

Request for Proposals Talent Pathways Analysis and Strategic Development



July 27, 2023

Introduction and Background

The Hampton Roads Workforce Council (HRWC) seeks a qualified, contracted partner with whom to collaborate to execute deliverables and milestones for a planning grant issued to the HRWC by [GO Virginia](#), a statewide, business-led economic development initiative of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Specifically, the HRWC is looking to hire an organization to perform industry research, outreach, data collection and aggregation, gap analysis, and strategic development in order to help the HRWC establish the case and lay the groundwork for investment into the full launch of Talent Development efforts into a pair of regional industry clusters: (a) **Cyber Security, Data Analytics and Modeling and Simulation**; and (b) **Unmanned Systems and Aerospace**.

Deliverables include an inventory of local employers and training providers related to each of these industries, detailed Talent Development Plans for both clusters, and a summary of the economic growth that will benefit the Commonwealth of Virginia and especially Hampton Roads based on our full-scale talent pipeline development into these clusters.

High-Level Project Timeline

RFP Issued: July 27, 2023

Responses Due: September 5, 2023

Send proposal and any questions on the RFP to: Whitney Lester, Senior Director of Talent Development, Hampton Roads Workforce Council, WLester@theworkforcecouncil.org

Chosen Agency Selected & Contacted: September 12, 2023

Estimated Project Kick-off: October 1, 2023

Completed Project Target Date: March 31, 2024

The Hampton Roads Workforce Council:

The Hampton Roads Workforce Council oversees federally funded workforce development programs for all localities in the Hampton Roads region, including Chesapeake, Franklin, Gloucester, Hampton, Isle of Wight, James City, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Southampton, Suffolk, Virginia Beach, Williamsburg, and York.

The Hampton Roads Workforce Council provides strategic workforce development solutions designed to assist businesses in accessing qualified workers and job seekers in search of suitable job openings and training opportunities to bolster their earning potential.

The HRWC is the regional convener of regional industry leaders, skilled trades training providers, and the Virginia Community Colleges' workforce development programs. The organization is the hub to many key spokes in the training and development of our current and future workforce in Hampton Roads, especially in key industry clusters such as Information Technology and Cyber Security.

HRWC Talent:

In 2019, the HRWC commissioned a study of regional workforce and talent, one that delivered resultant Talent Alignment Strategy reports. The reports stated, among their many findings, that Hampton Roads has a “growing labor shortage” owing to the economic state of full employment, competition for high-demand occupations, and other factors. Based on this and a wealth of anecdotal information, the HRWC, with the aid of GO Virginia, launched its new Talent division.

With that funding, the HRWC hired a senior director who developed a blueprint to include the Talent Toolkit that incorporates a series of programs, projects, and tasks focused on the singular goal of developing, attracting, and retaining top talent in the region. The HRWC pursued and was awarded a subsequent GO Virginia grant that enabled the HRWC to hire full-time personnel to exclusively address the business cluster most in need of the middle skill workers and with whom the Workforce Council already had substantial traction: the Hampton Roads Maritime Industry.

The HRWC now employs an Employer Engagement Manager, a Business Intelligence Analyst, and a Training Provider Engagement Manager who, along with the Sr. Director, have spent the past couple of years working through the proven Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) methodology employed by the Workforce Council and produced by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The core principle of this methodology is that every action taken is driven by data garnered directly from the business community. At the same time, approaching Talent challenges the same way one would a supply chain issue dictates the proper responses to those challenges.

The HRWC’s first employer collaborative features 17 of the most prominent and representative employers in local shipbuilding and ship repair, and our team has worked with them to obtain a clear demand signal for the immediate future and beyond. As part of our TPM work, we have identified key occupations, the required education/experience/credentials that candidates must possess in entry/mid/senior level roles for those positions, projections for hiring needs over the next six months to two years, and an analysis of their current talent flows. At the same time, we have formed a collaborative of training providers as we work to establish capacity, throughput, outcomes, and alignment with industry need.

This program and the work that it produced served as the backbone for the HRWC proposal to the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) for their Good Jobs Challenge (GJC) opportunity – one for which we were awarded \$11 million in 2022. This principal team and the GJC Regional Workforce Training System whose foundation it helped build continues their work in maritime.

