

FY 2025-2026

ONWARD NRV ANNUAL REPORT



ONWARD NRV

MISSION & VISION



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. It's a movement where leaders from business, government, and higher education work together to promote the economic vitality of the region.

Onward NRV is always striving to move the region forward. It is an organization that gets things done. This is embodied in the action-oriented name and branding of our organization. The movement of the red arrow in our logo is symbolic of Onward NRV, which pulls people and ideas together to move the region forward. Leaders in business, government, and higher education have a role to play in economic development. We're here to help them **Join the Movement.**



FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY

To drive economic success in Virginia's New River Valley, Onward NRV is implementing a five-year economic development strategy, Onward 2028. This strategy adopts a modern, holistic approach that targets four interconnected goals: (1) Talent, (2) Business, (3) Marketing, and (4) Regionalism. FY 2025-26 marked the third year of this ongoing five-year strategic plan. As you review the annual report, you'll see significant progress across all four areas of Onward 2028.



TALENT



BUSINESS



MARKETING



REGIONALISM

A red graphic element consisting of a circular arrow with an upward-pointing arrowhead, positioned behind the text.
**ONWARD
2028**



REGIONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

FY 2025-26



GOVERNOR SPANBERGER ANNOUNCES \$9 MILLION EXPANSION IN GILES COUNTY BY INTERSTATE GROUP

In March 2026, The Interstate Group announced a \$8.9 million investment to expand their current facility in Giles County, creating 46 new jobs. The expansion will enable Interstate Group to increase production capacity and meet growing demand for its cargo, dump, and utility trailers, particularly across the East Coast. To support this growth, the company will invest in automation, new machinery, and facility upgrades.



ACLARA PARTNERS WITH VIRGINIA TECH TO BUILD NEW RARE-EARTH ELEMENT PILOT PLANT

In September of 2025, Aclara, a Canadian mining company, announced that they would be partnering with Virginia Tech to build a rare-earth element pilot plant in the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center. The company's \$10 million investment will create 15 new jobs. The facility will process heavy rare earth elements which are essential for making powerful magnets used in electric vehicles, wind turbines, and many high-tech devices.

GOAL 1

TALENT



ATTRACT AND RETAIN TALENT TO SUPPORT REGIONAL GROWTH



ELEVATE NRV HR CONFERENCE

In October, Onward NRV held its third annual Elevate NRV. Bringing together local business leaders to address talent recruitment and retention challenges, the half-day event featured workforce insights, practical strategies and networking to strengthen workplace cultures.



CAREER FAIRS & EVENTS

In FY 2025–26, Onward NRV staff attended a variety of high school and college career events across the region. Outreach included visits to Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski counties, the City of Radford, as well as Radford University, New River Community College, and Virginia Tech.



NRV TALENT TOURS EXPANDS

Onward NRV expanded the NRV Talent Tours program during this fiscal year, providing high school students from Pulaski County, Floyd County, and the City of Radford with opportunities to explore careers in their local communities. The program builds on the successful 2025 pilot in Pulaski County.



NRV Talent Network

Public group

Earn an Active Group badge

LAUNCH OF NRV TALENT NETWORK

Onward NRV launched the NRV Talent Network, a LinkedIn group designed to link people early in their careers with local employers and job opportunities. Unlike traditional alumni or professional groups, the NRV Talent Network is intentionally focused on opportunities within the NRV.



DIGITAL TALENT CAMPAIGNS



Manufacturing Jobs Digital Marketing Campaign

Onward NRV ran its annual digital marketing campaign in October promoting the NRV's advanced manufacturing sector to potential employees within a 3–5-hour radius, as well as legacy manufacturing hubs such as Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Detroit. The Facebook and YouTube campaign highlighted innovative, high-tech career opportunities and directed viewers to TheNRV.org/MFG. The campaign generated strong results, including 952,579 impressions, a reach of 597,507 people, 325,435 engagements, 680,979 video views, and 1,025 website visits.



Tech Jobs Digital Marketing Campaign

In May, Onward NRV conducted a digital marketing campaign to promote tech jobs in Virginia's New River Valley. The campaign saw some of the largest impressions and reach of any campaign previously run by Onward NRV, making it highly impactful. It generated 7,234,124 impressions, 1,316,816 reach, with 12,236 engagements, and 164,926 video views.



