

THE VIRGINIA APPRENTICESHIP COUNCIL MINUTES

The Virginia Apprenticeship Council met on Wednesday, September 23, 2026.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dudley Harris, Chair
Grant Shmelzer, Vice Chair
Nicole Overley, Secretary
Doris Crouse-Mays
Patrick Dean
William Dunn
Meghan Hurt
Samantha Galina
Steve Masterson
Dr. Latitia McCane (virtual)
Bo Bundick
Michelle Ramaker
Dr. Anthony Williams
Jessica Looman (Secretary of Labor)

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT:

Laura McClintock
Dr. Jason Williams
Dr. Jameo Pollock

STAFF PRESENT:

Dana Westgren, Assistant Commissioner
Asif Bhavnagri, Deputy Commissioner
Skip Maupai, Workforce Senior Policy Analyst
Vicki Tanner, Director of Compliance and EO
Faith Clayton, Registered Apprenticeship Region Supervisor
Kristen DeSanti, Apprenticeship Intermediary Fellow
Diana Leyva, Registered Apprenticeship Consultant
Tereza Edwards, Registered Apprenticeship Consultant
James Edmunds, Program Support Technician
Cierra Morgan, Program Support Technician
Emilia Hughes, Rural Healthcare Apprenticeship Consultant
Liaison

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS:

Chair Dudley Harris called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and welcomed the council members.

Chair Dudley Harris welcomes everyone and had VAC members and Virginia Works staff introduce themselves.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Laura Duckworth, Laura wants to ensure that the Virginia Apprenticeship Council knows that Registered Apprenticeship overlaps with safety and health. She also states that she believes that there is currently a gap in this area. Mrs. Duckworth suggested to the Council that a subcommittee be formed on how to address safety/health and how they can better align with Registered Apprenticeship. She also inquired about the training that Registered Apprenticeship Consultants (RACs) receive regarding identifying an effective safety and health program. Lastly, Mrs. Duckworth inquired about the process of involving the Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) to help identify safety/health issues or concerns.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

June 2026 meeting minutes were approved through voice vote with no objections.

OLD BUSINESS:

Regulatory Documents: Skip Maupai informed the council that the regulatory documents that they voted on in December of 2025 are currently under review by the new administration. These documents were developed under the previous administration and the new administration wanted to take some time to review them before approval.

Reciprocity Agreement Acceptance: Skip Maupai updated the council on the reciprocity agreement. He informed the council that all comments, thoughts, and ideas from the council were incorporated into the agreement and it is still under review with the regulatory documents. Virginia has currently made 28 agreements for reciprocity with other states.

Ratio Workgroup: Skip Maupai provided updates to the council regarding the ratio of Journeyworker to apprentices. He shared with the council the code that Registered Apprenticeship adheres to (16VAC 35-30-50 sub b) and stated it the ratio is 1:1. This was a part of the regulatory documents that the council approved back in December.

Exemption Requirements: Virginia Works is requesting that a workgroup be formed to provide some clarification regarding exam exemption requirements. A motion was made to create the subcommittee by Doris Crouse-Mays and seconded by William Dunn.

NEW BUSINESS:

Virginia Works Apprenticeship Updates: Nicole Overley, Commissioner of Virginia Works, gave the following updates on behalf of Virginia Works:

- i. **Intermediary Support & Apprenticeship for All Summit:** Kristen Desanti, Apprenticeship Intermediary Fellow, updated the council on Registered Apprenticeship's most recent event, the Apprenticeship for All Summit. Registered Apprenticeship brought intermediaries from across the commonwealth to look at where RA is today, introduce our emerging intermediary framework, and most importantly, hear directly from the field about where we can grow and what it will take to get there. Kristen stated that two things

stood out from the summit. First, there is a tremendous appetite for Registered Apprenticeships to grow across Virginia. Secondly, there is a clear opportunity to strengthen the infrastructure that makes that growth possible. Lastly, Kristen stated that the consistent message from the working session is that partnerships matter, but that people need an easier system to navigate and practical support from where they are. Registered Apprenticeship is now in the process of refining their intermediary framework, building a toolkit, and launching the intermediary network in November.