At the same time, the HRWC looks to expand this kind of work into other regional industries – ones that both have a critical need for talent development and provide substantive economic benefit to Hampton Roads. Based on preliminary assessments and the guidance of GO Virginia’s Region 5 Growth and Diversification Plan, two additional business clusters have been identified:

- **Cyber Security, Data Analytics and Modeling and Simulation**
- **Unmanned Systems and Aerospace**

The Project

GO Virginia issued an RFP for a planning grant in early 2023, one that included the guidance below:

Section I: GO Virginia Program Intent and TPI

GO Virginia's goal is to facilitate regional collaboration to grow and diversify the economy through supporting projects leading to the creation of higher paying jobs through revenue derived from out-of-state sources. Programs and projects recommended by the regional councils and approved by the board shall be consistent with the strategies and targeted industry clusters outlined in each regional growth and diversification plan.

Since 2017, GO Virginia has supported many workforce development and training programs, and while several afford opportunities for duplication or scale up across regional boundaries, these projects have often been focused on specific job creation opportunities instead of leading to broader talent pathways efforts over the long term to grow and enhance the available workforce for sustainable economic growth in a region.

[House Bill 29](#), approved by the 2022 General Assembly, provided \$2.5 million to the GO Virginia State Board for planning grants to support analysis of the workforce needs of regional businesses and the identification of the skills and training that can help prepare Virginians to fill available jobs in regional markets. It is anticipated that regional councils will focus this analysis on prioritized industry clusters identified in their approved 2021 Growth and Diversification plan.

Using this analysis, it is anticipated that the Board, with subsequent funding, will be able to support implementation projects for talent pathways initiatives. Such efforts will seek to align training curricula with the needs of business through collaboration incentives as well as facilitate increased work-based learning experiences (internships, apprenticeships, on-the-job upskilling, and re-skilling programs) and to develop entrepreneurial talent.

Section II: Talent Pathways Initiative – Planning Phase

Establishes and funds planning for a new "talent pathways" planning initiative to foster collaboration by business and education to meet workforce needs by developing, retaining, and attracting talent to the Commonwealth to meet the needs of Virginia businesses. Each region will conduct a situational analysis to support the development of a regional talent pathway strategy to support the workforce needs of priority targeted industry clusters as identified in their approved 2021 Growth and Diversification Plan.

The selection of priority cluster for this initiative should be informed by an analysis of which industry clusters support the highest growth opportunities within a region. Such grant requests shall demonstrate existing and future collaboration among stakeholders that may include primary and secondary education, higher education, businesses, local workforce boards, non-profits, and local governments as part of this analysis and for future implementation strategies. The Board invites interested regional councils to identify an industry cluster talent coordinating entity which may apply.

With oversight by the regional councils, the coordinating entity in each region that is interested in applying will be tasked with developing a comprehensive talent pathway analysis and prioritize strategic investments with input from regional stakeholders.

To facilitate the analysis of talent pathways that support sustained economic growth and talent development and retention in the Commonwealth, planning activities must include:

- 1) Development of industry coalitions directed by industry leaders and engaging workforce system partners to guide and advise on the following:
- 2) Completion of a quantitative and qualitative situational analysis of the workforce needs for one or more high-impact industry clusters prioritized by each region,
- 3) Completion of a gap analysis related to the jobs needed to help such clusters grow,
- 4) Identification of the skills and training needed for people to fill such jobs, including those provided through high school career and technical education, credentials, certifications, apprenticeships, internships, and other degree and non-degree programs, including a gap analysis of where such programs fall short in meeting identified needs,
- 5) Development of an asset map that evaluates the region's capacity (institutions, programs) to support the identified unmet workforce needs,
- 6) Identify strategies and supporting highest-impact pathway projects for future implementation.

The 2021 Growth and Diversification Plan included information about two clusters that the HRWC successfully put forth for this planning grant. The below information is drawn directly from this 2021 Plan.

