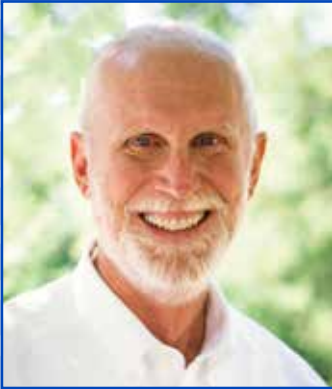


2019 - 2020

ANNUAL
REP
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NRVRC
new river valley regional commission



CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Greetings, and thanks for looking at the New River Valley Regional Commission Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2019-2020.

This publication reviews some of the many recent accomplishments of the Regional Commission on behalf of all residents of the New River Valley. You will see that this report reflects the collaborative spirit that defines our region, our home. A few of the many highlights include:

- Led several shared efforts to **address and mitigate the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic in our area**, including ways to recover and rebuild as we look forward to the end of the pandemic.
- Engaged with the I-81 Committee, opting to **plan highway improvements on a priority basis** (including safety, economic, and environmental impacts among others) and to advance funding of projects along I-81.
- **Completed** a Regional and Local **Housing Study**.
- Continued efforts to **make Broadband capabilities more widely available** in the New River Valley.
- Convened the Mayors/Board of Supervisors Chairs annual meeting to **brainstorm and address mutual issues and opportunities** throughout the region.
- **Completed the Millstone Kitchen**, a shared-use commercial kitchen, located in the old Price's Fork Elementary School.
- Coordinated the New River Watershed Roundtable, which brings together diverse parties with interests in the New River and its tributaries, and **actively collaborated on regional clean-ups and a system of water trail mileage markers** along the river to aid emergency responders.

- **Reformatted the NRV Data Dashboard**, which shows data on many issues in an easy-to-understand format and allows users to explore and interact with NRV-specific data.
- **Helped in planning the Valley to Valley Trail Initiative**, a bike/pedestrian connection between the New River Valley and the Roanoke Valley.
- Continued to work with several partners to **bring Passenger Rail Service** to the New River Valley.
- Recognized two individuals by presenting the **Citizen of the Valley and Champion of the Valley awards**. These awards signify exceptional contributions to making the New River Valley a better place to live, work, and play.
- **Focused on Economic Development activities**, leading to funding of several projects.

The New River Valley Regional Commission staff and board members are pleased to share these, and many other accomplishments during the past year. We hope to contribute to more shared success throughout the region.

Michael Harvey

Chair

Fiscal Year 2019-2020

FY 2019 - 2020

COMMISSIONERS

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Mr. Michael Maslaney,
Vice-Chair
Mr. Justin Coleman

GILES COUNTY

Mr. Richard McCoy
Mr. Leon Law, Treasurer

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Mr. Steve Fijalkowski
Mr. Michael Harvey, *Chair*

PULASKI COUNTY

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TOWN OF RICH CREEK

Mr. William Kantsios

RADFORD UNIVERSITY

Dr. Angela Joyner

VIRGINIA TECH

Ms. Catherine Potter
Mr. Chris Kiwus

NEW RIVER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Ms. Angie Covey



REGIONAL COOPERATION

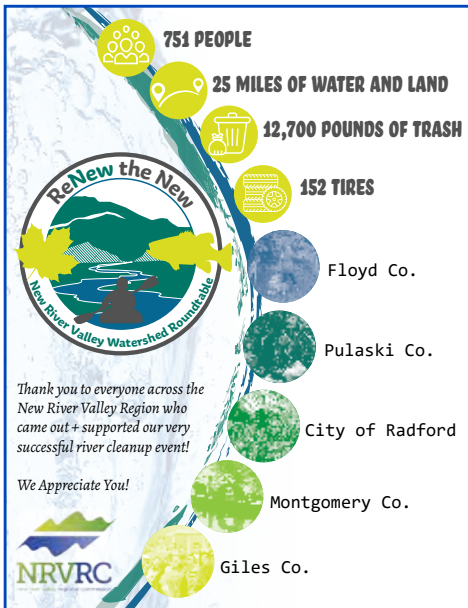
NRVRC Annual Awards

The New River Valley Regional Commission board of directors named their annual award recipients. Mr. Bill Ellenbogen, Community Advocate, received the Citizen of the Valley award. Mr. Chris Tuck, former Montgomery County Board of Supervisors member, received the Champion of the Valley award.



Passenger Rail

Partners in the New River Valley continued to pursue a new passenger rail service in Christiansburg. During this fiscal year, regional partners met with the Secretary of Transportation and with representatives from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation and Amtrak. The Commonwealth had clear priorities in and around the Port of Virginia and also in Northern Virginia that required the full attention of all rail projects this year. Regional partners remain hopeful their commitments to build and operate a new facility in Christiansburg will encourage a service extension from Roanoke.



