



Mount Rogers Region



A different side of Virginia



Regional Economic Development Plan

2016 - 2019



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Stronger Economies Together Initiative

USDA Rural Development launched the Stronger Economies Together (SET) in 2009 in **collaboration with the nation's Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDC) and their** land-grant university partners. **SET's purpose** is to strengthen the capacity of communities in rural America to work together in developing and implementing an economic development blueprint that strategically builds on the current and emerging economic strengths of their region. Important elements of the Stronger Economies Together program will build collaboration between communities in a **region, provide economic analyses tailored to help capture the region's current** or emerging clusters and comparative economic advantages and supported by technical assistance provided by land-grant university extension systems to the regions over a period of several months including the SET training.

The Mount Rogers Planning District Commission (MRPDC), **the region's Economic Development District (EDD)** as recognized by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and the Local Development District (LDD) as recognized by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), applied for the region to be accepted as a SET region in May 2015. As an EDD, the MRPDC directs and **updates the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and felt that the** CEDS plan could be maximized by layering it with the economic development blueprint developed through the SET process. The MRPDC saw SET participation as an avenue to receive additional guidance and technical assistance—namely, this was an opportunity to synchronize local and regional efforts to develop a more cohesive, overarching plan for the Mount Rogers Region.

The MRPDC was notified of its acceptance as a SET region in August 2015 and began working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) in September to organize the **initiative's sessions and membership**. As a leadership and planning initiative, SET brought leaders from the Mount Rogers Region together to develop and implement an economic development blueprint. Approximately 60 individuals from the region participated throughout the SET process beginning in October with the Mount Rogers Regional forum where the group conducted an in-depth SWOT analysis. From December 2015 to May 2016, meetings and planning sessions were held and the group determined its plan of work.

Executive Summary

Steeped in rich musical, culture, and natural history, **Appalachian Virginia's Mount Rogers Region** is using these assets to a change the way the region perceives economic development and growth. This Regional Economic Development Plan ties in with other regional plans and will serve as a roadmap for the future economic development efforts of the Mount Rogers Region.

Through the SET process, key regional stakeholders embraced a spirit of regionalism to support this initiative. Implementing the action items described within this document will strengthen the ability of the Mount Rogers Region to secure its economic future and position it as a competitive region. This plan reflects a five module planning process with active participation from business, civic, and community leaders. Significant research and discussions have led to the development of this plan.

During the planning process, the group identified three major areas of focus for the region: **tourism, agribusiness, and manufacturing**. **The region's natural** and cultural assets, including the Appalachian Trail, Creeper Trail, Crooked Road, Grayson Highlands State Park, and the Jefferson National Forest are an attraction to the area that bring thousands of visitors each year. Continuing with those natural assets, **the region's culture is** also largely dependent on its agriculture and related industries, and several of its counties are among the top beef cattle and sheep producing counties in the state. Manufacturing is central to the region as twelve **of the region's 50 largest** employers are manufacturers and this industry continues to have some of the highest wages within the region.

To create the most productive environment to prepare the SET plan, SET participants were asked to divide into groups based on their areas of expertise and it was apparent from early on that each group had its own unique dynamic and way of functioning. The smaller subgroup division allowed each area to work within its own culture and develop, or expand upon, the relationships needed to see these efforts through to fruition. The SET plan builds upon the strengths within each group, allowing the plan to be structured in way that it is the most effective for each group.

To drive economic development in the region over the coming years, the three cluster groups developed SMART goals that were refined over the course of several months before being included in the final SET plan. These goals include:

Tourism

- Collectively deploy the shared SWVA brand
- Implement a web-based hospitality training program
- Secure funding to grow and attract new tourism businesses.
- Increase local business sourcing by aligning local resources with regional tourism cluster needs.

Agribusiness



A different side of Virginia

- Advance economic opportunities in agriculture, food, and natural resources
- Equip the region's youth and adults for employment in the agribusiness industry

Manufacturing

- Create access to high quality regional data
- Develop a coordinated, regionally funded marketing strategy to attract new manufacturers
- Cultivate regional linkages between workforce initiatives
- Coordinate effective plan to address workforce turnover/retention in manufacturing

There are several items that apply in more than one focus area and once they are achieved in one area, there may be noted impacts in another area. Notably, any developments in regional workforce linkages will affect the entirety of the SET plan.

Based on regional data and trends, the Mount Rogers Region Economic Development Plan will serve as the roadmap for future regional economic development efforts. One of the most important goals of the SET group was to build on efforts currently underway in the region, avoiding duplication of efforts. The Mount Rogers Initiative is a tourism initiative put in place to build a regional tourism brand, which will be rolled out in one section of this plan. Additionally, the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board (WDB) began facilitation of a manufacturing Sector Strategy during the same timeframe as the SET process and the team is working closely with the WDB to align the SET plan with the Sector Strategy. Virginia Cooperative Extension is working to develop the New River Hill Farm as an agricultural and natural resources laboratory. SET efforts will tie in with current plans for New River Hill Farm and help implement it as a regional project, setting the stage for regional resource sharing.

Regional Collaboration

The Mount Rogers Regional Economic Development Plan has buy-in from key decision makers in the region including each of the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission member localities—the counties of Bland, Carroll, Grayson, Smyth, Washington and Wythe, the independent cities of Bristol and Galax, and the towns of Abingdon, Chilhowie, Damascus, Fries, Glade Spring, Hillsville, Independence, Marion, Rural Retreat, Saltville, Troutdale, and Wytheville. Local and regional development authorities, non-profits, and various others helped develop the plan and will be instrumental in its implementation.

The members of the regional SET Steering Committee submitted support letters and participated in SET sessions. They helped guide the larger group sessions, developed actions for implementing the goals established in the program, and helped review and edit plan drafts.

Region Description



The Mount Rogers Region encompasses Washington, Smyth, Grayson, Bland, Wythe, and Carroll counties and the independent cities of Bristol and Galax. This geographical span was selected in 1969 as Planning District 3, or the Mount Rogers Planning District (MRPD). While each jurisdiction in the district retains its individual character, they do share many common features. All of the jurisdictions are similar in that the region is mountainous. The region is divided into two physiographic provinces: the Blue Ridge Province and the Ridge and Valley Province. The localities have a long history of working together and **leaders meet monthly at the MRPDC's executive committee meeting.**



Many regional cooperatives and partnerships exist throughout the MRPDC that assist with a variety of regional planning topics including economy, transportation, tourism, education, and health care. The Mount Rogers Region is the western half of the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board and is also classified as **Virginia's Industrial Advancement Alliance (VIAA)**, an economic development partnership. The localities are interdependent with regard to labor exchange (i.e. commuting patterns), retail trade, shared problems, and shared opportunities. The region is traversed by Interstates 81 and 77, which intersect in, and run concurrently through, Wythe County. Grayson County is the only locality in the area without immediate access to a major interstate.

The physical environment is largely unspoiled, and may be a key factor in stimulation of regional economic vitality. The region is classified as rural and has traditionally been an agricultural, manufacturing, and coal supply chain. The natural barriers that the region has coped with, historically, have resulted in long-lasting infrastructure, income, and employment effects. Thus, the region is concerned with the availability of jobs, finding profitable new and alternative agricultural products and markets, the development of cultural and recreational tourism, and developing cross-sector economic linkages, especially those that can take advantage of the **region's natural resources in sustainable, non-consumptive ways.**

Despite the fact that the district has struggled with economic and infrastructure problems (such as water, sewer, roads, industrial sites, high development cost of land due to topography), significant opportunities for economic development do exist. Advanced telecommunications networks, such as the Wired Road in Carroll and Grayson counties and the City of Galax, are **opening the region's small communities to high-tech business that attracted by the region's low costs of living, scenic beauty, recreational opportunities, and relative absence of crime, pollution, traffic congestion, and other problems that characterize urban metro areas.** Additionally, localities such as Bland County are utilizing the most up-to-date technologies, such as using wireless networks instead of fiber, to overcome the geographical challenges of the region.

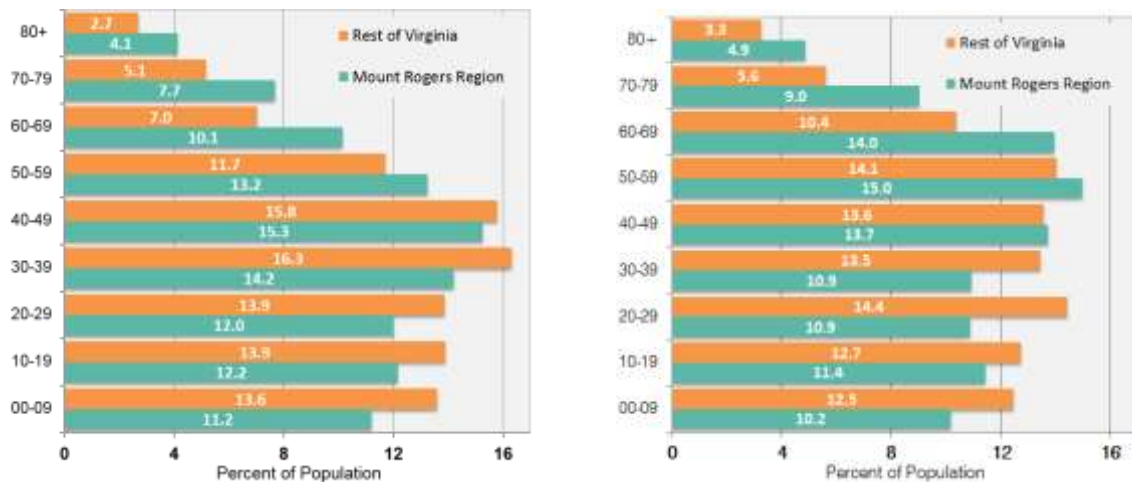
The most important asset in the Mount Rogers region is the workforce. To be competitive, the region must ensure that the educational and training levels are raised to meet technological and information advances. Additionally, the region must continue to push for transportation access improvements and maintain a competitive cost of doing business.

Evidence Basis for Plan

Regional Demographic Data

Population

With an estimated population of 192,407 in 2014, one of the most readily apparent issues within the Mount Rogers Region is the aging population, which is solidly higher than the rest of the Commonwealth. The area has a noticeable lack of population in the areas of 20-29 and 30-39, which **solidifies the group's assertion that we have a talent attraction and "brain drain" issue** where the younger generation is leaving the area after reaching their maturity. In the 14 years from the 2000 Census to the most recently available population estimate, 2014, the percentage of the population under the age of 50 dropped by 7.8%, with 4.4% of that population change being in the 20-29 and 30-39 age ranges.



i. Population Age Structure 2000 (left) and 2014 (right), prepared by Purdue University

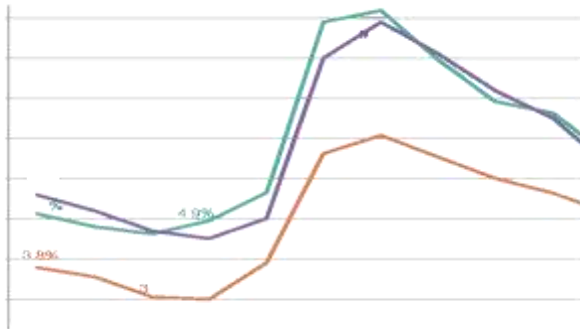
Poverty and Unemployment

The Mount Rogers Region's poverty rate rose sharply from 2003 to 2008, and while it has continued to rise, the amount of change from 2008 to 2013 was slower. However, despite this slow down, poverty in 2013 was 16.7%, sharply higher than the Commonwealth's rate of 11.7%.

Despite the fact that poverty rates have continued to rise since 2008, after unemployment rates hit their highest in 2009-10 they had leveled out to almost pre-Recession rates by 2014. These figures in combination suggest the possible underemployment of area residents.

	2003	2008	2013
Total Population in Poverty	13.8%	16.1%	16.7%
Minors (Age 0-17) in Poverty	21.5%	23.2%	25.3%
Real Median Household Income* (\$ 2013)	\$40,369	\$39,902	\$38,683

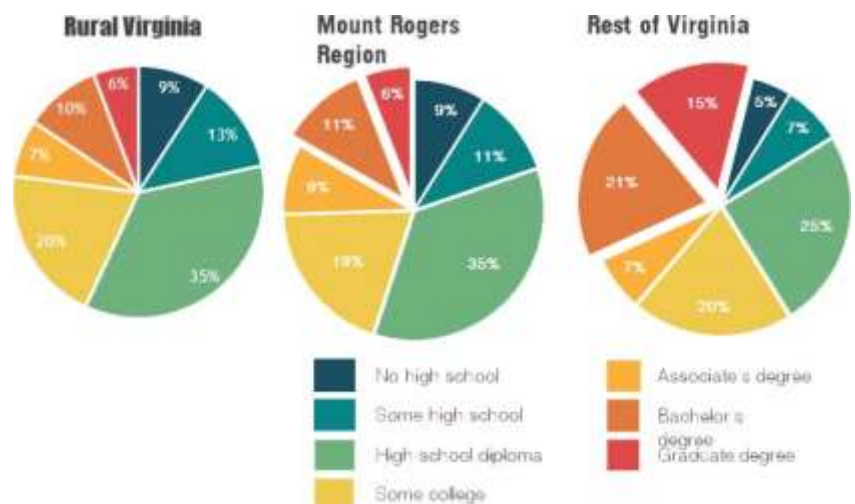
ii. Poverty and Median Income, prepared by Purdue University



iii. Regional Unemployment 2004 – 2014, prepared by Purdue University

Educational Attainment

With 17% of the population having a bachelor's degree or higher, the Mount Rogers Region has a lower education attainment rate than the rest of the Commonwealth. However, when compared to rural Virginia as a whole, the region's rate is actually only slightly higher than rural rate of 16% for a bachelor's or higher and the region's percentages are very representative of rural Virginia.



iv. Educational Attainment, Prepared by Purdue University

Regional Economic Data

Through the SET process, regional leaders analyzed the region's industry cluster data and identified mature, transforming, emerging, and Star clusters within the region. This analysis was used to help determine the focus clusters to be targeted with the Mount Rogers Region Economic Development Plan. Clusters that are more concentrated and growing in the region are labeled as star clusters, while mature clusters are those within the region that are concentrated but are experiencing negative growth. Agribusiness and several areas of manufacturing were both identified as star clusters, while the tourism cluster was identified as transforming. Star clusters in the region included agribusiness and food processing and various areas of manufacturing, such as transportation equipment manufacturing and primary metal manufacturing.

