



# WEST VIRGINIA FORWARD

**2018** YEAR-END REPORT

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PRINCIPLE PARTNERS



**ED GAUNCH**  
WEST VIRGINIA  
SECRETARY OF COMMERCE



West Virginia can tackle big economic challenges, win jobs and drive investment if our best minds are focused on real results. The more we can collaborate on a strategic path forward, the more we can boost our economy and development.”



**E. GORDON GEE**  
PRESIDENT OF  
WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY



West Virginia Forward has taken our shared roadmap to prosperity and partnered with hundreds of West Virginians. Our state’s success depends on our working together to forge smart, effective results. I anticipate another forward-thinking year as we continue on this journey.”



**JEROME A. GILBERT**  
PRESIDENT OF  
MARSHALL UNIVERSITY



Marshall University’s faculty and staff are engaged and working diligently on projects to help move West Virginia. We are committed to providing quality education to our students, partnering with other higher education institutions to grow our workforce pipeline, working with state leaders to attract and keep jobs and taking new ideas from concepts to realities. We are ... moving West Virginia forward.”

STEERING COMMITTEE



Marty Becker



Patrick Farrell



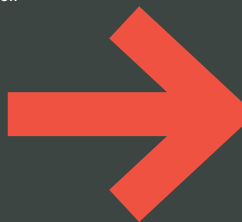
Pat Getty



Jen Giovannitti



Jim Pennington



INTRODUCTION



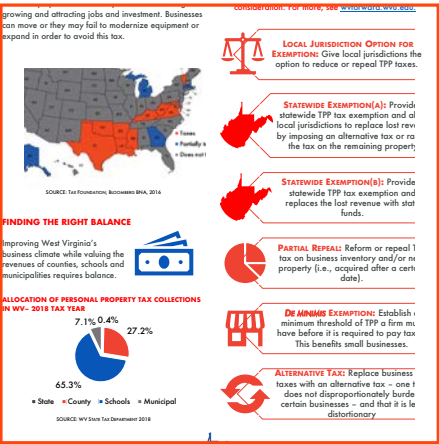
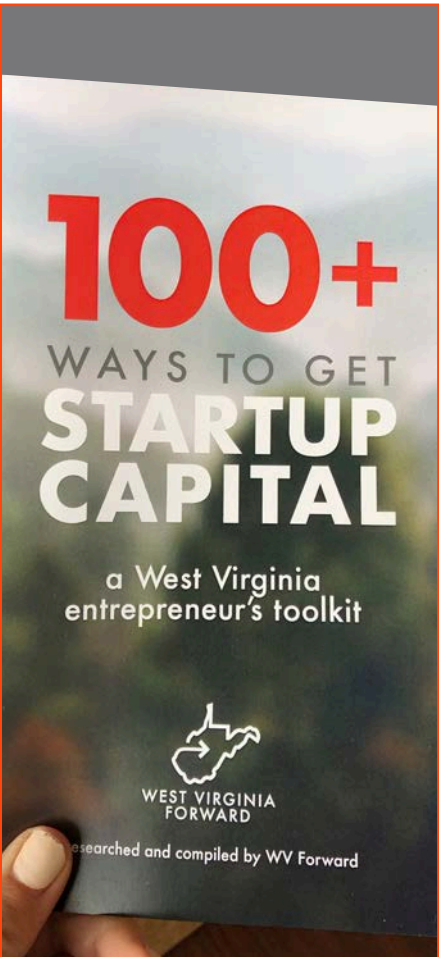
A LETTER FROM WV FORWARD

On a snowy day in January 2018, WV Forward partners and newly appointed steering committee members sat down together for the first time to endeavor to tackle our state’s toughest challenges and most promising opportunities. Armed with McKinsey and Company findings that created a blueprint for prosperity, WV Forward set about to take action. Many reports and findings collect dust on shelves. Not this one.

WV Forward committed to boldly implement the McKinsey recommendations that were endorsed by leaders and doers across the state. The agreed vision was to stretch for big results with an understanding of the art of the possible. WV Forward was born as an unprecedented partnership to dig into the real work that transforms a state.

Work started straight away with an eye toward quick results as well as outside-the-box solutions to be forged from the ground up. WV Forward got down to business on heavy policy lifts from taxes to electricity rates and began charting smart courses of action designed for real world results into the future. At the same time, the team reached out to hundreds of leaders, businesses, and communities across the state to pinpoint the most urgent needs for quick action. In response to identified needs, WV Forward created resources such as: an entrepreneur’s resource guide with 100 sources of capital, tools for students and others to successfully land cyber jobs open today, or an index of work being done on the opioid crisis.