- ii. **Youth Apprenticeship (Career Wise) Project Update:** Dana Westgren, Assistant Commissioner, updated the council on project with Career Wise. Career Wise is a national group that brings together experts around apprenticeship and Virginia is now a member of the future Ready Apprenticeship Center. Virginia has joined a cohort of other states to develop essentially a state plan for the apprenticeship. Through Spring of 2027, Virginia Works will be working with the Future Ready Apprenticeship Center to build out a state plan for youth apprenticeship. Dana informed the council on the scope of the work. The scope included: scale the statewide system, launch healthcare pathways, formalize postsecondary and intermediary capacity, and strengthen employer and wraparound supports. Dana also stated that the focus sectors were skilled trades, automotive, and healthcare. These focus sectors were selected based on in-demand occupations and that the occupations that are easily apprenticeable. Lastly, Dana informed the council that the initial draft for the project is due in June 2027.

- iii. **Overall Registered Apprenticeship Growth Strategy:** Nicole Overley, Commissioner of Virginia Works, updated the council on the RA growth strategy. This strategy involves the people, the industries, and the types of Registered Apprenticeship. It is important that all three of these are durable – equitable growth means progressing on all three together, not just adding apprentices to the existing programs.

- i. People: Opening access to unrepresented Virginians
 - i. Women, veterans, and people with disabilities
 - ii. Youth and out-of-school youth
 - iii. Dislocated and long-term unemployed workers
 - iv. Justice-involved, single parents, and more
- ii. Industries: High-demand, apprenticeable sectors
 - i. Advanced manufacturing and life sciences
 - ii. Healthcare, with a focus on rural health
 - iii. IT and cybersecurity: energy and clean energy
 - iv. Shipbuilding, maritime, and nuclear
- iii. Types of RA: Every entry point, from high school to a degree
 - i. Employer, JATC, and intermediary-sponsored
 - ii. Youth apprenticeship
 - iii. Pre-apprenticeship
 - iv. Degree apprenticeship (earn credit and wage)

Commissioner Overley also updated the council on the seven pillars of the growth strategy

1. Connect apprentices to sponsors
 - a. The #1 barrier we hear, solved through connection to Virginia's workforce system
 2. Grow & diversify partner landscape
 - a. More employers, intermediaries, labor organizations & trade associations.
 3. Strengthen the mentorship backbone
 - a. Mentor toolkits, upskilling, and public recognition.
 4. Reflect the whole career continuum
 - a. Youth, pre-apprenticeship, adult learner, and degree pathways.
 5. Build & connect the pipeline
 - a. Link CTE, community colleges & WIOA into RA entry.
 6. Equity, credentials & career advancement
 - a. Reach underserved Virginians; stackable, affordable credentials.
 7. Investment & legislative foundation
 - a. Braid WIOA Title I, FastForward & G3; set the policy agenda.
- iv. **Grant Updates:** Dana Westgren, Assistant Commissioner, updated the council on the two grants that Registered Apprenticeship is involved with.
- i. **HIRED Fund**
 - i. Highlight, Include, Recruit, Engage, Deliver
 - ii. \$7,000 per employer (\$3,500 per apprentice) for training and supportive services with priority for rural employers.
 - iii. 39 employers/industry partners awarded a total of \$262,500
 - ii. **SAEF Grants**
 - i. SAEF2-\$6M Partnerships with Department of Education
 1. Supporting 33 principal and 119 teacher apprentices
 - ii. SAEF4 - Awarded \$2.2M August 2026-focus support intermediaries, target high-demand industries, provide funding to support RTI/OJT, and supportive services, improve RA dashboard
 - iii. **Rural Health Transformation Grant**
 - i. Virginia Works will fund 3–7 subrecipients to build or expand rural healthcare Registered Apprenticeship programs.
 - ii. \$500K–\$1M to be award per subrecipient, per year. Initial 12 months, renewable through 2030.
 - iii. 350 allied health apprentices are expected to register in year one.
 - iv. Applications for this grant are due October 16, 2026 and will be turning around those notices on the October 30, 2026.
 - v. Rural Virginia healthcare employers, groups of employers, and intermediaries are available to apply.
 - vi. **\$18/hour** minimum wage, plus **up to 80%** wage support for on-the-job training.

