



# Hardy County Summary Report

Prepared by:



# Introduction

This report will provide a summary of the Career Readiness West Virginia discussion and recommendations within Hardy County. A considerable amount of research, meetings and breakout sessions have taken place in the past couple months to assess and evaluate the **Growth, Decline, and Opportunities** faced by both education and local industry.

Forge Business Solutions has conducted discussions with stakeholders throughout the county and region, including members of the house of delegates, the leaders within education, educators, students at large, parents, business leaders, non-profit organization representatives, and community members. We have analyzed economic data, reviewed current partnerships and collaborations, and investigated different relationships that can be created, developed or enhanced. Through this work, we have been able to analyze the Hardy County economy to determine where collaboration can be fostered in order to develop a sustainable partnership model between area industry and K-12, including Career Technical Education.

In the pages that follow, we will summarize the results of the stakeholder engagement meeting discussion and will include county-specific recommendations. With an overview of the Hardy County education system that is as broad as it is specific, the foundation has been laid to launch the collaborative model that will arm education and industry with the necessary partnerships to forge ahead for a successful and sustainable future.

Our sincere appreciation goes to Superintendent Sheena Van Meter and Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Bonnie Rogers for their dedication to their community and support of Career Readiness West Virginia.



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# Hardy County Summary

Hardy County is a small community serving the towns of Moorefield and Wardensville with a population just shy of 14,000. Hardy County's small size has created a close-knit community in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia. Home to a variety of industries, Hardy County has top employers such as Pilgrim's Pride, American Woodmark, and Summit Community Bank. This wide range of industries for a small community has helped to maintain a consistent size.

Hardy County Schools serve over 2,300 of the community's youth with Moorefield High School, East Hardy High School, and the supporting middle and elementary schools. Two hundred and fifty-six employers employ the residents of Hardy County, many of which are members of the Hardy County Chamber of Commerce. Currently, there is little engagement between education and industry leaving significant opportunity for future collaboration. However, many community members communicated their support and dedication towards helping develop and implement the Career Readiness West Virginia partnership model.

Boasting a lower poverty rate and higher labor participation rate than the average county in West Virginia, Hardy County is prepared to lead the way for the state. Educating its students with skills and expertise in demand by local industry and connecting them with local opportunities will allow the county to continue to grow and thrive in the future.

Forge has identified eight activities in which industry and education can collaborate to support workforce development utilizing newly formed relationships – [Internships](#), [Externships](#), [Speakers' Bureaus](#), [Job Shadowing](#), [Job Fairs](#), [Integrated Pathways](#), [Career Exploration](#), and [Workplace Tours](#).

In addition to these activities, Forge recommends that Hardy County Schools and the Hardy County Chamber of Commerce work together to develop a local career readiness advisory committee. This committee will become the bridge that connects education to teaching desired skillsets as demanded by local industry. Together education and industry can lead West Virginia toward a stronger future.



# Hardy County Schools

510 Ashby Street  
Moorefield, WV 26836

**Superintendent:** Sheena Van Meter

**Enrollment:** 2,354



# Hardy County Chamber of Commerce

122 N Main St  
Moorefield, WV 26836

**Executive Director:** Bonnie Rogers

**County Population:** 13,717



# Discovery

## Top Employers

Name	Industry	Address
Pilgrim’s Pride Corporation of West Virginia	Agriculture	129 Potomac Ave; Moorefield, WV 26836
American Woodmark Corporation	Manufacturing	587 Robert C. Byrd Industrial Park Road Moorefield, WV 26836
Hardy County Board of Education	Education	510 Ashby St, Moorefield, WV 26836
Wal-Mart	Retail	11 Harness Rd, Moorefield, WV 26836
Summit Community Bank	Banking	300 N Main St, Moorefield, WV 26836
M & M Transportation	Transportation	412 M and M Ln, Fisher, WV 26818
EA Hawse Health Center	Healthcare	8 Lee St # 127, Moorefield, WV 26836
Eastern West Virginia Community & Technical College	Education	316 Eastern Dr, Moorefield, WV 26836
Packers Sanitation Services	Sanitation	1682 Sauget Business Blvd., Moorefield, WV 26836
Hardy County Commission	Government	204 Washington St # B2, Moorefield, WV 26836

## Stakeholder Engagement Meeting Comments

Forge Business Solutions collaborated with Hardy County Schools and the Hardy County Chamber of Commerce to conduct a stakeholder engagement meeting. This meeting invited local educators, employers, parents, students and politicians to develop an initial discussion. The following subsections include comments collected from the stakeholders. They may contain opinionated statements that do not represent the research or thoughts of Forge.