1. **Cyber Security, Data Analytics and Modeling and Simulation** is an industry cluster that encompasses a range of activities, inclusive of cyber security, data analytics/data engineering, and modeling and simulation. These activities often overlap in the industry cluster and the cluster is characterized by rapid technological change. The changing needs of this cluster are also reflected in workforce demands. Data analytic tools, for example,

are quickly moving towards R, Python, and other platforms and away from legacy, closed-source platforms. Region 5's educational institutions must be nimble to meet these workforce demands, especially given the rapid and likely sustained transition to remote work in this industry over the last twenty-four months. There were slightly more than 4,500 workers in this cluster in 2021 Q2 with an average annual wage over \$72,000. While average employment growth was the highest among the priority clusters at 4.3% from 2011 Q2 to 2021 Q2, this is likely due to the smaller size of the cluster. The employment (0.6) and wage (0.5) location quotients were well below 1, signaling that Region 5 does not have a concentration or competitive advantage in this cluster.

- 2. Unmanned Systems and Aerospace** is a key industry cluster that includes firms in aircraft manufacturing (including drones), aircraft parts manufacturing, robotic manufacturing, and aerospace engineering.¹⁷ Undoubtedly, unmanned systems will only rise in importance over the coming decade. Drones, automated long-distance transport, robotic-assisted manufacturing, and other technologies are either emerging in the marketplace or on the immediate horizon. There were over 27,000 employees in this cluster in 2021 Q2 with an annual average wage of almost \$94,000. We caution that these estimates may be overstated as firms may not be 'fully committed' to unmanned systems and aerospace, working in manned and unmanned systems simultaneously. This cluster grew at an average annual rate of 2.7% from 2011 Q2 to 2021 Q2. Its employment (3.6) and wage (4.2) location quotients signal that Region 5 has a competitive advantage in this cluster. We recognize, however, that the technological change in this cluster is extremely fast, and the region cannot afford to debate strategies and actions over the course of years. We need only remind the reader that just fifteen years ago, only a handful of nation-states had the capability to field drones on a consistent basis. Today, individuals and firms can use drones of increasing capability for a wide variety of uses.

The Hampton Roads Workforce Council was selected as the lone recipient of this grant award in May of 2023.

Deliverables include:

- Industry Analysis – Case for Cyber Security/Data Analytics/Modeling and Simulation as a Talent Cluster
- Regional Cyber Security/Data Analytics/Modeling and Simulation employer inventory
- Regional Cyber Security/Data Analytics/Modeling and Simulation training provider inventory
- Cyber Security/Data Analytics/Modeling and Simulation Talent budget document

- Cyber Security/Data Analytics/Modeling and Simulation Talent Pipeline Development Plan
- Industry Analysis – Case for Unmanned Systems & Aerospace as a Talent Cluster
- Regional Unmanned Systems & Aerospace employer inventory
- Regional Unmanned Systems & Aerospace training provider inventory
- Unmanned Systems & Aerospace Talent budget document
- Unmanned Systems & Aerospace Talent Pipeline Development Plan

HRWC Project Team:

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Goals

HRWC goals from this partnership include the timely delivery of the items below.

For both Cyber Security/Data Analytics/Modeling & Simulation and Unmanned Systems and Aerospace:

- a summary of the economic growth that will benefit the Commonwealth of Virginia and especially Hampton Roads based on full-scale talent pipeline development into the cluster
- an inventory of local employers and training providers related to the industry
- formation of an employer collaborative, a collection of some the region's most prominent employers in the industry committed to sharing key information and participating in Talent Pipeline Management activities with the HRWC
- a gap analysis related to the jobs needed to help such clusters grow
- completion of a quantitative and qualitative situational analysis of the workforce needs
- identification of the skills and training needed for people to fill such jobs, including those provided through high school career and technical education, credentials, certifications, apprenticeships, internships, and other degree and non-degree programs
- an asset map that evaluates the region's capacity (institutions, programs) to support the identified unmet workforce needs
- identified strategies for the highest-impact pathway projects for future implementation

In keeping with the established timelines in HRWC's contract with the GO Virginia / DHCD, we will want this work to start immediately following contract execution. The project period is expected to run approximately six (6) months.

Budget

HRWC is budgeting \$90,000 – \$150,000 for this work. When constructing a budget, please itemize deliverables as appropriate.

Proposal Requirements

Please include the following in your proposal response:

- Company Overview
- Approach of how you will meet stated goals
- Scope of work
- Proposed timeline from kickoff to completion
- Details about the members of your team that will be involved in this project
- Recent, relevant past performance and key differentiators
- Pricing with optional elements line-itemed

Thank you very much for your interest in partnering with the Hampton Roads Workforce Council on this project.