- v. **Pre-Apprenticeships:** Dana Westgren, Assistant Commissioner, updated the council on the framework for Effective Pre-Apprenticeships. The federal guidance standards establish a framework defining effective pre-apprenticeship (based on 20 CFR 681.480), its pathway into Registered Apprenticeship (RA), and clarifying how it can be delivered across federal workforce and education programs. The central message: pre-apprenticeship must connect directly to employers and lead to an active RA. These are suggestions of what to do to be a high-quality provider.
- i. Direct link to RA
 - i. Written direct-entry or advanced-standing agreements, credit for prior learning, and active employer engagement.
 - ii. Industry-driven curriculum
 - i. Aligned to RA competencies and entry requirements, validated by employers, with industry-recognized credentials and embedded employability skills.
 - iii. Supervised, hands-on learning
 - i. Work-based learning in real or simulated settings; realistic career exposure that reduces early apprenticeship attrition.
 - iv. Braided funding and delivery
 - i. Combine WIOA, Perkins V, and Workforce Pell with employer and state investment.
 - v. CTE and secondary pathways
 - i. Dual enrollment, articulation agreements, and employer-driven work-based learning that led to RA
- vi. **Program Quality Framework:** Vicki Tanner, Director of Compliance and EO, updated the council on program quality framework. Virginia Works is just getting started on creating program quality framework. The goal of this is to establish a statewide framework for quality assurance for our Registered Apprenticeship sponsors/programs. There is a federal foundation for this in the code of Federal regulations, and that does require our state workforce agencies to evaluate program effectiveness and their performance. It also sets out some standards for consistent review that includes things such as OJT/work processes & supervision, related technical instruction, apprentice progression & wage increases, registration, cancellations & completions, program administration, records & sponsor responsibilities, and program performance and outcomes. The Registered Apprenticeship database (RAPIDS) already has a quality assurance assessment, and we will use that as the framework and go from there.
- vii. **Secretary Jessica Looman:** provided an update focused on registered apprenticeship and Virginia's workforce. She emphasizes her long-standing commitment to apprenticeship programs and thanks Virginia Works and the board for their efforts.
- i. Secretary Looman started by discussing some key workforce updates and by wishing everyone a happy Virginia Jobs Day. The Commonwealth reported an increase of approximately 5,600 jobs over the past month; however, employment levels remain about 37,000 jobs below those recorded in August of the previous year, positioning Virginia among the states experiencing the most significant job losses. The unemployment rate stands at roughly 3.6%, supported by a newly

launched real-time dashboard that provides daily monitoring of unemployment claims. Additionally, the labor force participation rate has declined to 62.8%, a trend largely attributed to women leaving the workforce due to high childcare costs and the need for stronger supports such as paid family leave and paid sick days.

- ii. Secretary Looman also commended the recent “Apprenticeship for All” summit, noting that it signifies the beginning of a comprehensive statewide strategy to expand registered apprenticeship opportunities. The Commonwealth is actively exploring policies and funding mechanisms to strengthen youth apprenticeship programs, enhance high-quality pre-apprenticeship and readiness initiatives, and improve supports that facilitate apprenticeship participation. She also highlighted successful models, including programs designed to assist formerly incarcerated individuals in transitioning into registered apprenticeship pathways.
- iii. Lastly, Secretary Looman informed the council that the Governor recently released a new framework addressing data centers and artificial intelligence, which incorporates key workforce protections and mandates the development of a comprehensive “quality job framework.” Within this framework, registered apprenticeship is expected to serve as a central component, particularly in relation to construction activities associated with data center development.

REPORTS:

Virginia Community College System (VCCS):

Dr Jason Williams, the director of career education programs and workforce partnerships with the system office, provided the following written report to the council:

Danville Community College has teamed up with First Piedmont Waste & Recycling Solutions for a registered apprenticeship agreement. In creating a direct pathway for students in DCC’s Diesel Maintenance Technology program to continue their training and launch careers in the diesel industry. This agreement lays the groundwork for future students to move from classroom and hands-on training at DCC into paid, work-based learning with an established regional employer.

