

A large, leafy tree stands in the center of a green field, partially obscured by a wooden fence. The background shows rolling hills under a blue sky with white clouds.

Rappahannock- Rapidan Regional Commission CEDS

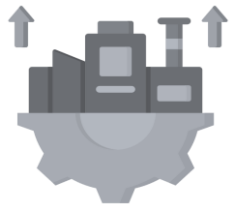
DRAFT ACTION PLAN MATRIX – INTERNAL WORKSHOP
FEBRUARY 22, 2024

TODAY'S OBJECTIVES

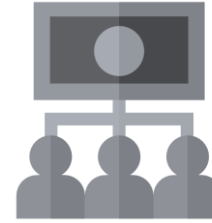


- ✓ Assess the implementation-readiness scale of each strategy
- ✓ Name partners and expected partners through discussion
- ✓ Refine strategies and priority areas through discussion
- ✓ Wrap up with next steps

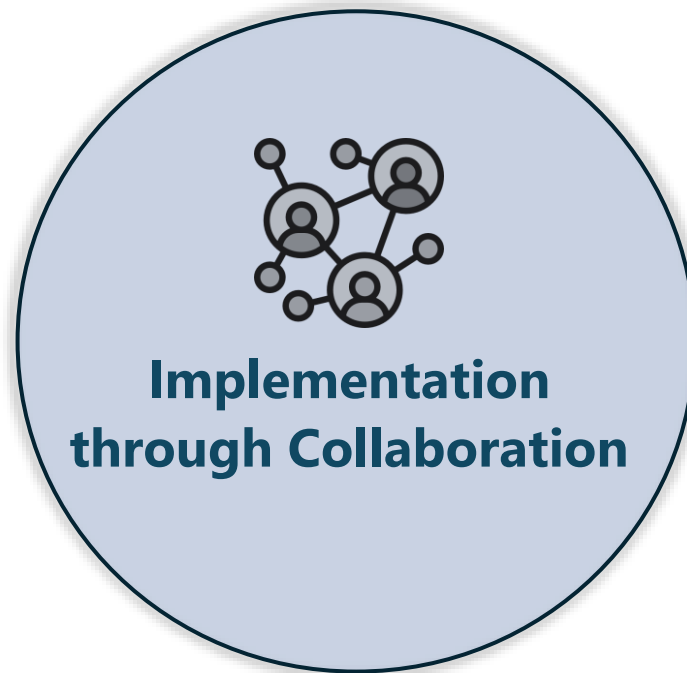
STRATEGY FRAMEWORK



**Existing, emerging,
and target
industries**



**Workforce
development and
partnerships**



**Implementation
through Collaboration**



**Places and spaces
for economic
development**



**Site infrastructure
and adaptive
reuse**

Implementation Scale



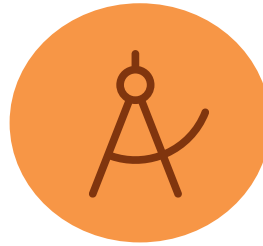
Emergent Strategy

Status:

Needs additional conceptualization and planning.

These actions represent opportunities to chart new territory and develop breakthrough strategies and leadership capabilities.

Since this is a new endeavor, there is room for developing innovative approaches, frameworks and leadership paradigms.



Evolving Strategy

Status:

Needs a clear leader and/or resource allocation.

These actions represent initiatives that build on or re-purpose resources or partners that are currently in the economic development system.

Resource allocation, leadership and approaches may need to be adjusted or enhanced to implement these strategies.



Launch-Ready Strategy

Status:

Ready to be executed.

These actions represent items that can be accomplished within the current economic development system.

These strategies have a clear leader and dedicated resources. They can always benefit from growing partnerships.



Parking lot : Strategies needs rethinking or is no longer a priority

Strategy Framework



GOALS

Big Ideas, what we hope to achieve.

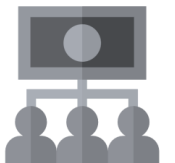
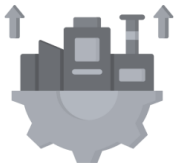
Strategy

Projects designed to achieve our goals.

Actions

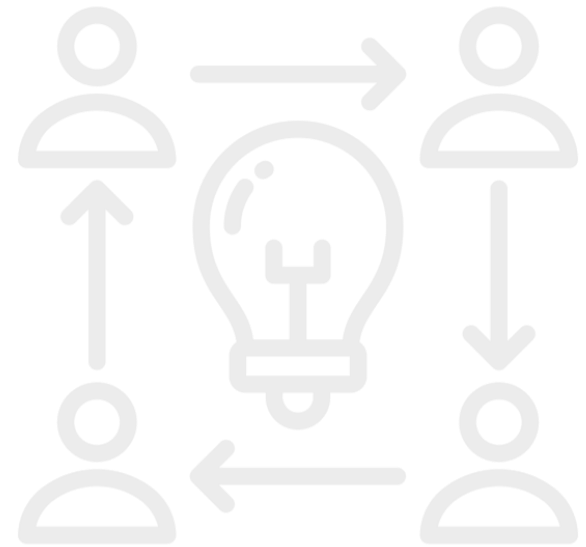
What we'll do to achieve our goals.