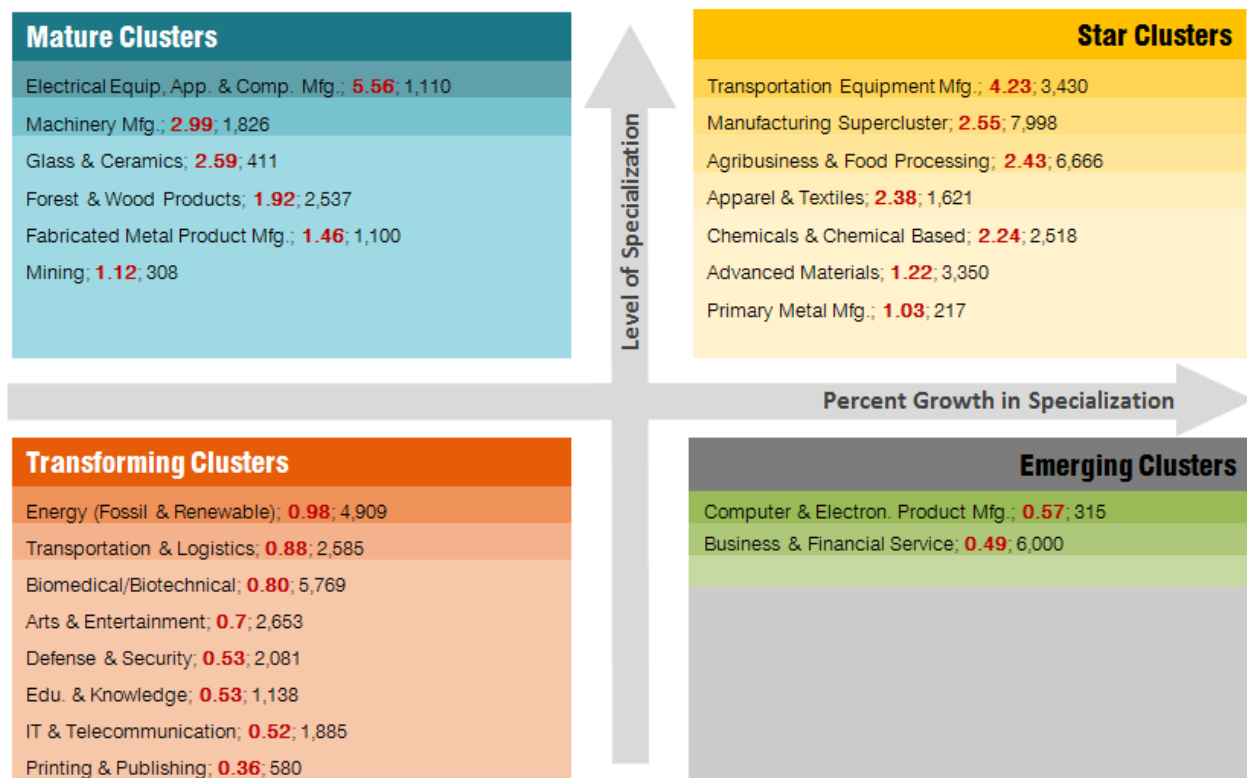
Industry Cluster Analysis Explanation

Emerging (bottom right): Contains industry clusters that are underrepresented in the region (low Location Quotient (LQ)) but are growing. *Weak but advancing*

Stars (top right): Contains industry clusters that more concentrated in the region (LQ over 1) and are growing. *Strong and advancing*

Mature (top left): Contains industry clusters that are more concentrated in the region (LQ over 1) but are decreasing or declining (job losses). *Strong but Declining*

Transforming (bottom left): Contains industry clusters that are underrepresented in the region (low LQ) and are also decreasing or declining (job losses). *Weak and declining*

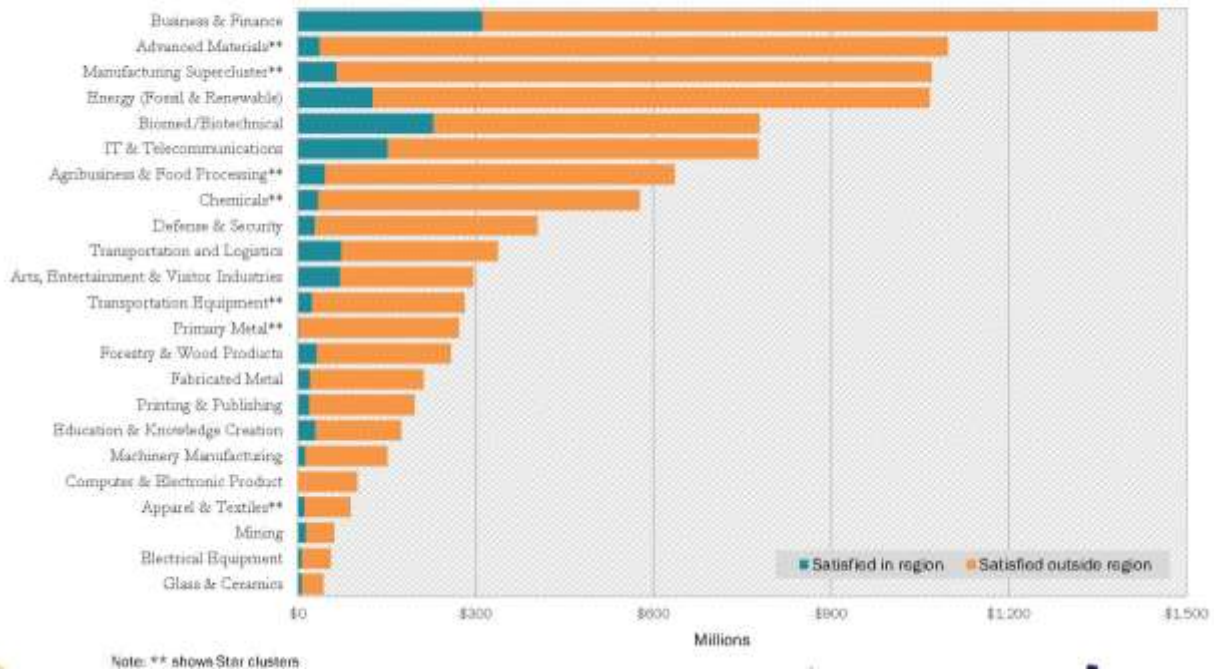


v: Mount Rogers Region Industry Cluster Analysis, prepared by Purdue University

As part of the analysis, a review was conducted on each cluster's leakages and the potential for capturing new market share (See Figure vi.). The review encouraged consideration of all the suppliers and producers that bring a product or service into existence and where the possibility for

new development exists. The analysis showed large amounts of leakages in the areas of manufacturing, agribusiness, and tourism (Arts & Entertainment) and helped the group chose those clusters as their focus for the SET plan. Despite the tourism cluster's label of transforming, the leakages analysis results and feedback from participants regarding major regional projects and initiatives in the cluster, helped lead the group to choose it as a regional focus.

Industry Clusters: Leakages Regional requirements, 2013



vi. Industry Cluster Leakages, 2013

Strengths and Assets

At the Civic Forum, attendees cataloged the strengths and challenges of the region and then used these to develop regional opportunities. These strengths and weaknesses were frequently revisited as the planning process continued and many of the noted opportunities can be found within the goals of each subgroup.

Many quality of life factors were listed as strengths including the strong sense of community, low cost of living, and access to educational opportunities. Additional strengths in the region focused on the cultural and natural resources and discussion centered the ways that we can leverage those for our economic benefit, including the regional trends in and push for cultural and natural resources tourism and recreation. The region's extensive agricultural and manufacturing industries were detailed at great length. From this discussion, it was apparent early on that tourism, manufacturing, and agribusiness would have great influence on the region's economic development plan.

Strengths:

- Cultural/natural resources related to recreation and eco-tourism, including arts
- Variety of organizations and agencies offering resources to support area
- Quality of life with low cost of living
- Strong sense of community with passionate individuals
- Local and resilient workforce with strong work ethic
- Utility infrastructure is second to none
- Accessibility related to geographic area
- Educational opportunities
- Agricultural industry is growing especially around local foods systems

The Mount Rogers Region is blessed with a multitude of assets at its disposal, which the region has used as an economic driver for many of its recent regional plans. Regional assets committed to help support the SET plan include an immense array of regional natural assets, such as the state parks within the region: Hungry Mother, Grayson Highlands, and New River Trail. Strong cultural ties **draw their roots from the Appalachian culture, with events such as the Galax's Old Fiddlers' Convention and the Bristol Rhythm & Roots Reunion music festival taking center stage.**

The region's human capital is supported by strong relationships built within the K-12 and secondary education, as well as strong career and technical education programs and a top-tier workforce development structure. The strong working relationships and networks within K-12 education, the community college system, and workforce development allows the address the needs of the workforce and help prepare individuals for the next step in their career.

Social capital in the region draws its strength both from long-time residents and from "imports" who have fallen in love with the region and decided to make it their home. One such example of **this is in the Town of Damascus where the Damascus Business Group's most active members are** individuals who have visited the area and then moved here to live and open businesses. These individuals and others like them region-wide who have opened breweries, restaurants, lodging establishments, and outfitters are a true asset for positive change, because they see the potential for the region to develop, while remaining true to its culture and retaining its natural assets.

Challenges and Related Strategies

When attendees were asked to focus on the challenges in the region, the answers were much broader than the answers for strengths. In addition, due to various factors, including geographic diversity of the region, some of the challenges noted in one county may have been strengths in another (e.g. access to major roads or internet). One topic that was the focus of much discussion over the course of the project was the stigma attached to technical education and to "just" having a two-year-degree, despite the fact that many of the employers in our region need employees with technical skills and education.

One of the region's major barriers is its population pyramid structure, showing an aging regional population. With a lower than average population in the working age brackets, the region may have difficulty in the future maintaining itself because of the overrepresentation in the elderly population and the demands that this population makes upon regional economic resources. The region is looking to combat the out-migration of its younger population with goals focused around expanded education opportunities for both youth and the current workforce. Many of these strategies are shown in the SET plans of work, which show various methods of targeting the younger workforce across the region's diverse cluster groups.

Challenges:

- Lack of unified approach has created an overlap in planning and access to resources
- **Stigma of technical education or obtaining "just" a two-year degree**
- Inability of region to accept reality and/or change
- **Overcoming "the nothing to do" mentality (both amenities and job opportunities)**
- Need for talent attraction
- Connecting the dots between workforce and education (or interest and skills to jobs)
- **Moving/aging populations creates a "brain drain" with talent leaving the region**
- Aging population impacts the need for health care workers
- Access to education (educational opportunities are available but not accessible to everyone)
- Workforce issues including underemployment and availability of skilled workers
- Plant/company closures
- Lack of high paying jobs
- Poverty still exists and families are locked into it
- Lack of diversity of population impacts the development of a robust economy - region must become more inclusive and welcoming
- Lack of access to transportation and internet in remote areas
- Wi-Fi and cell services availability affects information infrastructure

Regional Opportunities

After discussion of strengths and weaknesses at the Civic Forum, participants were asked what opportunities could help make the Mount Rogers region more vibrant. The group placed the opportunities into six major categories, which were communication/network, workforce/education, awareness/education, entrepreneurship, economic strategies, and rebranding region. These opportunities were often the focus of discussion for SET meetings and many of them can be noted in the region's goals, such as the agribusiness group's education goals, the manufacturing group's workforce goals, and the tourism group's entrepreneurship goals.

Participants were instructed to select one of the categories of "opportunities" that should be a priority. The overwhelming choice of this exercise, with over half of the participants choosing it, was the workforce/education category. The top areas of opportunities in the region included

workforce/education, awareness education, entrepreneurship, and rebranding the region, all of which can be seen in the SET plan goals.

Communication/Network

- Increase coordination between agencies—using initiatives like SET
- Increase dialog among stakeholders
- Workforce Development and economic development entities work collaboratively and meet quarterly
- Leadership/facilitation—>enhance ways to work together
- Models of cooperation

Workforce/Education

- Linking with the Sector Strategy Initiative
- Changing perception of technical education
- Develop workforce to meet current and emerging careers
- Match education with current and future vocational employment needs
- Connect K-12 education system with workforce pipeline

Awareness/Education

- Educate K-12 students about region and opportunities
- Educate parents and teachers to funnel students in the right direction

Entrepreneurship

- Strong correlation between technical skills and entrepreneurship
- Growth from within is vital requiring the region to increase the support to entrepreneurship and increase the marketing skills as well as the marketing region
- Current and future jobs require technical training requiring the region to focus increasing the educational attainment of those who only hold a high school diploma

Economic Strategies

- Double down on agriculture—keep locally grown products local
- Manufacture outdoor recreation products for outfitters

Regional Rebrand

- Rebrand and correct the stereotypes both internally and externally associated with Appalachia.