New River Watershed Roundtable

The Regional Commission continues to provide leadership and dialogue on regional watershed issues through the reestablished New River Watershed Roundtable. In August 2019, the Watershed Roundtable, a subcommittee of the Regional Commission, coordinated the New River Valley's fourth regional river clean-up.

New River Valley HOME Consortium

The New River Valley HOME Consortium was created in 2007 and utilizes an annual funding allocation from The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to construct or rehabilitate affordable housing for low-to-moderate income households in the New River Valley.

- Habitat for Humanity began construction on **seven townhomes in the Town of Blacksburg**, located on land donated by Blacksburg Presbyterian Church.
- Funding has been committed to Habitat for Humanity to construct **seven townhomes just outside the Town of Floyd**.
- Taylor Hollow Construction broke ground on **16 additional rental units** at the old Price's Fork Elementary School site.
- Wintergreen Commons, formerly Summit Place Assisted Living, located in Rich Creek, completed construction to convert **23 single rooms to 12 one-bedroom apartments for persons 55 or better**.
- The Landmark Group applied for and was awarded Low-Income Housing Tax Credits to redevelop the old Claremont School in the Town of Pulaski, which will **create 41 new rental housing units for low-income households**.





ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

& HUMAN SERVICES

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Annual Update

Each year the New River Valley Regional Commission reviews and updates the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The purpose of the CEDS is to continue federal and local partnerships to address economic development in the region. The CEDS also serves to document the planning efforts to identify economic development needs in the region, which is required for grant applications to the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration and the Appalachian Regional Commission. The CEDS major sections include an overview of regional economic conditions through summary data and a SWOT analysis, related goals and strategies, and a listing of prioritized regional and local economic development projects.

As part of this year's CEDS process, Regional Commission staff solicited new or updated economic development projects for inclusion in the CEDS, requesting projects from the counties, cities, and towns in the New River Valley. In addition, the Regional Commission convened the CEDS Committee several times each year during the update process, which is the regional 'CEDS Think Tank' that includes representatives of businesses and government and non-profit organizations involved in economic development in the New River Valley. The committee proposes new projects for the CEDS project list, reviews CEDS report content like the project ranking criteria, and provides input and updates on developments over the past year, and future economic trends that may have implications for the CEDS economic development goals and strategies.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy outcomes/metrics:

- At least **28 projects from the CEDS project list** are underway during 2018, including **6 technical assistance projects, 7 facility rehab/construction projects, 6 infrastructure projects, and 6 planning projects.**
- At least **220 jobs created/retained** as a result of projects underway.
- At least **\$12 million in public and private investment** devoted to CEDS projects.



Old Price's Fork School Comprehensive Community Revitalization Project

The Price's Fork Revitalization project was funded, in part, by a \$2.5M Vibrant Communities Initiative grant and a \$500,000 Appalachian Regional Commission grant. The project anticipates the creation of 49 new jobs as a result of the investment.

- **Grand opening held for Millstone Kitchen**, attended by 120 partners, funders, and citizens.
- Millstone Kitchen hosted "From Scratch" a six-week course for start-up or expanding food entrepreneurs, taught by industry professionals who shared their expertise on business planning strategies, food safety requirements, legal parameters, marketing ideas, and finance options. The class was **fully booked with 39 participants**, seven of which submitted business plans to be judged by a committee for awards.
- Moon Hollow Brewery opened at the beginning of 2020 and **remained open during COVID-19** by employing call-ahead curbside pickup.
- Construction has begun on **16 additional two and three-bedroom rental units**.
- A project website is updated regularly with more information about the Old School: **oldschoolpricesfork.org**.



Floyd County Housing Rehabilitation Project

With Planning Grant funding from the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the Commission worked alongside Floyd County to identify housing rehabilitation needs in

the county. Typical housing rehab grants focus on a defined project area; however, Floyd County is among the first communities to seek funding for scatter-site homes, an option recently made eligible by DHCD.

As a result, the Commission:

- **partnered with Floyd Initiative for Safe Housing (FISH)** and other volunteers from the Management Team to engage potential rehab applicants and complete preliminary applications for assistance;
- **contracted with SERCAP to inspect each of the 15 homes** and estimate the cost of rehabilitation;
- **applied for \$1,000,000 in implementation funding** to rehabilitate or reconstruct 15 homes in the County; and
- **projected \$207,900 in leverage funds** through partnerships with Habitat for Humanity, FISH, Renovation Alliance, Community Housing Partner's Weatherization Program, Rural Development, SERCAP, Citizens Co-op, and Sustain Floyd as well as funding contribution from Floyd County.