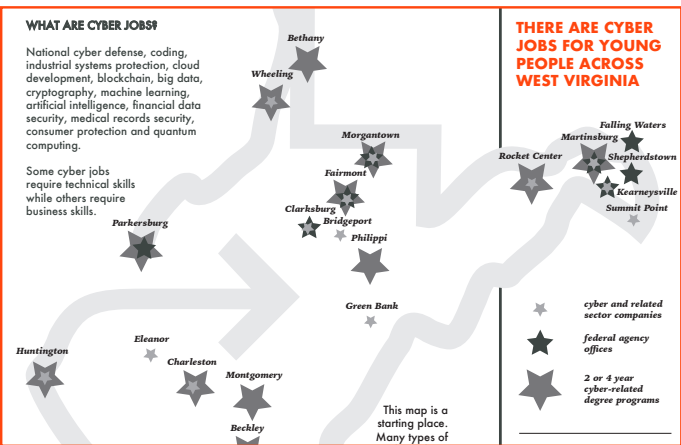
Within days of launching, resources and strategic support were provided on active policy efforts. Within weeks of launching, WV Forward established operations, ironed out logistics and identified first phase lines of effort. In the first months, research scholars, volunteer experts and a quickly growing cadre of collaborators were working together to



advance top priorities. The first phase work took the form of action, reference and teamwork. Examples of each are provided in this report and on the WV Forward website.

Key players with a common vision convened to work more effectively. Embracing both the chance to try something new and a community spirit, experts and leaders joined up to solve priorities. Willing partners recognized that harnessing their collective resources would propel West Virginia forward farther and faster. The collaboration grew even outside of the state’s borders. Economic development and education leaders from Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia met to distill three ground-tested ideas to yield big growth for the entire region. Hundreds of others signed up for newsletters and updates so they could offer help and support.

The inaugural year was dynamic with an eventful legislative landscape, new leadership faces and tangible results. This report provides a glimpse at some of the WV Forward 2018 accomplishments, acknowledging that more opportunities and challenges remain. Many other incredible efforts are advancing WV Forward priorities across the state that are not captured in this report.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

**BUILDING ON EXISTING ASSETS.**  
What can we enhance to compete more effectively? This includes addressing human capital, infrastructure, innovation and West Virginia’s business climate.

**GROWING AND DIVERSIFYING INTO NEW SECTORS.**  
How can we grow our state more rapidly, and what industries have projected growth?

**DISCOVERING DISRUPTIVE TRENDS.**  
We are looking for trends that, according to Forbes, “Displace an existing market, industry, or technology and produce something new and more efficient and worthwhile.” Where can we find market-changing innovations?

**FINDING QUICK WINS.**  
What can we do now to produce the greatest gains within the next year?

**CONSIDERING OUR REGIONAL IMPACT.**  
What priorities will have the greatest influence on our region?

THANK YOU  
WV FORWARD PARTNERS  
AND COLLABORATORS



# JOB GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES



## INVESTING IN CYBERSECURITY AND IT JOBS

Based on global trends and West Virginia's unique assets, the state has big opportunities to add jobs in the cyber, coding and IT-related sectors. From national cyber defense servicemembers to IT data center engineers to startup coders, employers in West Virginia say they want to fill more jobs in the cyber sector today. The state doesn't have to wait for "the jobs of the future" to fill open positions now.

WV Forward and partners have worked to identify and put in place top ways to develop our cyber workforce, including specifically how to: prepare youth for cyber and IT careers, yield policy recommendations tailored to West Virginia, attract more cyber sector companies to the state and invest in sector talent.

### MAPPING OUT CYBER AND IT CAREERS FOR YOUTH

Cyber jobs are high-paying, high-skilled and in high-demand. WV Forward has produced a guide for young people on ways to best prepare for a career in the cyber sector, map out where available jobs have been reported across the state and navigate through the security clearance process.

### ADDRESSING THE NATIONAL SECURITY CLEARANCE BACKLOG

West Virginia's cyber industry experts report that the number-one barrier to filling cyber and intel jobs is the ability to hire cleared, trained professionals. They cite the 700,000+ national backlog of security clearance investigations as a serious hurdle to creating more jobs in West Virginia today.

To work toward solutions as federal officials report clearance protocols are currently under development, WV Forward and the Discover the Real West Virginia Foundation convened government, industry, business and education leaders in October 2018 in Fairmont to provide substantive, actionable recommendations to the federal agencies responsible for security clearance protocols. Those on the front lines of hiring cleared staff offered suggestions to federal officials present at the meeting and asserted that hearing from West Virginians will help improve the process.