When determining the plans of work, the group often pulled back to strengths, challenges, and opportunities addressed at the Civic Forum and determined those that they would like to capitalize upon. This method also pulled the **group's** focus back to one of the major takeaways from the Mount Rogers Region Civic Forum: our goals are interdependent. Regardless of different agencies, missions, or focus areas, regional leaders all generally want the same thing and are working toward the same type of goals. There may be a slightly different focus, but many goals across the

region are interconnected. While one area/agency may have good short-term outcomes, in order for the region to succeed in the long-term, it must work together to create lasting solutions. While regional leaders highlight that many of **the region's** greatest strengths revolve around its attractiveness regarding natural/cultural assets and way of life, they know that the region cannot rely on tourism as its main industry. What leaders can focus on as a region is using its tourism industry to spur business and entrepreneur growth. Through regional branding and marketing efforts for our assets we can improve the way the outside world views our region and we can change the way residents perceive it, prompting the younger demographic to understand that this is a region worthy of investing their time, efforts, and futures. This improved perception of the quality of life in our region not only affects individuals, it also changes the way companies view our region and may be a determining factor in their willingness to locate or stay within the region.

Industry Cluster Focus

After reviewing data compiled by United States Department of Agriculture, Purdue University, and Virginia Tech, the group decided on the cluster focus areas of tourism, manufacturing, and agribusiness. The region had originally considered the fourth focus area of health care, but, due to extenuating circumstances, including a preliminary merger negotiations between service providers in a great part of the region, the SET group was unable to garner the human capital deemed necessary to develop strong and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-framed) goals, so it was decided to dissolve the health care group in order to devote efforts toward strengthening the other cluster.

One of the main goals of the Mount Rogers Region Stronger Economies Together (SET) initiative was to avoid duplication of efforts and to capitalize on and strengthen projects already in progress. There are a variety of these efforts including the Mount Rogers Regional Initiative, a tourism and branding-focused initiative, and Appalachian Spring, an outdoor recreation initiative focused on highlighting **and marketing the region's natural assets**. The **New River/Mount Rogers Sector Strategy**, facilitated by the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board, is based upon the manufacturing cluster in the region and is serving as the model for sector strategies in workforce development areas throughout the state. The Sector Strategy is being developed and implemented based on input provided by the regional businesses and industry as to what are their critical workforce needs.

The SET group frequently noted that there are several areas that serve as support within the region and do not align with only any single industry. These include education, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, and utilities. While some of these areas are noted in goals, others are not addressed in the SET plan, as they are part of other plans and the group wanted to avoid duplication. One example of this is that internet access is vital to the **area's growth and development**. **Although the SET goals do not specifically address the regional need for broadband expansion**, the SET group will provide assistance and support to other agencies with broadband/wireless initiatives already in place, such as the Wired Road Authority and the Bland Wireless Authority. The MRPDC is actively

involved in all of the previously mentioned initiatives and will update the group on the progress of each of these initiatives quarterly.

Regional Economic Goals

Through assistance provided by the state and national SET teams, the Mount Rogers Region's SET plan is evidence-based, relevant to the region, and realistic. The plan engages the resources in the communities and relies on collaboration to leverage support and reduce duplication in developing economic initiatives. The community capitals upon which strong economies are built are incorporated into the plan, capitalizing on the built infrastructure, political will, natural and cultural assets, social and human resources, and financial options of the region.

Based upon input from the **Mount Rogers Region's Stronger Economies Together (SET)** participants, coupled with the regional economic and demographic data and resources explored through SET, the following goals were selected for the Mount Rogers Region:

Tourism

Collectively deploy the shared SWVA brand	Secure funding to grow and attract new tourism businesses.	Implement a hospitality training program	Increase local business sourcing by aligning local resources with regional tourism cluster needs.
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Agribusiness

Advance economic opportunities in agriculture, food, and natural resources	Equip the region's youth and adults for employment in the agribusiness industry
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Manufacturing

Create access to high quality regional data	Develop a Coordinated, Regionally Funded Marketing Strategy to attract new manufacturers	Cultivate Regional Linkages Between Workforce Initiatives	Coordinate effective plan to address workforce turnover/retention in manufacturing
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Tourism

The Mount Rogers Region has a very strong tourism cluster, as there are several initiatives on going in the region, including the rebranding of the region as ["The Other Side of Virginia"](#) (See logo, right, and Appendix B – Tourism for additional branding materials). This group is established and has worked with [Arnett Muldrow & Associates](#) to develop a regional branding plan that will be implemented as part of the SET plan.



Tourism in the Mount Rogers Region is a rapidly growing industry with, travel expenditures from 2004 to 2014 increasing by 48% from \$282.6 million to \$418.9 million. Local travel related tax revenues increased by 33% from \$8.35 million to \$11.1 million; state travel related tax revenues increased by 26% from \$14.8 million to \$18.7 million. During that same period, overall employment in Mount Rogers PDC area decreased by 5.5%, but employment in the Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food service industry cluster, employment increased by 20.8%. According to a report from VTC, travel employment in the Mount Rogers area was 3,867 in 2014. The state parks within the Mount Rogers PDC (Grayson Highlands, Hungry Mother, New River Trail) had an attendance of 1,385,112 with economic impact of \$28,150,098 in 2014.

According to a survey completed during the SET process, tourism leaders in the region state that Outdoor recreation and entertainment are the primary reasons visitors travel to the Mount Rogers area. Visitors to the region primarily come from other areas in Virginia and its neighboring and nearby states: North Carolina, Tennessee, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, with the most common travel party origin being North Carolina (See Figure vii). Top organizational priorities collected from the survey are: increased tourism funding for better marketing campaigns; more tourism related businesses or attractions; more or higher quality dining and lodging opportunities; and more networking among tourism related businesses and attractions. The top three needs for businesses are marketing, customer service training, and partnerships—all areas addressed with the SET initiative.

Top Five Travel Party Origin

1. North Carolina
2. Virginia
3. Tennessee
4. Ohio
5. Pennsylvania



Please list the states of origin for the travelers visiting your community. Please rank the top five states in order of visitation with #1 being the top state where travelers are coming from. Please note that your community refers to the area of interest represented by you, your employer, or organization. For example, the community for businesses such as attractions, hotels, restaurants, etc. might be the local city/county/town where the business is located, while the community for regional or state organizations will be a defined region or the state overall, respectively.



vii: Tourism Travel Party Origin

The tourism industry within the Mount Rogers Region should not be thought of something that simply brings in visitors; tourism efforts allow the local population to stay in their hometowns by providing them with entrepreneurial opportunities that might otherwise be nonexistent. Marketing and branding efforts keep our region fresh and, while they do draw in visitors, they show locals a different side of the area and instill regional and community pride. Our tourism industry does not just showcase that Southwest Virginia is an exciting place to visit; it emphasizes that it is **a great place to build a life**. The tourism group's focus on marketing the quality of life in the region holistically assists the SET plan and all of its focus groups.

Agribusiness

Mount Rogers Planning District stakeholders agree that the Agribusiness industry segment is **more broad than the traditional definitions of "agriculture" and "agribusiness"**. Clearly defining these terms is imperative to capture the scope of work as the Agribusiness Plan of Action is formalized. From henceforth throughout this document, **"agriculture" will include the production of all food, raw natural fiber and forest products. "Agribusiness" will be defined as all businesses engaged in the supply chain of food, fiber and forest products from the raw materials to final consumer.** Such enterprises include, but are not limited to, farms, sawmills, grocery outlets, value-added processing, aggregation and distribution, farmers markets, bottling, etc of such goods.

Agribusiness is a star cluster within the Mount Rogers Region, indicating that it is strong and positioned for advancement. With 6,666 jobs in the industry cluster region-wide, **the region's**



Location Quotient for agribusiness and food processing is 2.43 meaning there are nearly 2.5 times more jobs in the cluster in the region than the national average. Leakage data from the cluster indicates that a significant amount of the materials and services to support the industry are produced outside of the region. Exempting Bland County (which is approximately 33% National Forest and 33% farm land), every county in the region was over 45% farm land, compared to the US percentage of 41%.

Having those 6,666 jobs spread out over the 5,452 farms (as of the 2012 Census of Agriculture) and over 91% of those farms having sales of less than \$100,000, shows that the Mount Rogers **Region's farms are small and** generally supporting solely one individual or family. Oftentimes these farms are second jobs, but with a total farm sales of over \$270 million in 2012, they are a very important part of the economy and culture of the region. The direct and total economic impact of agriculture and forestry in the region in 2011 was over \$1.62 billion.

Traditionally, the agribusiness sector, much like its producers themselves, has been an independent and very self-reliant group. The SET group is working to change the culture within the region to create more regionalized thinking and projects that capitalize on the assets of each locality for the good of the region as a whole. Due to this need for a culture shift, the group has been conservative in creating what they consider realistic and attainable goals. The group feels that the project will have its greatest hurdles in the beginning of the project with getting buy-in and participation from groups. Much like the successes within the tourism sector, once a revitalized and strengthened regional coalition has been established, the future of regional efforts will be more productive and easier to implement.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing is another star cluster within the region and with 7,998 jobs in the industry cluster in the region, the Location Quotient for manufacturing is 2.55 meaning there are over 2.5 times more jobs in the cluster in the region than the national average. Between 2009 and 2014, there was a 3% increase in overall manufacturing employment in the region from 14,286 to 14,666. State manufacturing employment decreased 2.1% in the same time frame. The share-shift analysis shows that seven industries in the manufacturing supercluster experienced positive regional performance from 2000 to 2014, outpacing national employment figures. Those industries are: truck trailer manufacturing, motor vehicle steering and suspension components manufacturing, plate work manufacturing, mining machinery and equipment manufacturing, travel trailer and camper manufacturing, motor vehicle gasoline engine and engine parts manufacturing

There is significant leakage within the manufacturing industry with over \$1.07 billion in expenditures dedicated to the manufacturing supercluster—93% of which are satisfied outside of the region. Only \$65 million of input expenditures are spent within the region.

The SET manufacturing cluster group is in the midst of transition as new leadership in several localities and agencies is creating a culture of regionalism with leaders understanding and

embracing the need to work together for larger, more regionalized successes rather than pitting themselves against each other for smaller, localized gains. This new leadership is knowledgeable in the current business atmosphere and forward-thinking in its drive to work in the present to create regionalized future solutions.

The group's goals focus around addressing the workforce needs of current manufacturers to retain them in our area and ensure they have a stable workforce, allowing us build that workforce up and work toward attracting new manufacturers to the region. Existing manufacturers sometimes struggle to find well-suited candidates for their opens positions and have expressed concern about bringing in additional companies before we have strengthened our regional workforce pool.

Regional Economic Development Plan

The Mount Rogers Regional Economic Development Plan is outlined in the following tables, which show the in-depth strategies, processes, and steps needed for each of these goals to be successful. Each subgroup will use the plan they created as a guide to implementation of the SET initiative.

All **"Key Contact/ Convener"** sections list the person who is responsible for coordinating this strategy and we are aware that personnel may change. For more information regarding our procedures, please see the Succession Plan (page 36). The Mount Rogers Region strives to make this a usable plan, thus, any changes in personnel will be updated in the document. We will also be **updating each strategy's "Progress Status" as new updates become available. To ensure that you have the most recent copy of this plan, please check the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission SET webpage (<http://www.mrpdc.org/set.htm>) or contact Rocky Warren at rwarren@mrpdc.org or (276) 783-5103.**

Tourism

GOAL 1: Collectively deploy the shared SWVA brand.

The Mount Rogers regional tourism brand was developed through a 2015 Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development grant and is now ready for deployment in the region as a coordinating symbol. With a fully deployed regional tourism brand, Mount Rogers will become a vibrant, recognizable tourist destination where all its natural and creative resources are celebrated, local entrepreneurs are profitable, and tax revenues from tourism are increased.

Objective A: Introduce the regional brand to the region's tourism entrepreneurs by December 2016 to grow awareness of Southwest Virginia as visitor destination and a region of choice for investment.

Strategy	Responsibility	Key Contact/ Convener	Timeline	Activity Outcome/ Output Measurements	Progress Status
<p>Compile a database of brand evangelists.</p> <p>*Refer to SWVA database</p>	<p>Mount Rogers Planning District (MRPDC), with support from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation • Chambers • Main Street Directors • Tourism Officials • Town and City Managers (staff) • MySWVAopportunity 	<p>Aaron Sizemore (MRPDC)</p>	<p>Baseline by June 2016 with updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 2016 • June 2017 • November 2017 • June 2018 • November 2018 	<p>The baseline data (inventory of businesses will not be exhaustive. The goal is to continue to grow the tally and the number of tourism businesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed inventory • Updated semiannually • Growth of 10% by June 2017 • Growth of 10% by November 2017 	<p>The inventory has been started and is currently under development.</p>
<p>Establish a coordinated communication network for Mount Rogers Regional Brand Partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRPDC with support from the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aaron Sizemore (MRPDC) will develop the communication tools 	<p>First Newsletter out in Fall 2016 with seasonal updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall 2017-2018 	<p>Newsletter template will be developed and reviewed for overall tourism business message and content of first issue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set baseline of opens and click throughs. • Measure opens and click throughs to assess the nature of useable information. • Grow average opens and click-throughs by 10 % annually 	
<p>Develop and deploy Brand Partner menu with demonstrated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jenna Wagner (CHF Marketing Director) with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2016: menu developed of 	<p>A menu of options will present the brand as an "opt in at your comfort level"</p>	<p>10 projects shared by communities</p>

participation by community and business partners		support from Becky Nave (VTC)	brand partner options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer 2016: menu presented through newsletter • Ongoing: menu tracked for implementation • Ongoing: menu added to with examples from the community 	strategy with clear ideas for simple alignment <p>By December 2016 at least 10 of the 100 strategies will have been deployed.</p> <p>By December 2017, at least 30 of the 100 strategies will have been deployed.</p> <p>By December 2018, at least 50 of the 100 strategies will have been deployed.</p>	have been established
Develop a one page brand partner sheet to communicate how to be a brand partner and why to be a brand partner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation with support from Virginia Tourism Corporation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jenna Wagner with support from Becky Nave 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft developed by MAY 2016 • Revision by June 2016 with inclusion on brandswva.com • Summer 2016: Brand partner sheet presented through newsletter 	A one page sheet will communicate the history and value of regional collaboration in the presentation of a positive united identity that supports, supplements, and connects existing local identities, while welcoming new participants as brand partners.	The brand partner sheet is being distributed to regional partners.
Distribute branding materials throughout the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation via www.brandswva.com • Mount Rogers Planning District Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jenna Wagner with support from Becky Nave and Aaron Sizemore 	December 2016 December 2017	<p>By December 2016, help the region as a whole to reach 300 brand partners from businesses, localities, organizations, institutions in the Mount Rogers Region will have downloaded the brand package.</p> <p>By December 2017, 1000 brand partners from businesses, localities, organizations, institutions in the Mount Rogers Region will have downloaded the brand package</p>	The brand is currently being deployed throughout the region. A brand rollout ceremony was held and attended by 200+ individuals.

