



VIRGINIA'S REGION 2000 TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL

CONNECTING THE TECHNOLOGY COMMUNITY

STRATEGIC PLAN

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A member of Virginia's Region 2000 Partnership

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The technology community in Region 2000 is represented through participation in and support of the Technology Council by a mix of technologists, engineers, IT professionals, technology business owners, representatives from higher education, and interested parties in economic development.

Since its inception ten years ago, the Technology Council has made great strides in our mission to create an environment that fosters innovation and growth within the technology sector of Virginia's Region 2000 while providing valuable services to local companies and assisting with the recruitment of technology-based opportunities. Our accomplishments in technology-based economic development advocacy, networking, event offerings, education, and promotion have been duly noted within the business community and have helped to launch initiatives such as the Center for Advanced Engineering and Research that create value and opportunities for growth in the region's technology sector.

Defining the role of the Council has not been an easy task. As all encompassing as the word technology is, it brings different thoughts into the minds of those trying to define it. While the technology council has attempted to be a clearinghouse for all things technology in the past, our mission and objectives have steadily become much more narrowly focused. Today, the Technology Council's role in the community can be summed up in four major areas: Network and Promote the Technology Sector, Advocate for Technology Businesses, Develop a Technology Focused Workforce Pipeline for current and new employers in Region 2000 and Facilitate the Growth of Technology-Focused Entrepreneurship.

While Virginia steadily leads the nation in new technology jobs and company growth, there is great disparity in the technology communities that comprise the Commonwealth; ten technology regions have been established. Each region is different, with its own focus and objectives for growth. Ours can best be summarized as one that we will call "user heavy but poised for growth". Technology companies can be defined in three broad categories: producers, innovators, and users. Technology Producers are companies that produce or sustain technological goods or services. Technology Innovators are companies that help to open up new lines of research or advance existing technology. And lastly, technology users are those companies that heavily rely on technology to sustain or grow their business operations.

With a traditional manufacturing and service base in the region, most companies here are classified as technology users; we have a modest number of technology Producers and Innovators - those entrepreneurial companies that fuel explosive growth within their business sector. The Council will continue to support the growing technology

companies that we do have, pursue new opportunities to recruit companies that fit well within the industry clusters in the region and work to build entrepreneurial capacity for new start-up firms. The Council has the responsibility of education and creation of a mindset towards technology-based jobs. Perhaps the most difficult task that lies ahead for us is to make students, parents, and existing businesses understand the importance of education and an interest in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). As companies of all descriptions innovate their respective business operations and with a nationwide shortage of qualified employees, it is imperative that the citizens of Region 2000 adopt a “grow-your-own” mentality. Without a fundable, growing, and active base of volunteers, the Council and the community stands to lose out to more progressive communities at both the state and national level.

Over the past several years, our work to bring along our partner organizations towards a TBED (Technology Based Economic Development) mindset has consumed much of our time and focus. We are now at a stage where our partner organizations fully understand, embrace, and are working towards strategies that will transform our regional economy into one that is empowered by innovative, entrepreneurial, and technology-focused companies. Through the Region 2000 Partnership, our two main partners include the Region 2000 Economic Development Council and the Center for Advanced Engineering and Research. Other partners within the Region 2000 Partnership include the Region 2000 Workforce Investment Board, the Young Professionals of Central Virginia, and the Region 2000 Local Government Council.

With the success of our STEM Programs and our vision for TBED being adopted by our key strategic partners, we are now growing programs that will be of direct benefit to our member companies and supporters of the technology community. In the tough economic times we are facing, it is more important than ever to work hard for those companies that have made investments in our collective vision for the future.

Strengthening our membership base and support services are serving as a catalyst to our vision, mission, and objectives. We are building upon the feeling that “something unique is happening in the technology community”. More members and activity will mean more opportunities for growth across all levels. Now is the time to reach out to new industries and explore opportunities to have our efforts recognized across the Commonwealth of Virginia and beyond.

We believe that with the combination of our membership and the shared vision of the Region 2000 Partnership, the technology community has a bright and promising future ahead of it.

VISION

Virginia's Region 2000 will be recognized as a place where technology-focused organizations thrive, STEM educational programs flourish, and where innovation and technology-based entrepreneurship are championed.

MISSION

To foster an environment that stimulates innovation and growth of technology-focused organizations in Virginia's Region 2000.