WV Forward plans a follow-up meeting in 2019 with federal officials and state experts as the federal protocol review advances. National security clearance backlogs may have seemed like an insurmountable barrier to job growth, but the concrete suggestions and ongoing conversations with federal agencies have already indicated progress in easing delays that prevent employers from offering more cyber jobs to more West Virginians.



### MODERNIZING WEST VIRGINIA CYBERSECURITY DATA AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTIONS

The National Governors Association's Cyber Policy Academy chose four states in 2018 to support in strengthening cyber threat protections. West Virginia was among the states who decided to work with the NGA on policies that guard against a full range of debilitating and costly cyber breaches that have occurred around the world. A small team, including WV Forward, has reviewed best practices and recommended policies to help West Virginia be better prepared to address cyber threats.

### PARTNERING TO SUPPORT BUILDING A CYBER WORKFORCE

To better secure West Virginia's cyber workforce and expand jobs, WV Forward and statewide leaders are producing the West Virginia Cybersecurity Workforce Strategic Initiative Report. Recommendations include better statewide communication and collaboration on cyber training offerings and more ways to recruit new and experienced talent into the state's cyber workforce.

### UNCOVERING POLICIES AND SOLUTIONS TO DRIVE WEST VIRGINIA'S CYBER SECTOR

To help capture growth in this globally trending sector, WV Forward has worked with industry experts to compile ideas related to tax incentives and best practices to help grow cyber sector jobs in West Virginia and compete worldwide.



## INCREASING TOURISM SPENDING AND CREATING JOBS

West Virginia can increase tourism spending and create jobs by showcasing and leveraging the best of the state. Although West Virginia has fewer average overnight stays and less travel spending than surrounding states, the state has significant natural, cultural and geographic assets that could bring in more visitors who stay longer and spend more.

The launch of the West Virginia Tourism Office's "Almost Heaven" campaign in April 2018 has been informed by Tourism's engagement with McKinsey & Company and the resulting WV Forward blueprint findings. Tourism's campaign has helped increase tax revenue and in-state economic growth through targeted travel and tourism advertising and marketing.



To help boost tourism revenues and jobs, WV Forward is launching a three-pronged effort that focuses on: identifying opportunities, aligning efforts among partners and supporting livability in communities.

**IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES**

WV Forward has aligned specific McKinsey & Company findings with specific opportunities ready for potential action. Research findings target increasing overnight stays from two to four nights, and raising tourism spending by capitalizing on regional opportunities. Regional goals included: attracting wealthier, mature and retired tourists to the panhandles, expanding activities for adventure tourism and promoting second home ownership in the Potomac highlands. In addition, WV Forward has created the first comprehensive catalogue of West Virginia-made products to help find goods produced across the state. It is now easier to shop local and source homegrown products from small businesses while boosting the economy.

**ALIGNING EFFORTS**

WV Forward has convened tourism experts across WVU and Marshall University to share best efforts that align with the goal of growing state tourism. Until now, multidisciplinary academic experts have not had a platform to collectively share work and learn how best to advance Tourism Office priorities and increase its economic impact. The Tourism Office, WVU and Marshall University classes, faculty and staff are considering joint projects that embody the McKinsey & Company’s blueprint findings, the goals of the Almost Heaven



campaign, the universities’ resources and state assets. By harnessing academic, state and community resources, the best of West Virginia can be shown to potential visitors, returning tourists and residents who stay and play in the state, bringing and keeping more dollars here.

**SUPPORTING WORK IN COMMUNITIES**

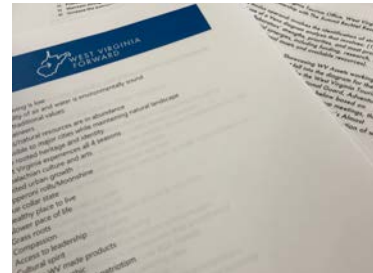
WV Forward recognizes that livable communities are foundational to creating places in which people want to live, work and play – for those who reside here and for those who come to visit. WV Forward is beginning to work with AARP of West Virginia and community leaders on services, amenities and civic and social engagement that can help make the most of this beautiful state.