Livability Digital Marketing Campaign

Onward NRV executed their livability digital marketing campaign during the month of June. The campaign was strategically focused on attracting professionals working in the biotechnology and life sciences industries to consider the NRV as a place to live, work, and build their careers. It generated 453,002 impressions, 306,181 reach, with 74,225 engagements, 406,227 video views and 3,816 website visits to TheNRV.org/live page.

NRV EXPERIENCE

LEVEL UP YOUR INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

2026 NRV Experience

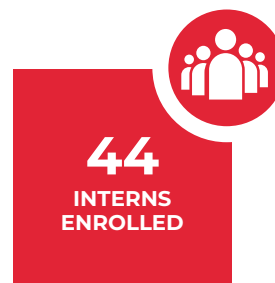
Launched in 2020, the NRV Experience was created to support employer internship programs while encouraging more young professionals to build their futures in Virginia's New River Valley after graduation.

In 2026, the program had 11 participating companies with 44 enrolled interns. Interns gained exposure to local NRV cultural, recreational, and outdoor amenities while practicing durable career-readiness skills aligned with NACE competencies through professional development sessions held at each excursion.

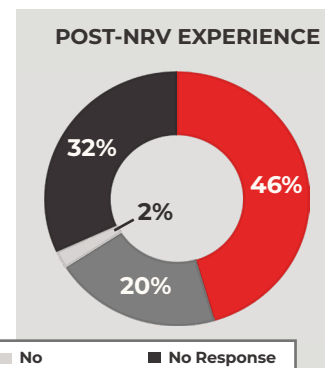
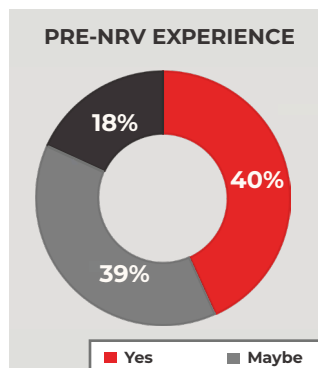
In partnership with localities' tourism and economic development organizations, the cohort learned about what sets each community apart and all that they have to offer. The schedule took them to Claytor Lake, The Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech, Mountain Lake Lodge, The Floyd Center for the Arts, and floating the New River at Bisset Park with RU Outdoors.

The wrap-up event included a chance for interns to receive a professional headshot and network with Onward NRV investors.

2026 NRV EXPERIENCE DASHBOARD



INTERN SURVEY: WOULD YOU CONSIDER WORKING IN THE NRV AFTER GRADUATION?



■ Yes ■ Maybe ■ No ■ No Response

GOAL 2

BUSINESS

ATTRACT AND GROW
BUSINESS TO STIMULATE NEW
JOBS AND INVESTMENT

EXISTING BUSINESS

INDUSTRY LEADERS'
SUMMITS

Onward NRV hosted its semiannual Tech/IT and Manufacturing Leaders' Summits in October 2025 and April 2026. Tech summits covered topics on AI and its impact on education and the tech industry. Manufacturing summits at James Hardie and IV Labs featured discussions on building stronger leaders and the effect of current tariffs. These events strengthen the region's tech and manufacturing sectors by connecting industry leaders and fostering collaboration.

SITES & BUILDINGS

ONWARD PARTNERS
IN GRANT FOR SITE
READINESS

Onward NRV partnered with the New River Valley Regional Commission on a GO Virginia Region 2-funded Site Advancement Strategy to strengthen the region's industrial site portfolio. Through this initiative, Onward NRV is helping evaluate key sites across the region, identify development needs, and improve readiness for future investment. The project will support long-term economic growth and job creation.

ONWARD ATTENDS
WOMEN LEADERSHIP
FORUM

In May, Laken Blankenship and Mary Denson represented Onward NRV at the Virginia Economic Development Partnership's Women's Leadership Forum in Charlottesville, VA. Bringing together economic developers from across Virginia and some of the nation's top site selectors, the forum was a full day of conversation about the site selection process and the future of economic development in Virginia.



CULTIVATE NEW BUSINESS



LEAD GENERATION MARKETING ENGAGEMENTS

Onward NRV engaged in targeted lead generation marketing to attract new jobs and investment to the region during FY 25-26. The Onward team attended the AUVSI Xponential in Detroit and the SelectUSA Investment Summit in Washington, D.C. Staff also collaborated with VEDP on two virtual engagements: hosting an Advanced Manufacturing Webinar and participating in a virtual campaign meeting with Midwest tech companies.