OBJECTIVES

- >>> Promote the development, growth, and recognition of the region's technology-focused organizations
- >>> Provide a forum in which technology-focused organizations can exchange ideas and information, and capitalize on business opportunities
- >>> Deliver programs and services that promote the recognition of and provide substantial value to the Council's members
- >>> Participate in activities to drive visibility and awareness of the Region 2000 Technology Council, its members, and the region to other regions within the state
- >>> Serve as an advocate for the Region on a broad range of technology issues at the local and state level
- >>> Provide assistance to local economic developers in the recruitment of new technology companies, technology park implementation efforts, and the development of programs that enhance services to existing companies
- >>> Create an environment and sustainable programs in the region's K-12 schools that enhance Science, Technology, Engineering and Math career choices
- >>> Facilitate the growth of services within the region that support technology-focused entrepreneurship and create an environment that champions entrepreneurial success

EXISTING STRATEGIES

The Council has four areas of primary focus in order to fulfill our mission and accomplish our objectives: Technology Focused Business Advocacy, Networking and Promotion, Building a STEM Workforce Pipeline and Facilitating the Growth of Technology-Focused Entrepreneurship. We allocate our finances, staff, and volunteer resources across these four areas.

Technology-Focused Business Advocacy

The Technology Council works in five areas as an advocate for the region's technology-focused organizations:

1. We provide assistance to the region's economic developers in the recruitment of new technology-focused companies, technology park implementation efforts, and the development of programs that enhance services to existing companies.
2. We serve as an advocate for the region on a broad range of technology issues at the local and state level through direct contact with elected officials and partner organizations such as Virginia's Center for Innovative Technology.
3. We participate in several statewide organizations to drive visibility and awareness of the Region 2000 Technology Council, its members, and the region to other regions within the state.
4. We provide assistance to the Center for Advanced Engineering and Research to bring University lead research and development to local companies and expand educational opportunities at a post graduate level.
5. We provide technical assistance to Technology-Focused Entrepreneurs through our network of colleges, universities, non-profits, and various business support organizations.

Networking and Promotion

The Technology Council provides a forum in which technology-focused organizations can exchange ideas and information, and capitalize on business opportunities. The Council also promotes the development, growth and recognition of the region's technology organizations and capabilities. We host numerous events annually that accomplish these two goals.

1. **Wired Wednesday Luncheon:** Quarterly Lunch and Learn event that focuses on a specific business or technology topic from a regional expert.

2. **Tech@Breakfast:** Quarterly breakfast meeting that invites local technology-focused companies to present information about their business or developing technologies within their industry.

3. **Technology Awards Banquet:** As the premier-networking event of the year, the annual awards banquet recognizes the best and brightest in the region's technology sector.

4. **CIO Roundtable:** Quarterly networking opportunity for area CIO's and IT Executives over lunch.

S.T.E.M. Workforce Pipeline

The Technology Council supports numerous programs through its educational foundation (Future Focus Foundation) that are building a technology-focused workforce for employers in the region, specifically those that focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math initiatives with our region's K-12 students. We are engaged in the following programs:

1. **Jr. FIRST Lego League:** Jr. FIRST Lego League introduces kids ages 6 to 9 (grades K – 3) to the exciting worlds of science and technology. The Council is currently growing this program into its second year, supports 15 local teams and hosts an annual regional tournament for more than 25 teams.

2. **FIRST Lego League:** FIRST Lego League (FLL) is an exciting and fun global robotics program that ignites an enthusiasm for discovery, science, and technology in kids ages 9 to 14. The Council financially supports several local teams and an annual regional competition for more than 25 teams.

3. **Vex Robotics:** Vex Robotics is robotics program for kids ages 14-18 that builds upon the foundation of FIRST Lego League. The Council hosts a competition between local high school teams at the annual Technology Fair at CVCC and supports an annual regional tournament hosted by Liberty University.

4. **Technology Fair:** Held each May at Central VA Community College (CVCC), the Council is a supporter of the region's only technology fair for high school students. Students from area high schools compete in a variety of technology-focused competitions.

5. **Summer Middle School Academies:** In conjunction with Tech Prep and CVCC, the Council offers week long technology camps to area middle school students. Students participate in one of 15 different camps. A sample of camps include: Women in Engineering, Aviation Technology, Health Technology, Advanced Manufacturing,

Building Trades, Information Technology and Motor sports.

6. **Get Set:** The Council and CVCC put out an annual magazine for the region's 8th and 9th grade students that showcase the variety of technology based job opportunities available to students and the educational pathways needed to enter these job fields. In addition, we host the Get Set website (www.getset.cc) which is an online portal for students, parents, educators and companies that match makes career interests and educational opportunities.

7. **Central VA Governor's School Science Fair:** Held each May, the Council is a corporate sponsor of the region's only area-wide science fair for 5th through 8th grade students.

8. **Future Focus Career EXPO:** Held each October, we bring together industry and education in a trade-show format where students can explore career opportunities within Region 2000. Students from more than 25 area middle and high schools and 50 companies participate each year with more than 1500 students in attendance.

9. **Partners in Education:** The Council is a partner with Lynchburg City School's Computer Systems Technology program. We provide assistance to the program by bringing in area representatives from industry to meet with the instructor and students and seek to facilitate real world learning experiences.

