

A large white offshore wind turbine stands in the middle of a deep blue ocean under a clear sky. The turbine's three blades are spread out, and its nacelle is visible. In the distance, another smaller wind turbine is visible on the horizon.

# REPORT ON CLEAN ENERGY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

AN OFFSHORE WIND CASE STUDY

HAMPTONROADS  
**WORKFORCECOUNCIL**  
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**Governor Northam's** Executive Order 43 represented Virginia's first major step toward the transition to a new clean energy sector. The Order recognized how the energy industry serves as the backbone of the Commonwealth's economy. It also recognized the need to transition to a more modern electric grid that would accommodate and incorporate technology advances and widely distributed generation assets. The clean energy sector is creating new business opportunities which requires a highly skilled technical workforce. Supporting programs that enable a pipeline of skilled workers will not only fulfill the opportunity for significant new job growth, but will also attract new businesses and opportunities in the clean energy sector. The Virginia offshore wind opportunity is a clear and present example. This report was prepared by the Hampton Roads Workforce Council and provides a summary of programs positioned to contribute to a workforce solution model. The Commonwealth must establish ambitious goals and work with stakeholders across the industry. This report recommends a strategy to build on the current momentum through enabling and coordinating activities of a very engaged collection of training partners.

# INCLUSIVE TALENT DEVELOPMENT FOR OFFSHORE WIND

**Diverse workforces** typically outperform their less diverse counterparts, regardless of the industry in which they work. Creating a diverse and inclusive offshore wind workforce will help this new industry gain solid footing and our local economy to grow. (McKinsey Diversity Report) To do so, workforce diversity and inclusion actions must:

- Recruit talent, no matter who they are, where they live, or what barriers they may face
- Reflect the communities served
- Create spaces that are welcoming, inclusive, and open to positive change.

According to the Offshore Wind Industry Council's 2020 Best Practice Guide - Addressing Gender & Ethnicity in the Offshore Wind Sector, "...helping these companies to improve their practices in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). EDI can be a complex endeavor, but when done in the right way EDI can significantly improve an organization's outputs and deliver a competitive advantage in the attraction, retention, innovation and productivity of staff. Additionally, investing in EDI is the right thing to do." The report goes on to describe fundamental steps that a company should consider when establishing an EDI plan for this industry. They include:

- 1** Consider outreach – for example, work with K-12, community colleges, partner with community groups, outreach activities through faith-based organizations, etc.
- 2** Make it easier to enter/lower barriers to entry – communicate clearly about the skill sets needed, or different pathways to enter the field. Internships, job shadowing, industry days, etc.
- 3** De-bias job descriptions – replace years of experience with skills, remove gender terminology, disclose salary ranges, etc.
- 4** Widen recruitment channels – use market intelligence to decide where to search, look at alternative education providers, retrain/upskill workers from temporary or declining industries, retrain women looking to get back to the workforce.
- 5** Create inclusive employee branding – hire ethnic/minority people and/or women in senior teams, share real life stories of role models in marketing materials, social media, etc.

These fundamental steps along with efforts currently underway with companies and partners support the Commonwealth's mission to ensure that a workforce is in place to meet the growing needs and technological advancements in the clean energy sector goes hand-in-hand with activities currently be developed and ongoing in Virginia. We are committed to providing strategic workforce development solutions designed to help Virginia's economy grow through the cultivation of a robust, inclusive workforce.

Below is a summary of active programs that have proven to be successful in recruiting various subsets of our population into training and development initiatives that are critical in generating, attracting, and retaining skilled workforce. Many of these programs incorporate the EDI concepts mentioned above; those that do not have them in their current focus could be enhanced integrate EDI strategies into their recruitment portfolio. All of them can be replicated throughout the state via strategic partners.

# WOMEN IN SKILLED CAREERS (WISC)

**The Women** in Skilled Careers program creates a pipeline of workers for the skilled trades by providing women with a fast-tracked pathway to learn critical skills, obtain industry-recognized credentials, and interview with companies in the ship repair industry. The program offers 6 training tracks: Maritime Coatings, Maritime Electrical, Maritime Welding, Outside Machinist, Sheet Metal Fabrication, and Pipefitting. Participants complete 4 weeks of workplace readiness and soft skills training followed by 5 weeks of industry-related training. Participants also can earn monetary performance incentives and receive assistance with childcare and transportation costs. WISC gives priority of service to women who are: transitioning out of homeless, domestic violence, and/or human trafficking, women; earning at or below the Federal poverty line; and/or are veterans or military spouses.