Objective B: Provide technical assistance on the most effective usage of the regional tourism brand throughout 2016, 2017 and beyond.

<p>Identify at least 5 communities or entrepreneurs to pilot the brand in 2016.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grayson County • Town of Damascus • Town of Chilhowie • Town of Marion • Town of Wytheville • Emerging SET Agricultural Coalition 	<p>One-on-one outreach by team leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marie Isom • Aaron Sizemore • Becky Nave • Brenda Bonk • Rosa Lee Jude 	<p>October 2016</p>	<p>5 or more willing early adopters will be identified.</p>	<p>Branding Pilot meetings have begun with the first meeting being held in Damascus in early May 2016</p>
<p>Host training sessions on deployment strategies with communities, entrepreneurs, and tourism stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mount Rogers Regional Tourism Team 	<p>One-on-one outreach by team leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marie Isom • Aaron Sizemore • Becky Nave • Brenda Bonk 	<p>2016 - 2017</p>	<p>By June 2017, at least 5 participating organizations, communities, or businesses will be highlighted as case studies and shared throughout the region via the newsletter.</p> <p>Each will have incorporated the brand in at least 3 ways through a variety of media</p>	
<p>Showcase the pilot communities/ entrepreneurs throughout the region using video, web-based, and printed technology.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jenna Wagner (CHF) 	<p>June 2017</p>	<p>An opportunity will be identified following June 2017 for a public or innovative presentation of case studies such as :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference • Webinar • Podcast 	

GOAL 2: Implement a hospitality training program to create a high standard of service and to project Southwest Virginia as a region of choice for visitors and investment.

The regional tourism workforce will understand and have knowledge of the regional tourism products offered and expand customer service skills to support the tourism industry thereby enhancing the visitors' experiences.

Objective A: Train at least 25 Certified Regional Hospitality Ambassadors in regional products and customer service skills by December 2016.

Strategy	Responsibility	Key Contact/ Convener	Timeline	Activity Outcome/ Output Measurements	Progress Status
Deliver at least 1 Train-the-Trainer program for tourism directors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Becky Nave 	Spring/Summer 2016: First session held MAY 5	Prior to the session, At least one person from each county or town will commit to attending the Train-the-Trainer program	The Train-the-Trainer session has been held and was attended by individuals from all localities
Develop regional web-based customer service training for tourism workers based on the Abingdon Ambassador "product knowledge" training or the nationally recognized Retail Trade Federation. OR as a backup: YouTube video.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MRPDC and Town of Abingdon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kevin Costello 	Fall 2016 June 2017	Develop a coordinated web tool that builds on existing resources and highlights the best of the communities across the Mount Rogers Region. Present opportunity to Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation Marketing Committee in Fall 2016 Solicit quotes by May 1, 2017 Develop grant application(s) to fund a comprehensive strategy for regional product awareness by May 1, 2017 If grant funding is not possible, explore cheaper alternatives, such as coordinated education through the newsletter. Tool developed by December 2017	

Train and certify at least 25 tourism ambassadors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mount Rogers Tourism Team with support from Virginia Tourism Corporation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kevin Costello (Town of Abingdon) 	Summer 2017 through 2018	<p>25 tourism ambassadors will be trained and certified in 2017.</p> <p>By December 2021, 100 will be trained and certified.</p>	
Offer the Mount Rogers region as a test market for tourism training that can be replicated throughout Virginia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becky Nave (VTC) 	June 2017-2018	Roll out product with support from Virginia Tourism Corporation to measure effectiveness and usability.	

GOAL 3: Secure funding to grow and attract new tourism businesses.

Since 2012, efforts to build entrepreneurial communities have primarily taken the form of public business plan competitions. The events build awareness and encourage local support for business development and attraction.

Objective A: Increase financial resources for business plan competitions by 5% by June 2017.

Strategy	Responsibility	Key Contact/ Convener	Timeline	Activity Outcome/ Output Measurements	Progress Status
Prepare an inventory of current sources of business funding including banking industry, insurance companies, EDAs, and other innovative funders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mount Rogers Planning District Commission with the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aaron Sizemore, with support from Josh Smith and Robyn Lee 	Summer to Fall 2016	<p>The aggregated resources will be promoted on the mySWVAopportunity website and the Mount Rogers Tourism Team newsletter.</p> <p>The inventory will be marketed with a case study of an entrepreneur in the region and the resources they have tapped in the Mount Rogers Tourism Team newsletter and the mySWVAopportunity newsletter.</p>	The inventory is currently under development
Explore and share examples of town and county funding investments to provide matching funding for business development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mount Rogers Planning District Commission with mySWVAopportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aaron Sizemore with support from Robyn Lee and Mandy Archer 	Fall 2016/Winter 2017	Community partnerships and their measured outcomes will be highlighted with a case study in the Winter 2017 Mount Rogers Tourism Team newsletter and the mySWVAopportunity newsletter.	

Partner with SBDC and mySWVAopportunity (business development roundtable) and create financial packages for specific competition based strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mount Rogers Planning District Commission with mySWVAopportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aaron Sizemore with support from Robyn Lee and Mandy Archer 	Measures in December of each year. 2016-2018	<p>At least 3 business plan competitions will be held in the region in 2016, with at least 7 new businesses established</p> <p>At least 3 business plan competitions will be held in the region in 2017 with 10 business established.</p> <p>At least 3 business plan comp At least 3 business plan competitions will be held in the region in 2017 with 10 businesses established.</p>
Convene regional financial services in support of entrepreneurship to create shared structure of support for entrepreneurs in the region from the private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mount Rogers Planning District Commission with mySWVAopportunity and Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aaron Sizemore (MRPDC) with support from Ken Heath, Olivia McDonald, Josh Smith, Ernie Maddy, Mandy Archer 	Early 2017	<p>Representatives from at least 20 private, for profit will gather in a roundtable setting to explore collaborative strategies to support emerging and growing businesses.</p> <p>At least one collective strategy will be pursued with support from the Mt. Rogers Tourism Team</p>

GOAL 4: Increase local business sourcing by aligning local resources with regional tourism cluster needs.

After changing attitudes toward collaborative strategies within industry clusters, business leaders will be encouraged to develop and prioritize actions to address shared opportunities.

Objective A: Create a sector partnership by engaging tourism entrepreneurs in collaborative discussions.

Strategy	Responsibility	Key Contact/ Convener	Timeline	Activity Outcome/ Output Measurements	Progress Status
Pilot an outdoor recreation industry cohort roundtable by first gathering a community specific roundtable focused on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRPDC through the Mount Rogers Outdoor economy efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aaron Sizemore (MRPDC) 	Late Fall 2016 (at the tail end of the season, before losing	The group will identify potential collaborative strategies or collective benefits of communication.	

bicycle outfitters in Damascus.			them for the winter.)	
Identify training, policy, business needs by supporting and listening: General needs will be identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mount Rogers Planning District through the Mount Rogers Outdoor economy efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aaron Sizemore (MRPDC) with support from Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation Appalachian Spring Staff (The position is being advertised in June 2016) 	Spring 2017	<p>One outcome/next step of the meeting will be identified.</p> <p>The bicycle pilot group in considering ongoing benefits of organized discussion.</p> <p>The bicycle pilot group will be guided through a discussion of potential expansion to additional communities or development of a broader 19 county SWVA biking industry cluster group.</p>
Share Spotlight Southwest Virginia as a model, both with the Bicycle network and with more broadly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lincoln Theater and Spotlight Southwest Virginia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kristin Untiedt-Barnett with support from Amy Ball Braswell 	Spring 2017	Include a summary of the Spotlight Southwest Virginia theater network as an industry network in the Mount Rogers Tourism Team Newsletter
Begin convening of an additional tourism business cohort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mount Rogers Tourism Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aaron Sizemore (MRPDC) 	Spring 2017-Fall 2017	Through one on one conversations in response to the newsletter article on the industry cluster roundtable strategy, an additional cohort will be identified
Add one additional cohort in 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mount Rogers Tourism Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aaron Sizemore (MRPDC) 	2018	Through one on one conversations in response to promotion of the work of the bicycle cluster, an additional cohort will be identified
Have developed 5 cohorts by 2021.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mount Rogers Tourism Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aaron Sizemore (MRPDC) 	Spring 2020	Cohorts will be developed across the region and industry clusters are identified are identified and self-select.

Objective B: Identify existing leakages among the tourism cluster.

Communicate the buy local/leakage model in more broadly by including it in the Mount Rogers Tourism Team Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mount Rogers Tourism Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Olivia McDonald (Marion Downtown) 	Spring 2017	A tailored approach to buy local at the industry scale will be communicated in a handout and newsletter.	
Interview tourism entrepreneurs confirming source leakages, beginning with the pilot bicycle group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mount Rogers Tourism Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aaron Sizemore (MRPDC) 	Summer 2017	Identify and capture cost savings and leakage for at least one supply.	
Organize cohort strategy for one supply input for the 2018 season	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mount Rogers Tourism Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aaron Sizemore (MRPDC) 	For 2018 season	Increase local business sourcing in one product line by 10%	

Agribusiness

GOAL 1: Advance economic opportunities in agriculture, food, and natural resources.

Healthy local agribusiness brings economic growth and development to the Mount Rogers region. Food and agribusiness have a massive economic, social, and environmental footprint. When the direct and indirect impacts of the agribusiness sector to employment, output, and value-added are considered, the contributions of the agribusiness sector to the level of economic activity in the region are even more impressive. The economic multipliers generated by activity in the agribusiness sector give credence to the fact that the agribusiness sector has significant direct and indirect impacts on our region.

While there is a strong core of fundamental values for agribusiness in the region, urbanization and lack of financial and other support threaten economic growth. Agricultural entrepreneurs and organizations appear to **work independently with very little collaboration**. To advance agriculture's economic opportunities, the agricultural stakeholders must build a regional foundation of collaboration that promotes agriculture.

Objective 1: Develop a regional agricultural economic advancement plan by December 2016.

Strategy	Responsibility	Key Contact/ Convener	Timeline	Activity Outcome/ Output Measurements	Progress Status
Build a regional coalition addressing how the region works together more effectively than working independently on agriculture issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southwest Virginia Agricultural Association • Mount Rogers Planning District Commission (MRPDC) • Agribusiness lenders • County Farm Bureaus • Virginia Cooperative Extension • Appalachian Sustainable Development • Economic Developers • Agribusiness industries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kevin Spurlin, Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) • Rocky Warren Mount Rogers Planning District Commission (MRPDC) 	April 2017 and then to meet quarterly	<p>Discussion with Southwest Virginia Agricultural Association Board.</p> <p>A SET agribusiness cluster representative is added to the Southwest Virginia Agricultural Association Futuring Committee.</p> <p>Establish the mission, plan of work, and operational structure of a regional agricultural coalition.</p>	<p>Conversations have been held with area farmers and agricultural associations.</p> <p>Southwest Virginia Agricultural Association has determined the SET goals line up with the mission of the SAA</p>
Integrate regional coalition into SET Implementation Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southwest Virginia Agricultural Association • Agribusiness lenders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rocky Warren (MRPDC) • Kevin Spurlin (VCE) 	April 2017	The agricultural coalition will be established with reporting process to the SET implementation team.	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Farm Bureaus • Virginia Cooperative Extension • Southwest Virginia Agricultural Association 				
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Objective 2: Communicate agriculture’s regional economic impact at least quarterly through area media and face-to-face presentations.

Provide coordinated agricultural information to news media in each area of the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural coalition communication team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Agricultural Coalition 	May 2017	Increased publicity on the economic impact of agriculture as measured by the number of news stories from less than 2 per year to at least 4 per year.	
Present agricultural economic impacts to local business community and governing bodies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural coalition communication team • Chambers of Commerce • Elected officials • Government Staff • Economic Developers • Mount Rogers PDC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mount Rogers PDC • Regional Agricultural Coalition 	Semi-annually, beginning June 2017	At least 4 presentations will be made to the local business community through area Chambers of Commerce and to the elected officials through their monthly meetings and PDC sessions.	

Goal 2: **Equip the region's youth and adult for employment in** the agribusiness industry.

The Mount Rogers region must create a skilled, affordable, and accessible workforce. We seek to inspire and educate the next generation of agricultural workers.

Situated in Appalachia, the Mount Rogers region has significantly lower per capita and household income, higher rates of unemployment and poverty and lower educational attainment than the statewide averages. As such, there are significant obstacles to build an educated and skilled workforce relying on an impoverished taxpayer base. School divisions lack resources to establish or duplicate educational resources.

A regional collaborative effort to provide and access educational and training opportunities would benefit building a skilled and educated workforce.

Objective 1: Provide regional K-12 youth with at least 4 out of school, hands-on agricultural training experiences each year.

