Pathways to the American Dream

PARTNERSHIP LEAD ORGANIZATION – NEW RIVER/MOUNT ROGERS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA CONSORTIUM BOARD (NR/MR WDACB)

SERVICE AREA


GOALS

- Create a regional workforce strategy for sector partnerships in the Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Information Technology industries.
- Increase opportunities for unemployed and underemployed adults as well as incumbent workers to develop their skills and earn credentials in high-demand occupations.
- Guide education and training partners in closing the gap between the skills needed by workers and the skills of the available workforce, expanding the affordability of workforce training and credentialing, and increasing the interest in technician, technologist, and trade-level positions to fill available and emerging jobs.
- Guide education and training partners in developing a system that awards academic credit applicable to the student’s certificate or degree program requirements to students who demonstrate competency through a Prior Learning Assessment system.
- Provide research and best-practices so Virginia legislators can adopt policies for creating, sustaining, and scaling sector partnerships to generate innovative programming that closes skill gaps and leads to employment in technical and professional level demand occupations.

TARGETED POPULATIONS

- Unemployed Adults
- Underemployed Adults
- Incumbent workers

TARGETED INDUSTRIES

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Healthcare
- Information Technology

PARTNERS

- Workforce Boards: LWDA 1 Southwest Virginia; LWIA 3 Western Virginia; LWIA 17 West Piedmont
- Employers and Industry Representatives: Southwest Virginia Alliance for Manufacturing; Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council, West River Conveyers Machinery; Samuel Pressure Vessel Group; Pemco Corporation; Tempur Production USA; Optical Cable Corporation; Tadano Mantis Corporation
- Economic Development Agencies: New River Valley Regional Commission; Virginia Tech’s Office of Economic Development; Mount Rogers Planning District Commission; Roanoke Regional Partnership; Lenowisco Planning District Commission; Bland County; Floyd County Community and Economic Development Office
- Education and Training Providers: Virginia Community College System (including nine community colleges); Virginia Center of Excellence; Radford University; Virginia Tech; numerous alternative training providers
- Other: Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL); Business U
ACHIEVEMENTS

- Exceeding performance targets for participants served, training completed, credentials earned, and employment obtained
- Exceeding business engagement goals
- Increasing sector partnerships
- Providing evidenced-based design data and outcomes for sustaining and scaling sector partnership training programs

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Developed a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system using B2B Engage® to support Business Engagement and manage Participant finances, services, and outcomes.
- Assisted community colleges in developing a Prior Learning Assessment System for working adults.
- Developed an online portal, KnowledgetoWork.com, to assist individuals in accessing career pathway and employment information.
- Developed an Evaluation Plan and Process to measure the effectiveness of project activities and their potential long-term impacts.

Hunter

Hunter was quiet and brought a good attitude with him. He talked with the Pathways Navigator, Renee Sturgill and enrolled in the program. He was excited at the prospect of going to school and eager to create his own future. He was just 18.

At 10, Hunter and his younger brother moved in with their grandparents. Both are disabled and receive only Social Security and SNAP, which made life difficult. His father was gone for the majority of his childhood and hadn’t helped financially in many years. His mother was also not in his life and had been sent to prison earlier in the year. Times were tough and money was tight, never enough to buy extras, go on vacation, or go out to eat once in a while. However, he feels quite fortunate to live with his grandparents and credits them for his perseverance and drive to be successful. “All my grandparents ever wanted for me and my brother was for us to become successful and be able to live a life that they couldn’t live,” Hunter stated. He wanted to do his best and get as far as possible. He earned an advanced high school diploma but wasn’t quite sure what would happen next.

Hunter then heard about the Powerline program at Wytheville Community College and explored the job duties, employment opportunities, salary, and opportunities. He liked the idea of getting a job quickly and certainly didn’t mind the hard work it would take to get there because he wanted to be able to help his family. While the training was hard work, especially the tractor trailer driving component, he credits his instructors for their “heart and kindness,” especially for staying after class to help students—even after eleven hour training days. With the help of the Pathways to the American Dream program, Hunter completed all three components of the training and graduated in November, 2018.

Hunter is very thankful for the opportunity to attend training and stated, “I was able to receive financial assistance from Pathways and others to basically allow me to go to school without having to pay a single bill.” He is especially excited about the job he’s been offered by Utility Line Construction Services as a C Class Lineman with a starting pay of $18.25 per hour. Hunter stated about his employment opportunity, “I am excited for this job because I am starting out at an amazing rate, and I will finally have some money and be able to help out. I want to not only help out, but have some money left over as well at the end of the week for anything that I want.” He has opportunities to move up within the company and receive wage advancements with each promotion.

At the top of Hunter’s priorities is to help his family with their finances and see their burden of worry and struggle diminish. “My goal ever since I was old enough to realize that a childhood should not be as tough as mine was,” Hunter stated, “is to provide a life for my kids that was so much better than mine.” Hunter is appreciative of the Pathways program for the help given to him to assist him in being able to fully participate in training. “I think this is an amazing program. I hate asking for help. I am a do it myself sort of guy, and if I can do it without asking for help, I would, but I just simply couldn’t. If not for this program, I am not sure that I could or would have been able to take the training program. So, from the bottom of my heart, I thank you Renee for helping me and for the people of this program.” The Pathways program is extremely proud of Hunter’s accomplishments—as we’re sure his grandparents are as well—and are pleased to have been a part of his journey.