

## Shenandoah Valley Partnership Submission for 2016 CEDA



The Shenandoah Valley Partnership (SVP) launched Valley Career Hub in 2015 as a collaborative effort among the business, education, and economic development communities in the Shenandoah Valley to broaden awareness of high-demand, high-growth, high-wage careers in their region and promote local training opportunities for these careers.



The initiative started as a partnership with Harrisonburg-based TV station WHSV-TV3 called “InDemand Local Career Opportunities,” featuring over two dozen high-paying career options in high-growth industries throughout the Shenandoah Valley where there is a substantial demand for a qualified workforce. These careers do not necessarily require a four-year degree, but do require further education after high school, filling the increasing gap for “middle skills” jobs.

While many Virginia communities struggle with having enough students interested in “middle skills” jobs, SVP set out to diligently address the problem of the so-called “interest gap” through this evolving marketing campaign. SVP’s successful partnership with local businesses, training providers, academic partners, and economic development allies targets students, parents, and working adults who are seeking career pathways, more opportunity, and better wages.

The themes reinforced in the year-long campaign have been consistent, focusing on matching great jobs with accessible, efficient training in the Shenandoah Valley for futures that ensure solid wages and growth opportunities. These jobs are vitally important to our local economy, and the training needed to attain them is within reach thanks to the high concentration of academic partners and training providers throughout the Valley. This campaign has been based on the idea that someone can stay in, relocate to, and thrive in the Shenandoah Valley by pursuing a career that requires some postsecondary training but not necessarily a baccalaureate degree.

The campaign includes 27 video segments that began airing bi-weekly on April 2, 2015, and will conclude March 31, 2016. SVP gathered data on needs over the next 10 years for high-growth, high-wage, high-demand careers, driving the campaign to focus on the following positions:

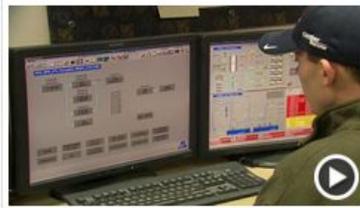
- Robotics Technician
- Welder
- Commercial Truck Driver
- Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator
- Mechatronics Engineer
- Licensed Practical Nurse
- Information Security Analyst
- Automotive & Diesel Technicians
- CNC Machinist
- Respiratory Therapist
- Accountant/Finance Specialist
- Software Developer
- Dental Assistant
- HVAC Technician
- Database Administrator
- Airframe Maintenance Technician
- Cost Estimator
- Commercial Pilot
- Medical Records Technician
- Maintenance Technician
- Cell Tower Technician

## inDemand



### Learn about the demand for machinists

Almost everything in our lives is made by machines.



### Learn about the demand for controls technicians

We take a look at the people who make sure businesses and manufacturing plants run smoothly, and why this is a job people should...



### Learn about the demand for airframe maintenance technicians

This is a field with both a need and potential.

Each segment, including one featuring Governor McAuliffe highlighting the importance of skilled workers for the New Virginia Economy, can be accessed on the WHSV website at

<http://www.wHSV.com/features/indemand>, and also through links provided on the Valley Career Hub landing page at <http://www.valleycareerhub.com/>.

The target audience includes anyone who might consider a career that requires training beyond high school but is unable or uninterested to commit the time and resources associated with a full baccalaureate degree. Careful effort has been made to ensure those seeking career information and related workforce development assistance are provided appropriate contact information at the conclusion of each episode. In addition to providing web links that detail general career and workforce information, the Valley Career Hub web page also contains links for Dream It. Do It. Virginia, the Virginia Workforce Connection, and the Shenandoah Valley Workforce Development Board. The Shenandoah Valley Partnership's Education and Training Database web link is prominently featured as well.

The overall goal is twofold - to enhance our regional economic development efforts for business growth by ensuring a strong, skilled, consistent workforce pipeline in years to come, while also ensuring individual economic opportunity and meaningful career paths for our citizens. In turn, this two-pronged focus helps to enrich the overall vitality of our regional economy.

The Valley Career Hub effort is therefore representative of all four of the CEDA Award categories with the following attributes:

**Innovativeness** – Valley Career Hub features unique career experiences in high-growth, high-wage, high-demand careers, which are relayed first-hand by a person in that career. These personal stories help frame the message and tell the story in a meaningful way that is relatable to viewers. The employees and student trainees featured have been carefully selected for their dedication to and enthusiasm for their craft. Told through the perspective of the worker (and a trainee, in some cases), these stories resonate, serving as a call to the uninitiated to explore a world that might otherwise remain ambiguous, unknown, or unattainable.

From an economic development standpoint, Valley Career Hub provides an opportunity to reach thousands of local teens (and their parents) who are on the cusp of their career decision-making process, and encourages them to consider entering occupations that are currently sought by Valley employers. These occupations are also frequently requested by economic development prospects. By developing talent in

these high-demand occupations, the Valley will be better poised to attract future economic development projects and support existing business growth.

**Transferability** – Valley Career Hub could easily be replicated by any region or locality, or even launched as a statewide initiative. The campaign addresses the problem of growing the talent pipeline within the sectors and career pathways that are critical to our interdependent economic vitality, which is a universal concern in communities of all sizes striving to be competitive in a global economy.