Regional + Local Housing Study

The NRV Regional + Local Housing Study was funded, in part, by Virginia Housing (formerly Virginia Housing Development Authority) and spurred by local interest in housing needs. **Together they:**

- **completed outreach phase**, which included 11 focus groups, a public online survey, monthly Leadership Team meetings, and quarterly Consortium team meetings;
- **worked with Virginia Center for Housing Research** at Virginia Tech to collect and analyze local and regional data from the American Community Survey for data points and trends regarding topics such as incomes, median rent and owner costs, housing gap analysis;
- **worked with Richmond-based consultant, Housing Forward Virginia**, to meet individually with local government staff and elected officials to determine priority action areas and draft strategies for implementation;



- **made presentations on the preliminary findings** to the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, the NRV Livability Information Exchange, Blacksburg Partnership, New River Valley Association of Realtors, the NRV Leadership program, Radford EDA, and the NRV Regional Commission Board; and
- began drafting both the **final technical report** as well as an **abridged consumer report**.



Regional Tourism Convening

Staff at the Regional Commission continued their collaborative partnership with the local Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) over the course of the year. The group embarked on a partnership with Radford University to create an updated regional tourism website with the brand, Visit NRV. This project garnered investment from the Virginia Tourism Corporation, with added investment coming from Radford University, as well as the DMOs. The website will showcase several aspects of the region, such as outdoor recreation opportunities, culinary experiences, wedding venues, and more. The project is currently underway and will launch publicly in early fall.



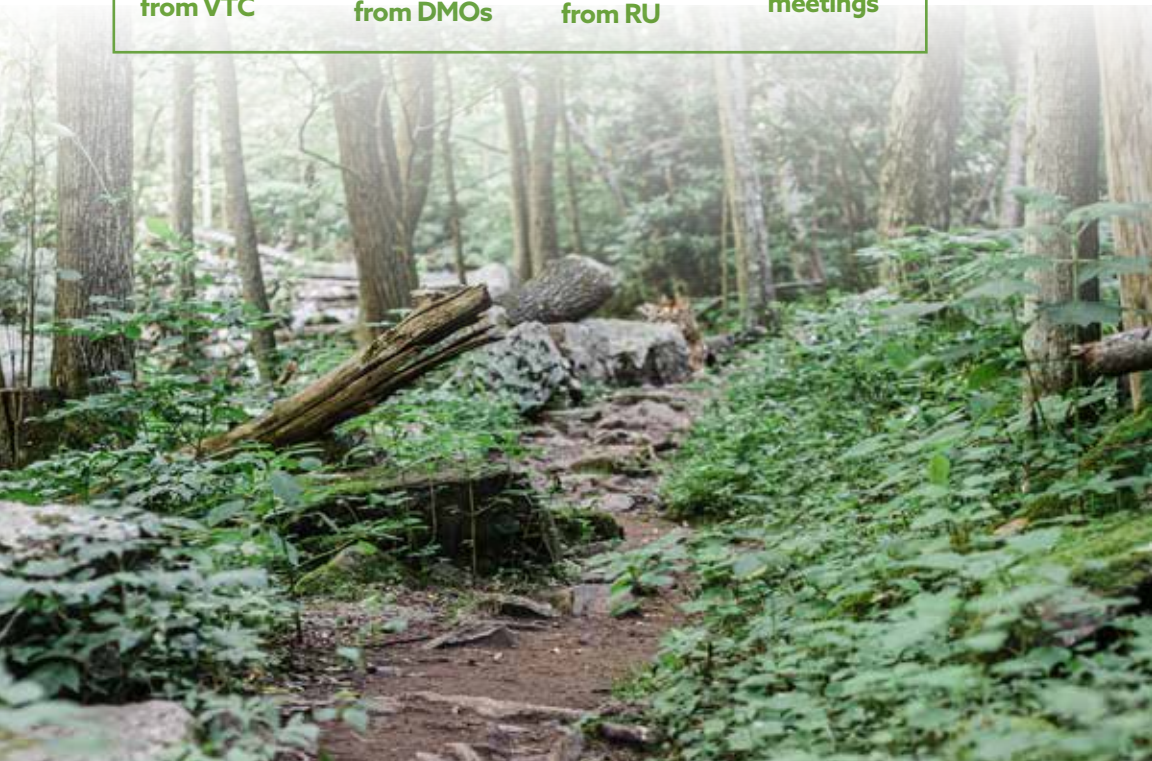
Key Impacts:

\$3,250
from VTC

\$3,250
from DMOs

\$1,500
from RU

8 project
meetings





Giles County Broadband Expansion

The Regional Commission is helping Giles County administer a grant award from the Virginia Telecommunications Initiative broadband program with the County receiving over \$580,000 in funding from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. This project aims to provide broadband internet to unserved and underserved portions of Giles County. Gigabeam Networks, a local internet service provider, is collaborating on the project and matched \$266,265 in funding towards the effort. Once completed, over 2,300 additional households and 60 businesses within the County will have access to much needed broadband services.



