



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 18, 2022

Contact: Will Payne

Email: Will.Payne@CoalfieldLLC.com

Phone: 804-393-8380

Virginians Devise Playbook to Address Hybrid Workplace Opportunity

~ Rural Southwest Region Initiates Economic Development Pivot with Project Fuse, Beginning with Localities in the Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Facilities Authority Territory ~

DUFFIELD, VA — The overall shift to what many call a hybrid or elastic workplace has ignited a major opportunity for rural Virginia. According to a new economic development project, it is time for Virginia's Southwest to change its approach to attracting and retaining scalable businesses to the region. The place to begin is around the remote work phenomenon.

“The global pandemic accelerated more than a workplace shift and the remote work opportunity,” said **Duane Miller, Executive Director of the LENOWISCO Planning District Commission and chief sponsor of the project**. “It has opened a new door into diversifying our economy in Virginia's Southwest. Given the quality of life we can offer and the support our economic development teams can provide to companies, we commissioned a look into how to match our assets to the opportunity. The result is a new playbook, beginning with the LPRIFA localities and the ‘fusion’ required with targeted business partners. Project Fuse represents a first step into a vast opportunity.”

The Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Facilities Authority (LPRIFA) includes the City of Norton and the Counties of Dickenson, Lee, Scott and Wise. The LPRIFA provides an economic development device for enabling localities to collaborate and pool their resources around business attraction and retention. Project Fuse was coalesced by the economic development campaign InvestSWVA, to examine telework shifts and the opportunity created for the LPRIFA localities and their distinct advantages. Other sponsors of the project include GO Virginia Region One, which represents thirteen counties and three cities in Virginia's Southwest, and the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

Project Fuse began with research that helped to confirm market demand and to catalog the region's assets in terms of the new opportunity, which reaches beyond telework to include

Virginians Devise Playbook to Address Hybrid Workplace Opportunity

remote work. The LPRIFA Fuse Playbook introduces a model for building relevance by aligning the assets of the localities with market opportunities.

Regarding telework and remote work, the study identified *four* opportunities for LPRIFA localities:

1. Employers are offering new types of employment packages, including support for living remotely and using coworking spaces.
2. Real estate needs have changed – companies are designing workspaces to accommodate workers who won't be in the workplace every day and who might be working new hours.
3. Customer service via teleworkers is growing in sophistication and pay scales, so the teleworking workforce must be able to learn constantly and adjust, to access more lucrative compensation.
4. There are more jobs than applicants, and companies are looking for partnership with communities to find and retain quality employees.

The LPRIFA Fuse Playbook goes on to assert that, in light of these market shifts, there are *five* conditions localities must meet to be ready for private partners:

1. Ubiquitous internet connectivity and a reliable transportation network
2. Downtown buildings with cutting-edge office space options that can offer connectivity and meeting space
3. Diverse housing options that are affordable and walkable to retail and entertainment venues
4. A tight network with academic partners to help companies with talent planning through upskilling and reskilling programs and employee experience strategies
5. The innovative mindset necessary to tailor Virginia's telework incentives to the broader aspects of the elastic workplace

Finally, the LPRIFA Fuse Playbook identifies *seven* essential actions that localities must take to capture the interest of companies and workers seeking a new work/life experience.

1. Inspire companies to build with the region, not just in it.
2. Develop the downtowns.
3. Design communities around employers' and workers' lifestyle priorities.
4. Deliver universal internet connectivity ahead of schedule.
5. Help prevent talent attrition by leveraging higher education opportunities.
6. Involve current companies in helping new companies enter the region.
7. Target community-minded employers to attract to the region.

The LPRIFA Fuse Playbook includes examples of these actions underway, including the story of eHealth Technologies, which is reporting laudable performance and high employee satisfaction in its LPRIFA-based workforce.

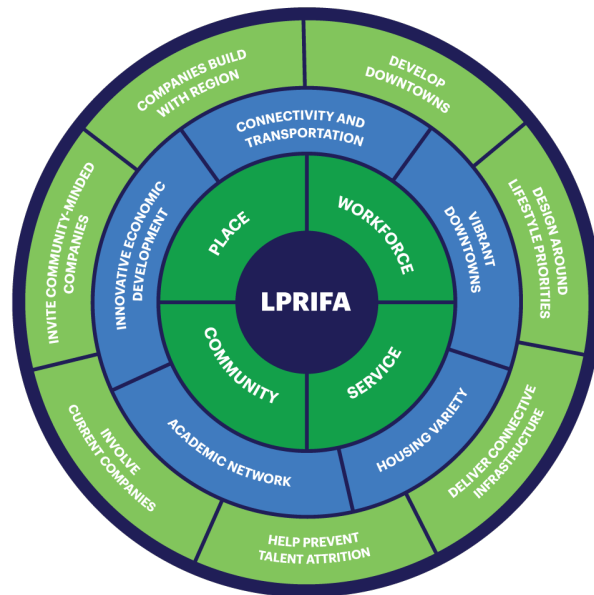
“The global business community seeks options for both attracting the employees they want and managing their operating costs,” said **Will Payne, Managing Partner of Coalfield Strategies and campaign lead for InvestSWVA**. “Companies need rural community partners who can

help them with teleworking and remote working, as Project Fuse explains. We have confirmed something else with this project. After decades of a different approach, in which we petition state and federal governments for aid and private businesses for a hand up, we must instead flip the narrative to a conversation about our capabilities and to what we bring to the table. We now know that – in every type of interplay with prospects, including sites and incentives – senior executives want to hear about assets and opportunities, not the painful twists and turns of the journey since our industrial base shifted. The LPRIFA Fuse Playbook therefore speaks to a strategy that redirects economic development as we know it in Virginia’s Great Southwest – and that tells the powerful story of who we are.”

To download a copy of The LPRIFA Fuse Playbook, visit <https://www.investswva.org/project-fuse>.

The LPRIFA Fuse Model

Defining the new American hybrid workplace



ABOUT INVESTSWVA

A public-private business research, attraction and marketing campaign for Virginia’s Southwest, was launched in September 2019. Initiated under the umbrella of the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission and backed by private industry, the campaign produces economic development traction by welcoming new business-centric ideas and leveraging industry relationships. For more information, visit <https://www.investswva.org>.

ABOUT LENOWISCO

The LENOWISCO Planning District Commission serves the Counties of Lee, Wise, Scott and the City of Norton. It is one of 21 such districts in the Commonwealth of Virginia, facilitating local government collaboration and implementing public policies and services. For more information, visit <http://www.lenowisco.org>.

Virginians Devise Playbook to Address Hybrid Workplace Opportunity

ABOUT LPRIFA

The Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Facilities Authority (LPRIFA) was established in 2019 under authorization of Virginia Code Section 15.2-6400. Member localities of the LPRIFA include Dickenson County, Lee County, City of Norton, Scott County, and Wise County. The authority provides a mechanism enabling far Southwest Virginia localities to capitalize on the strength of collaboratively working together and engaging in revenue sharing for regional projects. The purpose of the LPRIFA is to develop and enhance infrastructure, programs, and initiatives that diversify economic development and job creation opportunities for the region.

###