## CONNECTING OPPORTUNITIES

**The Hampton Roads Workforce Council** and Elizabeth River Crossings joined forces to create the Connecting Opportunities program — an innovative program that connects local community members to higher paying, more stable opportunities through skilled trade education. Through the program, students receive funding to complete trade programs through Tidewater Community College's Skilled Trades Academy. Participants receive training and employment assistance for in-demand construction and maritime trades such as welding, roofing, National Center for Construction Education Research (NCCER) Core, and more. After training is completed, participants will receive assistance with job placement within the maritime and construction industry. The Connecting Opportunities Program serves members of the ALICE (asset limited, income constrained, employed) community, disconnected youth, and transitioning service members.



## BRIDGE757

Founded in partnership with LISC Hampton Roads and the Urban League of Hampton Roads; Bridge757 offers career training, financial coaching, and benefit enhancement guidance to individuals enrolled in occupational skills training through Financial Opportunity Centers. Participants must be eligible for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs.



## Network2Work

Network2Work is a statewide initiative, with four pilot areas, that connects job seekers to the skills and resources they need to find family-sustaining wages and helps employers find the quality employees they need for their companies.

Network2Work utilizes community-based Connectors, well-respected individuals at the center of social networks in their neighborhoods, local organizations, schools, places of worship, and immigrant communities. Connectors help refer job seekers to the program's staff that help the job seeker chart a resource pathway that leads to securing a job. The network of service providers offer a wide range of resources including training, childcare, transportation, etc.

Network2Work helps employers post their jobs and the skill sets they are looking for. The pathway a job seeker takes helps them obtain the skills, training, and life supports they need to be the perfect fit for the employer's positions.



## Choose 757 Career Conference for Educators

The Choose 757 Career Conference is a two-day program that shares information on in-demand careers of the future and provides educators and guidance counselors with a blueprint on how to best prepare the emerging workforce. Academy participants receive labor market information on the needs of various industries, learn the requirements for entry into careers and gain insight into cutting-edge opportunities currently available in Hampton Roads through behind-scenes tours of local industry. The 2021 conference included a full day of labor market training for the offshore wind industry as well as a tour of the two test turbines off the coast of Virginia Beach.



## Campus757

Campus757 is designed to facilitate students' full immersion into our region through a variety of career development and cultural engagement activities. By helping students fall in love with the 757 and launch their careers here after graduation, Campus757 will help grow a skilled, diverse workforce for local businesses, which in turn will fuel economic growth and opportunity across the region. Pathways to success in this program hinge on the successful accomplishment of two major outcomes: enhancing regional attraction among college students and tethering them to the business community and specific opportunities therein. Retaining a diverse and inclusive workforce is a priority of this program.



## Community Navigation

Key components of cultivating a skilled workforce, particularly one comprised of under-resourced and under-represented populations, is community outreach led by community representatives. The HRWC is working with regional strategic partners to develop a community navigation program that will establish paid positions for neighborhood leaders to help their residents navigate joining the offshore wind industry. Their duties will include community outreach, peer advising, service referrals and related event planning. These positions may be hired directly through the HRWC or subcontracted to a partner organization.



# THE OFFSHORE WIND JOBS FORUM/ROUNDTABLES



**The objective** of these roundtables is to ensure a pipeline of workers who are qualified to meet the needs of the CVOW project and other U.S. East Coast offshore wind projects. We discuss CVOW, workforce needs, the hiring timeframe, and explore pathways to engage veterans, local workers, and underrepresented communities regarding workforce development and employment opportunities.

Panel discussions include representatives from the Offices of Virginia's Chief Workforce Advisor and Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer as well as senior leadership in Dominion Energy's offshore wind team and the Hampton Roads Workforce Council. Information is shared about supply chain and jobs analysis that has been undertaken and about resources available through the Hampton Roads Workforce Council and other service providers.

# ALTERNATIVE ENERGY PROGRAMS AT VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES —



**Solar Ready Vets**, a U.S. Department of Energy program in partnership with Naval Station Norfolk and TCC, offers transitioning military the chance to train for new careers in the burgeoning solar industry. The entire program can be completed in just five weeks.

The founders of SHINE and leadership at Southside Virginia Community College (SVCC) have teamed up to offer an innovative training program in the solar energy field. “The Solar Hands-On Instructional Network of Excellence (SHINE), is a public-private partnership dedicated to building innovative solar career pathways in Virginia. SHINE’s mission is to develop a qualified, diverse, equitable, and inclusive solar workforce, equip Virginians with the tools and knowledge to enter the solar sector with a competitive edge, help solar developers and construction companies source qualified and trained talent, and bridge the gap between solar jobs supply and solar jobs demand.” Their partnership with SVCC has already produced a steady stream of newly trained solar technicians for this expanding industry in Virginia.

