

THE CRATER REGIONAL  
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT GROUP  
& VIRGINIA'S GATEWAY REGION  
**WORKFORCE GUIDE**



*We want to help your business thrive in today's marketplace.*

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Has your company ever instituted a new software package, which only a few executives and administrators were fluent in? Has your company ever changed its customer and client service policies on a large-scale basis? Has your company ever implemented new systems to streamline production and improve efficiency?

If you can answer “yes” to any of these questions, then you’re probably familiar with what a company-wide training program looks like. And if you’re familiar with those programs, then you’re also aware that these programs can present challenges for any company.

If you’re trying to train your employees in-house, then you know that it can consume time and important resources. If you hire an outside consulting agency, it can cost a considerable amount of money with no guarantee of success.

**U.S. companies spent more than \$60 billion for employee training last year. That’s nearly \$500 per employee for every worker at every company in the United States.**

How can your company avoid contributing to that astronomical figure? If you operate in central Virginia, call the **Crater Regional Workforce Investment Group (CRWIG)**.

### **Who We Are**

The Crater Regional Workforce Investment Group is a federally-funded organization dedicated to helping businesses in central Virginia hire and train their workforces. Created by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, we’ve helped many companies adapt to changing technologies, markets, and workplaces. Our services extend to companies located in the cities of Colonial Heights, Petersburg, Hopewell, and Emporia as well as the counties of Chesterfield, Prince George, Dinwiddie, Sussex, Surry, and Greensville. We can provide customized solutions ranging from basic training, such as customer service and corporate protocols, to advanced topics like software learning and management strategies.

Allow us to train your workers on-site or off-site using our many educational partners within the community. Our staff consists of industry experts from across the corporate, manufacturing, and service sectors, which

gives us the ability to adapt our training programs to meet your company’s needs using leading-edge platforms and techniques.

We operate several of our programs through two of the area’s outstanding community colleges, **J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College** and **John Tyler Community College**, which have several campuses located across our area. Collectively known as the **Community College Workforce Alliance (CCWA)**, these two colleges provide excellent locations for off-site training courses and seminars, assessments, and even job fairs to help recruit new employees.

Supporting a comprehensive approach to workplace preparedness, the CCWA maintains its commitment to economic development by providing educational programs for current and future employees that enhance marketplace knowledge, skills and abilities.





### ***Partners of the Crater Regional Workforce Investment Group***

Of course, the Crater Regional Workforce Investment Group's most important partners have been the companies for whom it has helped create workforce solutions. In doing that, however, the CRWIG has been supported by local partners and institutions that have offered their time, service, and facilities for the benefit of the local business community.

Founded in 1988, **Mirror Enterprise, Inc. (MEI)** provides strategic organizational alignment through HR consulting and professional development training. MEI offers a broad spectrum of services, including diversity training, leadership development, customer service, team building and management/supervisory training. By bridging the gap between employee performance requirements and companies' business goals, MEI develops people to grow businesses.

Since 2001, the **Moving Forward Agency (MFA)** has offered quality services in individual consultation, group facilitation, program development and staff training to organizations. The MFA can offer customized individual or group training for both management and staff on topics ranging from strategic planning to soft skills training.

Central Virginia's outstanding continuing education system provides excellent partners for the CRWIG from the world of academia, including:

**John Tyler Community College** is a public two-year institution of higher education that has been serving the community since 1967. The College offers a variety of programs and services to primarily the residents of the cities of Colonial Heights, Hopewell and Petersburg; and the counties of Amelia, Charles City, Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Prince George, Surry and Sussex.

**J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College**—Virginia's newest community college—was founded in 1972 to serve the capitol region in and around the city of Richmond. In just over 25 years, J. Sargeant Reynolds has grown into the third largest college in the Virginia Community College System, enrolling students at three major campuses, at five off-campus sites, and "virtually" through distance learning.

**Virginia State University's (VSU)** School of Graduate Studies, Research and Outreach provides access for non-traditional students in the surrounding counties to continue their education toward formal degree programs, for professional growth or for self-enrichment.

Our partners also include for-profit universities such as **ECPI**, **Strayer University**, and **ITT Technical Institute**, which all have campuses in the central Virginia area. With their ability to design curriculum based specifically on various corporate needs, these institutions can serve as excellent off-site training centers for large-scale training initiatives.



## ***Programs That Can Help Develop Your Business***

### ***INDUSTRY INSIDERS AND INDUSTRY STANDARDS***

With access to both industry experts and college faculty, the CRWIG and the CCWA can partner to develop a broad series of training and educational programs to explicitly meet your company's needs. Our partnership can also mark your employees' development through industry certifications and standards, such as technical degrees.