**→ ADVANCING DOWNSTREAM SECTOR COLLABORATION**

It’s no secret that West Virginia’s shale gas reserves present a tremendous opportunity for job growth and investment. There is big business in adding value to the abundant raw materials being produced in the region now and into the future. Adding value before raw materials are shipped out of state allows West Virginia to capture more revenue and expand small, medium and large businesses. A shale boom could position Appalachia as a hub for jobs in plastics, fine chemicals and carbon fiber materials, as well as supply chain products and services. WV Forward has initiated efforts to help existing and new businesses navigate the shale manufacturing supply chain for greater and broader sector development. Growing value-added supply chain connections helps all kinds of businesses thrive in the state — from water haulers to widget makers to the folks who make lunch.





# ECONOMIC GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

## → INVESTING IN INNOVATION AND BUSINESS GROWTH

A key driver of job growth is a healthy startup and small business ecosystem. In order to foster innovation and entrepreneurship in communities across the state, WV Forward and partners are convening finance experts, community development professionals, higher education researchers and start-up support groups to provide research and data related to new and underused opportunities, finance and funding mechanisms.

Driven by an identified need for greater deal flow and risk-tolerant capital, WV Forward helped convene capital experts from across the state and region in October 2018 to share data and information on capital trends and efforts to spur needed investment. Having a better tool for finding financing has been spotted as a top need.

In response, WV Forward has released a new “100+ Ways to Get Startup Capital: A West Virginia Entrepreneur’s Toolkit.” This direct funding resource guide includes a variety of grants, equity investors and alternative lenders so businesses and future entrepreneurs can navigate funding options and grease the gears of further investment.

Another identified need is a better understanding of help that a future entrepreneur can get to launch a business.

WV Forward is developing an index of entrepreneurship assistance services across the state. Tax and investment resources like Opportunity Zone rules and regulations will continue to be tracked and resources will aid the statewide effort to invest in these areas. Every advantage must be directed to supporting the birth of more businesses and preventing the death of businesses or exodus of jobs.

## → REVIEWING AND EVALUATING WEST VIRGINIA TAX INCENTIVES

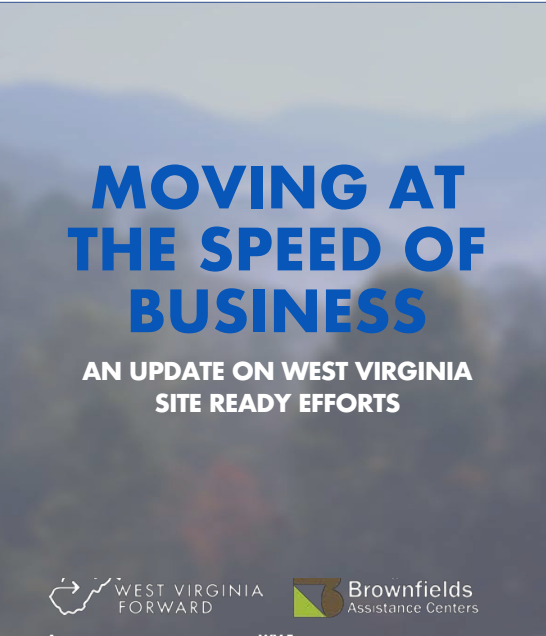
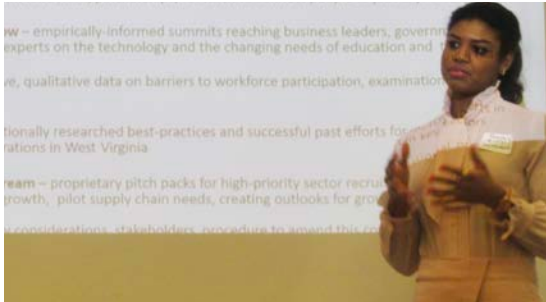
Highlighted in WV Forward’s blueprint as contributing to a positive business climate, tax incentive evaluations help the state strategically enact its economic development plans and be good stewards of State dollars. Many states regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their tax incentives to help avoid wasting taxpayer dollars and losing out on business development opportunities. West Virginia does not. The state’s outlier status on this issue was recently underscored by the Pew Charitable Trusts. WV Forward has offered resources on tax incentive evaluation, related best practices and policies for policymakers and public officials to consider how best to spur broad economic growth in the state.



## → CREATING AN INVENTORY OF SITES READY FOR DEVELOPMENT

Development-ready sites are often the dealmaker in business location decisions. West Virginia does not have a comprehensive program to ready sites, unlike most states. The West Virginia Development Office and other economic development professionals cite the lack of development-ready industrial sites as one of the top-three barriers to attract businesses, create jobs and bolster investments in West Virginia. Shovel-ready sites are one of the most effective ways to bring new firms to the state, saving companies time and resources while reducing site location risk and development costs.