ONWARD PARTICIPATES IN I-81 CORRIDOR GROUP

In FY 25-26, Onward NRV worked with the I-81 Corridor Group to enhance the visibility of the NRV. Consisting of the Roanoke Regional Partnership, the Shenandoah Valley Partnership, and the Economic Coalition of the Northern Shenandoah Valley, the group conducted a virtual trip meeting with Chicago site consultants, co-sponsored the welcome event at Economix, attended the Consultants Forum Workshop in Charlotte, and participated in virtual talks with Site Selectors Guild members.

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LEAD GENERATION & MARKETING ENGAGEMENTS

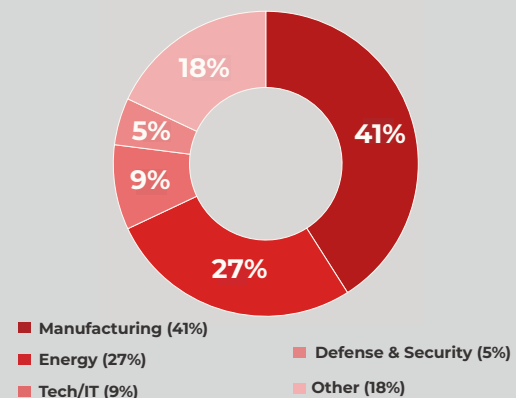
7

PROSPECT VISITS

22

NEW PROSPECTS

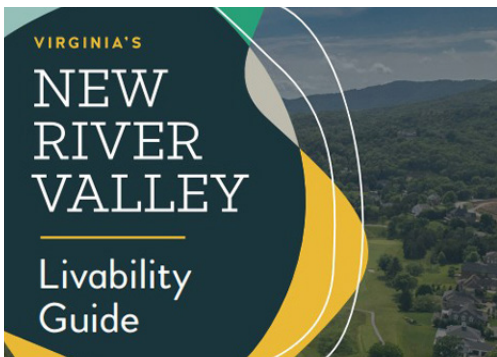
PROSPECTS BY INDUSTRY



GOAL 3

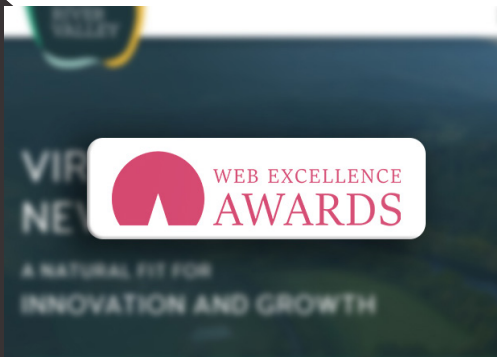
MARKETING

MARKET THE NRV AS A COMPETITIVE DESTINATION FOR TALENT & COMPANIES



ONWARD RELEASES LIVABILITY GUIDE

Onward NRV is proud to announce the release of its new NRV Livability Guide, a comprehensive resource designed to showcase the many advantages of living, working, and building a career in Virginia's New River Valley. Created to support talent attraction, workforce recruitment, and regional awareness efforts, the NRV Livability Guide highlights the distinctive qualities that make the New River Valley one of the most desirable places in the Commonwealth. The guide is now available for free download at www.TheNRV.org.



NRV WEBSITE REDESIGN RECEIVES AWARD

Onward NRV is excited to share that the newly redesigned Virginia's New River Valley website, TheNRV.org, was recognized with a Web Excellence Award in the Economic Development category. The site was thoughtfully built by Whittington Consulting in collaboration with Onward staff to support economic development efforts while making it easy for users to navigate and explore. The Web Excellence Awards celebrate outstanding achievement in web development, design, and digital innovation across industries.



A Natural Fit

ROOTS IN THE VALLEY:

YOUR GUIDE TO GROWING A LIFE AND CAREER IN THE NRV

Welcome to the fifth issue of Roots in the Valley. My name is [Laken Blankenship](#), and I serve as the Talent and Business Strategies Manager at [Onward NRV](#).



ONWARD NRV'S TALENT NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS OPPORTUNITIES IN THE NRV

The Roots in the Valley Newsletter is an email newsletter that is released quarterly and features an interview with a young professional living and working in the NRV, job search and career advice from local universities, and a spotlight on a regional employer.

Designed to increase awareness of local industries and employers, promote internships and job opportunities, and reinforce the New River Valley as a compelling place to build a career, the newsletter is currently being delivered to more than 180 local college students with an average open rate of 35%.