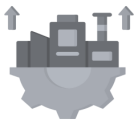
Shared strategy with TJPDC, best practice for economic development.



These strategies ...

- ✓ Build on the existing work by partners in the region
- ✓ Leverage the assets that are being strengthened by economic developers in their own localities
- ✓ Are ambitious and seek to maximize the region's economic activity
- ✓ May end up being modified based on today's discussion – the goal is quality over quantity
- ✓ Are independent of, but complementary to superregional strategies

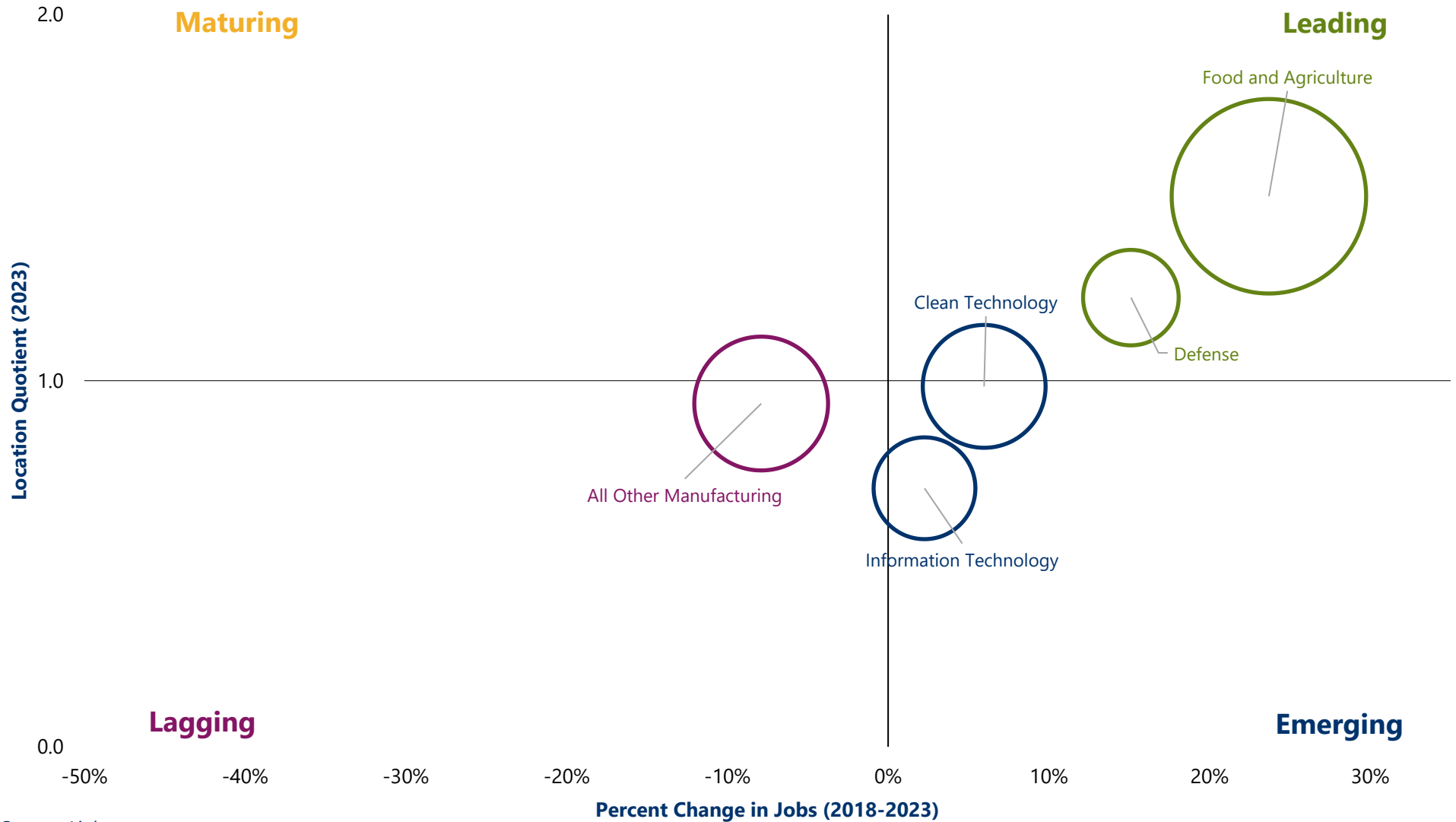




Existing, emerging, and target industries

Key Metrics by Sector, Rappahannock-Rapidan Region

Bubble size indicates 2023 job count



Source: Lightcast

GOAL 1

Expand economic potential for existing industries and prepare the region to take advantage of growing markets.

Strategy 1.A) Focus on growing SME businesses and retaining them in the region.