Key Investments:



\$589,444

from DHCD

\$266,265

from Gigabeam



Christiansburg Placemaking Plan

In early 2020, the Commission completed work on a Planning Grant for the Town of Christiansburg, funded through the Appalachian Regional Commission.

- **Drafted the Christiansburg Placemaking Plan**, which focused on the areas of Downtown, Midtown, and Cambria and **identified 37 actionable strategies** for implementation, highlighting nine as priority projects
- The Placemaking Plan was **created through direct input** from area residents, business owners, town staff, non-profits, and online survey feedback
- **Applied for a \$500,000 ARC implementation grant** to construct a community gathering space and farmers market structure in downtown Christiansburg



New River Community College ACCE Seed Money from Appalachian Regional Commission

New River Community College's ACCE program launched in Radford with support from the Appalachian Regional Commission. The ARC seed money will provide the "last dollar" financial support to graduating high school seniors to attend two years (60 credit hours) tuition-free, regardless of their personal financial situation. NRCC staff also assisted students in completing the considerable paperwork for financial aid and coached students for successful outcomes.

Outcomes reported to ARC include:



15 students

were retained in the first semester. Over subsequent semesters, an average of 8 students remained in the program.

20 students

completed at least 12 credits in the first semester. Over subsequent semesters, an average of 14 students completed at least 12 credits per semester.

20 students

maintained a 2.5 GPA or better in the first semester. Over subsequent semesters, an average of 10 students in the program maintained a 2.5 GPA or better.

9 students

completed industry certification during their two-year program.





Town of Narrows Business District Revitalization Project and Wolf Creek Outfitters Project Implementation

Regional Commission staff is assisting the Town of Narrows with a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for the Narrows Business District Revitalization Project. The project will construct public space improvements and upgrade downtown commercial buildings to encourage business development and create an inviting atmosphere for visitors and residents in the core of the Narrows Historic Commercial District. In addition, the town received funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission to complete the related investments of the Wolf Creek Outfitters Project. The two-year project is underway, with construction scheduled for completion in late 2020.

Project elements include:

- **streetscape improvements** on Monroe Street and parking areas near the Farmer's Market and Monroe Street businesses, including sidewalks, lighting, furnishings, landscaping, and paving.
- improvements to the grounds of the Narrows Farmer's Market to create a **larger public event space and pedestrian accessibility.**
- **construction of a walking trail** along the bank of Wolf Creek in the rear of the buildings on Monroe Street to create a public park area along the creek, including overlooks, furnishings, and access points for tubing and kayaking.
- **purchase and renovation** of a vacant warehouse building to create the 'Wolf Creek Outfitter' facility to **provide outfitter retail and rental services** for outdoor recreation activities in Narrows, including watersports on adjacent Wolf Creek.
- **facade repairs/improvements** to the exteriors of **8+** commercial storefronts and historic buildings in the project area around Monroe St./MacArthur Ln./Main St.



Narrows Business District Revitalization/Wolf Creek Outfitter Projects outcomes/metrics:

\$69,934 grant

from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development Community Development Block Grant program for project construction and administration

\$392,588 grant

from the Appalachian Regional Commission Area Development grant program for the purchase and renovation of the Wolf Creek Outfitter facility

\$310,645

in matching investments from local government and private contributors toward construction costs for elements of the project

8+ buildings

in the historic district receiving repairs and improvements to commercial storefronts

2+ acres

of public park and recreation space added to downtown Narrows

1,000+ new visitors

to downtown Narrows each year through the attractions of the outfitter and related downtown improvement projects



New River Valley Development Corporation Revolving Loan Fund

Regional Commission staff continues to provide staff support for the NRV Development Corporation Revolving Loan Fund (RLF). The loan fund received several inquiries this year from businesses in the counties of Pulaski, Floyd, Giles and the City of Radford. Currently, the Development Corporation is servicing loans to businesses located in Floyd County (2) and the City of Radford (1). The fund loaned approximately **\$40,000 to clients**, with approximately **\$50,000 available to lend**.