Strategy	Responsibility	Key Contact/ Convener	Timeline	Activity Outcome/ Output Measurements	Progress Status
Inventory regional K-12 educational assets and establish a regional utilization agreements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local school systems Agriculture educators and Career & Technical Directors New River Soil & Water District Virginia Tech Agriculture Research and Extension Center (AREC) Carroll County STEM lab 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Agricultural Coalition Virginia Cooperative Extension 	May 2017	<p>A comprehensive inventory of K-12 educational assets will be developed.</p> <p>A formal agreement on a regional, shared utilization plan will be approved.</p> <p>Increased number of training opportunities for area youth.</p>	
Develop at least 1 regional site such as the New River Hill Farm or the Blue Ridge Discover Center as a unique agricultural and natural resources laboratory for youth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New River Soil & Water District Blue Ridge Discovery Center Local school systems Virginia Department of Forestry Matthews Foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kevin Spurlin, Virginia Cooperative Extension Brenda Bonk, Blue Ridge Discover Center Brenda Marrah, City of Galax 	<p>Summer 2017 (pilot)</p> <p>Summer 2018</p>	At least 1 regional site offering agricultural and natural resource laboratory experiences for youth will be operational.	The New River Hill Farm has drafted a plan of work for a 140-acre site.

Promote regional out-of-school agricultural training schedule.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appalachian Sustainable Development • New River Soil & Water District • Blue Ridge Discovery Center • Local school systems • Virginia Department of Forestry • Matthews Foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sylvia Crum, Appalachian Sustainable Development 	Fall 2017	<p>A published schedule of regional out-of-school youth agricultural training options.</p> <p>At least 200 K-12 youth will complete at least 1 out-of-school agricultural training each year as measured by training attendance documentation.</p>	Blue Ridge Discovery Center is currently engaging the school systems of the City of Galax and the county of Grayson.
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Objective 2: Train and link adult agricultural workers to educational, employment, and market opportunities.

Offer and publicize regional agricultural training options for adult workers and agricultural management through local media and web sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm Credit • People Incorporated • USDA Rural Development • Virginia Cooperative Extension • Virginia Employment Commission • Virginia Highlands Community College • Region II Workforce Development Board • Wytheville Community College 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce Development Board 	Quarterly, beginning September 2017	<p>An up-to-date, communication hub will be established to publicize agricultural trainings for adult workers.</p> <p>A training schedule for the agribusiness workforce will be published each quarter using social media, electronic communication, and the website.</p>	
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Link agribusiness management to potential workers through at least 1 regional agricultural job fair each year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Region II Workforce Development Board • People Incorporated • Virginia Cooperative Extension • Virginia Employment Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce Development Board • Regional Agricultural Coalition 	Semi-annually, beginning June 2017	At least 10 agribusiness operations will participate in at least 1 job fair connecting at least 20 people to agricultural jobs.	
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<p>Explore at least two agricultural marketing and viable product opportunities annually,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services • Virginia Highlands Community College • Wytheville Community College • Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services • Virginia Cooperative Extension • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia Cooperative Extension • Appalachian Sustainable Development • Danny Neel, Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services • 	<p>October 2017 and ongoing</p>	<p>At least 10 farms will participate in marketing and product discussions, farm tours, and/or conferences.</p> <p>At least 1 farm will pilot a new market or product each year.</p>	
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Manufacturing

GOAL 1: Create accessible high quality regional data for Mount Rogers by June 30, 2018

Eliminate duplication of data. Provide real time data (improve quality).

Objective A: Hire a quality data savvy research manager for Mount Rogers region

Strategy	Responsibility	Key Contact/ Convener	Timeline	Activity Outcome/ Output Measurements	Progress Status
Create job description that captures the regions data needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board (NRMWDB) • Virginia's Industrial Advancement Alliance (VIAA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Josh Lewis (VIAA) • Marty Holliday (NRMWDB) 	Aug 31, 2016	The job description will be complete.	Job description is complete.
Create buy-in and support for this position more data-driven decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRMWDB • VIAA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Josh Lewis • Marty Holliday 	Dec 31, 2016	Executive board/localities will be in support of adding the new position in the region.	
Establish Funding for position and data tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRMWDB • VIAA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Josh Lewis • Marty Holliday 	June 30, 2017	Utilization of funding from multiple sources	

Objective B: Develop culture that supports data-driven decision-making.

Create a dashboard/ website to house and disseminate information (interface)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDP in each locality • VIAA • NRMWDB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Josh Lewis • Marty Holliday 	Dec 31, 2017	Dashboard/Website will be live.	
Develop a process/timeline for updating information and handling requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDP in each locality • VIAA • NRMWDB partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Josh Lewis • Marty Holliday 	June 30, 2018	<p>Data requests will be made through one website.</p> <p>Process will be tested and implemented with continued monitoring to ensure efficiency and effective use of the information.</p>	

GOAL 2: Develop a coordinated, regionally funded marketing strategy to attract new manufacturers by Dec. 31, 2017

Market our region as premier location for manufacturing (PML). As region we know how to collaborate and work together to be proactive and not reactionary

Objective A: Create a new marketing plan for the Virginia's Industrial Advancement Alliance (VIAA).

Strategy	Responsibility	Key Contact/ Convener	Timeline	Activity Outcome/ Output Measurements	Progress Status
Identify current initiatives in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Localities (IDAs/EDAs) VIAA Other regional partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Josh Lewis (VIAA) 	June 30, 2016	Current initiatives will be documented and used to create new marketing plan.	Current initiatives have been documented.
Identify potential funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Localities (IDAs/EDAs) VIAA Private sector partners Other regional partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Josh Lewis 	Ongoing	Funding sources will be identified and contacted.	Ongoing
Facilitate meetings w/ local stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Localities (IDAs/EDAs) VIAA Private sector partners Other regional partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Josh Lewis 	Ongoing	Information from meeting with stakeholders will be collected and distributed to all parties involved in the process.	4 local ED meetings and 3 regional locality meetings already completed.

Objective B: Implement new marketing plan

Write the plan – convene ad hoc committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Localities (IDAs/EDAs) VIAA Other regional partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Josh Lewis 	June 30, 2016	Plan will be complete	Marketing plan is complete.
Create buy-in for plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Localities (IDAs/EDAs) VIAA Other regional partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Josh Lewis 	Aug 31, 2016	All localities and stakeholders will support the plan.	Creating buy-in is an ongoing process.
Strong regional branding and story telling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Localities (IDAs/EDAs) VIAA Other regional partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Josh Lewis (VIAA) David Manley (Joint Industrial Development) 	Dec 31, 2017	All localities and stakeholders will be telling the same story of the region.	

		Authority of Wythe County)			
Objective C: Access and adjust marketing plan					
Evaluate marketing plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Localities (IDAs/EDAs) VIAA Other regional partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Josh Lewis 	June 30, 2018 June 30, 2020	Utilize VEDA CARDINAL program for planning/completing the evaluation	

GOAL 3: Cultivate regional linkages between workforce initiatives by December 31, 2018

Creating more channels of communication between workforce development professionals throughout the region..

Objective A: Create communication channels

Strategy	Responsibility	Key Contact/ Convener	Timeline	Activity Outcome/ Output Measurements	Progress Status
Identify various initiatives and lead organizations/person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board (NRMRWDB) partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marty Holliday (NRMRWDB) 	June 30, 2017	A collective list of organization contacts and initiatives has been created.	
Facilitate a meeting between organization/persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marty Holliday 	Aug 31, 2017	Information will be gathered and distributed from meeting with stakeholders.	
Evaluate for potential for duplication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marty Holliday 	Dec 31, 2017	A list of duplicate programs has been created.	
Develop a communication system between each area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WCC Workforce Development Virginia Workforce Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marty Holliday 	Mar 30, 2018	A system of communication has been created.	

Objective B: Implement communication channels

Facilitate quarterly meetings between workforce and economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NRMRWDB VIAA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marty Holliday Josh Lewis (VIAA) 	June 30, 2018	Quarterly meetings will be scheduled and held.	
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GOAL 4: Coordinate effective plan to address workforce turnover/retention in manufacturing for Mount Rogers region by June 30, 2019
 Develop more holistic support system for manufacturers, more stable workforce, better buy-in from local governments, and increase manufacturing profitability.

Objective A: Gather information from existing manufacturers regarding the workforce

Strategy	Responsibility	Key Contact/ Convener	Timeline	Activity Outcome/ Output Measurements	Progress Status
Compile research on climate survey best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board (NRMWDB) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marty Holliday (NRMWDB) 	Jun 30, 2018	Survey will be complete and information will be collected from the survey and compiled into one document.	
Create buy-in for climate survey with regional manufacturers (through Sector Partnerships or focus groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRMWDB • VIAA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marty Holiday • Josh Lewis (VIAA) 	June 30, 2017	Through focus groups and/or Sector Partnerships at least five (5) manufacturers agree to participate in the Climate Survey	
Conduct climate survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Localities (IDAs/EDAs) • New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marty Holliday (NRMWDB) 	Jun 30, 2018	Survey will be complete and information will be collected from the survey and compiled into one document.	
Review outcome of survey with focus groups/company management (or in Sector Partnerships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Localities (IDAs/EDAs) • New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lori Deel (Smyth County) • Local EDPs 	Aug 31, 2018	Focus group meetings have been completed and information from meetings and been collected and distributed.	
Create manufacturer buy-in to address retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Localities (IDAs/EDAs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marty Holliday • Lori Deel 	Nov 30, 2018	At least five (5) manufacturers are willing to participate in new plan	
Host regional meeting to discuss retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Localities (IDAs/EDAs) • NRMWDB partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marty Holliday 	Sept 30, 2018	Regional meetings will be complete and information will be compiled from each meeting.	

Objective B: Implement regional and collaborative training programs support system

Cataloging and disseminating available training in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marty Holliday 	Mar 31, 2018	Regional training information will be in place for everyone to use as a resource. Consult manufacturing human resources staff about programs they may be using
Identify and offer needed/required training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector Partnerships/Business focus groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jane Mitchell (Wytheville Community College) • Marty Holliday 	Ongoing	Effective training programs will be taking place throughout the region.

Implementation and Evaluation Plan

At the Civic Forum, individuals from various agencies stated that communication and developing a network of coordination is a very important focus for the region. Investors want to be able to see tangible results and changes, therefore, the SET team will use its resources gained through the SET planning process to support a coordinated communication process that will continue through **the plan's implementation and beyond**. This coordinated communication network, headed by MRPDC, will help the group determine the best strategies for the region, keep the group up-to-date on happenings in other localities, and help disseminate information regarding the progress of SET goals.

In consideration of making the SET plan a functional working plan, implementation and evaluation will be through the working groups that were established in the planning process. These groups may be reorganized as additional group members vital to the achievement of plan goals are added. These groups will function under the organization of the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission (MRPDC) and each will carry out the action steps needed to complete the strategies and achieve the goals set forth in the SET plan.

Measures were established for each goal in the plan of action and the MRPDC will coordinate the **reporting and evaluation of each group's goals**. Each working group will:

- determine the leadership and communication structures best suited to them
- designate a member who will be in charge of quarterly reporting to the MRPDC

A group representative or an MRPDC staff member will report progress of group at quarterly MRPDC Meetings. The group will also report a quarterly progress update to SET group through face-to-face presentation and the progress will be evaluated at this meeting. This format will allow the larger group to see what is going on in other groups, help provide solutions to any difficulties that may arise, or learn implement strategies from other groups that may be useful for them. Progress reports or summaries of quarterly reporting sessions will be made public at www.mrpdc.org/set.htm, giving the larger community a chance to view the data and weigh in on **the group's efforts**.

Succession Plan

One of the most important portions of the SET implementation process will be the succession plan. The group was affected early on in the planning phase by turnover, with no less than 15% of members either in their first year at their new position or receiving a new position during the SET planning process, thusly, it was imperative to create a succession plan.

The **group's succession plan** will be coordinated by the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission. There will be some amount of personal responsibility placed on individuals to notify the group members, taking it upon themselves to appoint a successor from their own agency, if possible, before their departure. Ideally, the departing member will have adequate time to brief the successor with tasks of the group, responsibilities that will be turned over to the successor

and introduction to the focus group members. If the group member is unable to appoint a successor or begin succession training, the remaining group members will recruit a successor from within the agency of the departing group member, ideally within a month of the departure of the previous member. The **remaining group members will assess the new member's** experience and leadership skills, and, if necessary, reassign tasks within the group to accommodate differing skill levels. MRPDC will help coordinate these efforts and depending on the level of assistance needed, may use its contacts to lead new member recruitment efforts.

Mount Rogers Planning District Commission

Aaron Sizemore

Executive Director

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(276) 783-5103 ext. 304

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Appendix A – Partnerships and Involvement

Statewide Resource Team

USDA Rural Development—Dr. Basil Gooden, Janice Stroud-Bickes, Anne Herring, Craig Barbrow, David Foster, & Dr. Kasey Martin

Office of the Secretary of Commerce and Trade—Mary Rae Carter

Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development—Doug Jackson & Michelle Jones

Virginia Rural Center—Christy Morton

Virginia Tourism—Steve Gaylean & Sandra Tanner

Virginia Economic Development Partnership—Liz Povar

Virginia Cooperative Extension (Virginia Tech)—Dr. Ed Jones, Dr. Jim Pease, Dr. Mike Lambur, & Dr. Martha Walker

Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development—Scott Tate

Regional Steering Committee

ABB Ltd. Automation Company —Herb Grant

Virginia’s Industrial Advancement Alliance (VIAA)—Josh Lewis

Blue Ridge Crossroads Economic Development Authority—Ken McFadyen

Chestnut Creek School of the Arts—Chris Pollins

Emory & Henry College—Lou Fincher & Dirk Moore

Grayson County—Elaine Holeton

Marion Downtown—Olivia McDonald

Mount Rogers Planning District Commission—Aaron Sizemore & Rocky Warren

New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board—Marty Holliday

Smyth County—Lori Deel

Virginia Cooperative Extension—Kevin Spurlin

Washington County—Whitney Bonham

Wythe Joint Industrial Development Authority—David Manley

Planning Team Members

Listed below are individuals who assisted in the planning process for the Mount Rogers Region Stronger Economies Together (SET) plan.