10. **Tech Prep Career Pathways:** This consortium consists of representatives from the region's public schools, CVCC, area employers and the Technology Council. The consortium provides students in the region with educational opportunities organized around career pathways that lead to rewarding careers. The Council's role in this program is to facilitate relationships between industry and K-12 education.

11. **Customized Training Classes:** In Partnership with Central Virginia Community College, we offer customized training classes to companies seeking training in areas that are outside the scope of normal class offerings or those that have low class enrollment.

SPECIFIC TACTICS

We will continue to expand our four areas of primary focus in order to fulfill our mission and accomplish our objectives through specific tactics.

Technology-Focused Business Advocacy

1. Work with the Region 2000 Economic Development Council in the development of a regional TBED (Technology Based Economic Development) strategy that can be executed by the Partners of the Region 2000 Partnership and clearly communicated to regional stakeholders. The plan will identify critical strategies needed to further develop a TBED economy and define the roles of each organization that participates.
2. Seek to serve local legislators in a greater capacity by offering guidance and advice in areas of expertise from within the membership of the Council. Examples include: appointments to boards and committees, testimony before legislative committees, and participation in legislative events.
3. Become the leading voice of industry and technology-based economic development within the Commonwealth on STEM Workforce Development issues. Examples include: the creation of or participation in legislative committees that deal with STEM issues and advocating for STEM development within the VA Department of Education.

Networking and Promotion

1. **Virtual Networks:** Expand our website and blog and continue the growth of social networking tools such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter to build more interaction between and communication to our members and the community.
2. **Topical Events:** Partner with Virginia's Center for Innovative Technology, Central Virginia PTAC, Southside Business Technology Center and other organizations that offer valuable information to our member companies. Topical events can take any format necessary.
3. **Specialized Networks:** Expand upon our quarterly CIO roundtables and develop new specialized networking groups such as Small Business Technology Owners, Chief Technology Officers, Business Development Managers, and STEM Educators.

S.T.E.M. Workforce Pipeline

1. **Future Focus Foundation:** Continue to seek new grant-funding opportunities for our Future Focus Foundation, which supports the growth of K-12 STEM programs and activities in our region's public and private schools.
2. **STEM Programs:** Continue support for numerous STEM educational programs held in conjunction with our education and industry partners.
3. **Professional Development:** Facilitate professional development in STEM-related topics for local K-12 educators, CTE directors, and Instructional Specialists.
4. **Redevelop and Promote the Get Set Website:** Promote the Get Set website as the place for all regional STEM activities and information to students, parents, and businesses.
5. **Establish New Relationships:** Establish new relationships with K-12 schools, PTA's, non-profit organizations and community groups in order to grow the STEM Workforce Pipeline.

Facilitate the Growth of Technology-Focused Entrepreneurship

1. **Economic Development Council:** Work with the Region 2000 EDC to establish a long-term strategic plan for technology-focused entrepreneurial support programs within Region 2000.
2. **Central VA Community College:** Work with CVCC to develop a collaborative relationship along with the Region 2000 EDC in order to establish a regional entrepreneurship advisory committee with input from other local colleges and universities.
3. **Promote Entrepreneurial Success:** Promote entrepreneurial success from within the technology community through our website, blog, press releases and social media channels to raise greater awareness of the importance of entrepreneurial programs and services.
4. **Technology Conference:** Hold a daylong conference, possibly in conjunction with Awards Night, which will bring together expert speakers to address the needs of launching and growing technology businesses.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

1. Become more inclusive of our base of “technology-user” companies within the region. Expand our membership scope to include companies that fit within the following industries: Energy, Wireless, Information Technology, Pharmaceutical, Manufacturing, and Engineering. Continue to seek membership from those companies that wish to support our mission and objectives.
2. Become well known within Region 2000 and across the Commonwealth for the quality of our organization and the work we accomplish, especially in the area of STEM Workforce Development.
3. Attract new technology companies to the region in conjunction with our partners and members, through either relocation assistance or entrepreneurial activities.
4. Annually, reach more than 3,000 students with hands-on activities through our Future Focus Foundation. Quantify the success of these programs with local employers and the educational/career paths these students take.
5. Facilitate the development of a regional STEM/Career Academy to benefit high school juniors and seniors from across Region 2000. Such an academy will center on our region’s core industry clusters and will involve their support and guidance along with that from the region’s five public school systems and Central Virginia Community College.
6. Launch a coordinated entrepreneurial support program with our regional partners that is specifically focused on meeting the needs of technology companies.
7. Launch and manage a coordinated BRE (Business Retention and Expansion) call program to insure that we are meeting with and providing assistance to our members and those companies that support the Region 2000 Partnership.



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