Action	Description			
1.A.1	Consider GO VA funding to identify supply chain gaps for industries in RRRRC and within nearby metro areas, and then build this into a coordinated outreach effort.	While the region is not situated on the state's major transportation routes, it is geographically located between major population centers and commercial hubs, which presents opportunities to fulfill regional supply chain needs. Tap into industry associations and growing industries in NOVA and the Southeast.		
1.A.2	Develop protocols to share business retention information and build a knowledge base that can be tracked to document trends in the regional business environment.	Regional coordination can be elevated by tracking standard metrics among the partner localities in the region. Over time, these metrics will document changes in the economy and help inform partners about the impact of their work.		
1.A.3	Initiate more opportunities for business-to-business connections in emerging sectors to cultivate economic growth.	As subsectors emerge in pockets of the region, connecting those businesses with their peer networks can help grow relationships and foster the development of that sector. With such a vast range of activities across the region, this is particularly important.		
1.A.4	Market the region as a lower-cost alternative to NOVA for start-ups and smaller-scale defense-related companies and contractors.	The region is poised to capitalize on activity in NOVA and showcase how this region can not only support but be advantageous for these companies.		

GOAL 1

Expand economic potential for existing industries and prepare the region to take advantage of growing markets.

Strategy 1.A) Focus on growing SME businesses and retaining them in the region.



Action		Description		
1.A.5	Pursue emerging state and federal resources (IRA, CHIPS Act, USDA, NIST, EDA) that will advance the conceptualization of new technologies that can improve business operations and encourage sustainability.	<p>These pieces of federal legislation have the potential to transform sectors through investments in infrastructure, technology uptake, and workforce training. Maintaining awareness of their applicability to the region's industries is important to leverage available resources.</p> <p><i>Ex: Virginia Tech pilot program to implement climate-smart practices</i></p>		
1.A.6 ***	Connect rural communities to growing market opportunities and make investments to advance their ability to access these opportunities.	Rural communities can be at a disadvantage when it comes to attracting investment from existing or emerging industries. Yet, there are specific opportunities that could be a fit for rural communities, or this could be an opportunity to make large-scale investments to connect areas to regional opportunities.		
1.A.7 ***	Grow partnerships with trusted community partners to expand relationships with MWVE and grow awareness of the barriers within these communities.	Intentional support for underserved groups is necessary to build viable onramps for all workers. Expand relationships with trusted community partners who represent the interests of new Americans. Seek or support pathways to recognize foreign credentials and certifications across a variety of industries.		

GOAL 1

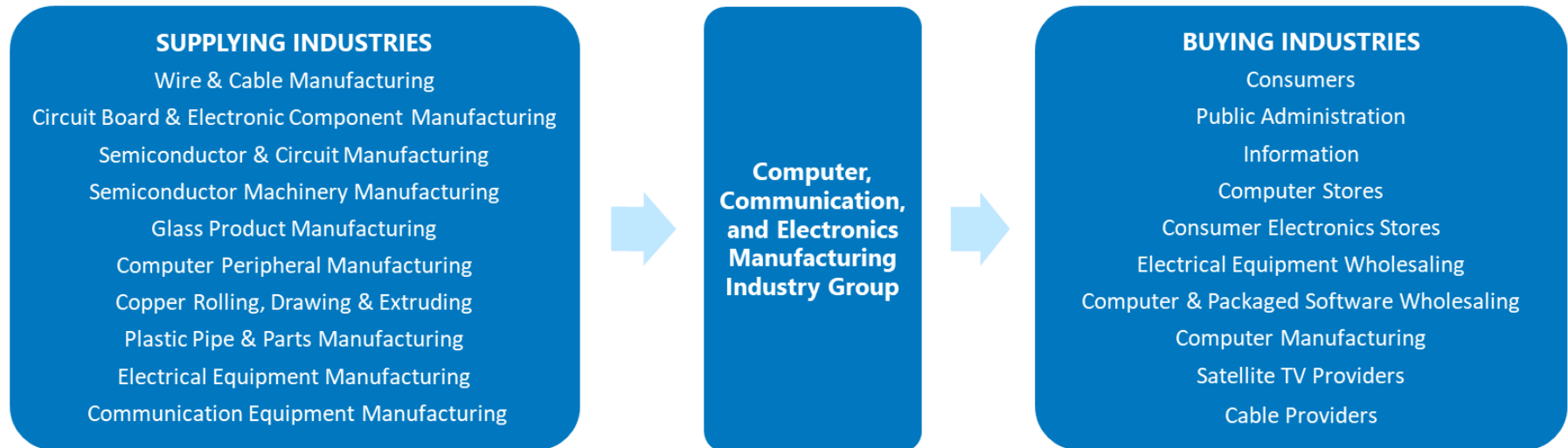
Expand economic potential for existing industries and prepare the region to take advantage of growing markets across the RRRC region.

Strategy 1.B) Continue investment in value-added food production systems and innovative agriculture production.