ABB Ltd. Automation Company—Herb Grant
Appalachian Regional and Rural Studies Center, Radford University—Theresa Burris
Appalachian Spring—Stephanie Otis
Appalachian Sustainable Development— Sylvia Crum
Bland County— Rodney Ratliff
Blue Ridge Crossroads Economic Development Authority— Ken McFadyen
Blue Ridge Discovery Center—Brenda Bonk & Aaron Floyd
Chestnut Creek School of the Arts—Chris Pollins
City of Bristol—Melanie Fleenor & Bart Poe
City of Galax—Ray Kohl, Brenda Marrah, & Jessica Milby
Crossroads Institute—Brenda Sutherland
People Incorporated of Virginia—Maggie Costello, Traci Mitchell, & Ellen Tolton
Emory & Henry College—Lou Fincher
Friends of SWVA—Jack Morgan
Grayson County—John Fant & Elaine Holeton
Grayson County Department of Social Services—Tony Isom
Hands and Feet Ministries—Linda Austin
Joint Industrial Development Authority of Wythe County—David Manley
The Lincoln Theatre—Kristin Untiedt-Barnett
Marion Downtown—Olivia MacDonald
Mount Rogers Planning District Commission—Aaron Sizemore & Rocky Warren
New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area—Marty Holliday
Office of Congressman H. Morgan Griffith—Cody Mumpower & Michelle Jenkins
Smyth County—Lori Deel & Kendra Hayden
Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation—Jeff Mansour
Town of Abingdon— Kevin Costello
Town of Fries—Marie Isom
Town of Glade Spring—Dirk Moore
Town of Marion—Bill Rush
Town of Rural Retreat—Brian Reed
Town of Wytheville— Wayne Sutherland
United Way Virginia Highlands—Crystal Breeding
U.S. Department of Agriculture – FSA— Aaron Blackburn, Lindsey Carrico, & Ron Hale
Virginia Cooperative Extension— Kevin Spurlin
Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services— Danny Neel
Virginia Department of Social Services—Tommy Casteel
Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator— Cathy Lowe

Virginia Tourism Corporation—Randy Rose, Michelle Workman, & Becky Nave
Virginia's **Industrial Advancement Alliance (VIAA)**— Joshua Lewis
Washington County— Jason Berry & Whitney Bonham
Washington County Chamber of Commerce— Suzanne Lay
Wythe County— Cellell Dalton
Wytheville Community College—Perry Hughes, Jane Mitchell, & Dean Sprinkle



Appendix B – Tourism

Regional Branding Materials



1.1 Brand Statement

The core values define Southwest Virginia's strengths and how it needs to behave to achieve its vision.

UNDERSTANDING VALUE

To create a brand, designers must message around what THEY believe to be the most important features of their community, instead of asking the client what is actually important to others. Take the time to understand the region's residents and their values, then sign your messaging accordingly.

Brand Statement

If you are looking for stunning natural beauty, Southwest Virginia is a place where peace and tranquility come in dramatic form, from the highest mountain peaks in Virginia to the most diverse river ecosystem in all of America. Whether taking scenic drives to view the Fall color, following Daniel Boone's footsteps along the Wilderness Road, or simply fishing, floating or paddling on a meandering river, time spent in the region adds up to something much more than a simple getaway.

Music, Arts & Crafts

If you are searching for a place rooted in rich history and culture, Southwest Virginia's tales run deep. With our sons and daughters putting everything on the line to power the nation, this region of migrants created America's home grown music, and that artistic spirit remains today. The heartbeat of Southwest Virginia is heard in the sounds of the Crooked Road, and seen in the craftsmanship of the artisans' Round the Mountain and through the halls of Heartwood.

Outdoor Recreation

If you seek new adventures, Southwest Virginia has opportunities that abound. Hike Southwest Virginia's 200 miles of the Appalachian Trail, navigate a new fork of rapids, or camp at one of Virginia's nationally renowned State Parks. The action in Southwest Virginia is unparalleled and endless, passive or high adrenaline. It's a place for new memories and lifetime experiences; accessible wilderness, extreme adventure, and pastoral recreation, all rolled into one.

Industry, Education & Innovation

If you strive for knowledge, Southwest Virginia has earned a pedigree of ingenuity through necessity. Industry in Southwest Virginia has matured from extraction and manufacturing to include innovation, intellectual capacity, and the creative economy. The academic institutions shaping minds in Southwest Virginia are highly acclaimed, cultivating leaders who will go on to design, nurture, and serve our region and nation.

Hometowns & Downtowns

If you cherish small towns, Southwest Virginia's are the real thing, each with a personality of place that reflects the true definition of Americana. Dance at the Friday Night Jamboree in Floyd, relax on the porch to the calm sounds of water flowing over the dam in Damascus, taste home baked goods from the general store in Burkes Garden, or have a sandwich at the soda fountain in Gate City. From the explosion of boutique hotels to our upstart business and vibrant festivals, Southwest Virginia towns are reinvigorated cultural centers, renewing their homes by celebrating the best of a region.

Indeed, Southwest Virginia is a singular region. Experiences are daring and peaceful, cultured and eclectic, creative and innovative, friendly and proud. In a state known for tri-corner hats and sandy beaches, Southwest Virginia presents a different side of a true common wealth.

**We are Authentic, Distinctive, Alive.
Southwest Virginia- A Different Side of Virginia.**





1.2 Brand Message

The primary message used to express the brand promise. This reflects the desired position of the brand.

LOGLINE

Your logline should give people an idea of what you offer and provide some sort of hook to pique their interest. For example, "A boutique PR agency that specializes in launching and rebranding tech companies" or "An accounting firm that deals exclusively with small-business audits."

Once you've got your logline, go back through your marketing copy and make sure those simple messages come through loud and clear. You can also use the logline itself in your marketing materials, on your website and social media properties, and in conversations with customers and prospects.

Southwest Virginia: A Different Side of Virginia





2.1 Logo

Southwest Virginia already has a personality. The job of the brand is to preserve that personality while helping the community to realize its vision of its future.

A. LOGOMARK

A logomark is an identifying mark or symbol that doesn't contain the business name. Think of the Nike "swoosh", Shell, WWF, Mercedes or Adobe.

B. WORDMARK

A wordmark refers to words or the name of a business that is designed in a special way. Examples include Pinterest, eBay or Google.

C. LOGO

The logo is the combination of the logomark and logotype along with the tagline to graphically convey the identity of the community.





2.2 Logo Variants

Choosing the right dominant color for your brand is crucial. This color should appear on all your materials, including your logo and signage.

LOGO USAGE

As much as possible, the color you choose should set you apart, set it with your industry and image, and tie to your brand promise. It should also take into account color psychology, which is fairly complex. Colors can mean different things depending on the culture, situation and industry.



A different side of Virginia



Tourism Cluster Data

Reeder, Richard S. and Dennis M. Brown. 2005. "Recreation, Tourism, and Rural Well-Being." *USDA Economic Research Service*, Economic Research Report Number 7.

http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/302182/err7_1_.pdf

Here are some helpful findings from this report:

- Rural counties with recreation focused assets and economies have population growth three times more than non-recreation rural counties.
- Recreation focused counties have more than double the rate of employment growth compared to non-recreation counties.
- Per capita incomes were also growing more quickly in recreation-focused counties.
- Recreation focused counties also had lower poverty rates and better health outcomes.

Kramich, Richard. 2011. *People, Places and Landscapes: Social Change in High Amenity Rural Areas*. Chapter 2: Putting Rural Community Change in Perspective.

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/AE_Luloff/publication/251330873_Putting_Rural_Community_Change_in_Perspective/links/542062670cf203f155c59102.pdf

- Key takeaways from this research:
- Non-economic amenities such as climate, topography, and proximity to water help to fuel rural population growth.
- There are many case studies of communities that were once isolated and dependent of extractive industries growing in to hubs of tourism because of natural resource amenities. In turn, permanent migrants to these areas are motivated by the quality of life assets.
- From 2004 to 2014, travel expenditures in the Mount Rogers PDC region increased by 48% from \$282.6 million to \$418.9 million.
- Local travel related tax revenues increased by 33% from \$8.35 million to \$11.1 million; state travel related tax revenues increased by 26% from \$14.8 million to \$18.7 million.
- Between 2000 and 2014, overall employment in Mount Rogers PDC area decreased by 5.5%, but employment in the Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food service industry cluster, employment increased by 20.8%.
- The travel industry is the fifth largest private employer in Virginia. According to a report from VTC, travel employment in the Mount Rogers area was 3,867 in 2014.
- According to the 2012 Virginia Tourism Plan, the economic impact of the tourism industry in the state was \$20.4 billion in 2011.
- The state parks within the Mount Rogers PDC (Grayson Highlands, Hungry Mother, and New River Trail) had an attendance of 1,385,112 with economic impact of \$28,150,098 in 2014.

Shift-share analysis (# of jobs created in excess of national trends)

- Perform better than nationally: Golf Courses & Country Clubs (28); Museums (3)
- Perform on par with national trends: Radio stations (0); RV Parks and Campgrounds (0)
- Arts & Entertainment is a transforming cluster, meaning it is under-represented in the region and also losing jobs. Shows a general lack of competitiveness.
- Entertainment & Visitor Industries have the 11th highest regional requirements, representing just under \$300 million.
- **Food preparation and serving occupations comprise 7% of Mt. Rogers' occupations.**

The areas with the greatest leakage within Mount Rogers' Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Visitor Industries cluster are: Administrative Management and General Management Consulting Services (91% out of region, 15th greatest \$ regional input); Corporate, Subsidiary and Regional Managing Offices (85%, 1st); and Sports Teams and Clubs (85%, 3rd).

Jobs in this cluster span a range of educational levels from 'Less than high school' to 'Bachelor's degree' and offer median wages between \$7.80 and \$15.30 per hour.

VTC economic impact report:

- Travel in Mount Rogers directly creates 3,867 jobs.
- In Washington County, the economic impacts of travel (e.g. jobs, expenditures, and tax receipts) are growing faster than in Virginia as a whole.
- The total economic impact of travel in the Mount Rogers region is \$538 million.

VTC Blue Ridge Highlands Region Travel Profile

- The most common reason for a trip to the Blue Ridge Highlands (a region that encompasses Mount Rogers) was to visit friends or relatives. Other common reasons included outdoor recreation, entertainment and sightseeing, and personal business.
- 48% of travel parties consisted of two people. 15% consisted of three people and 14% consisted of one person.
- 32% of travelers were ages 45-64. 14% of travelers were ages 25-34.
- 86% of travelers drove for their trip.
- The most common duration for a trip to the Blue Ridge Highlands was 3 days (20%).
- 45% of travelers stayed in a hotel/motel for a portion of their trip; 42% stayed in a private home.
- 30% of travelers to the Blue Ridge Highlands spent \$100-250 on their trip. The median amount spent was \$230.
- 30% of visitors visited relatives on their trip to the Blue Ridge Highlands. 20% participated in rural sightseeing, 18% went shopping, 17% visited a state/national park, and 17% visited a historic site or church.
- 37% of visitors decided to visit Virginia less than two weeks before their visit, and their primary sources of planning information were: their own experience (32%), friends/relatives (30%), and destination websites (12%).

- 14% of travelers originated from the Washington, DC area and 12% originated from the Roanoke-Lynchburg area. 32% came from Virginia and 86% were White/Caucasian. The average household size for travelers was 2 people, and 61% of travelers were married.

ESRI Community Analyst

The top five recreation expenditure categories of Mount Rogers households, by spending amount compared to national average, were:

- Purchase of RVs or Boats
- Hunting and Fishing Equipment
- Other Sports Equipment
- Rental/Repair of Sports/Recreation/Exercise Equipment

The top two broad recreation expenditure categories of Mount Rogers households by dollar amount were:

- Entertainment/Recreation Fees and Admissions \$27,151,474
- Recreation Vehicles and Fees \$14,782,223

The highest market potential recreational activities that Mount Rogers households participate in are: hunting, fishing, archery, horseback riding, and target shooting.

Tourism Leader Survey Data

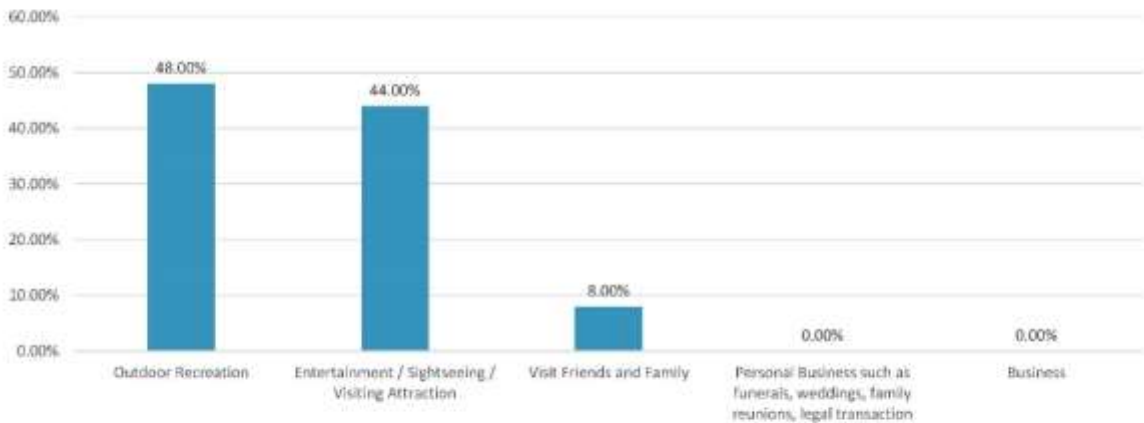
- Outdoor recreation and entertainment are the primary reasons visitors travel to the Mount Rogers area.
- 52% of travelers come for leisure, 34% pass through and 14% come for business.
- The peak tourism season is late spring through October.
- Visitors primarily come from Virginia and its neighboring and nearby states: North Carolina, Tennessee, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. The most common travel party origin is North Carolina.
- The top three needs for businesses are marketing, customer service training, and partnerships.
- Top organizational priorities are: increased tourism funding for better marketing campaigns; more tourism related businesses or attractions; more or higher quality dining and lodging opportunities; and more networking among tourism related businesses and attractions.

