



# HIRE Virginia

*Virginia's Transformational Workforce Development Initiative to Fill 75,000 Open Jobs  
Across the Commonwealth with Newly Trained and Qualified Virginia Workers*

## **The Challenge: Workers Needed Now!**

Virginia is facing a unique moment. With record-low unemployment, the Commonwealth has an enormous need for workers for an estimated 300,000 open and unfilled jobs. Governor Youngkin has asked business and education leaders for transformational ideas that will help fill these jobs quickly.

This is no small task — especially as Virginia wrestles with both a low unemployment rate (2.6%) and falling rate of labor force participation. Today, just 64% of working age Virginia adults are actively working or seeking a job. (This number dropped during the pandemic and hasn't recovered.)

This leaves Virginia's employers desperate to hire and searching for qualified workers — and that means the loss of billions of dollars in economic activity for the Commonwealth.

## **The Solution: Virginia Community College System's HIRE Virginia:**

The Virginia Community College System (VCCS) has the solution to fill many of the open jobs — HIRE Virginia. The program uses a business-minded approach to accelerate the training, credentialing, and placement of Virginia residents in available, good-paying jobs. The initiative focuses on the unfilled middle-skill jobs, approximately half of the 300,000 open jobs. Candidates for these jobs are trained at little or no cost to them personally, with the understanding that time is of the essence for their training and placement in the open positions.

Here's a quick snapshot of HIRE Virginia:

- Creates a new umbrella initiative by integrating and packaging the top three workforce training programs that are delivering results today — Fast Forward, G3, and Virginia Ready.
- Provides the resources to coordinate and hyper-scale these programs.
- Provides the needed investment to modernize VCCS' labs, classrooms, and learning experiences to meet business needs and expectations.
- Expands the number of VCCS' advisors and career placement services.
- Builds an innovative student (job seeker) and employer (job provider) online matching portal.
- Ramps up internships and apprenticeships.
- Is managed as a business by VCCS with SMART goals, responsible parties, practical action framework, and key performance indicators.
- Includes a dynamic statewide marketing effort.
- Will fill 75,000 open jobs across the Commonwealth with newly trained and qualified Virginia workers.



## HIRE Virginia's Key Components: A Business Approach to Filling Open Jobs

### 1. Expand dual enrollment for high school graduates with credentialing for middle-skill jobs:

**Challenge:** Almost 100,000 Virginia students graduate from high school every year. A four-year college is not the only next step. A growing number of well-paying, middle-skill jobs and related careers are available. A General Assembly (JLARC) report calls for increasing opportunities for high school students to enroll in career technical education pathways that lead to credentials and jobs. The challenge is the resources required for VCCS to partner with local high schools.

**Solution:** HIRE Virginia will enable VCCS to ramp up the dual enrollment in high schools across Virginia, credentialing thousands of high school students for middle-skill jobs.

### 2. Remove tuition barriers for specific, in-demand industry jobs:

**Challenge:** VCCS' market research identifies the lack of funds for tuition as the single greatest barrier for students enrolling in workforce training and credentialing programs.

**Solution:** HIRE Virginia will expand and closely coordinate the top three workforce training programs that are delivering results today, while demonstrating the need (demand) for greater investment in each program:

- **FastForward:** Started in 2016, this low-cost, short-term workforce program leads to industry certifications. Today, just \$13.5 million is invested in FastForward. More than 12,000 students participated last year.
- **G3 ("Get Skilled, Get a Job, Give Back"):** Started in 2021, this program helps low-income students move into high-demand fields. FastForward is often part of G3 associate degrees.

These programs will help train people for the open jobs at little or no cost to them.

### 3. Provide financial support during learning:

**Challenge:** Too often, life gets in the way when adults want to return to school to learn new skills. The barriers are real, from the costs of childcare to transportation, books, and more.

**Solution:** HIRE Virginia will knock down these barriers by investing in students and helping them enroll in and complete courses. This includes more advisors to help students secure available, but untapped support — from emergency funding to tutoring, to help with financial aid paperwork, and more. The Virginia Foundation for Community College Education (VFCCE) will help here by raising additional funding support.

### 4. Invest in modern labs, classrooms, and learning experiences:

**Challenge:** Many employers report that they must provide extra training to new workers — even those who have earned industry certifications. Too often, the workers were trained in outdated labs with old equipment—because Virginia has not invested in upgrading VCCS' labs and classrooms, or in starting up new, high demand programs to meet emerging workforce needs.

**Solution:** HIRE Virginia will modernize VCCS' teaching environments and student experiences, especially in the programs that will deliver workers to open jobs.



