

ONWARD 2028:

JOIN THE MOVEMENT.



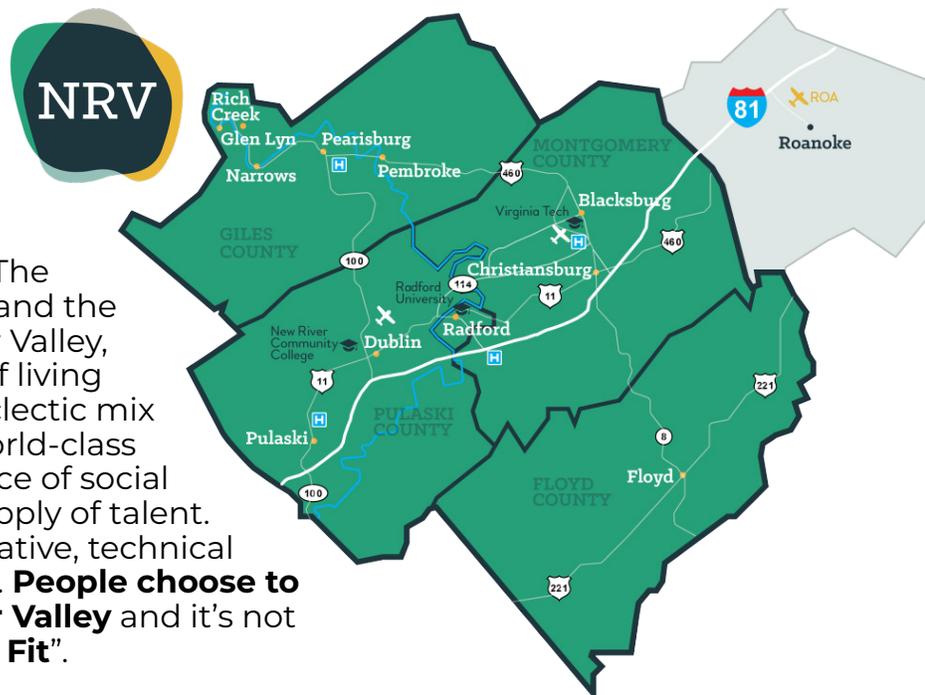


OUR MISSION & VISION

Established in 1990, Onward NRV is a public/private, regional economic development organization whose mission is to attract and retain world class jobs, investment and talent in Virginia's New River Valley. Our organization markets the region as a premier destination to live, work, and do business and builds collaborative partnerships that support the economic vitality of the region. Onward NRV works to unify leaders from business, government, and higher education around a common vision and goals for the New River Valley and moves the region forward with these partners through the execution of Onward 2028, our new five-year economic development strategic plan. [Join the Movement.](#)

OUR REGION

When a community fits, you feel it. The scenery inspires, the people connect, and the work feels easy. In Virginia's New River Valley, there is no need to sell. The benefits of living here surround you. The region is an eclectic mix of interconnected small towns and world-class universities that produce an abundance of social and cultural offerings and a steady supply of talent. The NRV is at once: organic and innovative, technical and agricultural, artistic and scientific. **People choose to live and work in Virginia's New River Valley** and it's not hard to see why. It's simply **"A Natural Fit"**.



FIVE YEARS OF PROGRESS

When Onward NRV began implementing the Onward 2023 strategic plan in July 2018, we set specific goals for both regional metrics and organizational metrics. Below are the results for both sets of metrics after the completion of the five-year strategy.

REGIONAL SUCCESS:



During the past five years, Virginia's New River Valley surpassed the regional economic development goals originally set in the Onward 2023 strategic plan. 24 new or expanding companies announced plans to create 2,530 jobs and invest nearly \$551 million in the NRV.

