

Research Agenda for Fiscal Year 2027

Established in 2021, the Virginia Office of Education Economics (VOEE) serves as a central, data-driven resource for the Commonwealth's education and workforce ecosystem, providing analyses, data products, and insights to inform policy and practice. VOEE's goal is to deliver unified, consistent, and impartial information to support state-administered education and workforce programs and guide strategic decision-making. Additional information is available at voee.org.

Each year, VOEE is required to submit a research agenda to the Governor and General Assembly based on input from key stakeholders, as outlined in Item 113 L.3., Chapter One of the 2026 Acts of Assembly, Special Session 1. These stakeholders—also referred to as the research advisory group—include:

- **Governor's administration:** Secretaries of Labor, Commerce and Trade, and Education
- **General Assembly:** Members of, or staff to, committees of the General Assembly
- **Agencies:** State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) – GO Virginia Board, Department of Workforce Development and Advancement (Virginia Works), Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), Department of Education (DOE)

The following sections outline VOEE's process for engaging stakeholder input; the primary research questions identified to guide research, tools, and services provided by VOEE; and the projects and key tasks for VOEE's FY 2027 research agenda (additional detail is provided in Appendix A), and next steps for implementation of the plan. In addition, Appendix B includes a list of accomplishments in FY 2026.

Stakeholder Input

In addition to input from the research advisory group, VOEE engages with education and workforce stakeholders across the Commonwealth to support their needs. Over the past year, VOEE has provided support through targeted projects, presentations, and ad hoc analyses to the following groups:

- **Workforce Development:** Virginia Board for Workforce Development (VBWD), local workforce development areas, and the Workforce Data Trust
- **Education:** Institutions of higher education, school divisions, adult education providers, the Virginia Longitudinal Data System (VLDS), and the Career and Technical Education Association (CTEA)
- **Other Partners:** Department of Corrections, Virginia Consensus for Higher Education in Prisons, Department of Health Professions, and the Virginia Partnership for Health Science Careers (VPHSC)

To inform the FY 2027 research agenda, VOEE convened the research advisory group in April 2025 and conducted more than 12 one-on-one meetings with representatives to gather input. Stakeholders provided feedback on priority research questions and proposed projects. VOEE shared summarized themes for review and conducted follow-up discussions to refine priorities; shared a draft agenda for further input, and incorporated stakeholder feedback.

VOEE also considered insights from ongoing stakeholder engagement and new requirements established through legislation passed during the 2026 General Assembly session.

Research Questions

Research topics for FY 2027 were developed to answer key questions identified by stakeholders during input sessions. These questions (shown below) were organized into three themes: labor market insights, talent development and skills alignment, and data translation and capacity building.

▪ Theme 1: Labor Market Insights

- What types of jobs and skills are in high demand? What jobs and skills support economic mobility?
- How are workforce needs and the demand for skills changing, including those related to artificial intelligence (AI)? What training is required to adapt to these changes?
- What workforce shortages exist across Virginia’s occupations, industries, and regions, and what policies or practices could mitigate these shortages?
- What are the primary workforce challenges identified by employers and industry sectors, and how can Virginia respond to these challenges?

▪ Theme 2: Talent Development and Skills Alignment

- Where do Virginia college graduates live and work after graduation, and which graduates are most likely to leave or stay in the Commonwealth?
- To what extent are Virginia’s education, training, credentials, and internship programs meeting talent development needs, and where do gaps remain?

▪ Theme 3: Data Translation and Capacity Building

- How can VOEE enhance communication and build capacity for agencies, program administrators, policymakers, and individuals to use data, research, and analysis to improve education and workforce alignment?
- How can Virginia better leverage existing tools—such as the Virginia Longitudinal Data System (VLDS), Workforce Data Trust, and public labor market information (LMI)—to ensure efficient use of data to drive decision-making?

Research Agenda: Projects and Key Tasks for FY 2027

Based on the research questions identified above, VOEE staff identified 16 projects and key tasks for FY 2027 (Appendix A) based on the three themes identified during the research question process: labor market insights, talent development and skills alignment, and data translation and capacity building. (Note that projects described below are organized by their primary theme but may address more than one research question or theme.)

These projects and tasks were reviewed with members of the research advisory group and other key stakeholders. Projects that are required as part of legislation, either through the budget or as part of the Code of Virginia, include references to their mandated activity.

