

# Practicing What We Preach:

*How Virginia Works is Building the Workforce of Tomorrow from the Inside Out*



*Every day, Virginia Works helps job seekers find their footing, connects employers with skilled talent, and coaches organizations across the Commonwealth on building stronger workforces.*

*This International HR Day, we turn that lens inward and ask: "Are we living the values we champion?"*

## OUR MISSION, REFLECTED

### An Agency That Strives to Walk the Talk

Each year on May 20, International Human Resources (HR) Day offers organizations across the country an opportunity to recognize the dedicated professionals who shape workplace culture, guide employees, and build strong foundations for success.

As the Commonwealth's workforce development agency, Virginia Works sits uniquely at the intersection of workforce development and public service. We guide businesses through the complexities of talent acquisition, help individuals navigate career transitions, and serve as the state's primary agency for employment readiness. That responsibility carries enormous weight, and an even greater obligation to lead by example.

Our agency is on a trajectory of steady growth and our HR team is a driving force behind it – helping us build an organizational identity, and collaborative ecosystem, that reflects who we are today and who we aim to become. At Virginia Works, Human Resources is more than a core function – it is an enabler of our mission, providing a foundation for stability while also helping set the tone for transformation.

*"We cannot shape the workforce of tomorrow unless we are willing to build it within our own organization.*

*Exemplifying what we teach is the foundation of our leadership."*

*-Shanell Day, HR Manager at Virginia Works*

## Eight Guiding Commitments, One Culture

Virginia Works’ HR team set forth eight core principles that shape how we serve and how we care for our own people. They give structure to our growth and clarity to our decisions as we grow together as a relatively new HR team, less than 6 months old.

These principles ground us in a shared sense of purpose, they help define our daily rhythms and strengthen the culture we are intentionally creating together.

	<b>Best-in-Class Approaches to Talent</b>		<b>Career Path Opportunities State-Wide</b>
	<b>Foster an Enabled &amp; Empowered Culture</b>		<b>Be Adaptable and Agile</b>
	<b>Embrace Continuous Learning</b>		<b>Customer &amp; Client-Centric Mindset</b>
	<b>Consultative In-House Talent Approach</b>		<b>Forward-Thinking HR Innovation</b>

Together, these principles form the blueprint for a human resources operation that doesn’t just process paperwork; it develops people, shapes careers, and builds the kind of workplace that makes Virginia’s public sector stronger.

## TALENT DEVELOPMENT IN ACTION

### “Practice What We Preach” Every Day

Perhaps no principle resonates more deeply within our team than this one. We tell employers to invest in early-career talent. We tell organizations **to build pipelines**, not just post jobs. So we do both, deliberately and systematically.

The following efforts represent the practical expression of our guiding commitments, turning our principles into real, tangible programs that shape our workforce from within.

#### Registered Apprenticeships

Virginia Works embeds apprenticeship models into our own HR and workforce operations, creating earn-while-you-learn pathways for individuals entering the human services field. Apprentices work alongside seasoned staff, gaining credentialed skills in case management, career coaching, and program administration - the same competencies we champion for the businesses we serve.

This work reflects our commitment to best-in-class talent development, statewide career pathways, and a more adaptable, future-ready workforce.

## **Internship & Early-Career Pipelines**

Our year-round internship program has provided students with meaningful, mentored experiences across data analytics, communications and engagement, and learning and development. These aren't coffee-and-copies roles; interns are embedded in real projects, contribute to real products, and leave with job-ready portfolios.

These pipelines embody our focus on cultivating talent early and embracing forward-thinking approaches to workforce development.

## **Internal Career Pathing**

We believe great talent is often already in the building. We are building career development frameworks to map clear, transparent advancement pathways for every role across Virginia Works, from front-line Career Navigator Apprentices to regional managers, and elevating the roles of leaders and managers of all kinds, from people managers to program and project managers to emerging leaders.

This effort directly supports our commitment to transparent statewide career pathways, empowered teams, and consultative, talent focused HR practices.

## **Continuous Learning Culture**

Embracing continuous learning isn't aspirational language for us, it is a continual focus. Our management team incorporates around 80 individuals who serve in leadership roles, and they connect monthly to talk through all aspects of agency strategy and operations. Once a month, our agency leaders also travel to a different workforce center for a live "traveling town hall", spotlighting the unique aspects of that region and team's effort for the benefit of all 350 Virginia Works team members. And each year, our team members build individual learning plans as part of their performance management process, designed to help them articulate their career goals and provide support from Virginia Works to achieve them.

This reinforces our dedication to continuous learning, agility, and supporting a workforce that is prepared to grow alongside the needs of the Commonwealth.

## **Consultative HR Model**

Rather than a transactional HR office that processes requests, Virginia Works has built an internal HR team that acts as a true strategic partner to every department. We model the consultative approach we teach employers - meeting our teams where they are, understanding their workforce challenges, and co-creating solutions.

This model reflects our consultative in-house talent approach, our customer and client-centric mindset, and our drive to build agile, best in class HR services.

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## **STATEWIDE IMPACT**

### **One Agency's Culture, the Whole Commonwealth's Future**

The work of Virginia Works HR extends far beyond our own walls. When we hire an apprentice from a community that has historically seen limited career opportunities, we send a message to every employer in that region. When we build transparent career ladders for our own staff, we demonstrate exactly what we encourage others to do.

Our commitment to fostering an **enabled and empowered culture** means that the hundreds of Virginians who work across our network of workforce centers don't just process unemployment claims and job referrals - they are themselves living proof that intentional HR practices transform lives and communities.

## LOOKING AHEAD

### Innovating Our Way into the Future

Our final guiding principle is to **be forward-thinking and innovative in our HR services**, is the one that keeps us honest. The workforce landscape is shifting faster than ever: AI is reshaping jobs, demographic change is accelerating, and the expectations workers bring to their careers have fundamentally changed.

Virginia Works HR is rising to meet that moment. We are actively exploring new models for skills-based hiring within our own agency, expanding our digital literacy offerings, and piloting new ways to reduce hiring time while increasing the quality and diversity of candidate pools.

Because that's what a best-in-class HR operation does. **It doesn't wait for the future to arrive- it builds it.**

## A MOMENT OF GRATITUDE

### Honoring the HR Team That Brings Our Values to Life

This International HR Day, we celebrate not just the professionals in our agency who navigate complex systems with grace and expertise, but the bold idea behind their work: that a government agency can be, and should be, a best-in-class employer, a place where **talent is discovered, developed, and celebrated.**

Today, **we celebrate our HR team** - not just for what they do, but **for how deeply they contribute to the heart of Virginia Works.** Their commitment helps make our workplace stronger, more cohesive, and better prepared for the future.

## Happy International HR Day from



*To every HR professional across the Commonwealth: your work shapes careers, strengthens communities, and defines what it means to value people.*

*Thank you.*