Town of Pulaski Business District Revitalization Project Implementation

Regional Commission staff is assisting the Town of Pulaski in implementing a Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for the Pulaski Business District Revitalization Project. The project will construct public space improvements and upgrade downtown commercial buildings to encourage business development and create an inviting atmosphere for visitors and residents in the core of the Pulaski Historic Commercial District. **Project elements include:**

- **streetscape improvements on Main Street**, including sidewalks, lighting, furnishings, landscaping, and utility bollards to allow food truck hook-ups.
- **the development of a pocket park and public gathering space** in the vacant lot near 57 W. Main Street (across from the courthouse).
- **pedestrian improvements** to the alleyways adjacent to the courthouse.
- **pedestrian and public space improvements** in the alleyway along Peak Creek in the rear of the buildings on Main Street, and on the bridges on Jefferson Ave. and Washington Ave., to create a walking trail and public space along the creek.
- **facade repairs and improvements** to the exteriors of 15+ commercial storefronts and historic buildings in the project area along Main Street/Washington Ave.

Pulaski Business District Revitalization Project metrics/outcomes:

\$696,846 grant

from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development Community Development Block Grant program for project construction and administration

\$406,918

in matching investments from local government and private contributors toward construction costs for elements of the project

1+ acre

of public park and recreation space added to downtown Pulaski

15+ buildings

in the historic district receiving repairs and improvements to commercial storefronts





New River Valley/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board (NR/MR WDB) is the regional convener of the workforce system. They facilitate, support, and coordinate regional workforce initiatives that enable economic growth and increase the standard of living for this Workforce Development Area.

The NR/MR WDB, through the brand name of Virginia Career Works New River/Mount Rogers Region, uses the following platforms and tools to communicate to regional stakeholders:



- **NR/MR WDB Website** – vcwnewrivermrogers.com
- **Work Talk Podcast** – guest speakers and discussions about regional business and workforce issues: vcwnewrivermrogers.com/category/work-talk
- **Quarterly Workforce Reports** on regional trends and data – vcwnewrivermrogers.com/resources/regional-workforce-data/regional-economic-indicators
- **Facebook** – facebook.com/nrmrworkforcenetwork
- **LinkedIn** – linkedin.com/company/virginia-career-works-newriver-mountrogers
- **Career Exploration/Virtual Job Fair Platform** – knowledgetowork.com

Supporting Regional Economic Growth and Vitality

The NR/MR WDB continues to lead the region in developing a workforce system that is agile and flexible, enabling the system to adjust and/or respond to economic disturbances and shifts by leveraging and braiding the various Federal, State and local funds that come to the region to serve both businesses and job seekers. During FY'19, the NR/MR WDB used the following projects to support this systemic change:

Pathways to the American Dream Project (January 2017 through December 2020)



In January 2017, Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration awarded a \$6 million H-1B Job Training Grant to the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Area Consortium Board to coordinate and manage a multi-partner/multi-jurisdictional collaborative. The project covers four Workforce Areas, which includes 34 jurisdictions in western, southwest and southern Virginia (Planning Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 12). The project is

soon coming to a close, and our focus is on sustainability and evaluation. Outcomes have exceeded performance targets.

*Outcomes have exceeded performance targets, including achieving a **median wage of \$23.00**. Through July 23, 2020, the project has served **1,201 participants**. Of this number:*

- **106** are employed workers (needing additional skills/training), and 1,095 are un/underemployed workers.
- **1,135** have completed training and earned credentials.
- **911** have obtained or advanced in employment (others are still in job search).

Specifically, in the New River Region, the project has had the following outcomes:

- **507** participants, of this number, **20** are employed workers (needing additional skills/training), and **487** are un/underemployed workers.
- **498** have completed training and earned credentials.
- **502** have obtained or advanced in employment (others are still in job search).
- New median wage of **\$25.00**

Currently in NR/MR WDB region, the project has invested \$600,000 to the three local community colleges, \$503,000 to Radford University, and \$146,000 to other training providers.



Certified Work Ready Communities

The Certified Work Ready Communities effort is one critical component of meeting present and future workforce needs for the economic health and well-being of the region. Earning the status of a Work Ready Community is achieved when a percentage of a county's population obtains a National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) by demonstrating individual mastery in three foundational subjects. The ACT NCRC comprises Applied Mathematics, Graphic Literacy, and Workplace Documents—three cognitive skill areas most often determined to be important for job and task performance. The proficiency demonstrated in each subject determines NCRC certificate rankings including Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Platinum. Each state's number of total NCRC awards is one of the top five ranking categories publicized in the popular annual report, "State of the States" in Site Selection Magazine. In the State of the States 2019 Report, Virginia Ranked 7th in number of NCRC awards; however in the 2020 Report, Virginia ranked 28th—thus demonstrating the need for continued attention and effort toward this initiative. More information about the SWVA Certified Work Ready Communities can be found here: bit.ly/SWVA_WRC





The board's Occupational Skills Analyst is a Certified ACT Job Profiler. Job Profiling is the component of a Work Ready Community that links workforce development efforts to educational opportunities, aligns with the economic development needs of communities and regions, and matches individuals to jobs based on standardized skill levels. Businesses who profile jobs gain a detailed analysis of the exact skills they need for a productive workforce in a format that easily communicates essential skills with others (i.e. job seekers via scores required in specific jobs, educational institutions via leveled subject-related task statements, and workforce system partners via alignment of business needs and job seeker skills). Businesses may also use NCRC certifications and additional Work Keys assessment scores to improve processes in recruitment, performance and retention resulting in an immediate ROI. But this work requires funding.