Micron Technology, Inc., one of the world’s largest semiconductor companies celebrated the first graduating class of its Manassas Registered Apprenticeship Program for local pathways into semiconductor manufacturing careers. This first graduating class in Manassas is Micron’s largest apprenticeship class to graduate across the U.S. to date. Since launching the program in April 2024 with Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) and the National Institute for Industry and Career Advancement, Micron has hired more than 50 apprentices in Manassas, creating local opportunities to propel individuals into highly skilled careers. Micron’s registered apprenticeship program combines classroom learning, technical instruction and hands-on experience to create accessible pathways into advanced manufacturing careers. Designed for both recent high school graduates entering the workforce and adults seeking to transition into a new career.

An inaugural class of dental assistant students is the first to enter a new two-year dental assistant program in Central Virginia, where they’ll combine classroom instruction with hands-on training. Johnson Health Center (JHC) is a community health center that provides comprehensive medical and dental care to the community. The new two-year dental assistant program comes from a

collaboration from Amherst County Public Schools and Central Virginia Community College (CVCC). Students will earn college credits while developing critical skills for a career in dental assisting. JHC aims to expand career opportunities for students while also focusing on addressing the growing demand for skilled healthcare professionals in the region.

The Oberle Academy launched Heavy Equipment Operator courses, in partnership with Germanna Community College. This year marks year three year in partnering with Germanna Community College to expand CTE opportunities for Oberle students. Through this partnership, students also participate in welding and electrical courses, receiving hands-on instruction and developing industry-relevant skills that can prepare them for employment or continued education after graduation. Students will train using simulators for a variety of equipment, including standard and advanced excavators, a D11 earthmover, a large, wheeled tractor grader, a forklift and a skid steer. The Eastern Shore Community College campus in Melfa became the newest Virginia Career Works Center in the Hampton Roads Workforce Council area, marking the organization's commitment to expanding services to the local business community and to job seekers. The center is the seventh of its kind and was made possible by the council in partnership with Virginia Works, the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, and the college. Virginia Career Works connects job seekers with employers through its training providers and a network of professionals. Services include one-on-one career counseling, skills training, and job preparation.

Department of Education (DOE):

Dr. Anthony Williams, Director of CTE, Department of Education, provided the following report to the council:

The Department of Education is in the final stages of processing its Request for Applications (RFA) and expects to release it within the next two to three weeks following coordination with Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS). The grant will focus on students in rural school divisions who are participating in Career and Technical Education (CTE) health and medical sciences programs, as well as related activities such as dual enrollment and career exploration. Approximately \$8–9 million in first-year funding has been awarded, with four additional years contingent on meeting CMS-defined benchmarks. The primary goal is to increase student enrollment in health and medical sciences certification programs at the high school level. Additionally, an interim report summarizing all CTE courses, pathways, and credentialing opportunities for the 2025–2026 school year will be presented to both the Board of Education and the Board of Workforce Development. This report supports broader efforts, required under Senate Bill 592, to engage multiple agencies in evaluating and shaping the future of CTE coursework and credentialing, given concerns about the large number of existing courses and certifications. The interim report will be submitted to key state leaders by October 1, with a full report due in 2027 and updates every two years thereafter. The agency anticipates valuable collaboration and feedback as it works to strengthen CTE programs and maintain national leadership in workforce development.

Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI):

Samantha Galina, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Industry, gave the following report to the Virginia Apprenticeship Council on behalf of DOLI:

The Department of Labor and Industry is modernizing and expanding their wage protection division and currently have open positions
(https://www.jobs.virginia.gov/jobs/search?page=1&dropdown_field_2_uids%5B%5D=183a312ab1f33cdda05ac5921ebd9da3&query=)

DOLI also announced the safety video contest, “VOSH Vision: Your Voice. Your Safety,” at the VOSH annual conference. There is a category for “Early Career” people – apprentices, interns, recent graduates, first-year professionals, and people entering the workforce. DOLI would appreciate any assistance with promotion of the contest when we have the materials to distribute.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Commissioner Nicole Overley shared a copy of Virginia Apprenticeship Council annual report. Virginia Works has already received suggestions from Chair Harris but asks that the council review the report and provide any feedback by the end of the week.

Chair Harris announced the meetings dates for 2026.
December 3, 2026

Chair Harris thanked the Council and all in attendance.

The meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Dudley Harris, Chair
Nicole Overley, Commissioner and Secretary