

Executive Director, Virginia Office of Education Economics (VOEE)

Position Description

May 3, 2021

Our Vision

Virginia is creating a first-in-the-nation office to be a lighthouse/exemplar for how to leverage analytics and collaboration to drive improved labor market outcomes for students, job seekers, employers, and regions. We are seeking an entrepreneurial, collaborative leader with a passion for public- and private-sector impact to establish and lead this office, including building a highly capable internal team; engaging effectively with in-state and national partners; developing innovative new ways of understanding linkages between education and the labor market; and piloting and evaluating promising initiatives designed to yield a more robust talent ecosystem with greater economic mobility. Examples of innovative new initiatives we envision include:

- Creating a predictive model of employment outcomes that could be leveraged by school counselors, students, career coaches, and others to enable students and job changers to make well-informed choices and better achieve their goals, while avoiding negative outcomes (e.g., underemployment)
- Building a user-friendly, media-rich platform to enable students and job seekers to more easily explore career paths available to them and how to navigate from point A to point B
- Developing a more robust understanding of predictors of interstate and intrastate migration of talent to enable policymakers to take actions to increase talent retention and reverse out-migration
- Piloting skills-based hiring tools for employers that would reduce credential inflation and improve job matching for both employers and job seekers

Overview

Ranked America's best state for both Education and Workforce by CNBC, Virginia is building its economic development strategy for the future on human capital development. Put simply, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership ([VEDP](#)) aspires for Virginia to become America's top state for talent – from traditional education institutions to custom workforce solutions to educational attainment to the development and implementation of a new learning ecosystem (akin to that envisioned by Michelle Weise and Strada's Institute for the Future of Work).

Virginia already is well-positioned to “win” on talent. We have many strengths to build upon, including some of the best public schools and higher education institutions in the country, a well-educated populace, a growing cadre of innovative labor market initiatives (e.g., FastForward, G3, the Virginia Talent Accelerator Program), and the historic, \$1.1-billion Tech Talent Investment Program that has [garnered praise](#) from a wide variety of national organizations.

As Virginia continues its progress toward becoming a national leader in human capital development, a critical underpinning will be to cultivate a robust understanding of the connections between education and the labor market, enabling students, workers, job seekers, guidance counselors, education leaders, policymakers, and employers to make better-informed decisions as they navigate the complex, often confusing connections between education/training and the labor market. To accomplish this goal, Virginia is creating a new office focused on strengthening connections between education and the labor market, and we are searching for an experienced, passionate, entrepreneurial, and collaborative individual to lead this office.

Working in collaboration with a variety of in-state stakeholders and leveraging the best available literature, the inaugural Executive Director will develop, launch, and lead the Virginia Office of Education Economics (VOEE). Created by the Virginia General Assembly in early 2021 with the support of Virginia Governor Ralph Northam,

the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, and other groups, VOEE is charged with two important, complementary functions: (1) Provide a unified, consistent source of analysis for policy development and implementation related to talent development; and (2) Offer resources and expertise related to education and labor market alignment.

Potential/illustrative focus areas

- Development of important new learning ecosystem elements, internally and/or in partnership with other organizations (e.g., improved navigation tools for individuals, new education financing mechanisms, policy initiatives to increase access to internships and/or apprenticeships)
- Periodic special reports on important talent-related topics (e.g., an in-depth analysis of talent pipeline needs of the tech sector, healthcare, or education; identification of predictors of underemployment of college grads to improve employment outcomes; insights on interstate migration of talent)
- Comprehensive, reliable analyses of labor market supply/demand balances – annual or quarterly, by region and for the Commonwealth as a whole
- Policy evaluation and recommendations to address labor market supply/demand gaps (e.g., talent pipeline plans for strategic growth occupations) – on request and/or based on largest identified labor market supply/demand gaps
- Benchmarking of promising education and workforce/talent development efforts in other states designed to meet important labor market demands

The new Virginia Office of Education Economics will be housed within VEDP. The Executive Director will be a member of VEDP's executive team. The Executive Director will work closely with VEDP President and CEO [Stephen Moret](#), VEDP Managing Director of Strategic Talent Initiatives [Pam Harder](#), and VEDP SVP of Talent Solutions [Mike Grundmann](#), as well as many other internal and external partners.

Context

The Commonwealth of Virginia is blessed with exceptional human capital, geographic, and infrastructure assets. Widely viewed as an attractive state for business, Virginia also is home to a diverse array of leading private-sector firms, national labs, and important military installations, as well as one of the most educated populations in the country.

For more than two decades, VEDP has served as Virginia's state economic development authority. Like the special Commonwealth that it serves, VEDP has long been regarded as among the best in the country. As a quasi-independent state authority governed by a board of directors that spans gubernatorial administrations, VEDP is a nonpartisan organization with stable leadership and nimble, creative, mission-focused operations. With approximately 150 team members (and growing), VEDP offers a dynamic, collaborative, high-profile, fast-paced professional environment where a strategic, integrated, action-oriented approach is the standard.