### ***E-LEARNING POSSIBILITIES***

With companies using e-learning programs more widely every year, the CRWIG has recognized the importance of providing area companies with the newest advances in these programs.

We can conduct our e-learning seminars at your facilities or at a satellite location in conjunction with our partners in the CCWA. Our designers can create either software-based or web-based learning solutions for subjects as diverse as customer service, project and office management, manufacturing processes, and company protocol. These programs will not only simply help your workers, but give them a consequence-free environment to apply their new knowledge towards real-life situations.

### ***YOUR PLACE OR OURS?***

With two easily-accessible corporate centers throughout central Virginia and the ability to bring its expertise on-site, the CCWA is a major partner in our training program. Both community colleges have ample space to host one-day training seminars or ongoing corporate development classes, depending on which format is preferred. The broad expertise of both CRWIG and CCWA staff ensures that we can train your workers in skills ranging through all different industry sectors.

The CCWA's satellite corporate centers are located in Chester, near both U.S. Interstate 95 and 295, and in Midlothian in southwest Chesterfield County.

**Virginia State University's** emphasis is on convenience and access, with workshops, seminars and institutes, in addition to credit courses, on campus and at

off-campus sites in Richmond, Emporia, Petersburg, Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Henrico and other central Virginia locations.

### ***ASSESSING YOUR SITUATION***

While understanding where your workforce needs to learn new skills is very important, your company may also need to determine your workers' current levels of aptitude in your most crucial disciplines. Through the Work-Keys program, the CRWIG and CCWA can isolate your company's most important job skills, then assess your current and prospective employees in each crucial area.

Our staff can administer aptitude assessments ranging from subjects as broad as customer service and telephone skills to subjects as specific as accounting principles or certain software programs.

### ***YOUR NEXT GENERATION OF WORKERS***

In addition, we can help you develop an apprenticeship program through the CCWA, by which your company could take on student workers who would train on-site and learn your company's programs and processes. Through this program, your company would have one to two years to evaluate a potential employee while he or she learned your company's important processes for scholastic credit and a reasonable wage. If your company decided to offer the student a job at the end of this period, then he or she would enter your company as a fully-trained, productive employee who could begin working on crucial projects immediately.

With the CRWIG's assistance, your business may also be able to partner with VSU in Petersburg on similar apprenticeships through their School of Business and School of Engineering, Science, and Technology.

At a more local level, central Virginia is home to six technical centers. The CRWIG can help you establish contact with each technical center's respective school board, which can help you design a curriculum to teach their students the different skills that your company may need.





### ***How The CRWIG Helped a Local Company Improve Its Workforce***

The Crater Regional Workforce Investment Group can use its considerable resources to help create and develop your company's workforce. Through partnerships with the federal government, local specialists, and individual companies, the CRWIG can address almost any possible concern, ranging from software proficiency to employee transportation.

Here's a case where the CRWIG helped one of the region's newest businesses get the most out of its multi-million dollar investment:

#### ***THE COMPANY***

One of the fastest-growing customer service and acquisition companies in the country, StarTek had already worked with such prominent clients as T-Mobile and Verizon when it announced its intentions to locate its newest call center in Petersburg in early 2006.

StarTek executives were excited about the potential for growth inherent in locating in one of the nation's best business climates; with a projected 500 jobs coming into the area, local officials were excited about adding hundreds of new and desirable opportunities to an already vibrant economy. The state government even chimed in its support, as Governor Mark Warner approved a \$225,000 grant from the Governor's Opportunity Fund to assist the City of Petersburg with the project.

"We have experienced nothing but positive greetings from the Petersburg community since we began investigating areas for another customer care facility," said StarTek CEO Steve Butler in November 2005. "The warm reception contributed to our decision to be here, as did the available workforce and the education levels of the people in the Petersburg area. We are thrilled to be here."

Upon arriving in Petersburg in the spring of 2006,

StarTek executives set up a temporary office space in a local hotel and began screening potential employees while their new offices were being finished. Armed with a new workforce in a new facility, StarTek looked ready to make a seamless transition to its new operations in central Virginia.

#### ***THE DILEMMA***

For its first couple of months in operation, the new facility did run well. Soon enough, though, small problems started popping up: the new workforce, unfamiliar with the call center environment, was having difficulty adapting to certain company protocols and techniques.

With a sizable number of employees new to office work in general, the new workers were also having difficulty with transportation to the office, arranging childcare, shifting schedules, and other constraints of the workweek.