Other Virginia Community Colleges like Dabney Lancaster, Virginia Highlands, Patrick Henry, and New River offer green energy certification and degree programs that include courses like: Introduction to Alternative Energy Including Hybrid Systems; Agricultural Alternative Energy Solutions; and Geothermic Applications, to name a few, each introducing concepts for the clean energy sector to a diverse population covering the entire Commonwealth.

One of the tools utilized by the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) that support selected training initiatives mentioned above, is the FastForward program, “a short-term workforce training program to train Virginians for industry credentials and certifications for the most in-demand jobs across the Commonwealth. Run out of Virginia’s Community Colleges, our career training is different from one college to the next because the workforce needs vary from community to community.”

The VCCS also offers financial assistance to obtain certifications via the G3 Tuition Assistance initiative. The program is for students living in Virginia who qualify for “state financial aid with a household income that’s less than \$100,000. G3 is available for select programs in five of Virginia’s most in-demand industries, including Early Childhood Education, Healthcare, Information Technology, Public Safety and Skilled Trades (construction and manufacturing).”



# GAPS IN THE OFFSHORE WIND TALENT PIPELINE

**Early studies** into the potential workforce impact of the Offshore Wind industry indicate that there will be a significant shortfall in skilled trades professionals, particularly in welding, electricians, and maintenance/repair workers. A holistic workforce development initiative can address these shortfalls through occupational skills training, wrap around supportive services, and a comprehensive network of outreach and referral partners.

Building on the best practices of aforementioned established programs and services; the Hampton Roads Workforce Council proposes establishing the Offshore Wind Workforce Pipeline Project.

## OFFSHORE WIND WORKFORCE PIPELINE PROJECT

**This project** will cultivate a skilled trades workforce for the offshore wind industry utilizing a grassroots and collective impact-based outreach/recruitment system. The Hampton Roads Workforce Council (HRWC) will serve as the convenor of training, employment, and support services for this project.

Using regional demographic data, the project will target outreach and recruitment to both communities of color as well as communities experiencing persistent, multi-generational poverty. In addition to partnering with key nonprofits specializing in working with underrepresented communities, such as the Urban League and the Hampton Roads Community Action Program, individuals from the targeted communities will be hired to serve as Community Navigators. Once fully trained in advocacy, resource identification and access, workforce training opportunities, and offshore wind employment data- these Navigators will be deployed back into their home communities to recruit their peers for careers in offshore wind. Additionally, a comprehensive network of service providers will provide a “no-wrong door” approach to connecting under-resourced individuals to the Offshore Wind Workforce Pipeline Project through the Network2Work system.

Once individuals have been connected to the HRWC, a team of dedicated Career Planners will help program applicants identify the appropriate training track, identify and secure tuition funding, complete applications for supportive services, and begin preparing their resumes for post-graduation employment searches. The HRWC Business Services team will provide real-time updates regarding this training initiative to the regional offshore wind employers to better enable them to develop their talent recruitment plans.

It is anticipated that this project would produce 1,000 new offshore wind professionals by 2025 with most of this workforce coming from communities of color and/or communities experiencing persistent, multi-generational poverty.

These are a few examples of successful programs that can be replicated for other regions of the state and modified for other clean industry sectors and would complement the Governors “Build Virginia” effort as well as the outreach efforts of partners like the Virginia Energy Workforce Consortium.

“The energy industry is growing: Several hundred thousand employees will be hired over the next three years. There are a variety of opportunities for candidates with different skillsets and education levels, including those with experience and advanced degrees; those with high school degrees or GEDs who want to begin their career journey through on-the-job training; and those eager to transition from another career.” - Get Into Energy (GIE) website

# ESTABLISHING A PIPELINE FOR THE MOST NEEDED SKILLSETS

– A HAMPTON ROADS EXAMPLE

**The Hampton Roads Workforce Council's** Talent Pipeline Implementation project is a pivotal step in an extensive, regional initiative conceived, designed, and launched to alleviate the 757's long-standing, economically detrimental labor shortage in skilled positions. This effort is building the foundation to generate a much-needed, targeted talent pipeline in Hampton Roads and structuring the program to be a self-sustaining mechanism supporting local business for many years to come.