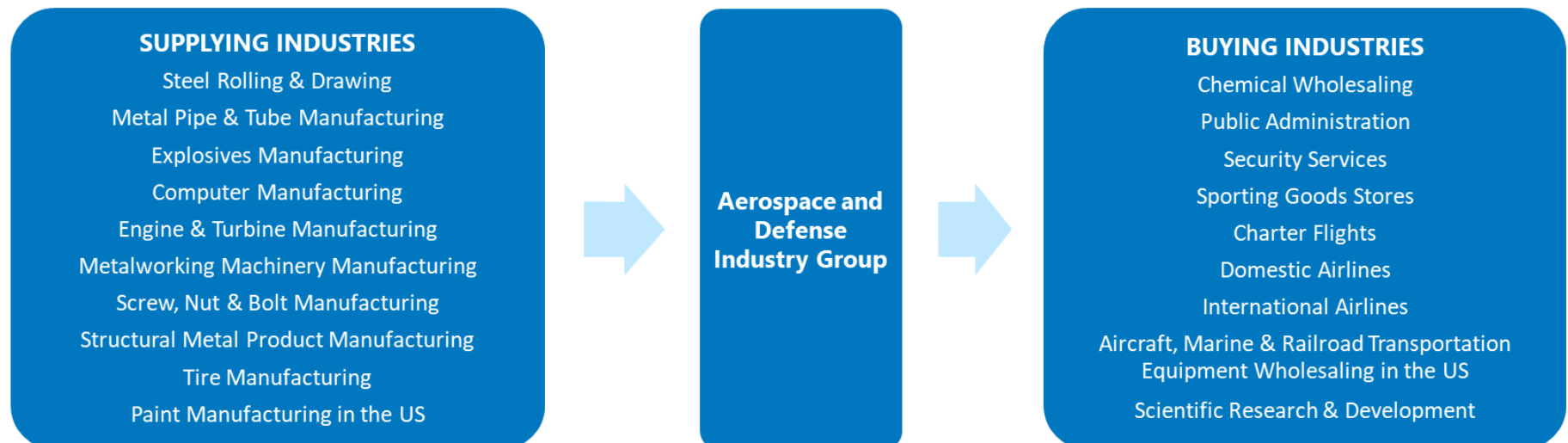


Action	Description		
1.B.1	<p>Advance existing goals set by the RRRC Food Council. The RRRC Food Council is actively advancing priority projects that enhance the regional food system and agriculture producers.</p>	<p>The priority items most relevant to economic development include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster food business entrepreneurship • Improve financial literacy among producers and local food businesses • Improve farmland access for underserved producers and beginning farmers 	
1.B.2	<p>Invest in the next generation of agricultural workers through recruitment, workforce training, and increasing awareness.</p>	<p>The agriculture and value-added production industries require a vast array of positions that range from technology and robotics to land cultivation. Exploring the range of positions and expanding the perception of what agriculture includes will help strengthen the economic potential of this sector.</p>	
1.B.3	<p>Work closely with planners to examine future land use documents to monitor land competition.</p>	<p>Quality land is essential to maintain the region's ability to produce superior products. As the region grows and climate change has impacts on land, it is essential to work with agricultural leaders to assess and monitor productive land.</p>	
1.B.4	<p>Increase output of controlled environment agriculture (CEA) sites and build off existing assets to grow the cluster.</p>	<p>As consumer demand grows for healthy food on-demand, regional CEA operations have significant economic potential.</p>	
1.B.5	<p>Facilitate resource match-making for agriculture producers who are poised to expand into value-added production.</p>	<p>There is a wide spectrum of needs to grow or enter into value-added production. This support may include help obtaining equipment or finding shared resources, training and hiring, product testing, connections to end users, finding leads, marketing and promotion, and identifying modes of transportation.</p>	

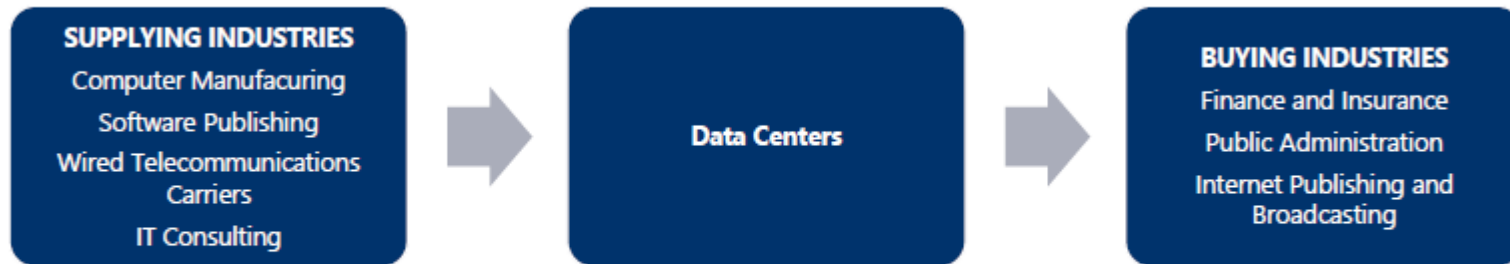
Computer, Communication, and Electronics Manufacturing Supply Chain



Aerospace and Defense Supply Chain



Data Center Supply Chain



Food and Agriculture Supply Chains

SUPPLY CHAIN



GOAL 2

Implement or adapt industry-focused initiatives that draw on cross-sector collaboration for worker retention, advancement, and attraction.