ONWARD NRV SUCCESS:



200

NEW PROSPECTS
(121% of 5-Year Goal)



362K

WEBSITE VISITS
(307% of 5-Year Goal)



494K

SOCIAL
ENGAGEMENT
(1098% of 5-Year Goal)



48

PROSPECT VISITS
(73% of 5-Year Goal)



111

INVESTORS
(93% of 5-Year Goal)

LOOKING ONWARD

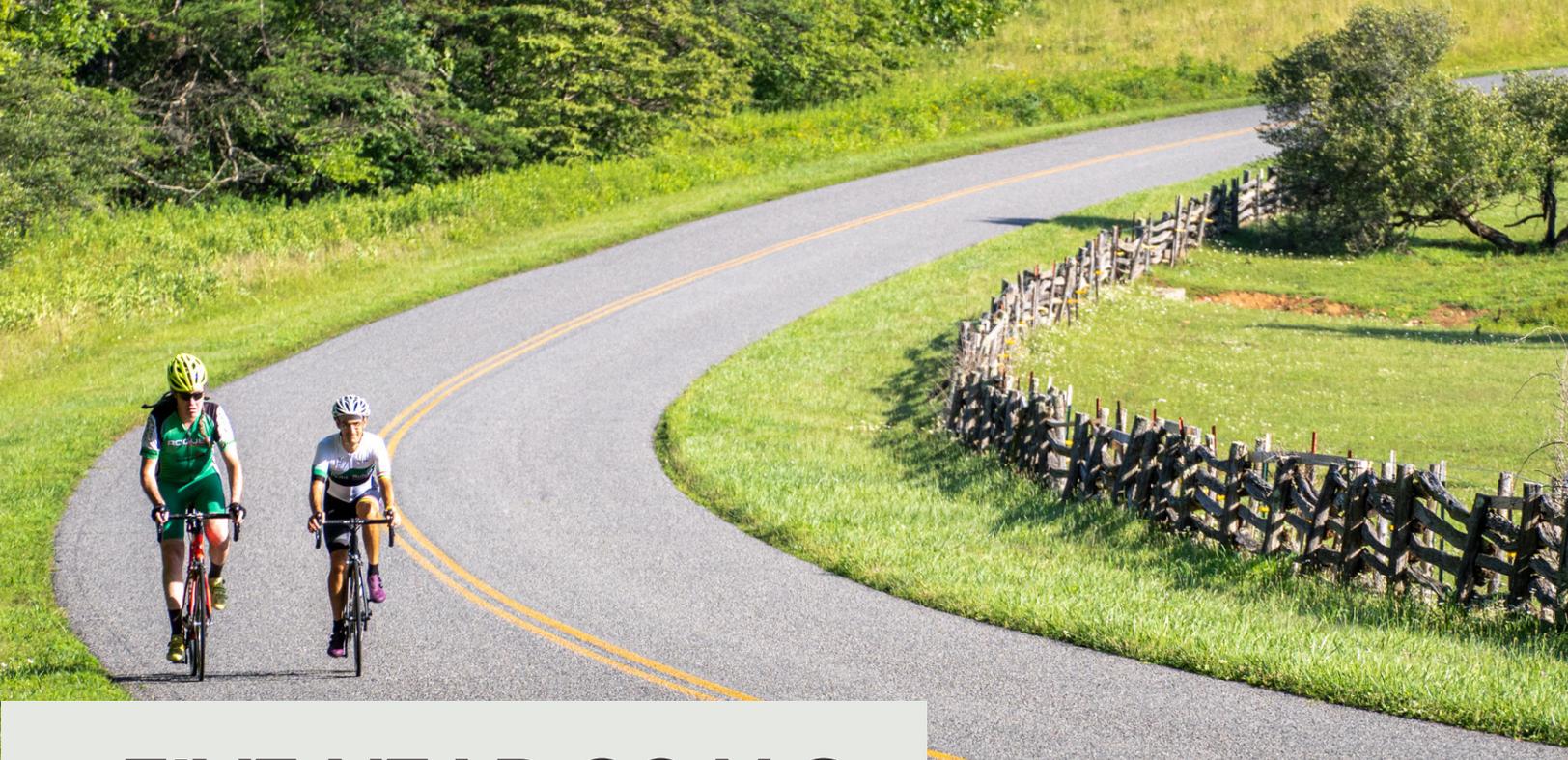
ONWARD 2028: A NEW FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

The Onward 2028 strategic plan, which began on July 1, 2023, supports Onward NRV's mission to attract and retain world-class jobs, investment, and talent in Virginia's New River Valley. It is a roadmap for new business attraction, talent retention and attraction, and ensuring the New River Valley remains a competitive destination for business and people. In addition, the strategic plan outlines strategies for Onward NRV to lead collaboration across the region, sparking innovation and cross-pollinating ideas.