Regional stakeholders such as business leaders, chambers of commerce, institutions of higher learning, and local economic development professionals can all provide valuable insight for this type of program. All of which work together to identify their region's top needs within the current workforce and essential talent needs in the future. Data collected for the individual job projections, annual salary range, and training/certification requirements can be quickly accessed through multiple sources for any region. Common sources include the *Virginia Workforce Connection*, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, *O\*Net*, *The Virginia Education Wizard* and *Dream It. Do It. Virginia*.

**Community Commitment & Leverage** – One of the most critical assets of Valley Career Hub has been the collaborative spirit which is inherent to the success of the project. The campaign has been led by a small group of economic development and workforce professionals at the local, regional, and state level with support and participation from the Governor's office, private sector business leaders, academic partners and training providers, hospitals, utility providers, and even our local airport. A comprehensive coalition of committed, willing, and flexible participants has made this effort extraordinary in many ways. Employers and training facilities asked to participate in the campaign have done so enthusiastically.

Solid connections with our local K-12 public schools throughout the region, primarily through high school-based Community College Career Coaches, have ensured that the message and campaign exposure is gaining real traction. Coaches use the video segments to raise awareness of these careers and offer a first-hand view into what the career involves. Superintendents, principals, guidance staff and teachers are similarly engaged with ensuring the core audience of students understands where the jobs of the future will be in the Shenandoah Valley, and how to begin to build a specific plan toward these high-demand careers.

Amazingly, the entire segments of the InDemand campaign were produced and aired at no cost to the parties involved. All of the filming, anchor interviews, editing and web page hosting, and air time has been complimentary, courtesy of WHSV-TV3. The station recognized this program as a community and public service opportunity, knowing parents watching the evening news would be interested in learning about these career opportunities for their children. For these reasons the station was excited to participate in the series. Aside from the time and energy of those involved, the lack of costs associated with this campaign has been a key reason for its breadth, complexity, and success.

The campaign is also being promoted by other community partners, such as local chambers of commerce, the regional career and technical centers, and local economic development offices.

**Measured Objectives** – As previously stated, the goal of Valley Career Hub is to promote verified high-wage, high-growth, high-demand jobs that require additional education and training after high school without a four-year degree. Ideally, the campaign will result in an enhanced awareness of fantastic career opportunities for students, parents, and career switchers; increased enrollment in available training programs and associated credential attainment; an ample workforce pipeline for growing existing business; and a plentiful pool of qualified candidates for economic development prospects.

The campaign is less than one year old, making it currently difficult to measure a hard correlation with credential enrollment or successful filling of vacancies for our businesses. However, measurable traffic on

the SVP website and social media outlets, including the Valley Career Hub page, as well as the WHSV website and social media outlets, offers an estimate of the audience size for each segment. Each time the InDemand program airs, it is viewed by approximately 13,300 people in the Shenandoah Valley region. The content is also shared on the WHSV Facebook page, where the typical “reach” is 1,500-3,500 people per post, with an approximate 10% click-through rate. InDemand programming and associated online resources are also on the WHSV website and there have been more than 24,000 page views to date.

SVP has also solicited feedback from high school-based Community College Career Coaches, who have unanimously agreed that the career segments have given them a valuable tool for communicating with students exploring careers. The two- to three-minute segments share a glimpse of the career through the eyes of those who know its joys and challenges best, with the intent to pique the interest of the potential future workforce.

Career Coaches have found value in combining the use of the InDemand segments with other efforts, such as the Career Connect tour, coordinated by Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC) in the fall of 2015. Career Connect went beyond traditional employer or campus tours by combining a first-hand look at job sites, with employers talking directly to students about skills and credentials needed for in-demand jobs, with campus tours of BRCC, where students learned about the preparation and education needed to access key jobs in the New Economy. Career Connect 2015 focused on Advanced Manufacturing, with nine advanced manufacturing employers offering tours and advice to local junior and senior high school students. Post-tour surveys indicated a resounding success in reaching objectives, with 97% of surveyed students reporting Career Connect gave them a better idea of the variety of jobs to be found in local businesses, 93% reporting Career Connect gave them resources to find in-demand jobs, and 92% reporting Career Connect gave them a good amount of information on what credentials employers in our community are requiring for in-demand jobs. In addition to \$10,000 in direct financial support from local Economic Development Authorities, Cadence, the Community Foundation of Greater Augusta, and Augusta Health, Career Connect leveraged in-kind donations totaling over \$22,000 to provide this exceptional opportunity.

Career Connect complements Valley Career Hub by exposing students to multiple platforms for job opportunities, both online and in the field.

**Secondary Benefits** - The broader goal of this effort is to demonstrate the Shenandoah Valley’s dedication to creating the workforce talent necessary to nurture our existing businesses while also enticing new economic development prospects. SVP and its public and private partners recognize while it is unlikely that an existing business expansion or a new company location will be attributed solely to the campaign, this effort has become a valuable asset in promoting the Valley’s excellent workforce and widespread support to help its continued evolution.

As the original InDemand campaign segments conclude this spring, our efforts will continue. WHSV is committed to airing updated segments on these careers with any additional information on position statistics or demand. SVP will continue to promote and accelerate Valley Career Hub, taking the message to the next level by providing an enhanced marketing and outreach strategy. Through web, print, social media, and television/radio opportunities, we hope to continue to relay the message that high-wage, high-demand, high-growth careers abound in the Valley, and the training to achieve success in these careers is available and accessible.