"We were pleased with the overall quality of our workers," said Josh Chapman, Call Center Director for StarTek's Petersburg facility, "but they needed a little guidance with their 'soft skills,' and we had to figure out a way to help them without disrupting our operations."

StarTek was faced with the prospect of training its employees on a fairly wide spectrum of topics while still operating the business effectively. Faced with this problem, the company's executives went to the one local agency whose focus was entirely on improving the area's workforce: the Crater Regional Workforce Investment Group.

As mentioned earlier, the Crater Regional Workforce Investment Group was created by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The CRWIG receives federal funding every year with the purpose of helping central Virginia's workers improve their skills and become successful employees.

That doesn't just translate to workers on the individual level: the CRWIG also focuses on handling employee development for entire companies as well, dividing its efforts between incoming businesses and long-standing resident business. Whether a company is new to central Virginia or a 35-year pillar of the business community, the CRWIG can help it shape its workforce.

In StarTek's case, the problems were twofold: *How would the company meet its needs for 'soft skills' training and its workers' needs for child care, transportation, and other peripheral issues? Secondly, how could the company undertake this kind of training without impacting production and without inflating operating costs?*

### **PROGRESS**

As it turns out, both questions were fairly easy to answer. The CRWIG looked over StarTek's employees and was able to determine which federal programs would be able to assist the company's employees in their various areas of need. The group was also able to stress the availability of these programs to StarTek's workers in various seminars.

For 'soft skills' training, the CRWIG turned to a local employee development firm, Mirror Enterprises, Incorporated. In working with MEI, the goal was to determine the areas where StarTek's employees needed improvement through assessments, and then design a customized training program specific to StarTek's needs and business practices.

"People don't realize how much we focus on customization," stated Najmah Thomas, program specialist for the CRWIG. "There are literally thousands of dollars set aside for us to help businesses customize their training, but so many companies aren't aware of it."

"This is our area of expertise," added Kim Walton, vice president of MEI. "When a local company needs specialized training and development programs, the CRWIG is more than willing to partner with local firms like ours to come up with the best solution possible." MEI designed and implemented a six-month training course, consisting of one paid hour of on-site training

per week and regular employee assessments to help gauge individual progress. With a training program designed and in place, StarTek could now help its employees develop professionally.

### **FOOTING THE BILL**

As per federal mandate, the CRWIG covered half of the program costs—roughly \$15,000.

And the remaining half? StarTek made an agreement with the CRWIG to make a payment *in kind*. The company paid its employees for one hour of training per week and agreed to give each employee who completed the training program a modest raise. In doing so, StarTek managed to train their entire workforce at no significant damage to either their operating budget or their office's productivity.

"This is the type of option that our organization can give area businesses," said Levin Sullivan, the CRWIG's executive director. "This is what we're funded for: we have the flexibility to offer companies all sorts of programs, depending on what best suits each company."

### **LEARNING FROM THE COMMUNITY ITSELF**

The CRWIG is governed by its Board of Directors – which is made up of local business leaders – as well as various committees, which are also made up of those same executives.

Their direction helps the CRWIG decide where to focus its employee development efforts, which extend all the way from its employment centers to individual companies to technical, vocational, and secondary schools.

"Think of it as this: these executives are taking the opportunity to build and design their own workforce," added Thomas. "Their input is helping us to shape the kinds of workers that are going to be coming to them for jobs in a few years. Who wouldn't want to take advantage of an opportunity like that?"

The CRWIG welcomes input from both new and established members of the business community, and its meetings are open to any executive or company representative.



## About Us



### **VIRGINIA'S GATEWAY REGION** *Economic Development Organization*

#### **Virginia's Gateway Region EDO**

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Virginia's Gateway Region exists to enhance the economic development opportunities for the cities of Colonial Heights, Hopewell and Petersburg, and the counties of Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Prince George, Surry and Sussex. Virginia's Gateway Region is a private, nonprofit organization that is publicly and privately funded to facilitate new business opportunities, work with existing businesses, advance resources that will enhance the economic viability of the region and foster regional cooperation among the public and private entities that are involved in economic development activities.

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The mission of the Crater Regional Workforce Investment Group is to link businesses to people, local officials, public and private agencies, and training providers for economic development to build a highly trained and motivated workforce. The CRWIG is committed to helping businesses with employment and training needs by offering the services and information necessary to support employment demands across the cities of Colonial Heights, Emporia, Hopewell and Petersburg, and the counties of southern Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Greensville, Prince George, Surry and Sussex.