Initiative 2.A) Prioritize collaboration and shared knowledge between workforce and economic development partners.



Action	Description		
2.A.1	Engage with GO VA on workforce regional solutions to enable specialized training at the high school, university, and continuing education levels.	The partnership to advance the Drone Academy exposed high school students to an emerging field and connected them to other resources after the initial training. This type of partnership could be adapted to other high-demand occupations.	
2.A.2	Advocate for heightened investment in the community college system at the state level.	Community colleges play an invaluable role in the workforce development system and must be well resourced to be able to innovate their training programs and advance their technological capabilities.	
2.A.3	Engage industry associations to work with TEC schools and community colleges to recruit industry leaders in training.	The region's community colleges already have strong connections to some sectors, and these are valuable connections to ensure that educators have direct experience in the subjects they are teaching. Expanding the pool of educators in workforce training programs could include retirees or part-time workers.	
2.A.4	Solidify mechanisms to expand paid training for workers to upskill.	It can be incredibly challenging for a worker to obtain upskilling training while they are currently working. Paid training is a necessary tool to enable workers to seek more opportune career pathways.	
2.A.5 ***	Work with leading entities in the childcare sector to prioritize action-items that will enable safe, affordable, and convenient childcare access points across the region.	Statewide and regional entities are pursuing solutions within the childcare sector. Actively participating in these conversations and piloting solutions with regional employers will be necessary to overcome significant barriers.	

STARS

SKILLED THROUGH
ALTERNATIVE ROUTES™



STARS are individuals currently active in the workforce, who have a high school diploma, but no bachelor's degree.

They're more than 50% of the workforce that has developed valuable skills through military service, community college, training programs, partial college completion, or, most commonly, on-the-job experience.

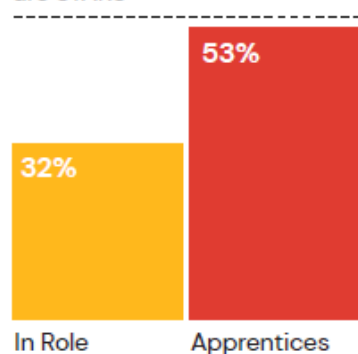
Employers are maximizing apprenticeship roles

- ✓ To fill high-volume roles
- ✓ To teach industry and employer specific skills
- ✓ To promote jobs that are new to the labor market
- ✓ To expand and diversify existing talent pools

