



***Commonwealth of Virginia***  
*Office of the Governor*

*Maurice A. Jones*  
*Secretary of Commerce and Trade*

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Heads of Agencies with Workforce Development Programs  
Workforce Investment Board Directors

**FROM:** Maurice A. Jones

**DATE:** July 30, 2014

**RE:** Strategic Workforce Initiative

Virginia's Workforce System is comprised of 24 federal and state funded programs administered by eight agencies and 15 regional Workforce Investment Areas directed by local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs). Your agency, along with other agencies charged to administer and continuously improve key programs and initiatives within Virginia's Workforce System, have already been collaborating through the Virginia Board of Workforce Development, the Career Pathways Work Group, and major collaborative initiatives such as Virginia Longitudinal Data System (VLDS), Virginia Education Wizard, Virginia's annual Workforce Report Card and many other projects. Soon, Governor McAuliffe will be calling on all agencies and WIBs in Virginia's Workforce System to take that history and spirit of collaboration and common goal setting to a new level in order to drive increased attainment of workforce credentials that count for business and jobs growth and for increased employment opportunities for Virginia's job seekers from recent high school graduates to underemployed and unemployed adults.

The Commonwealth of Virginia's enduring economic growth necessitates a comprehensive workforce credentials initiative to identify, increase and accelerate the availability of a diverse workforce. Prospective workforce expansion through credentials is critical because specialized, skilled and technical jobs at the technician level currently comprise about 45% of Virginia's labor. Driving a significant increase in workforce credentials attainment levels by Virginians of all ages will require cutting edge occupational training beyond a high school diploma or its equivalent. The requisite occupational training for these jobs is most commonly acquired through associate of applied science degrees and community college

certificates as well as through apprenticeships, certifications, licensures and other career-related credentials endorsed by business and industry. Career opportunities in fields such as Advanced Manufacturing, Information Technology, Energy, Logistics and Health Care offer the prospect of good jobs in high growth industries and are readily accessible to those who are trained, credentialed and ready to work. As the demand for new workers with specialized skills and training exceeds supply, the Commonwealth of Virginia must act to address industry requirements to fill the workforce skills gap.

As a first step in an upcoming statewide effort to drive workforce credential attainment rates, as the Governor's Chief Workforce Officer and on behalf of the Governor, I am calling on you and other public sector leaders to provide specific deliverables to assist the Governor, my office and the Virginia Board of Workforce Development to better plan and take decisive action to make Virginia the leading state for attainment and reporting of workforce credentials. Each of the deliverables requested will inform the Governor's Workforce Agenda and the strategic priorities and recommendations of the Virginia Board of Workforce Development.

My Advisor for Workforce Development, Elizabeth Creamer, has already been providing assistance to some of your agencies to begin the process of reporting on these deliverables and stands ready to assist your efforts as needed. She can be reached at [Elizabeth.creamer@governor.virginia.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.creamer@governor.virginia.gov) or at (804) 692-2563. Additionally, each agency involved has representation on the State Career Pathways Work Group which has informed and helped develop this initiative and the list of required deliverables. You are also always welcome to call my office. Secretary of Education Anne Holton's office has been closely involved in this effort as well, and has reviewed and approved each of the deliverables listed below:

### **Actions and Deliverables to Drive Workforce Credential Attainment Rates**

Agencies, local WIBs, and key partners will take the following actions:

1. ***Establish annual goals and identify opportunities to increase statewide attainment rates of credentials that align with employer needs in targeted industry sectors.***

By October 31, 2014, the Virginia Community College System ("VCCS"), Virginia Department of Education ("VDOE"), Virginia Department of Labor and Industry ("VDOLI"), Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services ("VDARS"), and Virginia Department of Social Services ("VDSS") will each produce a report for the Governor's designated Chief Workforce Officer, the Secretary of Commerce and Trade. The report will incorporate:

- a. FY 2013 workforce credential attainment levels for business and industry credentials,
- b. an annual goal for each of the next three years to increase attainment rates of these credentials through each agency's education and workforce programs, and

- c.* the identification of barriers to increased credential attainment, data tracking and validation methods,
  - d.* strategies for improving credential attainment rates and reporting, and
  - e.* opportunities for changing state policies or applying for federal waivers to increase credential rates. Credentials reported should include, as relevant to each agency's programs, industry certifications, licensures, apprenticeship credentials, and community college certificates and associate of applied science degrees.
2. ***Prioritize workforce credentials and levels of attainment to meet regional industry needs.***

By October 31, 2014, each local WIB working with business and industry, local chambers of commerce, and local community colleges will deliver a report to the Secretary of Commerce and Trade. The report will include:

- a.* the workforce credentials most in demand by employers in the WIB's region in priority order.
- b.* FY13 levels of workforce credential attainment through WIB programs or activities.
- c.* annual numeric goal for each of the next three years for the number of participants receiving training and attaining a workforce credential,
- d.* a three-year plan for increasing the percentage of WIA funds expended on workforce training that correlates with the workforce needs of regional employers. Such training may include occupational skills training, registered apprenticeships, and on the job training, as well as other education and training models with proven outcomes in attainment rates of workforce credentials and jobs.

By December 31, 2014, to support WIBs in repurposing a larger percentage of their funds to support training and credential attainment, the Virginia Board of Workforce Development will produce recommendations to the Secretary of Commerce and Trade for reducing local WIB operational costs. All state agencies that are required partners of Virginia's Workforce Network Centers will provide support to the Board as it recommends policies and strategies for reducing WIA operational costs. The Board's recommendations will target elimination of duplication and replication of administrative functions and core WIA services between state agencies charged with administering these roles.