The HRWC's strategy to solve this growing problem began with dedicated staff recruited and hired specifically to focus upon this issue and lead a regionwide initiative. In 2019 we onboarded a Senior Director of Talent Development; he and the HRWC senior leadership have developed an approach that will generate a world-class talent development system. Our approach constructs a full-time team of personnel to cultivate and leverage relationships throughout the realms of local business, education, government, and civic leadership. This team will systematically launch and execute the broad array of initiatives compiled in the HRWC Talent Toolkit, a living document that incorporates a series of programs, projects, and tasks focused on the singular goal of developing, attracting, and retaining top talent in the 757.

The initiatives include but are far from limited to: employer engagement (specifically working with business to focus on chronically unfilled positions); alignment between higher education curriculum and mandatory job requirements; on-the-job and incumbent worker training; regional apprenticeships; military/veteran outreach; college student engagement and graduate retention; talent portal development; soft skills development; workforce development alliance among local community colleges; out-of-market talent recruitment; and many more.

The program we have designed is vast and ambitious but achievable through a regimented implementation adhering to budgetary scope and the intelligently prioritization of the areas of greatest need. The first stage of constructing an over-arching Talent program that works across industries, benefits all of southeastern Virginia, and remains in place for many years to come was to establish an initial program with a sharp but limited focus on just one industry segment. This will serve in many ways as a proof of concept through which we can enhance the program before expanding across business clusters. The HRWC has targeted the business cluster most in need of the middle skill workers and with whom we already have substantial traction and in-roads as the area of initial primary concentration: the Hampton Roads Maritime Industry.

The team is now comprised of seven (7) full-time employees. For the local maritime industry, we are performing the six phases of the Talent Pipeline Management methodology: Organize for Employer Leadership and Collaboration; Project Critical Job Demand; Align and Communicate Job Requirements; Analyze Talent Supply; Build Talent Supply Chains; Engage in Continuous Improvement and Resiliency Planning. At the same time, we have launched Campus757, described above, as we work to retain college graduates here in the region.

The Talent Division of the organization is still in its formative stages but with good early progress and a path forward that projects to be an influential agent for positive change in regional talent development.





## STATEWIDE INITIATIVE

COMPREHENSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE REEMPLOYMENT THROUGH  
EQUITABLE RECOVERY (CAREER) NATIONAL DISLOCATED WORKER GRANT

**“As more** Americans rejoin the labor force and economy continues its recovery, we are acting now to invest in the public workforce system to advance strategies critical to ensuring an equitable national recovery in which more workers transition to suitable, safe, good-paying work and employers’ businesses return stronger than before,” said Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Employment Training Suzi LeVine.

To support this effort, the fourteen workforce development boards serving all of Virginia recently was awarded a \$1.5 million CAREER grant to support activities that will provide a pathway for the long-term unemployed and historically marginalized populations to acquire skills, earn credentials, and get hired quickly, while earning a living, sustainable wage and receiving full employment benefits. Many of these jobs can and will be directly related to Clean Industries in different areas of the Commonwealth. To ensure employment stability, after-care through frequent case management will be offered until employment stability is established. Participants will also be exposed to strategies on “how to keep a job” and partake in a financial literacy program that addresses debt, spending and saving. Participants will be required to establish financial goals as a component of the program as well as undergo soft-skills training.

Providing wrap-around services to the participant to address daily living needs during the training program makes this program unique. Co-enrollment in supportive service elements with community partners will be utilized whenever possible to further extend the supportive service resources.

Virginia’s workforce development boards, and their strategic partners, have seen the need to assist those directly affected by the pandemic, and other economic forces, and have come together to pursue a grant that will help them transition to a more sustainable career path. These are the types of opportunities and efforts that will support our workforce needs now and into the future for our Clean Industries sector throughout the Commonwealth.

# BOTTOM LINE

**The clean** energy industry in Virginia is evolving at a quick pace, be it solar or wind, onshore or offshore, all are vital to the continuing growth of this clean energy effort. This growth will provide opportunities for businesses, new and existing, in the Commonwealth as well as create a new path for prosperity for a diverse sector of Virginians. We need to ensure that we are looking outside of the normal talent pools to meet these workforce needs and to make certain that we are engaging multiple community organizations, employers, and training providers to retain and attract our diverse communities to support this electrifying and burgeoning energy sector in Virginia. Providing state support, recognition, and utilization of the Talent Pipeline and CAREER program efforts with a focus on offshore wind and the clean energy sector presents a pathway to a model workforce development platform.



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