VEDP's fastest growing division is Talent Solutions, which includes the world-class Virginia Talent Accelerator Program, a custom workforce solutions initiative; the Virginia Jobs Investment Program (VJIP), a workforce grant program that is the most commonly utilized economic development incentive in Virginia; a strategic talent initiatives team, which is responsible for the Tech Talent Investment Program; and now VOEE.

Position Overview

VEDP is seeking to hire an Executive Director of VOEE. The Executive Director will be the point person for all activities tied to VOEE – spanning everything from guiding the organizational design, development, and overall strategy to designing and executing a meaningful research agenda in partnership with local, regional, state, and national entities. This Executive Director will manage a staff of at least two initially, with substantial potential for growth.

Position Summary

- Member of VEDP's executive team

- Reports to VEDP's President & CEO
- Staff: 2-3 (with potential to grow)

Responsibilities

The Executive Director of the Virginia Office of Education Economics has four (4) core responsibility areas:

- **Lead the design and creation of the new Virginia Office of Education Economics:** With an eye toward Virginia serving as a model and leader on the topic of education and workforce alignment nationally, design the ideal structure, stakeholder engagement mechanisms, budget, funding strategy, vision, and mission in close partnership with the President of VEDP, VEDP's Managing Director of Strategic Talent Initiatives, and possibly with support of external consultants.
- **Lead VOEE's research agenda strategy and execution:** Informed by benchmarking analysis and input from stakeholders, identify and execute a research agenda strategy that will optimize impact for all of VOEE's key stakeholders (policymakers, employers, students, guidance counselors, jobseekers, workers and families, etc.) in the near-term, medium-term, and long-term. Garner feedback from key stakeholder groups in an iterative design process in order to set VOEE's research agenda approach, including how research endeavors are designed, conducted, and reviewed; design process of determining specific content areas / industries / topics of focus; and identify mechanisms for partnering with external stakeholders in order to deliver on specific research agenda deliverables.
- **Cultivate in-state and national partnerships and relationships:** VOEE will benefit from national partnerships and relationships in order to (1) garner best-in-class insights on any given education and labor market alignment topic and elevate Virginia's work to the national best practices conversations, and (2) ensure organizational sustainability and growth through grantmaking / funding opportunities. The Executive Director will be the lead spokesperson and champion for VOEE with chief responsibilities in cultivating these national partnerships and relationships for expertise and/or funding purposes.
- **Division leadership and administration:** Provide strong leadership to other staff members within the VOEE team. Ensure that all relevant HR and statutory responsibilities are consistently followed. Serve as an active, collaborative member of VEDP's executive team, including strong participation in key leadership meetings. As requested, attend external meetings on behalf of VEDP management, delivering key messages and perspectives of VEDP as appropriate. As requested, develop analyses and proposals to support VEDP management in decision-making efforts.

The Person

Education

- Advanced degree in economics, business (MBA), public policy (MPP) and/or another relevant field preferred
- Doctoral degree in labor economics, public policy, and/or another relevant field preferred

Experience required

- Track record/experience in understanding employer talent and human resource needs
- Subject matter expertise in education and labor market alignment research areas, including but not limited to the economics of education, unemployment, underemployment, navigational tools for jobseekers, industry credentials and certifications, and/or specific industry verticals (e.g., tech sector, healthcare sector)
- Experience leading an organization or office, including representing the broader vision and mission of that organization with a wide array of national stakeholders
- Track record and familiarity with philanthropic funding, grantmaking, and/or federal and state funding
- Management of direct reports with a track record of developing people and building successful teams
- Excellent strategic analysis and problem-solving skills

- Excellent communication (verbal and written) and interpersonal skills
- Knowledge of and experience working with talent-related datasets, including but not limited to BLS, Emsi, Burning Glass, Census Bureau, etc.

Experience desired

- At least three years of experience as an executive director or similar leadership level position for an organization involved in education and/or labor market alignment content
- Understanding of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, as well as an ability to convert findings and insights into accessible and executive-level communications
- Broad “T” experiences – not only in research, but in building an organization, piloting, innovation processes, raising/allocating funds, and an understanding of policy

Personal attributes

- Visionary leader – a thinker and a doer
- Passion for generating informed insights that create greater education and labor market alignment and/or improved outcomes for individuals, employers, regions, and policymakers
- Passion for public and private sector impact
- Strategic thinker who can synthesize large amounts of data and other information quickly
- Entrepreneurial mindset: comfort with ambiguity and an inclination for action
- Network-oriented: both in terms of existing contacts in Virginia and nationally, as well as the ability to sustain and build new relationships with public and private sector organizations
- Excels under pressure, in a fast-paced, high-profile work environment
- Relationship builder, motivator, and team player
- Positive attitude and energetic
- Healthy curiosity
- Sound judgment
- Innovator
- Impeccable character

Interested Candidates

Interested candidates are invited to submit their resume to Pam Harder, Managing Director, VEDP (pharder@vedp.org).