To help West Virginia move at the speed of business, WV Forward has worked with officials and experts to produce an in-depth site readiness planning and policy guide called “Moving at the Speed of Business” that offers established best practices, past and current in-state site readiness initiatives, examples from comparable states and input from key groups. The purpose of the document is to provide specific actions and policy considerations for decision-makers to implement a comprehensive site readiness program. WV Forward has also developed a multi-phase plan that could be used to create an inventory of developable sites.





## RESOLVING TANGIBLE PROPERTY TAXES

West Virginia is in the minority of states that levy tangible personal property (TPP) taxes on business inventory while also imposing TPP taxes on machinery and equipment. Ohio and other competing states have managed to eliminate these taxes. West Virginia leaders also have long discussed elimination, as TPP taxes are pinpointed as a competitive disadvantage to growing and attracting jobs and investment. Businesses can easily move to other states, or they may fail to modernize equipment or expand in order to avoid this tax.

As a constitutional tax, authority to advance legislative action or change the taxation of TPP in the state ultimately rests with lawmakers and West Virginia voters. However, solutions and adjustments to intricate tax laws are easiest to consider when decision-makers have access to impacts, facts and stakeholder perspectives, since tax changes do not operate as simple toggle switch choices. Balancing improvement of West Virginia's business climate with the significant value of revenues generated for counties, schools and municipalities requires an in-depth understanding of the complicated nature



of the trade-offs. Through an analysis of research, assessment of tax policy best practices, a yearlong series of fact-finding efforts and input from stakeholders, WV Forward, in collaboration with experts, has produced a foundational working document designed to inform decisions surrounding a potential TPP tax repeal or reform. If state decision-makers decide to revisit this tax, policy makers will be armed with information about addressing this complex issue.

WV Forward will continue to work with state officials and key groups to find a sensible solution, informed by the key findings in the working document, which can help improve West Virginia's competitiveness and outside investors' perception of West Virginia's business climate while addressing the counties', schools' and municipalities' revenues.



## MAINTAINING ELECTRICITY COMPETITIVENESS

West Virginia scores well on important factors like social and community engagement and a business-friendly environment. The state has long touted the low cost of doing business as an advantage to retain, grow and attract industries large and small. As an example, historically, West Virginia has consistently remained competitive among neighboring states on industrial electricity costs, which have been a prominent selling point for business attraction, particularly among energy-intensive manufacturers and data centers. For such enterprises, electricity rates can be a determining factor in their business location decisions. They can be the difference between closing a deal and losing a prospect.

Several surrounding states have taken a closer look at how to stay competitive in this business environment. West Virginia must do the same and examine past, current and future trends to ensure it remains competitive in the future.

### GATHERING THE ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

WV Forward assembled a team of experts to gather preliminary information and answer introductory questions related to electricity in West Virginia, in relation to competitor states and the U.S. average, in seven key areas: (1) rates, (2) generation, (3) delivery, (4) capacity, (5) demand, (6) regulation and (7) mix. These are among the factors that require further investigation to better understand West Virginia's industrial electricity rate competitiveness. WV Forward's phase one work has laid the foundation for

addressing convoluted and intricate issues that inform strategies to ensure future competitiveness. There are no simple, immediate answers, but the issue is too important to ignore.

An ever-changing global energy mix and emerging energy preferences from some companies are important to understand. Recent shifts in the governance of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) over the PJM ISO and the ramifications for the West Virginia energy market are also critical, especially as it relates to PJM's capacity market and its annual capacity auction for three years ahead. Recognizing competing priorities even among various electricity customers and shareholders is required. WV Forward's work has underscored that this issue must be approached with intellectual curiosity, urgency and an understanding of the full complexity of all that is at play.



# LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES



## REQUIRING STRONG EDUCATION AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD A HEALTHY ECONOMY

Economic prosperity is closely tied to a region's educational levels. Unfortunately, West Virginia's educational attainment, proficiency and training lag those of most other states. To improve the economy and increase jobs and investment, West Virginia must step up efforts to increase education and training opportunities.

To meet the needs of a functioning economy, 60 percent of West Virginians will need some type of higher education. Currently, fewer than 20 percent of working-age West Virginians have at least a bachelor's degree. West Virginia is also seeing rapid changes in the skills required for the jobs of today and tomorrow. To close these gaps, the state must improve affordable, innovative and flexible learning opportunities for a wide variety of lifelong learners including rural and first-generation students, veterans, minorities and those with disabilities.