Recently, the Tobacco Commission awarded the board **\$41,240** to support WorkKeys® testing, a component of our project, Profiles to Increase Critical Knowledge for Skills that Matter (PICKS™). To fund the remaining portion of PICKS™ (Job Profiling, Business Engagement), the board applied for a **GO Virginia Region 2 grant**. All other grant applications also support this effort, requiring WorkKeys testing as a component of training and the NCRC as a portable credential to demonstrate work ready skills.



Business Services

As the region's designated Workforce System Convener, the WDB provides businesses easy access to solutions to meet workforce needs without having to navigate the bureaucracy of dozens of program providers.

Besides acting as a central point of contact for businesses seeking specific assistance, the NR/MR WDB oversees and staffs four (4) regional Business Solution Units (BSU) that are made up of workforce, economic development and business membership organizations. The WDB believes that services to the region's businesses should serve the widest possible range of businesses, be individualized and efficient, with a single point of contact wherever possible (or a "no wrong door" approach). It is also our intent to share information about what services we are currently providing to businesses with partner agencies to avoid unnecessary duplication, including initial assessment and discovery, service plans, service coordination, outcome and follow-up information. In order to mount this collaborative effort, the BSU members offer cross training in one another's services so that we are able to provide more seamless referrals for needed services as well as being able to speak to the many services available, regardless of what agency may 'own' these services.

This program year the WDB offered:



Job Fairs:

- Planned **6 multi-company job fairs** (4 were postponed due to Covid) + 1 virtual
- Assisted with **4** Partner led multi-company events
- Planned **3 company specific events**



Business Workshops:

- **3** leadership dev/supervisor skills events
- **3** lunch & learn out of the box recruiting workshops
- **2** Workforce Exchange events



Existing Worker Training:

- **13 projects** supporting **109 workers**

The NR/MR WDB collaborated with the Southwest Virginia Workforce Development Board and the Western Virginia Workforce Development Board to implement a region-wide customer management system (B2B Engage) to monitor and track businesses services throughout the region.

Currently there are:

- Over **1–2 businesses accounts** entered into the system
- **Over 1,536** business services logged



Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Programs (WIOA)

The Adult and Dislocated Worker Program, under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, is designed to provide quality employment and training services to assist eligible individuals in finding and qualifying for meaningful employment, and to help businesses find the skilled workers they need to compete and succeed in the marketplace. **Outcomes from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020 are:**



Dislocated Workers

- Individuals that Received Individualized Career Services: **219**
- Placement Rate of those exited: **75%**
- Avg. Wage at Placement: **\$13.59**



Adult Program

- Individuals that Received Individualized Career Services: **290**
- Placement Rate of those exited: **80%**
- Avg. Wage at Placement: **\$14.00**



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & HUMAN SERVICES

WIOA Youth funds are targeted at young people who are both in and out of school, to assist them in their career and educational development, though the new law moves the focus from “in-school” to “out of school” youth.

Eligibility criteria for out-of-school youth services:

- Age 16 to 24 and not attending school
- ***Fall within one or more of the following categories:***
 - Individual with a disability
 - School dropout
 - Not attended school for at least the most recent complete school year calendar quarter
 - A high school graduate who is: basic skills deficient; or an English language learner
 - Offender
 - Homeless, runaway, or foster child
 - Pregnant or parenting
 - A low-income individual who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment

Outcomes for Youth from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020 are:

- Individuals that received Individualized Career Services: **159**
- Placement rate of those exited: **76%**





COVID-19 Response

Like all organizations, the NR/MR WDB had a major shift in March 2020. Programs quickly converted to virtual services (individualized services, providing laptops for students needing to complete training, virtual workshops, virtual job fairs, etc).

The board also did the following:

- **Created a special page on their website** to house specific COVID-19 information.
- **Began a Work Talk Community Awareness Podcast** specifically dealing with COVID-19 issues that affect businesses and workers/job seekers.
- Used Facebook as a way of **reaching as many individuals as possible**
- **Began using YouTube** as a way to offer workshops and “how tos” for the virtual job fair.