Primary projects that will require most of the staff time in the coming year include the following:

- **Employer Feedback and Talent Attraction Research** (Projects 1 and 3): VOEE will strengthen Virginia's understanding of workforce challenges by developing a new employer intelligence capability. Working with VEDP's Talent Accelerator, Regional Talent Solutions and Business Outreach, and Sector teams, VOEE will collect and synthesize qualitative employer feedback on talent attraction, retention, and workforce needs. Findings will be shared through research briefs and tools. In addition, VOEE will update its analysis of Virginia college graduate outcomes, including where students live and work upon completion, to better understand talent retention in the Commonwealth.
- **Skills, AI, and Workforce Alignment Analysis** (Project 2): VOEE will analyze changing employer demand for skills and examine how workforce needs are evolving beyond traditional degree requirements. This work will assess the alignment of education and training programs with high demand skills and will include an analysis of both the technical and durable skills associated with the adoption and use of artificial intelligence (AI).
- **Education Program Alignment Work** (Projects 6-8): VOEE will work with education and workforce partners to evaluate how existing and planned education and training programs, including internships, align with labor market demand. This analysis will identify areas of strength, highlight potential gaps, and provide insights to support future program development and workforce planning. In addition, VOEE will map industry credentials and training to high demand occupations to further assess alignment to middle skills jobs.
- **Data Awareness, Communications, and Outreach** (Projects 11–13): VOEE will expand its efforts to increase awareness and use of workforce and education data across the Commonwealth. Through the implementation of new webinars, research briefs, enhanced dashboards, and the development of statewide talent metrics in partnership with state agencies, VOEE will help policymakers, educators, workforce practitioners, and other stakeholders better understand and apply data to inform planning, policy, and program decisions.

Next Steps

VOEE will develop a detailed workplan aligned to the research agenda that includes a timeline and provide quarterly updates on the status of the workplan to the research advisory group. If significant changes to the research agenda are required due to changes in project priority, scope, or unanticipated delays, then VOEE will review these changes with primary stakeholders of the project and provide an update to the research advisory group.

Further, completion of the research agenda is part of VEDP's strategic plan initiatives approved by the VEDP Board of Directors and requires providing updates to the Board.

Appendix A: VOEE Projects and Key Tasks for FY 2027

Labor Market Insights

Projects and Key Tasks for FY 2027

Project	Key Tasks
1. Collect qualitative employer input to deepen Virginia's understanding of labor market needs	▪ Develop a proof of concept in partnership with VEDP and other partners in one sector/area to identify challenges and opportunities related to talent attraction and retention ▪ Publish findings and create tools to support employers, workers, and institutions to improve alignment ▪ Replicate model to support additional sectors
2. Evaluate occupational skill needs in the labor market and identify trends, including skills related to artificial intelligence (AI) with Virginia Works and other partners; determine the translation of skills across occupations; and assess strengths and opportunities in degree, certificate, and other training programs to ensure alignment with education providers	▪ Identify core skill needs for employers in select high-demand occupations ▪ Identify metrics to track skill needs, including metrics related to AI, and tools to assist with translating skills for career switchers or those seeking other occupations ▪ Identify degree and training programs related to top skills and occupation needs; identify initial programs to review with institutions to document how programs are adapting skills and training to meet workforce needs ▪ Publish at least two briefings and data sets related to: skills needs and alignment of education and training programs to those needs
3. Map how talent migration and degree majors impact Virginia's ability to meet workforce needs in partnership with SCHEV and higher education institutions	▪ Update VOEE college and career outcomes data set and dashboard ▪ Analyze outcomes data to assess where graduates live, work, and progress in their careers ▪ Publish a series of reports highlighting key findings and strategies to improve talent attraction and retention
4. Create industry profiles and conduct deeper analysis in at least two industry sectors to further assess workforce and training needs	▪ Enhance existing VOEE tools and dashboards to include industry filters where appropriate ▪ Conduct deeper analysis and report findings of workforce needs on Menhaden commercial fishing (Item 145 Q.1) and for at least two other industry sectors ▪ Explore public sector needs and identify an initial project for further analysis
5. Create a workforce shortage risk profile by occupation and industry to identify key indicators of talent attraction and retention, and support employers with workforce planning	▪ Identify key metrics to track shortage risks based on existing research ▪ Develop a model to track indicators across Virginia ▪ Create tools to help employers assess shortage risk and identify mitigation strategies

Talent Development and Skills Alignment

Projects and Key Tasks for FY 2027

Project	Key Tasks
6. Further align career pathways, degree programs, and skills development through enhanced labor market tools and resources for higher education institutions	- Analyze labor market demand to identify highest training needs - Identify 2-3 pilot projects focused on alignment with highest training needs to support additional targeted analysis based on identified needs - Develop models and tools for replication across institutions - Communicate findings and best practices to institutions
7. Assess strengths and opportunities of career and technical education programs, including skilled trades offered through community colleges, K-12, apprenticeships, and the Department of Corrections, to fill high demand jobs	- Create a consolidated, statewide list of industry credentials across K-12, higher education, and apprenticeships - Validate credentials and their alignment to high-demand occupations and support implementation of SB 592 of the 2026 General Assembly session related to credential alignment - Publish and maintain a list of aligned credentials that includes credential transferability and training information - Review planned and existing Get A Skill, Get a Job, Get Ahead (G3) programs offered by VCCS and make recommendations on what programs should be offered to the Governor and General Assembly per Item 204. D.2. - Establish an annual process to review alignment of programs to high-demand occupations, as recommended in the 2025 JLARC DOC report recommendations - Support the Virginia Prison Education Task Force as identified in HB 1041 of the 2026 General Assembly Session
8. Monitor and report progress of goals and metrics for the Innovative Internship Program in partnership with VEDP and SCHEV (Item 113 S.1.)	- Provide quarterly progress updates to key stakeholders - Produce a report to assess the alignment of internships with workforce demand and expand access for students, particularly for graduates who may be underemployed - Develop and support an internship readiness assessment to benchmark institutional progress
9. Provide ongoing support of existing labor market profiles for SCHEV's program approval process and expand service to interested private colleges	- Deliver timely labor market reports to institutions upon request - Support institutions in reviewing reports, interpreting results, and addressing questions - Expand services to include interested private colleges
10. Support the implementation of the Workforce Pell program to align with workforce needs	- Provide technical and project management support to support the Governor's administration and partner agencies - Support the development of policies, processes, and implementation guidance