**5. Provide more career services and connect qualified students and employers through an online job matching portal:**

**Challenge:** Research reveals that students do not know where or how to look for jobs, and employers are challenged in reaching and screening for qualified students.

**Solution:** HIRE Virginia will:

- Expand the number of VCCS advisors and career placement services — trained coaches to connect students and employers.
- Expand and promote the Virginia Education Wizard — a VCCS website that teaches career pathways and college planning. Three million have used the Wizard to date.
- Create an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven, “one-stop” portal that connects students (job seekers) to open jobs (employers). FYI: Charlotte is implementing this approach.

**6. Expand internships, apprenticeships, and career placement:**

**Challenge:** Employers prefer to “test drive” new workers. Internships and apprenticeships meet this growing need.

**Solution:** HIRE Virginia will help fund on-the-job learning, through ramped up internships and apprenticeships. This includes closer coordination with the Commonwealth Innovative Internship Program and the Virginia Registered Apprenticeship Program (which works with 2,000 employer/sponsors and includes 12,000 employees now).

**7. Market HIRE Virginia through a dynamic and sustainable statewide campaign:**

**Challenge:** Products and services succeed only if people know about them. VCCS needs to invest in marketing to attract students and employer partners. Today, VCCS spends just \$2 million statewide per year on marketing 23 community colleges. This is a tiny fraction of the annual marketing budget spent by four-year institutions of higher education and for-profit options.

**Solution:** HIRE Virginia includes a statewide marketing program — a first for VCCS.

## **HIRE Virginia’s ROI: 75,000 Middle-Skill Workers Trained and Placed**

HIRE Virginia requires a one-time \$250 million investment. The return on investment (ROI) is straightforward and will be easy to measure.

Of the 300,000 available and open jobs across the Commonwealth, an estimated 50% are middle-skill jobs — 150,000 jobs. HIRE Virginia will place workers in half of these positions — 75,000 additional skilled workers over the next three years.

This translates into \$3,333 per worker placed. The ROI extends way beyond the impact of each worker’s salary and taxes in the local community. It includes the increased output and growth of the employers and, in turn, the overall GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the locality and the Commonwealth.



Could VCCS' existing budget fund HIRE Virginia? No, for three clear reasons:

- 1. VCCS' annual funding is already inadequate.** Virginia's current investment in VCCS is telling. For General Fund appropriations, VCCS ranks at the very bottom of 20 Virginia colleges and universities for in-state FTE student reimbursement (FY 2020). Compared to community college investments in other states, Virginia ranks in the bottom third, below North Carolina.
- 2. HIRE Virginia requires additional funding for new program features.** While HIRE Virginia coordinates preexisting programs, it also includes investment in modern labs, classrooms, and learning experiences, as well as start-up of new programs to meet emerging workforce needs and overall marketing.
- 3. Current funding model is focused on FTEs, not part-time students seeking credentialing.** The current funding model is set up to incentivize VCCS to educate full-time students and graduating two-year associate degree holders. This system disincentivizes Virginia's community colleges to train adult and part-time students — the very students who are the primary candidates for middle-skill job training and credentialing. In fact, community colleges lose money on middle-skill job courses. This is not in Virginia's economic best interest. Adjusting the funding model will make HIRE Virginia self-sustaining.

## Summary: Put HIRE Virginia to Work for Virginia

Governor Youngkin has asked for a transformational workforce program to fill 300,000 open jobs. HIRE Virginia answers this call, delivering half of the open middle-skill workers needed in three years.

HIRE Virginia recognizes that there is no time to create a new, comprehensive workforce development program. HIRE Virginia deploys a sensible, business-minded approach, addressing many of the challenges with Virginia's workforce development system.

At its core, HIRE Virginia seamlessly coordinates and scales programs that deliver results — FastForward, G3, and Virginia Ready. For participants who seek credentials in Virginia's unfilled jobs, this includes covering the tuition cost and more. It also includes investing in modern labs, classrooms, and learning experiences. It expands the number of VCCS' advisors and career placement services offered, including an innovative, student-employer job matching portal.

HIRE Virginia is the opportunity to create a new and bold partnership between VCCS and the Commonwealth — a strategic partnership that will deliver benefits for all involved. This includes helping many underserved residents with job training and placement, increasing the productivity and growth of participating employers, increasing the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of localities, and, in turn, stimulating billions of dollars in economic activity for the Commonwealth.

VCCS' WORKFORCE TRAINING HAS NEVER BEEN PROPERLY FUNDED. Join us. Invest in HIRE Virginia and the future of our Commonwealth.

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