Investors are given the opportunity to participate as a featured employer, offering a direct connection to students already engaged with career opportunities

FY 2025-26 REGIONAL BRANDING DASHBOARD



SOCIAL MEDIA TOTAL IMPRESSIONS



VIDEO VIEWS



WEBSITE VISITS



DISTRIBUTED PIECES OF NRV MERCHANDISE

GOAL 4

REGIONALISM



STRENGTHEN THE
CONNECTEDNESS OF
THE REGION



**Additive Manufacturing
& Advanced Materials**
TECH HUB

ONWARD CONTINUES SUPPORT OF VIRGINIA'S AM² CONSORTIUM

Onward NRV remained actively engaged in Virginia's Additive Manufacturing and Advanced Materials (AM²) Consortium in FY 2025–26, working alongside the New River Valley Regional Commission, the Virginia Tech Center for Economic and Community Engagement, and regional partners across GO Virginia Regions 2 and 3 to advance the region's advanced manufacturing ecosystem.

Activities included participating in AM² All-Hands meetings, managing and supporting the initiative's website and communications efforts, representing the AM² Initiative at the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council's Emerging Tech Conference, and supporting regional collaboration that secured a \$4.2 million GO Virginia grant to advance the initiative's next phase. The GO Virginia Grant will help launch priorities identified in the consortium's 10-year roadmap, including AM² Studios, AM² Fellows, and the AM² Career Network, which are designed to expand technology access, accelerate commercialization, and strengthen the manufacturing workforce pipeline.

The Consortium has also applied for and is waiting to hear news on a \$44 million implementation grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

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**MEDIA
MENTIONS**

6

**PRESENTATIONS
ABOUT ONWARD
TO COMMUNITY
ORGANIZATIONS**

12+

**COMMUNITY
EVENTS
ATTENDED**



ONWARD COLLABORATES ON MULTI-REGIONAL TALENT SUMMIT

In March 2026, over 150 industry leaders, educators, and workforce professionals gathered at Roanoke College's Cregger Center for the regional Future of Talent Summit. The event, organized by the Roanoke Regional Partnership, in collaboration with Onward NRV and other regional partners focused on leveraging regional collaboration to meet today's workforce needs bringing together higher education, industry, and workforce organizations.



ONWARD SPONSORS AUVSI RIDGE & VALLEY ROUNDTABLE

Onward NRV was proud to sponsor the Association for Uncrewed Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI) Ridge & Valley Chapter's Summer Roundtable on August 22, 2025. The event, titled "Supporting Autonomy Through Uncertainty", reviewed current federal and state funding approaches to uncrewed systems, the FAA proposed "Part 108" regulation for beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) drone operations, and recent executive orders about drones.

ORGANIZATION



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ONWARD NRV
INVESTORS

ONWARD NRV STAFF



ONWARD EVENTS

2025 Annual Dinner

Date: September 11, 2025

Attendees: 123

Keynote Speaker: David Devan, VEDP
Senior Vice President of Policy &
Strategic Partnerships

Winter Investor Luncheon

Date: December 11, 2025

Attendees: 90

Panelists: Cameron Peel, Ben
Khandan-Barani, Haden Polseno-
Hensley, Michelle Rowe, Wes
Robertson

Topic: Current State of the NRV

Spring Investor Event:

Date: March 19, 2026

Attendees: 103

Speaker: Featured panelists
and a keynote from Chris Loyd,
McGuireWoods Consulting

Topic: Decoding Data Centers

Summer Investor Reception

Date: June 04, 2026

Registered Attendees: 59

Speaker: Shannon Ainsley

Topic: Town of Pulaski's Revitalization



Katie Boswell,
Executive Director



Rachel Johnson,
Director of Marketing



Laken Blankenship,
Talent and Business
Strategies Manager



Mary Denson,
Investor Relations
and Development
Coordinator



Kristy Fuhrer,
Office
Administrator

OUR INVESTORS

Thank you to all of the organizations that make the work of Onward NRV possible!

CHAIRMAN



PRESIDENT



DIRECTOR



For a complete list of our investors, please visit
www.OnwardNRV.org/Our-Investors.

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Abram Williams | City of Radford EDA
Mark Woolwine | Brown Edwards

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Jim Cowan, General Counsel | CowanPerry PC
Katie Boswell, Executive Director | Onward NRV

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Cora Gnegy, Secretary | Giles County
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Jody Lambert | James Hardie Building Products
Lydeana Martin | Floyd County
Kim Repass | City of Radford
Mike Vellines | Hurt & Proffitt
Laura Walters | Pulaski County



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