Data Translation and Capacity Building

Projects and Key Tasks for FY 2027

Project	Key Tasks
11. Update existing dashboards, tools, and support services to further align VOEE's work with stakeholder needs	▪ Conduct a comprehensive assessment of stakeholder needs ▪ Identify necessary enhancements to existing dashboards, tools, and services, and determine whether new services are needed ▪ Implement short-term improvements and incorporate longer-term changes into the FY 2028 workplan
12. Build data awareness and capacity among stakeholders related to labor market and education program data to support strategic development of programs and services	▪ Launch a webinar series in partnership with stakeholders to increase use of publicly available tools ▪ Develop a newsletter and policy briefs to share updates and highlight data trends ▪ Leverage LinkedIn and other communications channels to build awareness of tools and share data insights ▪ Provide updates and relevant information to key stakeholders through presentations at conferences, meetings, and targeted outreach
13. Develop statewide talent development metrics to track progress of Virginia's effort to further align education and workforce needs	▪ Identify key indicators and metrics, with a focus on alignment of education programs and workforce demand ▪ Review proposed metrics with stakeholders ▪ Develop a public-facing site and communications plan to track progress
14. Continue to provide ad hoc data support and presentations to meet stakeholder needs	▪ Track data requests and presentations to monitor reach and impact ▪ Incorporate stakeholder feedback to continuously improve responsiveness and quality of support
15. Support the development of enhanced labor market tools and wage record data with partners	▪ Support implementation of the enhanced wage record data collection with the Virginia Employment Commission and Virginia Works ▪ Assist with the development and launch of new labor market tools through Virginia Works
16. Enhance the quality of education and labor market data based on stakeholder feedback and analysis, including health education data	▪ Work with healthcare partners to address data quality and training needs identified through stakeholder feedback ▪ Identify additional data quality and reporting needs through ongoing analysis and recommend improvements

Appendix B: FY 2026 Accomplishments

VOEE's work in its initial years focused on fulfilling assigned project responsibilities, developing interactive data tools for partners, producing and disseminating research reports and briefs, communicating findings, and piloting new program reporting in partnership with SCHEV.

The Office is also charged with supporting several key initiatives across the Commonwealth. For example, VOEE supports the Virginia Board of Workforce Development in developing the biennial high-demand occupations list. It also partners with SCHEV and VEDP to evaluate and report on the Innovative Internship Program and provides recommendations for new G3 programs at the Virginia Community College System (VCCS).

VOEE's data tools, including the High-Demand Occupations Dashboard, the Education and Workforce Alignment Dashboard, and the College and Career Outcomes Dashboard, provide stakeholders with access to critical labor market, education, and training data. Together, these tools support informed decision-making and strengthen the Commonwealth's ability to address education and workforce challenges.

Additional information on VOEE's data tools, as well as the development and implementation of Labor Market Profiles for SCHEV, can be found in the FY 2026 Research Agenda.

In FY 2026, VOEE continued its work at the intersection of education and workforce. Key accomplishments include:

Labor Market Insights

- Updated the High-Demand Occupations List and published it on the VOEE website in partnership with Virginia Works and the Virginia Board of Workforce Development
- Provided monthly analysis of top occupations and industries based on job postings data to support Virginia Works' Virginia Has Jobs initiative
- Supported implementation of Executive Order 5 in collaboration with Virginia Works

Talent Development and Skills Alignment

- Completed the G3 analysis and submitted recommendations to the General Assembly and VCCS
- Partnered with SCHEV and VEDP to establish goals and metrics for the Innovative Internship Program
- Developed a consolidated, industry-based credential list in partnership with K–12 and community college stakeholders
- Supported four-year institutions by delivering more than 150 Labor Market Profiles

Data Translation and Capacity Building

- Completed more than 25 custom data requests for stakeholders, including institutions, workforce regions, and K–12 school divisions
- Initiated research on workforce shortages, artificial intelligence, and talent migration
- VOEE expanded its communications strategy, delivering more than 12 presentations—including keynotes, panel discussions, and guest speaking engagements—reaching over 650 participants. Website users increased from 9,434 to 21,518, more than a 128% increase over the prior year. VOEE also launched a LinkedIn page in April 2026 and plans to expand outreach in the coming year.