCC for employer-specific training programs
	Partner with VMA Manufacturing Skills Institute for customized workforce training
	Develop registered apprenticeship programs with Virginia Works support

Bay Consortium Workforce Development Board

How We Support Employers

- Skills gap analysis
- Customized training development
- Recruitment & pre-screening
- Funding navigation
- Industry partnership coordination
- Apprenticeship development

Contact Information

Website: <https://www.baywib.org/>

Physical Address: 487 Main Street, Warsaw, VA 22572

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1117, Warsaw, VA 22572

Phone: 804-333-4048

Fax: 804-333-6378

Toll Free: 1-800-582-7292

American Job Centers:

Fredericksburg Center

Physical Address: 10304 Spotsylvania Avenue, Suite 100, Fredericksburg, VA 22408
Phone Number: 540-680-0331

Hours of Operation: Mon., Tues., Thurs., Fri., 8:30 am – 4:30 pm; Weds., 9:30 am – 4:30 pm

Northern Neck Center

Physical Address: 487 Main Street, Warsaw, VA 22572

Phone Number: 804-333-4048

Hours of Operation: Mon., Tues., Weds., Thurs., Fri., 8:00 am – 4:00 pm



VIRGINIA INITIATIVE FOR
**GROWTH &
OPPORTUNITY**
IN EACH REGION

CONTACT INFORMATION

Bay Consortium Workforce Development Board
487 Main Street, P.O. Box 1117, Warsaw, VA 22572
Phone: 804-333-4048 | Fax: 804-333-6378
Toll Free: 1-800-582-7292
<https://www.baywib.org/>

This project was funded in part by the Bay Consortium Workforce Development Board and GO Virginia, a state-funded initiative administered by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) that strengthens and diversifies Virginia's economy and fosters the creation of higher wage jobs in strategic industries.