## EVOLVING WORKFORCE NEEDS CALL FOR DIFFERENT EDUCATION AND TRAINING PREPARATION

West Virginia's vibrancy, resilience and growth depend on the ability to give all West Virginians the right educational opportunities to unlock their full potential and contribute to the state's economic growth. WV Forward is beginning to unearth state-specific data and cultural norms while generating new research and partnering with organizations to better understand what training is necessary to help fill in-demand jobs now. Uncovering innovative approaches to increase post-high school education and lifelong learning, and encourage younger students to consider and

plan for higher education, are top priorities to keep our economic engines running. WV Forward is working with state and national experts to identify barriers and opportunities for higher education and training, improved skills and preparation for the high-tech workforce, and a broader belief by younger students that college and lifelong learning can be for them.

### SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

Throughout 2018, WV Forward has co-hosted a series of events aimed at tailored solutions. A leadership exchange with business, education, and economic leaders from four states framed the agenda for a later groundbreaking conference with our largest employers, top public officials, economists from the Federal Reserve Bank, artificial intelligence experts and education leadership. These working events have yielded curated policy recommendations, data and national best practices that have been provided to education leaders and lawmakers in advance of the 2019 legislative session.

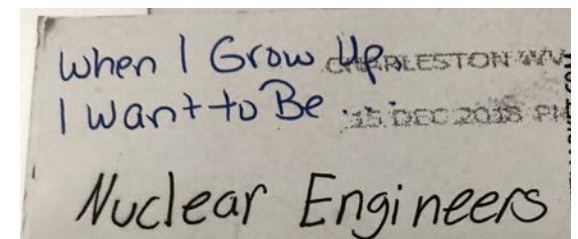
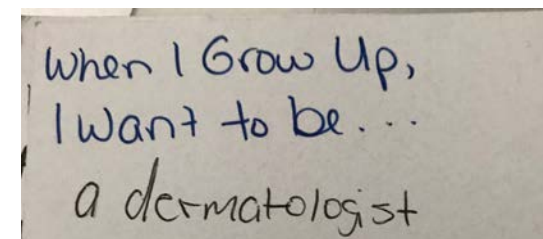
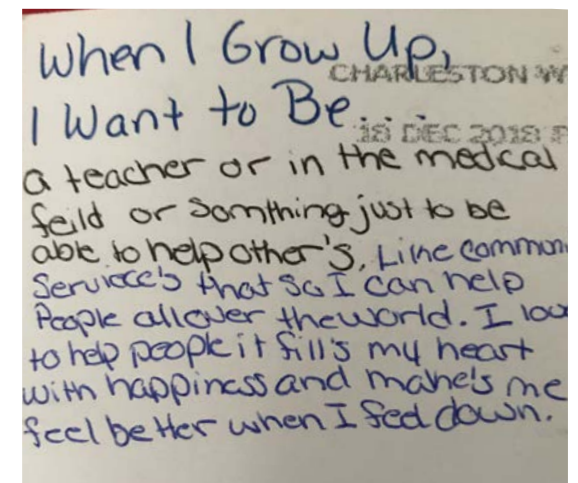


"WV Forward is the roadmap that we now have in hand, giving us the means to work together, row in the same direction and see the real progress and growth we want."

— WVU and Marshall University business deans **Javier Reyes** and **Avi Mukherjee**

### BELIEVING IN AND OWNING THE PROMISE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

A young child's belief that he or she can go to college is a powerful indicator of whether they graduate in the future. WV Forward and partners have worked through college students to help encourage middle schoolers to think about attaining a higher degree. As part of a pilot program, WV Forward has reached out to student body government leaders across West Virginia to share their positive messages of college life, send branded college gear and pass along information about how to go to college. Young students are being encouraged to continue education beyond high school, and some have written back with their dreams for the future that require advanced degrees.



# WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES



## INCREASING WEST VIRGINIA'S WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION

Matching jobs to people and people to jobs is necessary to make the economy work. Workforce participation is key to a healthy GDP, yet West Virginia has the lowest workforce participation rate in the country, hovering at 53 percent (well below the national average). By some estimates, several thousand existing jobs are currently unfilled. Creating jobs without also solving the workforce challenges remains short-sighted. Workforce limitations make it difficult to fill critical positions for not only maintaining but also expanding industries, including healthcare, oil and gas, downstream chemicals, manufacturing and information technology and cloud computing, as well as other potential growth sectors for West Virginia.

To increase the labor pool, the nuanced barriers and incentives to work must be understood. WV Forward and partners have begun examining research, qualitative and quantitative data from state government, higher education, economists, and others. Preliminarily identified barriers are being further studied, and some policy solutions have been identified for further work. Transportation, wage issues, dependent care, adequate education and training are among the challenges for which solutions are being evaluated. Without data-driven strategies to increase West Virginia's workforce participation, new and existing jobs will remain unfilled and the economy will be stunted.



