West Virginia University and the West Virginia Department of Commerce commissioned McKinsey & Company to identify short-term, larger-scale projects that will boost West Virginia’s economic development efforts and provide a strategic assessment of:

- Economic diversification opportunities,
- West Virginia’s competitive edge,
- The best method for implementation of key recommendations.

To help capture the opportunities identified by McKinsey & Company, West Virginia University and the West Virginia Department of Commerce invited Marshall University to participate, and together, created “West Virginia Forward,” a collaborative initiative to turn the findings’ recommendations into action to benefit West Virginia’s economy.

McKinsey & Company’s written product is a distilled summary of findings from months of work, serving to spot new issues, dig beneath existing challenges, and highlight the importance of ongoing work. The summary of findings was not meant to be a lengthy, comprehensive report with silver bullet solutions. Rather the effort is designed to point our conversation while recognizing that there is no substitute for including those with front line intel to craft solutions together.

**OUR PATH HAS THREE OBJECTIVES:**

**Identify**

Identify potential sectors in which West Virginia can grow to diversify our economy.

**Reinforce**

Reinforce the foundation that supports economic growth, including our infrastructure, talent base and business climate.

**Create**

Create a clear roadmap, helping partners around the state navigate these new pathways toward our shared destination: A prosperous West Virginia.

Collaboration that leverages partnerships with state and regional leaders is the heart of the West Virginia Forward effort.

Some of the issues spotted in the summary of findings may not seem surprising. However, the fact that McKinsey & Company flagged certain issues should challenge us to address those in innovative ways to attain the results we want and need. In other areas, McKinsey & Company gives us a fresh perspective, spots new trends or gives us tips on better marketing our successes so external perception is aligned with our progress.

We have now taken stock of the opportunities and challenges before us and we are putting thoughts into deeds. With a focus on short-term and long-term objectives, we are teaming up and taking action alongside stakeholders and experts across West Virginia and beyond.

A Steering Committee has been created to help us maintain momentum as we forge ahead, and each member has been tasked to help drive the overall direction, prioritize initiatives and direct stakeholder outreach. Working groups are also developing to focus on key areas identified by the summary of findings. Working groups have the front-line knowledge needed to produce real change.

#WVFORWARD