Tourism Leader Survey

Mount Rogers Planning District Commission
Virginia Tourism Corporation



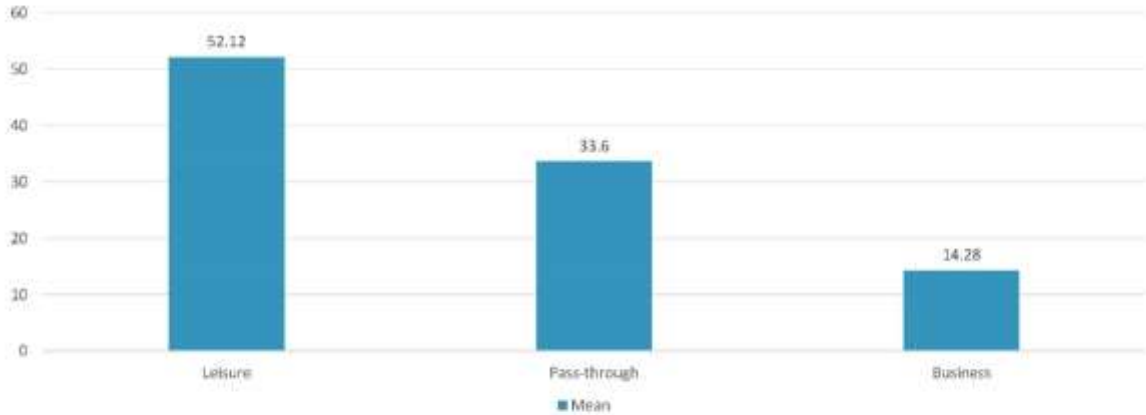
Outdoor Recreation, Entertainment are primary reasons visitors travel to the community.



What is the primary reason visitors travel to your community? Primary reason refers to the number one reason a visitor comes to your community. Please note that your community refers to the area of interest represented by you, your employer, or organization. For example, the community for businesses such as attractions, hotels, restaurants, etc. might be the local city/county/town where the business is located, while the community for regional or state organizations will be a defined region or the state overall, respectively.



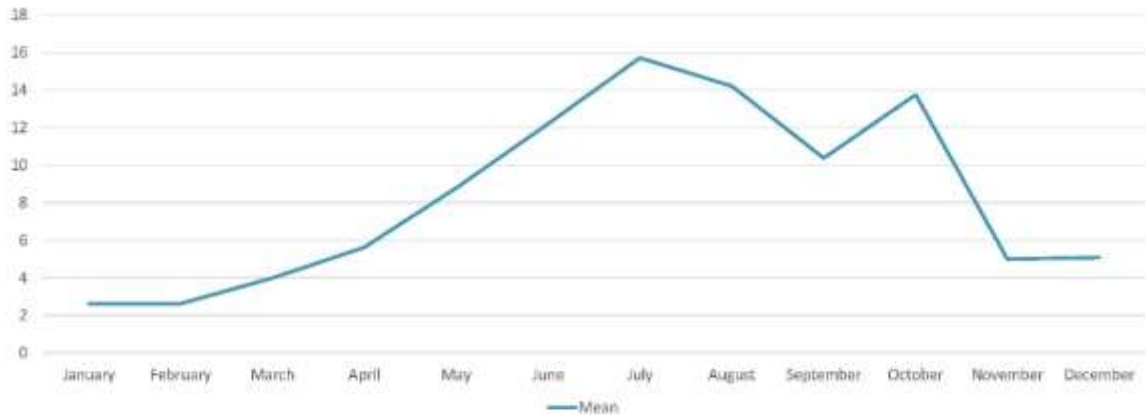
More than half of visitors are **leisure** travelers - one third are **pass-through** and 14% are **business** travelers.



What percentage of visitors to your community are leisure, business or pass-through? Total must sum to 100. Please note that your community refers to the area of interest represented by you, your employer, or organization. For example, the community for businesses such as attractions, hotels, restaurants, etc. might be the local city/county/town where the business is located, while the community for regional or state organizations will be a defined region or the state overall, respectively.



Seasonality is a challenge for the region- **late spring through October** are the months with the **highest visitation**.



Please indicate seasonality for your community by selecting a distribution of visitation by month. Total must sum to 100. Please note that your community refers to the area of interest represented by you, your employer, or organization. For example, the community for businesses such as attractions, hotels, restaurants, etc. might be the local city/county/town where the business is located, while the community for regional or state organizations will be a defined region or the state overall, respectively.



Top Five Travel Party Origin

1. North Carolina
2. Virginia
3. Tennessee
4. Ohio
5. Pennsylvania



Please list the states of origin for the travelers visiting your community. Please rank the top five states in order of visitation with #1 being the top state where travelers are coming from. Please note that your community refers to the area of interest represented by you, your employer, or organization. For example, the community for businesses such as attractions, hotels, restaurants, etc. might be the local city/county/town where the business is located, while the community for regional or state organizations will be a defined region or the state overall, respectively.



Hotel Supply as reported by DMOs in the Mt. Rogers PDC:

Locality	Total Number of hotel/motel establishments in my community	Total Number of hotel/motel rooms in my community	Number of Bed & Breakfast establishments in my community	Number of vacation cabins or vacation rental homes in my community
Abingdon	7	600	7	8
Bristol	17	1550	0	5
Galax	4	202	1	17
Grayson County	0	0	6	45
Wytheville	27	1810	1	38



Can you tell us about lodging inventory in your community? If you do not serve as a Destination Marketing / Management Organization (DMO) or if you don't know the answer to this question, simply place N/A in the boxes or skip this question. Please note that your community refers to the area of interest represented by you, your employer, or organization. For example, the community for businesses such as attractions, hotels, restaurants, etc. might be the local city/county/town where the business is located, while the community for regional or state organizations will be a defined region or the state overall, respectively.



Outdoor Recreation, Natural Resources, Cultural Heritage, and Attractions are top lures for communities.



Please name the top five tourism lures or drivers - such as attractions, nature / outdoor recreation, entertainment venues, historic & heritage experiences, culinary experiences - for travelers to visit your community? Please rank them in order with #1 being the top tourism lure. Please note that your community refers to the area of interest represented by you, your employer, or organization. For example, the community for businesses such as attractions, hotels, restaurants, etc. might be the local city/county/town where the business is located, while the community for regional or state organizations will be a defined region or the state overall, respectively.

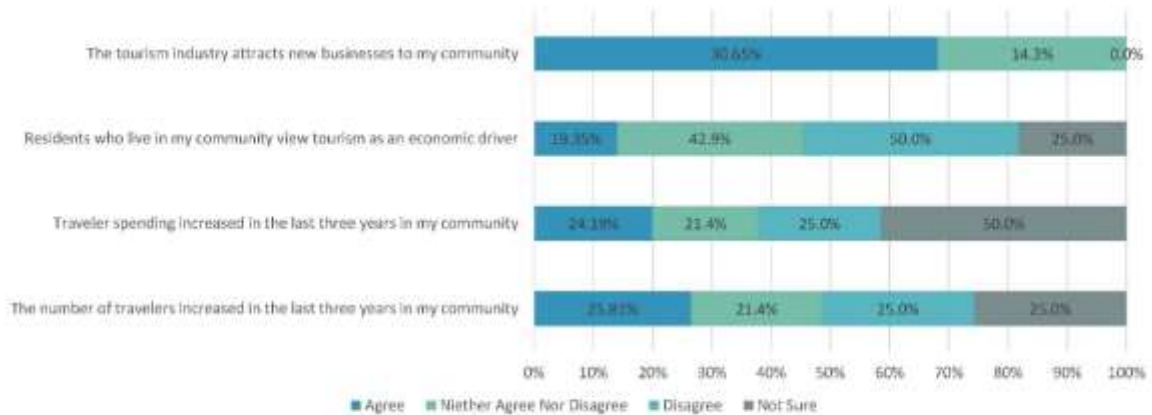
Outdoor Recreation, Entertainment Venues, Appalachian Trail, History, and Heritage are top lures for the Mount Rogers region.



Now, think about the Mt. Rogers Region which includes the Counties of Bland, Carroll, Grayson, Smyth, Washington, and Wythe and the independent cities of Bristol and Galax. Please name the top five tourism lures or drivers - such as attractions, nature / outdoor recreation, entertainment venues, historic & heritage experiences, culinary experiences - for travelers to visit the Mt. Rogers Region? Please rank them in order with #1 being the top tourism lure.



Overall **sentiment** of regional decision makers is **positive** in regards to new businesses, increase in travelers, and spending. **However, only 1-in-5 view tourism as an economic driver.**



How do you feel about the following statements? Please drag and drop each statement in the category you feel appropriate. Please note that your community refers to the area of interest represented by you, your employer, or organization. For example, the community for businesses such as attractions, hotels, restaurants, etc. might be the local city/county/town where the business is located, while the community for regional or state organizations will be a defined region or the state overall, respectively.



Marketing, Customer Service Training and Partnerships are the top three needs for businesses.



Based on your interaction with tourism-related businesses in your community, what would you identify as the top three needs for businesses? Please note that your community refers to the area of interest represented by you, your employer, or organization. For example, the community for businesses such as attractions, hotels, restaurants, etc. might be the local city/county/town where the business is located, while the community for regional or state organizations will be a defined region or the state overall, respectively.



Niche Products, Connectors such as the Crooked Road and **Cultural Heritage** are the top three tourism trends.



Please list the top three tourism trends that are influential in bringing new visitors or may have encouraged travelers to stay longer and have a better experience in your community. Please note that your community refers to the area of interest represented by you, your employer, or organization. For example, the community for businesses such as attractions, hotels, restaurants, etc. might be the local city/county/town where the business is located, while the community for regional or state organizations will be a defined region or the state overall, respectively.



Top priorities reported by organizations:

1	Increased tourism funding for better or more marketing campaigns
2	More tourism related businesses or attractions to provide a better visitor experience
3	More or higher quality dining opportunities
4	More or higher quality lodging opportunities
5	More networking among tourism related businesses & attractions
6	Increase the number of employees and funding for staff
7	Access to people & resources to assist with advertising campaigns, graphic design, marketing assistance
8	Better cooperation & networking among jurisdictions
9	More or better transportation options
10	More opportunities for multi-generational travel parties
11	A better tourism workforce
12	Community water & sewer infrastructure that can serve tourism related business/attractions
13	More or better telecommunications/high speed Internet
14	A research study on tourism data for my jurisdiction
15	Better statistical data on the tourism sector/visitor profiles/reasons for visitation
16	More or better group facilities for weddings, family reunions and other large groups
17	Other; please specify:



If you can prioritize your organizational needs based on the most positive impact they will have on your organizational goals, how would you rank them? Please rank them by importance of priority with #1 being the most important priority and #17 being the least important priority.



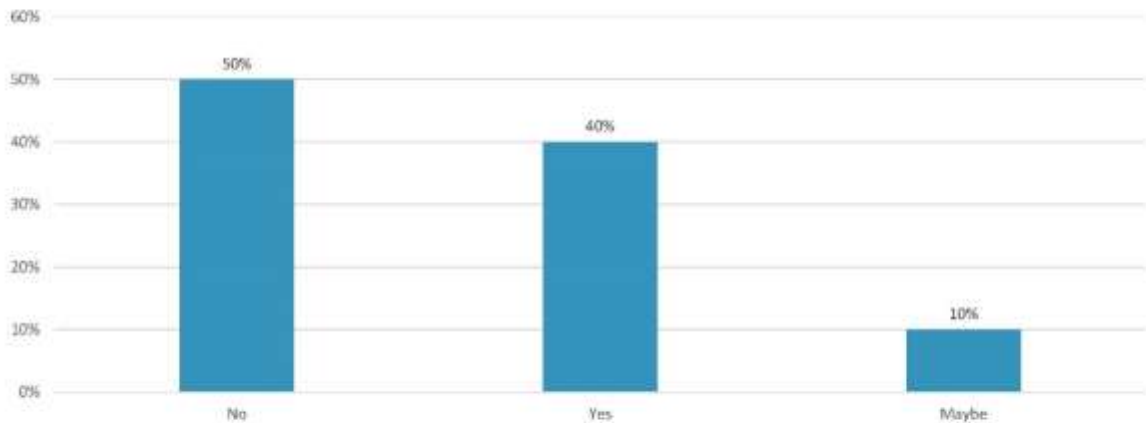
Respondents mentioned the need for more **Marketing**. Their tactics were **Diversified** and they were focused on the **Outdoors** and **Drive Market**.



If you had a million dollar advertising budget, what kind of marketing campaigns would you engage in, who would be your target market, and where would you market?

VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS

Only 40% of respondents have conducted **visitor research**.



Has your office or organization conducted any visitor research in the last three years?

VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS



A different side of Virginia

Appendix D – Agribusiness

Agribusiness Cluster Data

2012 Census of Agriculture

<http://quickstats.nass.usda.gov/>, accessed 11/20/2015

Farms	5452
Farms by Sales less than \$100K	4968
Farms by Sales \$100K and over	484
Land in Farms (acres)	882,791
Total Sales (\$)	\$270,291,000
Crop Sales (\$)	\$35,524,000
Livestock Sales (\$)	\$234,767,000
Net Cash Farm Income (\$)	\$24,691,000

Economic impacts of Agriculture and Forest Industries in VA 2013, Terance J. Rephann

Table D.1 Direct and Total Economic Impacts of Virginia Agriculture and Forestry-related Industries by Locality, Output 2011 (\$ Millions)

	Agriculture		Forestry		Agriculture & Forestry	
	Direct	Total	Direct	Total	Direct	Total
Bland	19.1	20.9	1.2	1.4	20.2	22.2
Carroll (w/Galax)	210.8	244.4	143.3	181.7	354.1	426.0
Grayson	39.6	45	35.8	42.5	75.3	87.5
Smyth	39.8	48.7	57.8	81.4	97.6	130.1
Washington (w/Bristol)	254.5	323.2	28.5	39.5	283.0	362.7
Wythe	506.1	584.5	11.3	14.4	517.4	598.9

Table D.2 Direct and Total Economic Impacts of Virginia Agriculture and Forestry-related Industries by Locality, Employment 2011

	Agriculture		Forestry		Agriculture & Forestry	
	Direct	Total	Direct	Total	Direct	Total
Bland	291	305	4	5	295	310
Carroll (w/Galax)	1,662	1,970	1,064	1,397	2,726	3,367
Grayson	728	774	196	253	924	1,027
Smyth	718	801	464	680	1,182	1,481
Washington (w/Bristol)	1,822	2,356	147	238	1,969	2,594
Wythe	1,704	2,345	86	117	1,790	2,462

Table D.3 Direct and Total Economic Impacts of Virginia Agriculture and Forestry-related Industries by Locality, Value-added 2011 (\$ Millions)

	Agriculture		Forestry		Agriculture & Forestry	
	Direct	Total	Direct	Total	Direct	Total
Bland	3.9	5.2	0.7	0.9	4.6	6.1
Carroll (w/Galax)	55.0	76.1	54.5	76	109.5	152.1
Grayson	11.1	14.8	8.0	11.4	19.0	26.2
Smyth	11.0	16.8	17.0	29.8	28.0	46.5
Washington (w/Bristol)	64.3	108.1	10.0	16.8	74.3	124.9
Wythe	70.7	115.5	7.2	9.3	77.8	124.8

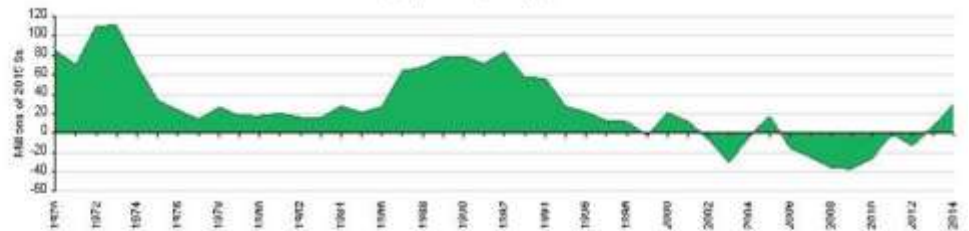
Farm Business Income 2014 (EPS Ag 2015)
 From Headwaters Economics/Economic Profile System (EPS) Jan2015:

Farm Business Income, 2014 (Thousands of 2015 \$)

	Blind County, VA	Carroll County, VA	Grayson County, VA	Smyth County, VA	Washington County, VA	Wythe County, VA	County Region	U.S.
Total Cash Receipts & Other Inc. (\$1000)	12,817	58,767	45,317	80,436	105,448	73,530	376,320	473,140,991
Cash Receipts from Marketing	11,793	53,625	41,032	76,050	97,562	66,786	347,036	428,891,959
Livestock & Products	10,550	43,423	34,534	71,723	91,351	59,779	311,359	233,620,406
Crops	1,233	10,201	6,498	4,327	6,211	7,007	35,676	195,071,552
Other Income	1,034	4,942	4,285	4,389	7,887	6,745	29,282	44,249,032
Government Payments	198	590	671	2,704	4,363	1,056	9,602	8,776,617
Imputed Rent & Misc. Income	836	4,362	3,615	1,686	3,504	5,689	19,661	34,472,415
Total Production Expenses	12,658	53,277	39,835	65,326	97,668	66,360	334,675	394,323,005
Realized Net Income (Receipts - Expenses)	159	5,489	5,282	15,113	7,762	7,140	41,445	78,817,927
Value of Inventory Change	-692	-2,119	-1,200	-2,303	-3,523	-2,433	-12,369	-14,212,746
Total Net Income Including Corp. Farms	-533	3,371	4,082	12,810	4,239	4,707	29,176	64,605,181
Ratio: Total Cash Receipts & Other Income/Total Production Expenses	1.21	1.10	1.15	1.20	1.08	1.11	1.12	1.20

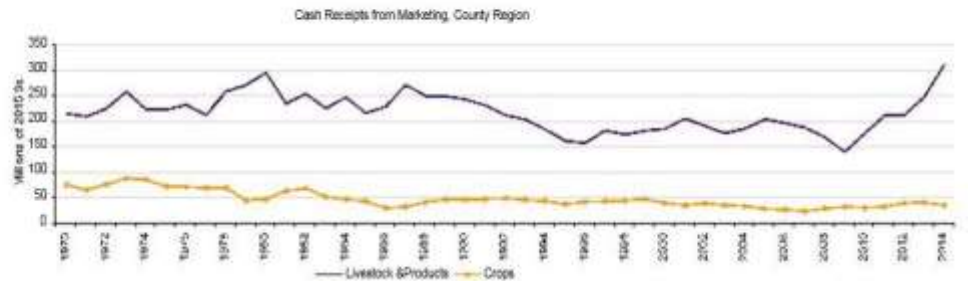
Total Net Income Including Corporate Farms, County Region

* From 1970 to 2014, net income including corporate farms shrank from \$54.9 million to \$29.2 million, a 46.6 percent decrease.



* From 1970 to 2014, cash receipts from livestock and products grew from \$215.5 million to \$311.4 million, a 44.5 percent increase.

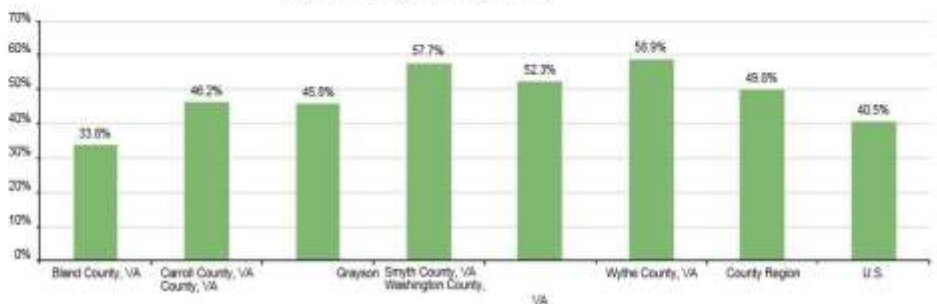
* From 1970 to 2014, cash receipts from crops shrank from \$75.5 million to \$35.7 million, a 52.8 percent decrease.



Number of Farms and Land in Farms (Acres), 2012

	Blind County, VA	Carroll County, VA	Grayson County, VA	Smyth County, VA	Washington County, VA	Wythe County, VA	County Region	U.S.
Number of Farms	362	680	764	792	1,002	952	5,452	2,109,303
Land in Farms (Acres)	77,456	140,474	131,522	166,656	152,123	174,950	882,791	914,527,657
Average Farm Size (Acres)	214	143	173	210	150	185	162	434
Approximate Land Area (Acres)	228,945	303,802	288,266	288,504	367,352	295,566	1,772,531	2,260,563,552
Approximate Percent of Land Area in Farms	33.8%	46.2%	45.6%	57.7%	52.3%	59.9%	49.8%	40.5%

Approximate Percent of Land Area in Farms, 2012



* In 2012, Wythe County, VA had the largest percent of land area in farms (59.9%), and Blind County, VA had the smallest (33.8%).

Number of Farms by Type, 2012

	Bland County, VA	Carroll County, VA	Grayson County, VA	Smyth County, VA	Washington County, VA	Wythe County, VA	County Region	U.S.
All Farms	362	993	764	792	1,602	952	5,452	2,109,303
Oileed & Grain Farming	4	0	2	2	2	9	19	369,332
Vegetable & Melon Farming	1	24	3	6	28	2	64	43,021
Fruit & Nut Tree Farming	0	26	12	3	21	6	68	93,020
Greenhouse, Nursery, etc.	1	29	85	19	22	4	170	52,777
Other Crop Farming	87	175	157	193	454	187	1,253	496,837
Beef Cattle Ranch. & Fam.	237	563	381	441	827	562	3,011	619,172
Cattle Feedlots	3	22	8	8	13	11	65	13,734
Dairy Cattle & Milk Prod.	1	11	12	10	21	30	85	46,005
Hog & Pig Farming	0	1	0	1	1	3	6	21,687
Poultry & Egg Production	4	21	3	4	11	0	43	52,849
Sheep & Goat Farming	8	31	21	28	60	22	170	73,272
Animal Aquaculture & Other Animal Prod.	16	77	70	77	142	118	458	227,597
Percent of Total								
Oileed & Grain Farming	1.1%	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.1%	0.9%	0.3%	17.5%
Vegetable & Melon Farming	0.3%	2.4%	0.4%	0.8%	1.7%	0.2%	1.2%	2.0%
Fruit & Nut Tree Farming	0.0%	2.7%	1.6%	0.4%	1.3%	0.6%	1.2%	4.4%
Greenhouse, Nursery, etc.	0.3%	3.0%	12.4%	2.4%	1.4%	0.4%	3.1%	2.5%
Other Crop Farming	24.0%	17.9%	20.5%	24.4%	28.3%	19.6%	23.0%	23.6%
Beef Cattle Ranch. & Fam.	65.2%	57.4%	49.9%	55.7%	51.6%	59.0%	55.2%	29.4%
Cattle Feedlots	0.8%	2.2%	1.0%	1.0%	0.8%	1.2%	1.2%	0.7%
Dairy Cattle & Milk Prod.	0.3%	1.1%	1.6%	1.3%	1.3%	3.2%	1.6%	2.2%
Hog & Pig Farming	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	1.0%
Poultry & Egg Production	1.1%	2.1%	0.4%	0.5%	0.7%	0.0%	0.8%	2.5%
Sheep & Goat Farming	2.2%	3.2%	2.7%	3.5%	3.7%	2.3%	3.1%	3.5%
Aquaculture & Other Prod.	4.4%	7.9%	9.2%	9.7%	8.9%	12.2%	9.1%	10.8%

Land in Farms According to Use (Acres), 2012

	Bland County, VA	Carroll County, VA	Grayson County, VA	Smyth County, VA	Washington County, VA	Wythe County, VA	County Region	U.S.
Land in Farms	77,456	140,474	131,922	188,686	192,123	174,160	882,791	914,627,657
Cropland	14,060	41,488	27,879	34,332	54,154	49,459	221,380	389,690,414
Woodland	29,765	31,574	42,073	40,798	44,770	33,016	221,964	77,012,907
Land in Farmsteads & Buildings	3,164	5,368	5,810	3,901	7,252	4,752	33,035	30,515,057
Permanent Pasture & Rangeland	30,457	62,073	56,300	87,627	85,947	86,933	429,352	415,309,280
Percent of Total								
Cropland	18.2%	29.5%	21.1%	20.6%	28.2%	28.4%	25.1%	42.8%
Woodland	38.4%	22.5%	31.9%	24.5%	23.9%	19.0%	25.1%	8.4%
Land in Farmsteads & Buildings	4.1%	3.8%	4.3%	2.1%	3.8%	2.7%	3.4%	3.8%
Permanent Pasture & Rangeland	39.3%	44.2%	42.7%	52.6%	44.7%	49.9%	46.4%	45.4%



Appendix E – Manufacturing

Manufacturing Cluster Data

Purdue University, Center for Regional Development, Regional Snapshot: Mount Rogers Region

Manufacturing is rated as a star cluster (strong, concentrated and growing). The industry has a location quotient of 2.55, meaning there are 2.55 more manufacturing jobs in the region than the national average.

2009-2014: 3% increase in manufacturing employment in the region from 14,286 to 14,666. State manufacturing employment decreased 2.1% in the same time frame.

Shift-share analysis—7 industries in the manufacturing supercluster experienced positive regional performance, outpacing national employment figures.

Those industries are: truck trailer manufacturing, motor vehicle steering and suspension components manufacturing, plate work manufacturing, mining machinery and equipment manufacturing, travel trailer and camper manufacturing, motor vehicle gasoline engine and engine parts manufacturing

Significant leakage-- \$1.07 billion in expenditures are dedicated to the manufacturing supercluster, 93% of which is satisfied outside of the region. Only \$65 million of input expenditures are spent within the region.

Virginia LMI Mount Rogers Community Profile

12 of the 50 largest employers in the area are in the manufacturing industry (excludes food manufacturing/agribusiness employers)

2. Utility Trailer Manufacturing

11. Bristol Compressors International

15. Electro Mechanical Corporation

16. General Dynamics Armament

17. Camac Corporation

22. Parkdale Mills Inc.

23. Paramount Manufacturing

26. Royal Mouldings Limited

27. ABB Service Company Division

32. Somic America Inc.

41. Strongwell

43. TRW Automotive US LLC

Long-term Employment Projections 2012-2022

Manufacturing industry—3% decrease 230,941 to 224,319



Production occupations—2012-2022, 1.87% increase 182,924 to 186,349

Educational institutions/training providers: Emory and Henry College, Virginia Highlands Community College, Wytheville Community College, Washington County Adult Skill Center