FIGURE 2.3: APPRENTICESHIPS ATTRACT A MORE DIVERSE TALENT POOL

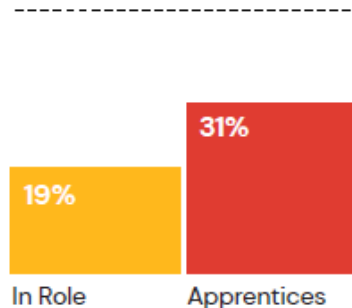
STAR Information Security Analysts

55% of all workers are STARS



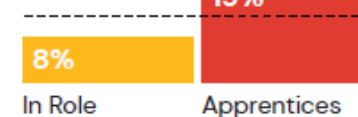
Women Software Developers

48% of all workers are women



Black Management Analysts

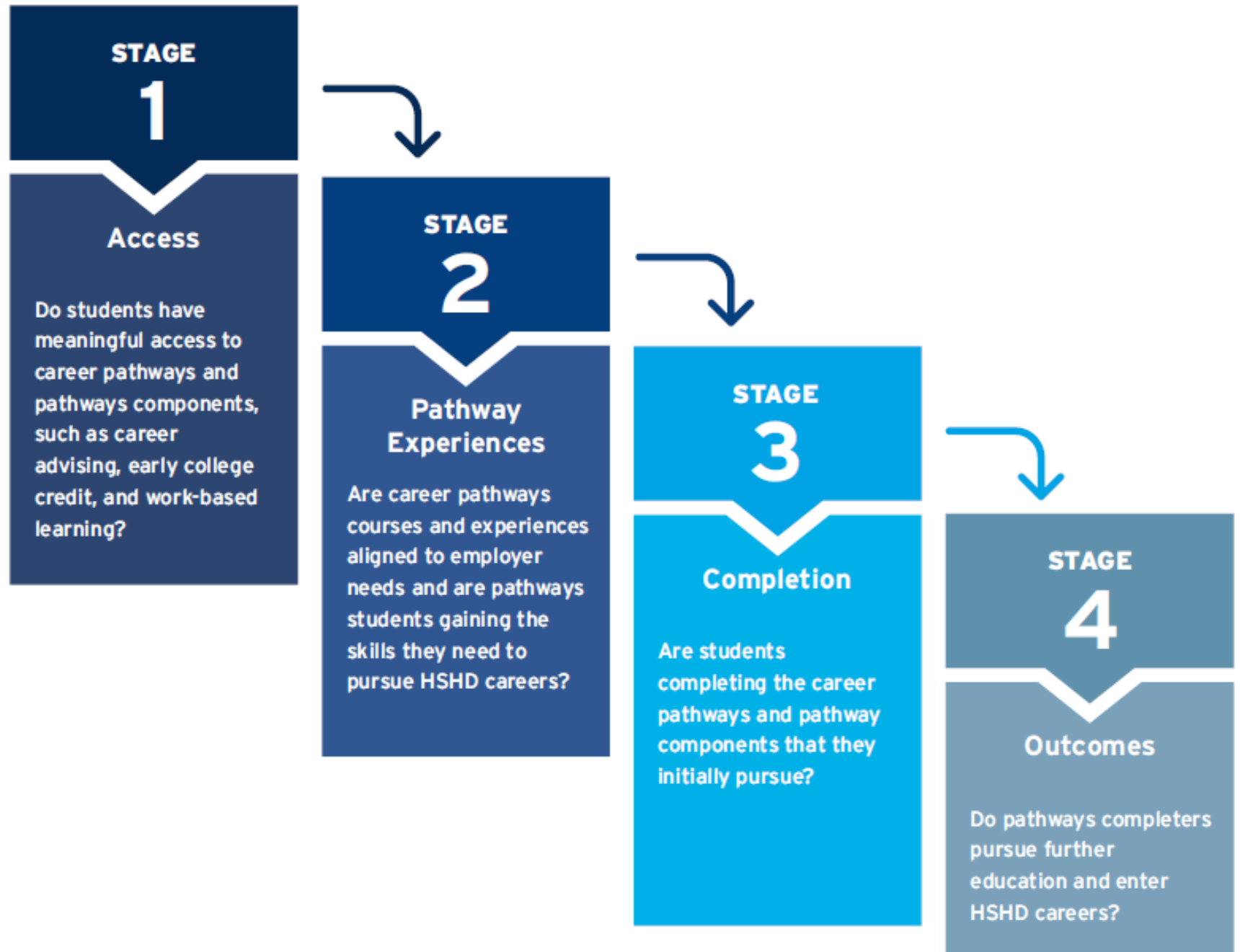
12% of all workers are Black



See page 17 for notes and sources.

