



VIRGINIA'S REGION 2000
TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL

**Region 2000 Technology Council
Strategic Plan**

Adopted September 4, 2009

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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 IT (Information Technology) leaders, technology business owners, representatives from higher education, and interested parties in economic development.

An eight-year-old organization, 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 explosive growth in the region's technology sector.

Defining technology and 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 been 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 three major areas: Network and Promote the Technology Sector, Advocate for Technology Businesses, and Develop a Technology Focused Workforce Pipeline for current and new employers in Region 2000.

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 and pursue new opportunities to recruit companies that fit well within the industry clusters in the region. 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 loose 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 our partner organizations working in cooperation towards TBED strategies, it is now time to build our base of supporters. With limited staff and resources, it has been difficult to focus energy in two places. Our growth and success in championing TBED has led to a decline in member support services. With the hiring of a STEM Program Manager and our vision for TBED being adopted by our key strategic partners, we now have the opportunity to grow programs that will be of direct benefit to our member companies and supporters. 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 will serve as a catalyst to our vision, mission, and objectives. We will build upon the feeling that “something unique is happening in the technology community” by executing a strategic communications plan that incorporates techniques from word-of-mouth to social networking. 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.

Within the confines of our organization 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 the Virginia Technology Alliance 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 interest

Existing Strategies

The Council has three areas of primary focus in order to fulfill our mission and accomplish our objectives: Technology Focused Business Advocacy, Networking and Promotion and building a STEM Workforce Pipeline. We allocate our finances, staff, and volunteer resources across these three 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 the Virginia Technology Alliance 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 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. **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.

3. **CIO Roundtable:** Facilitate quarterly networking opportunities for area CIO's and IT Executives over lunch.

S.T.E.M. Workforce Pipeline

The Technology Council supports numerous programs 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. **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 2 local teams and an annual regional competition for more than 25 teams.

2. **Vex Robotics:** FIRST Vex Robotics is an intermediate program between FIRST Lego and FIRST Robotics. The Council hosts a competition between local high-school teams at the annual Technology Fair at CVCC.

3. **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.

4. **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.

5. **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); an online portal for students, parents, educators and companies that match makes career interests and educational opportunities.

6. **Discovery Challenge 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. As a part of the Central VA Regional Science Fair this event is affiliated with the Discovery Channel Young Scientist Challenge.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

New Tactics

We will expand our three areas of primary focus in order to fulfill our mission and accomplish our objectives. New strategies will be introduced in each of these areas.

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. Becoming 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 Dept. of Education.

Networking and Promotion

1. **B2B Forum:** Continue to explore the creation of an annual event that brings together local Technology Companies in a forum that allows them to network and share detailed information about their company with a goal of increasing new business between participating companies. The forum may develop into smaller industry focused events.
2. **Tech Breakfast:** Create a quarterly breakfast meeting that invites local companies to present information about their businesses and/or upcoming technologies within their industry. The Tech Breakfast will alternate months with Wired Wednesdays.
3. **Topic Events:** Partner with Virginia's Center for Innovative Technology, Central Virginia PTAC and other organizations that offer valuable information to our member companies. Topic events can take any format necessary.
4. **Social Networking:** The Technology Council will develop a new website and make use of social networking tools such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter to build more interaction between and communication to our members and the community.

S.T.E.M. Workforce Pipeline

1. **Future Focus Foundation:** Establish a 501C3 non-profit organization with the mission of supporting the growth of K-12 STEM programs and activities in our region's public and private schools.
2. **Internship Program:** Establish and promote an internship program to be publicized through the Future Focus Foundation website. The program will include at least four local employers seeking interns for the summer of 2010. The program will be advertised to college intern coordinators and engineering schools.
3. **VEX Tournament:** Facilitate a regional VEX robotics tournament at Liberty University in the spring of 2009. The tournament will include all local public and private VEX teams.
4. **Children's Engineering Program:** Facilitate the establishment of the children's engineering program at TC Miller Elementary School by assisting with locating funds for the program.
5. **Professional Development:** Facilitate professional development in STEM-related topics for local K-12 educators.
6. **Speakers Bureau:** Establish and grow a regional speaker's bureau and make it accessible to educators via the GetSet website.
7. **Promote the GetSet Website:** Promote the GetSet website as the place for all regional STEM activities and information to students, parents, and businesses.
8. **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.

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. More than double our membership base and position the organization well for the next Region 2000 Partnership capital campaign to be conducted in the 2011/2012 timeframe.
4. Assist in the recruitment of 10 companies to the region and the creation of 10 new start-up companies within the region by the next capital campaign.
5. Develop a communications plan with multiple communications tools to adequately reach our members and the community with information about our events and opportunities to participate in various activities.
6. Increase our operating reserve to 15% of annual budget.
7. Expand the STEM Workforce Program Manager position from part-time to full-time and hire a part-time administrative assistant.
8. Annually, reach more 2500 students through our STEM outreach programs. Quantify the success of these programs with local employers and the educational/career paths these students take.
9. Secure \$50,000 annually in new grant funding through the Future Focus Foundation to underwrite K-12 STEM outreach programs.