3. ***Undertake measures to increase attainment of apprenticeship credentials and the alignment of apprenticeship and community college programs to create stackable credentials.***

By October 31, 2014, VDOLI and VCCS will submit a joint report to the Secretary of Commerce and Trade that summarizes FY2013 levels of apprenticeship credential attainment and the number and types of Virginia businesses employing apprentices. The report will:

- a. identify impediments to expanding registered apprenticeships and apprenticeship completions,
  - b. recommend solutions to overcome these barriers,
  - c. include baseline data on the number and percentage of apprenticeship-related instruction programs providing college credits towards community college certificates and degrees.
  - d. include annual goals for each of the next three years for increasing the number and percentage of apprenticeship related instruction programs that articulate into community college certificate and degree programs.
4. ***Evaluate and improve upon the Commonwealth's ability to identify those workforce credentials that matter to employment and career progression.***

By October 31, 2014, the Virginia Employment Commission ("VEC") will report to the Secretary of Commerce and Trade on strategies through which the VEC, supported by the Commonwealth's Labor Market Information ("LMI") System, can better identify and report on real time labor market demand for certifications, licensures, and other workforce credentials that are valued by employers as referenced in job postings and on other sources of current and developing jobs qualifications data. The report will also recommend strategies through which workforce credentials can be integrated into data available through VEC's LMI.

5. ***Amplify awareness of the value of workforce credentials for employment and career progression through an online annual wages scorecard.***

By October 31, 2014, the State Council of Higher Education ("SCHEV"), in cooperation with VDOLI and the VCCS, will submit to the Secretary of Commerce and Trade a plan for launching an online Commonwealth Scorecard of Economic Opportunity through Education to be hosted by SCHEV. The new scorecard will build on the success of SCHEV's current online Economic Opportunity Metrics website that provides students, parents, and counselors with data on post-graduation wages, by program of study, for associate and baccalaureate degrees, by college and university. The new scorecard will

provide data on post-graduation wages of Virginians attaining apprenticeship credentials and community college certificate programs as well as college and university degrees.

6. ***Maximize the acquisition and use of federal funds for workforce development – and the goal of elevating workforce credential attainment rates across programs.***

By Nov 30, 2014, Virginia’s Career Pathways Work Group (i.e., representatives from eight agencies administering workforce and Career and Technical Education (“CTE”) programs), will submit recommendations to the Secretary of Commerce and Trade for increasing collaboration among employers, local WIBs, and the agencies comprising Virginia’s Workforce System to maximally secure federal workforce grants. Additionally, the Virginia Board of Workforce Development will make recommendations for policy and administrative action, including applications for federal waivers, to increase the Commonwealth’s flexibility in the use of federal grants for jobs and credentials attainment. The Board report will also include recommendations for encouraging partnerships and resource sharing between workforce partners, including private partners in the System, and for streamlining state programs, as needed, to ensure the most effective and efficient use of government resources.

7. ***Ensure cross-agency, cross-program staff support for the Governor’s Office and the Virginia Board of Workforce Development in their efforts to reform the workforce system.***

By August 31, 2014, agency heads from VDOE, VCCS, SCHEV, VEC, VDOLI, VEDP, VDSS, and VDARS will confirm or make new appointments to Virginia’s Career Pathways Work Group, comprised of representatives of all these agencies. The expanded mission of the Virginia Board of Workforce Development will require staff support for the Board from multiple agencies. These agency and program representatives to the Career Pathways Work Group will assist the Office of the Secretary of Commerce and Trade by providing staff support to the Board and will recommend to the Board policy and administrative actions to foster a cohesive, efficient, and effective workforce.

8. ***Meet statewide benchmark for workforce credential attainment.***

This Fall 2014, the Council on Virginia’s Future and the Virginia Business Higher Education Council in collaboration with the Secretaries of Commerce and Trade and Education, SCHEV, VCCS, and other stakeholders will be updating Virginia’s higher education target with a broader emphasis on workforce that would include non-degree postsecondary credentials that are valued by employers. This statewide benchmark will serve as a common goal for all workforce agencies to increase workforce credential

attainment rates just as the call for 100,000 new degrees inspired increased attention to graduation rates by higher education institutions.

**9. *Formulate common performance metrics for all career and technical education as well as workforce programs in the Commonwealth.***

By December 31, 2014, the Secretary of Commerce and Trade will approve a plan for implementing new statewide common metrics and methods of measuring each workforce program. The Commonwealth's drive to produce the skilled workers in demand by industry requires coordination by diverse agencies and programs operating within Virginia's workforce system. Currently, the only established performance metrics for most of Virginia's publicly funded workforce programs are those imposed by various federal agencies, with metrics varying from program to program. To better align Virginia's career and technical education and workforce programs to a common state goal and ensure that publicly funded workforce programs are achieving the outcomes the Commonwealth needs for economic development, the state will, for the first time, introduce common statewide performance metrics for all publicly funded programs in the workforce system.

I look forward to working with you as we prepare these reports and establish goals for making Virginia the number one state for workforce development and credential attainment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maurice A. Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Maurice A. Jones

cc: The Honorable John C. Harvey, Jr.  
Secretary of Veteran's and Defense Affairs

The Honorable William A. Hazel, Jr., M.D.  
Secretary of Health and Human Resources

The Honorable Anne Holton  
Secretary of Education