## ENHANCING TALENT, ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

West Virginia exports too much of its most precious resource: its talent. The "brain drain" from several generations of young, talented and educated workers moving out of state contributes to West Virginia being among the top states in the country for population loss last year. The state has seen over 68,000 of its recent college graduates leave the workforce in a decade. West Virginia must have a clear understanding of why young talent is leaving and what is important to their decisions about where to live and work. WV Forward and partners have looked at research on top factors that are important to Millennials and Generation Z (iGen), and have convened higher education professionals to work toward greater retention strategies.

Building on research, WV Forward focused on three categories that may affect where younger people decide to live and work: (1) financial considerations, (2) quality of



life, and (3) professional development and employment. WV Forward and partners have worked on survey and policy efforts aimed at keeping and attracting young talent in West Virginia. In addition, WV Forward began working to connect students to West Virginia jobs. WV Forward convened professionals in higher education career placement and alumni offices for the first time to drill down on data and better link students and alumni to jobs in West Virginia. This newly-formed Talent Pipeline Professionals group, which includes nearly every two- and four-year higher education institution, is working together on statewide solutions to the outmigration of talent.

Together the information from research, young professionals in West Virginia and beyond our state, paired with the data from higher education and alumni networks can help distill steps that can be taken.



## SUBSTANCE ABUSE CRISIS AND THE WORKFORCE

The national substance abuse crisis has significantly harmed West Virginia's workforce. Research at the universities and governmental agencies across the state are attacking the overall issue from a variety of angles and specialties. In 2018, WV Forward has responded to a call for a better understanding of statewide efforts on substance abuse by creating a comprehensive index of such work. Additional identified needs included how West Virginia can best: (1) understand evidence in what is effective in treatment and workforce re-integration, (2) identify gaps in data and research about effective measures, and (3) analyze how social norms and bias interfere with best practices. WV Forward has worked with key experts to explore how best to address the above questions among ongoing and new efforts, and how to specifically consider the economic and workforce impact of the epidemic. Workforce reintegration is especially important. Treatment, training, criminal procedures and other considerations affect how someone in recovery may successfully re-enter and remain in the workforce.



# MOVING FORWARD BEHIND THE SCENES: PARTNERSHIPS, PROCESS, AND ENGAGEMENT



## PARTNERSHIPS

West Virginia's small size and close connections offer great opportunities to align ongoing work that aims to make the state more prosperous. WV Forward set out to take stock of the state's priority needs and assets, team up with smart collaborations and take action in the effort's inaugural year. By bringing together the brightest minds to leverage multidisciplinary action, it is possible to empower real, lasting change.

In 2018, WV Forward has collaborated with more than 250 organizations. Thanks to these collaborative efforts, WV Forward helped host nearly 40 events in 2018. A few examples include:

→ **June, October, December 2018** Focus Forward events: Preparing today for the West Virginia of tomorrow by convening government officials, policymakers, education leaders, economists and industry executives from across West Virginia and beyond.

→ **October 2018** Cybersecurity Security Clearance Backlog: Streamlining the national security clearance backlog by bringing to the table federal agencies, U.S. senators, representatives from the National Guard, industry and higher education institutions.

→ **October 2018** Capital Providers Workshop: Exploring new and better ways to expand investment opportunities for businesses to start and grow in West Virginia with WVU President E. Gordon Gee, Marshall University President Jerry Gilbert, Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond President Tom Barkin and impacted investors, loan collaborative members and economic experts.

→ **November 2018** Talent Pipeline Professionals: Increasing talent retention in West Virginia by bringing together two- and four-year, public and private career placement and alumni professionals.

→ **November, December 2018** Tri-State regional opportunities: Exploring collaborations to advance downstream manufacturing opportunities in the shale gas region with Jobs Ohio, Allegheny Conference, Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, Tri-State Shale Initiative, Vision Shared and others.



## PROCESS

WV Forward, a collaboration among principal partners West Virginia University, Marshall University and the West Virginia Department of Commerce, launched in January 2018. WV Forward has designated a steering committee, partners' implementation team, and initial phase working groups aimed at tackling specific McKinsey-recommended action items. WV Forward became a full staff consisting of three research scholars and a project manager in June 2018. Monthly strategy meetings are held for both the steering committee and partner implementation team, there are weekly calls with the Forward staff, and working group meetings are held for the various sector-specific and cross-sector topics. Monthly and quarterly WV Forward status reports synthesize minutes and work.