PLANNING/ TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Town of Pulaski Land Development Guide

The Town of Pulaski, in partnership with the Regional Commission, recently completed their Land Development Guide. This document will help property owners and applicants easily understand and follow the review procedures, and the decision processes for land development applications. The guide contains important requirements of the zoning ordinance along with many photographs and illustrations to clarify the components and requirements of the application processes.



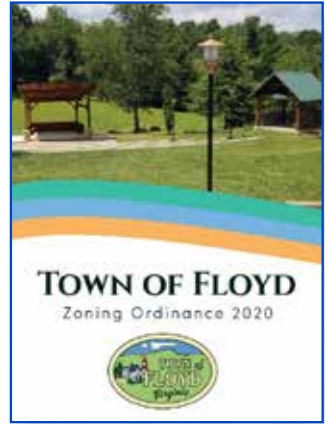
GIS Partnership – New River Health District

The Regional Commission renewed their partnership with the New River Health District (NRHD) for a sixth year. The goal of this ongoing partnership is to combine Commission GIS resources and NRHD data to analyze information, create

maps, and manage web content for NRHD staff and the public. Projects during FY20 included building the New River Valley Road to Wellness website (nrvroadtowellness.com) and providing web support during the coronavirus pandemic.

Town of Floyd Zoning Ordinance

The Regional Commission is working with the Town of Floyd staff and Planning Commission to rewrite the Town’s zoning ordinance with a first draft recently completed. The purpose of the rewrite is to add new permitted uses appropriate to each zoning district and simplify content to make it easier to understand and administer. Relevant diagrams and illustrations have been incorporated to communicate zoning requirements graphically.



MontCo VillagePlan

This year the Regional Commission supported Montgomery County with public engagement and conceptual planning in the Villages of Pices Fork and Riner. The County engaged residents and business owners over a one-year period, utilizing multiple online and in-person outreach techniques. Participants were encouraged to share their ideas about the future. Specifically, what types of land development they would support, which resources should be preserved, and identify long-term infrastructure needs to support a renewed long-term vision. Stay tuned, this work is expected to continue into next fiscal year.

SolSmart Designation

The Regional Commission is working towards attaining the SolSmart Designation and utilizing a vital education technology to advance solar efforts in the New River Valley region. The Regional Commission, with support from SolSmart, will disseminate available information, resources, and best practices for solar programs. The Regional Commission has hosted webinars for planners and building permitting staff in the region, which addressed topics such as best practices for including solar in land use plans, zoning ordinances, and permitting processes.





Radford University Hazard Mitigation Plan

Disasters can impact universities in a multitude of ways. Daily operations may be disrupted for a day to weeks or months. These disruptions can negatively impact research activities, causing a loss of future funding and, if severe enough, may lead students or faculty to leave the institution, causing a loss of educational continuity for students. Radford University's plan documents the challenges and successes in reducing risks the university faces and will help guide the campus in making better land use and development and operational decisions for new buildings, facilities, and utilities, as well as in the renovation of existing buildings and development. The Commission assisted the university in developing the plan which is now under review by state and federal agencies responsible for hazard mitigation.

New River Valley hosts multiple business plan competitions in 2020

This winter and spring, the New River Valley hosted two new small business development programs in Giles and Montgomery counties, with both the Giles County Tourism Office and the Millstone Kitchen at Price's Fork school developing business plan 'pitch' competitions. The two new programs join the Floyd C4 program, which has been offered annually for 5+ years to Floyd County businesses. The programs provide training and resources to help entrepreneurs develop their business ideas into a viable company and provide launch funding to the businesses with the best plans and sales pitches.

Overall, these competitions provided training and resources to 30-40+ new businesses and entrepreneurs, and over \$77,000 in grants to the winning businesses in the competitions.

Funding for James Hardie Sewer Improvements

The Town of Pulaski is working toward a solution to improve the capacity of its sewer system to benefit current and future investment in the town. The Regional Commission supported the Town in the submission of three grants to help fund identified improvements near the James Hardie plant. The Appalachian Regional Commission and Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development's Community Development Block Grant programs are contributing \$1.2 million with a potential for \$1.2 million more in other grant funding to complete the project. The project is currently in conceptual design.