Onward 2028 uses a holistic approach to economic development to focus our organization's work on four main goals:

- **Goal 1 (Talent)** is to attract and retain talent to support regional growth.
- **Goal 2 (Business)** is attract and grow business to stimulate new jobs and investment.
- **Goal 3 (Marketing)** is to market the NRV as a competitive destination for talent and companies.
- **Goal 4 (Regionalism)** is to strengthen the connectedness of the region.





FIVE-YEAR GOALS

ORGANIZATIONAL METRICS

These organizational metrics will measure Onward NRV’s performance on implementing the Onward 2028 five-year strategic plan for outcomes that are within our control.

Metric	Growth (from Onward 2023 outcomes)	5-Year Goal
New Prospects	10%	190
Prospect Visits (Virtual or In-Person)	22%	55
NRV Social Media Engagement	39%	450,000
NRV Website Visits	43%	400,000
Number of Engaged Investors	22%	140

REGIONAL METRICS

Regional metrics are different than organizational metrics in that they are complex and no single entity has control over the numerous variables that affect them. By executing the Onward 2028 plan, Onward NRV hopes to focus the region on achieving these goals.

Metric	5-Year Goal
Total New Capital Investment (33% New Companies; 67% Existing Companies)	\$250 Million
Total New Primary Jobs (33% New Companies; 67% Existing Companies)	2,500

ONWARD 2028 INITIATIVES

1 Attract & Retain Talent to Support Regional Growth

1. **Work to retain graduates and program completers from local colleges**
 - i. Expand the NRV Experience program.
 - ii. Develop employer tool kits on “how to run an internship” with contacts to local colleges.
 - iii. Update the brain drain study.
 - iv. Attend on-campus career fairs to promote the NRV as a place to live, work, and play.
 - v. Engage with on-campus career centers.
 - vi. Expand marketing reach by distributing content through local EDOs.
2. **Promote job openings and in-demand careers within targeted sectors**
 - i. Update and maintain the NRV Job Board and promote through digital strategies.
 - ii. Add an upskilling section to the website..
 - iii. Execute digital marketing strategies promoting careers in target sectors.
 - iv. Expand videos showcasing in-demand careers.
 - v. Engage with the WIB and CTE programs to be an advocate for industry needs.
 - vi. Compile a “work in the NRV” package of materials to share with K-12 educators.
3. **Encourage quality-of-life enhancements**
 - i. Collect and monitor cost of living data quarterly and promote the NRV’s advantages.
 - ii. Engage the NRV Livability Initiative including hosting a livability event.
 - iii. Increase support of the NRV Rail Initiative.
 - iv. Support regional destination developments that will attract talent and visitors.
4. **Promote scaling and cross pollination of best practice programs across the region**
 - i. Host annual talent summit to showcase best practices in education & workforce development.
 - ii. Produce quick reference/matrix guide to encourage cross-pollination of good programs.
 - iii. Identify grant sources to scale best practice programs in the region.
 - iv. Leverage regional partners such as the NRVRC and the CFNRV.
5. **Convene partners to highlight the impact of housing and childcare**
 - i. Support a regional meeting to draw attention to the need for housing.
 - ii. Support a regional meeting to draw attention to the need for childcare.