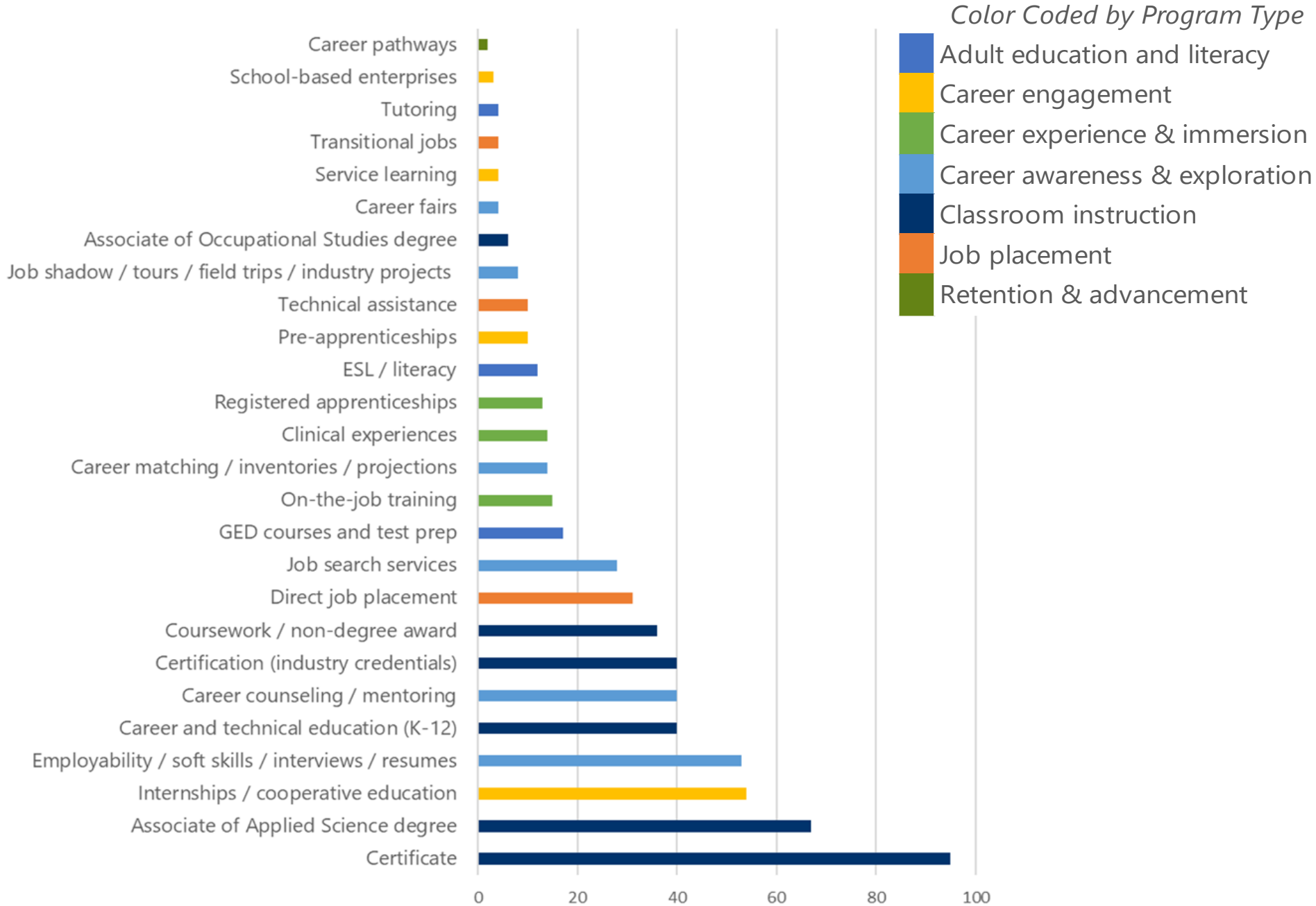
EXHIBIT 3

Stages of student career pathways experiences for data collection and monitoring



Workforce Programs in Monroe County by Subtype

June 2023



Programs may fall into multiple categories

Mining for talent

United Way, employers address regional workforce shortage

PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 29, 2023

BY KATHERINE HAMILTON



United Way of Southwest Virginia President and CEO Travis Staton is overseeing the \$25 million transformation of a former Kmart in Abingdon into a regional child care and workforce development hub. Photo by Earl Neikirk

virginiabusiness.com



CoLAB

Collaborative of Leaders in Academia and Business (CoLAB) is an action-oriented partnership of business and academic institutions that develops the talent pipeline for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

GOAL 2

Implement or adapt industry-focused initiatives that draw on cross-sector collaboration for worker retention, advancement, and attraction.

Initiative 2.B) Innovate ways to involve the private sector in workforce training programs.***



Action	Description		
2.B.1 ***	Pursue industry champions that will amplify the need for private sector involvement in workforce solutions.	The private sector plays an important role in supporting innovative workforce programming that will retain and advance current workers. While some industries have more involvement than others, a champion of the private sector will amplify the message to other employers.	
2.B.2 ***	Recruit more employers across leading industries to support novel on-the-job pilots, cost-share programs, mentorships, long-term programming, and industry-formed curriculum.	<p>Learning on the job and real-world experience is a proven way to retain workers. Additional employer engagement across a range of industries will help build awareness on what is available in the region and support employer workforce needs.</p> <p>Apprenticeships are one model but can be modified to pre-apprenticeships, internships, shadow days, badges, bootcamps, co-ops, and/or mentorships.</p>	
2.B.3 ***	Deepen engagement with trade unions, industry organizations, and other entities that directly represent private sector employees.	These are valuable partners to glean real-time information and are your partners in implementing WBL programs.	

GOAL 3

Support elements of the built environment that meet today's demand and lay the foundation for advancing a dynamic economic future.

Initiative 3.A) Invest in commercial centers and downtowns as economic and community hubs.



Action	Description		
3.A.1	Partner with localities to assess the vibrancy and vitality of commercial corridors, small towns, and downtown districts and identify tactics that can advance meaningful, local economic activity.	The region's main streets and commercial corridors are vital parts of the economy. Evaluating the needs of each community and where they can make progress will help advance scalable growth across the region.	
3.A.2	Identify infill opportunities and build up concentrations of activity.	Infill and redevelopment opportunities will help build a concentration of services and support existing infrastructure.	
3.A.3	Integrate housing options into Main Streets, downtowns, and other appropriate commercial hubs.	Housing is an important part of the dynamics of a main street and will help address the massive need for a mix of housing types across the region.	
3.A.4	Continue investing in digital infrastructure that supports entrepreneurship and business creation.	Digital infrastructure is necessary for businesses to connect to their customers and compete in today's economy. Continued investment to remain competitive and reach the rural portions of the region will support business retention and development. Leveraging the state's BEAD funding will be one mechanism to reach the remaining rural areas.	

GOAL 3

Support elements of the built environment that meet today's demand and lay the foundation for advancing a dynamic economic future.

Initiative 3.B) Improve transportation connections among commercial and residential hubs.



Action

Description

3.B.1 Partner with the private sector to understand pilot programs to support the movement of workers and/or monitor typical workforce needs.

Mass transportation options across the rural region are a challenging model. Working with anchor businesses to understand where demand is concentrated can help establish a critical mass.