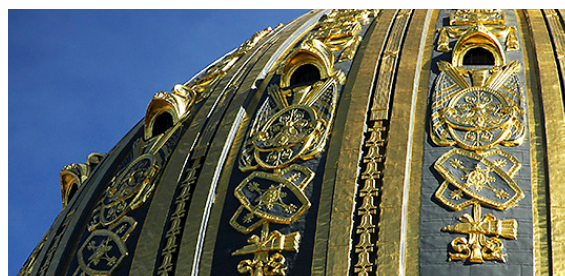


## ENGAGEMENT

WV Forward's charge is to help grow the state's economy by adding jobs, investing in education and improving health and wellness to create the most prosperous West Virginia possible. Engaging all West Virginians and ensuring they help shape this journey is imperative to ultimate success.

By learning from diverse constituencies and understanding what matters most to them, WV Forward partners can decipher how best to accomplish shared prosperity.

Over the past year, opportunities to share progress, along with the lessons learned and speedbumps, have been built from the ground up. Through individual meetings, group presentations, stakeholder engagement, public forums, collaborative events and assistance from the three partner organizations, WV Forward's movement is gaining momentum and recognition. Hundreds of people have expressed interest in helping move the state forward, and nearly 1,000 West Virginians are reached bi-monthly through WV Forward newsletter communications. The website and email address are also good platforms for engagement.



## ADDITIONAL REFERENCES



- 100+ WAYS TO GET STARTUP CAPITAL
- CYBER WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY AND REPORT
- GROWING WEST VIRGINIA CYBER JOBS: A POLICY TOOLKIT
- MOVING AT THE SPEED OF BUSINESS: AN UPDATE ON WEST VIRGINIA SITE READY EFFORTS – WHITE PAPER
- MOVING AT THE SPEED OF BUSINESS: AN UPDATE ON WEST VIRGINIA SITE READY EFFORTS – FACTSHEET
- OPIOID EPIDEMIC STAKEHOLDERS LIST
- RESOLVING TANGIBLE PERSONAL PROPERTY TAXES IN WEST VIRGINIA – WHITE PAPER
- RESOLVING TANGIBLE PERSONAL PROPERTY TAXES IN WEST VIRGINIA – FACTSHEET
- SECURING WEST VIRGINIA CYBER JOBS: REDUCING THE SECURITY CLEARANCE BACKLOG AND ACCELERATING JOB GROWTH
- WEST VIRGINIA CYBER JOBS MAP: MAPPING OUT A CAREER IN CYBER, IT OR CODING
- WEST VIRGINIA-MADE PRODUCTS

## A LETTER FROM THE WV FORWARD STEERING COMMITTEE

WV Forward, a collaboration among principal partners West Virginia University, Marshall University and the West Virginia Department of Commerce, is an unprecedented initiative that was launched in 2018. Never before have two major universities paired with state government to work with leaders across the state and beyond on a shared vision for greater prosperity. This effort grew from the understanding that we can do more together. We aimed to build on our assets, diversify and look around corners at new opportunities.

Last year, the principal partners of WV Forward took stock of our state's most pressing challenges and most encouraging economic opportunities with experts from McKinsey & Company. Those data-driven findings serve as our shared blueprint for prosperity. In 2018, it was time to turn thought to deed. The WV Forward partners began to team up with collaborators and take action to build our most promising future.

WV Forward values urgency and persistence to act and find quick wins, but we understand that successful foundations cannot be built on sand. We build upon an empirically-driven approach grounded in shared wisdom and critical analysis. In this inaugural year, we prioritized first-phase initiatives. We began with an analysis of gaps and opportunities by identifying work and stakeholders already engaged in targeted efforts, outstanding talent in key areas and priority issues that are not yet being addressed.

This journey toward lasting job creation and economic growth requires focus and determination. Large-scale results will not happen overnight. But smart strategies will guide us along the way, benchmarking success and forging the path forward.

## MOVING FORWARD BY THE NUMBERS IN 2018



# 1,500+

→ INDIVIDUALS REACHED THROUGH WV FORWARD ENGAGEMENT



→ PRIORITY ISSUE RESEARCH MEMOS



# 39

→ EVENTS

# 900+

→ NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS

# NINE

→ DATA-DRIVEN FACTSHEETS

# 1,150



→ SOURCES REVIEWED FOR RESEARCH

# 250

→ PAGES OF RESEARCH WRITTEN



→ GRANT APPLICATIONS



# 1,250+

→ HOURS DONATED BY VOLUNTEER EXPERTS

# TWO

→ WHITE PAPERS



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FORWARD

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