2 Attract & Grow Business to Stimulate New Jobs and Investment

1. **Cultivate new business investment opportunities**
 - i. Increase outreach to site consultants, engagement with VEDP, and direct lead generation.
 - ii. Engage local EDOs in the development and implementation of an annual lead generation calendar of events.
 - iii. Host and support prospect visits.
 - iv. Support local partners as projects narrow focus within the region.
 - v. Develop regional approach to entrepreneur development.
2. **Support existing business competitiveness**
 - i. Host target cluster summits in partnership with local businesses and localities.
 - ii. Develop a regional supplier/manufacturing matching portal to link NRV businesses and create opportunities for small business development.
 - iii. Explore a scale-up program for growing smaller businesses.
 - iv. Annually survey companies in target sectors to assess needs to inform the regional agenda.
 - v. Engage centers of innovation and talent through local higher education.
 - vi. Participate in the Ridge & Valley chapter of AUVSI.
3. **Advocate for ready-to-go sites and buildings**
 - i. Track/assess inventory of available sites/buildings.
 - ii. Track and assess prospect requirements trends and share with local EDOs.
 - iii. Produce and share a report that shows “missed opportunities” due to lack of product.
 - iv. Conduct regional analysis to identify potential new sites in each locality and multi-jurisdictional development opportunities.
 - v. Identify sources of funding for regional product development initiatives.
 - vi. Create a “shovel-ready” toolkit for LEDOs to use to inform local leaders on steps to develop product.
 - vii. Promote the NRV to private sector developers.
4. **Promote FTZ #238 and the FTZ Program**
 - i. Network with other FTZ grantees and connect with Virginia FTZs annually for updates.
 - ii. Attend NAFTAZ programming.
 - iii. Provide training to economic development partners in the FTZ #238 service area.
 - iv. Host a seminar/webinar about FTZs for regional manufacturers and distributors.
 - v. Develop relationships with third-party advisors to companies on FTZ matters to provide referrals.
 - vi. Integrate FTZ #238 into NRV marketing materials.

3 Market the NRV as a Competitive Destination for Talent & Companies

4 Strengthen the Connectedness of the Region

1. Cultivate the regional brand for the NRV

- i. Increase brand awareness of Virginia's New River Valley via digital engagement.
- ii. Create NRV brand ambassador program to encourage community engagement.
- iii. Expand the distribution of NRV branded swag through brand ambassador program.
- iv. Seek co-op marketing opportunities, especially geared toward the outdoors, with the Roanoke Regional Partnership and Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance.
- v. Host an annual meeting of the local EDO group and the regional tourism collaboration to identify synergies in marketing.

2. Promote regional business advantages

- i. Execute digital marketing strategies to reinforce business and industry messaging.
- ii. Present relevant information and data through the website and regional guidebooks.
- iii. Create marketing assets with messaging specific to each target industry sector.
- iv. Produce and update videos showcasing available sites and buildings.

3. Promote the livability story of the NRV

- i. Execute digital marketing strategies to reinforce "livability/outdoors" messaging.
- ii. Update and maintain compelling information and resources through website about living/relocating to NRV, including the cost-of-living calculator and a listing of co-work/remote workspaces.
- iii. Continue to produce updated videos reinforcing livability and outdoors messaging.
- iv. Encourage local employers to leverage livability assets to support talent attraction through a livability presentation that showcases the cost-of-living calculator, relocation guide, and job board.

1. Identify sources of funding for economic development

- i. Identify and apply for regional grants that will support regional strategies and advance economic development.
- ii. Develop a list of economic development grant resources that support local and regional strategies and promote to local EDOs.
- iii. Host informational meetings with grant sources, especially when a new funding opportunity emerges.

2. Lead regional collaboration and thought leadership

- i. Host regional events to promote collaboration such as an annual "state of the regional economy" event.
- ii. Publish business and industry information and host webinars that raise awareness of target sectors, job opportunities, and economic trends.
- iii. Be visible in the region through community meetings and Onward NRV presentations.
- iv. Work to raise the visibility of Onward NRV via media.
- v. Host regular local EDO meetings.

3. Lead multi-regional regional collaboration

- i. Seek out multi-regional projects and initiatives with the Roanoke Regional Partnership, Mount Rogers Regional Partnership, and Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance.
- ii. Seek to expand/franchise best-practice programs from neighboring regions into the NRV.



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