3.B.2 Implement the goals of the RRRC 2045 Long Range Plan and 2019 Active Transportation Plan.

These planning documents lay out expectations for growth and investment needed throughout RRRC's communities. Leveraging funding sources to support these needs is beneficial across geographies.

3.B.3 Explore transportation options that would support people commuting into the region.

While the region is currently an exporter of talent to Northern Virginia, there are opportunities to instead have those workers stay in the region *and* attract workers from NOVA into the region. This will occur in partnership with growing employment opportunities across the region.

GOAL 3

Support elements of the built environment that meet today's demand and lay the foundation for advancing a dynamic economic future.

Initiative 3.C) Advance housing options across the region in connection with market demand



Action	Description				
3.C.1	Continue to use and implement the Housing Needs Assessment that was adopted in 2021.	RRRC's 2021 Housing Needs Assessment is a strong foundation to support RRRC's housing work with the Foothills Housing Network and other activities with localities across the region. Continuing to use best practices, share common themes, and advance strategies is an important part of growing attainable housing in the region.			
3.C.2	Maintain relationships with the real estate community and attend their industry events to get the latest in real-time information about the market.	The real estate community maintains real-time information on the housing market and is a vital partner in understanding inventory.			
3.C.3	Explore funding mechanisms like public-private partnerships that will encourage employer participation in addressing housing inventory needs.	Medium and large employers have begun to play a role in supporting the development of housing for their workers. With a combination of public, private sector, and non-profit contributions, the region is more likely to address housing needs at an accelerated rate.			

GOAL 3

Support elements of the built environment that meet today's demand and lay the foundation for advancing a dynamic economic future.

Initiative 3.C) Advance housing options across the region in connection with market demand



Action	Description
3.C.4 ***	<p>Work with municipalities on land use updates that will encourage building in existing service centers.</p> <p>Municipalities play an important role in advancing housing development in the region. These roles include:</p> <p><i>Rezoning and future land use planning</i> – Aligning land use regulations with desired housing development is a high impact way to increase development.</p> <p><i>Identify underutilized locations</i> – There are often properties with the potential for development that have been abandoned or are otherwise challenging properties that hold potential for housing development.</p> <p><i>Inventory publicly owned land</i> – With public site control, this land may be a good fit to strategize housing solutions with the private, public and non-profit sectors</p>

GOAL 3

Support elements of the built environment that meet today's demand and lay the foundation for advancing a dynamic economic future.

Initiative 3.D) Proactively prepare the business community for economic and environmental crises.



Action	Description		
3.D.1	Implement drought mitigation techniques and water usage programs that can support existing business and expected business growth in target industries.	The region has been particularly impacted by drought conditions, which has an impact on the region's businesses and community members.	
3.D.2	Advance the planning process of the Hazard Mitigation Plan and incorporate the private sector in conversations about economic resiliency.	The ongoing HMP planning process documents hazards by locality and will be a key report to highlight vulnerabilities in the region. Partnering this analysis with the findings from the CEDS will help identify priority action items and highlight how these hazards can impact the community and business sector.	
3.D.3 ***	Solidify a leader or team of leaders in the community who will be the face of build-back efforts in the event of an economic or environmental crisis.	Having a plan before a crisis enables resources to be deployed quicker and will clarify where businesses can turn to in the event of a crisis.	

GOAL 4

Make strategic investments in critical infrastructure systems that will elevate the competitiveness of the region's production.

Initiative 4.A) Prepare due diligence for high-impact sites and obtain corresponding funding to implement infrastructure needs.



Action	Description				
4.A.1	Evaluate the location and status of parcels or areas that are suited to attract or grow target industries.	This inventory is critical to align where resources can have the greatest impact when funding becomes available through public and private sources. Information sharing on the status and availability of sites is also critical among partners.			
4.A.2	Work with EDOs to promote land banking/land assembly to generate sizeable parcels.	This tool is scalable to both rural and urban locations. It can take time to work with multiple property owners to acquire properties but can set up a community for success when the appropriate opportunity arises.			
4.A.3	Consider adopting climate-smart infrastructure standards for developers to opt-into.	Resilient economies are bolstered by sustainable infrastructure and building stock. A widely-accepted standard of climate-smart infrastructure will set the region on the path to long-term resiliency.			
4.A.4 ***	Assess electricity needs for local communities as heavy-energy industry users come online.	Some of the region's industries are heavy energy users and ensuring that long-term planning accounts for the needs of the broader economy will be important when building a resilient energy grid.			
4.A.5 ***	Pursue joint partnerships or other customized collaborations to help fund or advance infrastructure.	Funding infrastructure is a costly endeavor and can be supported through shared resources in multi-jurisdictional partnerships.			

Next Steps



- ✓ Finish any remaining strategy refinement + implementation scale discussion
- ✓ Write up findings and complete matrix
- ✓ Establish metrics for strategy areas
- ✓ Write up Executive Summary and complete report – end of March