TRANSPORTATION

RIDE Solutions

- Current NRV mobile app user stats: 1,071 commuters in the NRV; 112 employers. Since implementation: 148,008 reduced vehicle miles, 6,767 trips reduced, active users accumulated a savings of \$85,564
- Bike Valet – Free and secure bike parking for community events throughout the year: Sustainability Week Bike Parade in the fall and self-park lots at Steppin' Out and the October Brew Do with over 100 bikes parked this year
- Bike Shorts Film Festival, Blacksburg, October 10 – Staff produced this community event held at McClain's in Blacksburg in support of Ride Smart Challenge. Over 20 people participated.
- Other events to promote transportation choice before COVID-19 ceased all TDM promotion (except teleworking):
 - Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center annual tenant picnic – August 9
 - Terrace View Apartments move-in days: August 23
 - Virginia Tech Active Commute Celebration, September 19
 - Presentation to VEC and partner organizations' staff, September 25
 - Workplace Partner Outreach – 22+ businesses and organizations in the NRV
 - New River Community College Resource Fair on March 3rd





Downtown Rich Creek

The Regional Commission is partnering with the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Town of Rich Creek to provide technical assistance and contract administration for a project that involves improved parking, pedestrian accommodations, and new common spaces in downtown. The project is scheduled to be complete by the Spring of 2021.

Multi-Region's Alternative Transportation Social

On August 23, 2019, partners from the New River Valley and Roanoke-Alleghany regions met for an afternoon to discuss bicycle accommodations, pedestrian infrastructure, transit, and passenger rail. This year the event was held at Stonebridge Park in the Town of Vinton.





Director's Message

The 2019-2020 fiscal-year at the Regional Commission started much the same way as other fiscal years; several regional initiatives were underway along with a significant number of technical assistance projects for our members. In March, everyone's lives changed abruptly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the operations of the Regional Commission rapidly adjusted in order to meet the needs of our members and partner organizations. Little did we know, the last regional gathering of the year was the NRV Livability Exchange held on March 12th. Information on the virus was evolving quickly at that time and thankfully Dr. Bissell, Director of the New River Health District, was at the event that morning to address the attendees. If you fast forwarded a few days, the event would have been canceled. That is how rapidly the information was evolving and lives were changed.

Starting on March 12, the local government managers across the region increased the frequency of their meetings. Traditionally, the Regional Commission hosts the managers every other month for a lunch discussion about items of mutual interest. Their normal lunch meeting was held on March 12th following the Exchange, and from that date forward the Regional Commission coordinated a local government managers conference call three times per week with Dr. Bissell.

In early March as the region was learning more about the virus, the NRV Public Health Task Force was established. The Task Force has been the guiding light for the region and continues to serve in more critical roles than what can be fully expressed in this annual recap. The Regional Commission has contributed to the Task Force efforts wherever possible. Staff coordinated with several partners at Chambers of Commerce, tourism offices and small businesses to compile the **Working Smart. Working Safe. NRV Guidebook** to return to work safely. I collaborated with the public information officers across the region on the Task Force's Virtual Town Hall Series by serving as moderator for a six-week series of panels sharing information about the response to the pandemic. Most recently, staff updated the website we designed for the New River Health District (www.nrvroadtowellness.com)

to house a public information campaign, **Be Committed. Be Well.**, as we welcome students back to the region for the first time since March.

Further, the Regional Commission is currently launching programs to directly support companies impacted by the pandemic through the NRV Business Continuity Team, with wraparound services available to businesses that have a known positive COVID-19 case or need advisement on how to operate in a COVID-19 world.

It is instances such as the regional response to the pandemic which make me a proud resident of the New River Valley and I consider myself truly fortunate to serve in the capacity as director of the Regional Commission. Leaders across the New River Valley are selfless, and they are committed to achieving results. When taken together, residents of the region are best served and collectively we stand a much better outcome navigating the pandemic.



We all look forward to times when the pandemic has subsided. Until then, regional collaboration will guide us through, and the Regional Commission will remain a willing and active partner.

Kevin Byrd
Executive Director



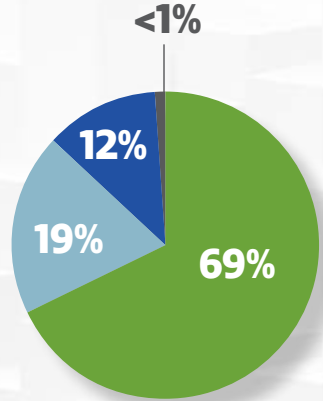
FINANCE REPORT

Year Ended June 30, 2020

Revenues

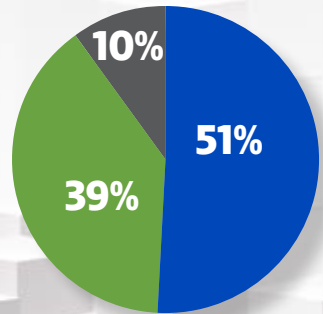
Grants and Appropriations

Federal.....	2,124,667
State	580,659
Local	361,588
Other	11,564
Total.....	\$3,078,479



Expenditures

Personnel	1,570,390
Contractual.....	1,215,987
Operations & Other	320,478
Total.....	\$3,106,855







NRVRC

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