## ***Local Industry Trends***

### ***Growth***

- Healthcare
- Pilgrim's and American Woodmark
- Agriculture industry
- Tourism
- Organic poultry
- Trades- plumbing, electricians, carpentry
- Poultry growers
- Retail establishments- Mom & Pop specialties
- Service industry
- Plant/manufacturing
- Financial services
- Service industry
- Cabinetry
- Technology/IT
- Construction
- Cyclical growth and decline
- Plumbing, HVAC, electrical

### ***Decline***

- Farming
- Wood industry
- Brick and mortar retail
- Logging
- CDL drivers
- Ruke Mill closing
- Allegheny Wood Products
- Agriculture
- Pulpwood
- Timber



## ***Opportunities***

- Organic farming- hemp
- Computer technology
- Agriculture
- Tourism
- Technical careers
- Building trades- plumbers, electricians
- Diesel mechanics
- Entrepreneurs
- Technology
- Small businesses
- CDL drivers
- Abundant opportunities

## ***Job Market Outlook***

### ***4-Year Degree***

- Decreasing opportunities
- Difficult to find jobs
- Business administration
- Medical field
- Limited opportunity
- Teaching profession
- Do not pay enough for those who secure degree
- Engineering positions
- Recruit from military or out of state
- Internships keep students in area



## ***2-Year Degree***

- Increasing opportunities
- CNAs
- CPNs, medical assistants, aides, technicians
- Highly recommended

## ***Tech Certificates***

- Increasing opportunities
- CDL drivers
- Information technology
- Diesel mechanics
- Very good opportunity
- Many older people in these jobs
- Recommend technical certificates
- Maintenance employees to repair equipment

## ***H.S. Grads***

- Stagnant growth
- Don't have interest or work ethic
- Greater need in Hardy County
- Services industry
- Young age group appears to lack motivation to work
- Nudged out by those with 2-year degrees
- High demand
- Low pay
- High school diploma required
- Labor intensive



## ***Current Engagement***

- Involved with Hardy County RDA
- Chamber members
- Open for tours
- Open for internships
- County CTE Board service
- Employee students
- HS- Prostart
- Baker Ruritan- volunteer
- Chamber of Commerce volunteer
- Support 4-H and FFA, community organizations
- CEO actively “rounds” throughout the region to identify ways to be creative and supportive of development to help support job growth
- Employment and training opportunities to farmworkers, their spouses and their children
- Business partners in education with Moorefield High and Moorefield Intermediate School
- Local school improvement council
- Willing to speak to classes
- Financial literacy program
- Participate in Chamber discussions
- Involved in business partnerships at local schools
- Grant loans for new and existing businesses
- Hosted job shadows
- College intern
- Spoken at career fairs and career days in the schools
- Directly engaged board
- MHS career fair
- Temporary summer employment
- Internships for specialized positions
- Provide workforce readiness skills
- Opportunity to advance education
- Core mission



## ***Top Characteristics***

- Hard workers and work ethic
- Willing to learn and grow
- Initiative
- Educated
- Communication skills
- Teamwork
- Problem solving
- Cultural alignment to company values
- Proper certification
- Ready to work and motivated
- Computer skills and desktop publishing
- Honesty
- Dependability and be on time
- Personable
- Service skills
- Count money
- Problem solving
- Customer service skills
- How to interact with people
- Reliability and adaptability
- Fitting into the culture
- Flexible
- Able to respect others
- Positive attitude
- Empathetic
- Responsibility
- Friendliness
- Math skills and ability to work with numbers
- Ability to “think”
- Professionalism and neatness
- Trustworthy
- Commitment to firm
- Works well with others
- Attention to detail
- Knowledge of job and profession
- Common sense



## ***Barriers for Collaboration***

- Only be beneficial
- Participation by students
- Parental involvement
- Stigma of death
- Openness to community
- Safe schools
- Transportation
- Infrastructure
- Lack of interest
- High speed internet
- Limited to serving farmworkers and their dependents
- Communication
- Listen to ideas and thoughts
- Education understanding private business/industry
- Teacher shadowing business
- Teachers playing a parent role for absent parents
- Allowing time in schools for introduction of life skills
- Speakers on industry topics
- Need buy-in from students through first-hand experience



# Recommendations

The Career Readiness WV model is student-centered. In an effort to increase workforce participation and improve job growth in the Hardy County area, collaboration between education providers at all levels and the business community is imperative. The following activities and organization are recommended.

## Workplace Tours

The Hardy County School District would benefit from preparing an annual calendar scheduling workplace tours with area employers for elementary, middle and high school students that is most convenient for the participating company or place of business. The calendar will create a centrally organized master calendar.

Identifying key employers that represent a broad spectrum of jobs and careers to engage in an interactive manner provides opportunities for students to see careers at work and to gain a better understanding of the key skillsets needed for various careers by industry sector. The workplace tours should be appropriate for the schools' respective grade levels. Schools and employers should develop sustainable relationships for annual exchange of ideas and collaboration that benefits both the student and the employer.

All are best served when educators ensure that students are learning about occupations that require a variety of degrees of education from high school diplomas to certificates to 2-year degrees and higher education. Employers and educators need to emphasize the importance of a knowledge-based drug-free workforce. An emphasis should be placed on jobs in STEM-related areas.

## Speakers' Bureau

In a centrally organized manner, speakers should be scheduled to present various occupations to students all throughout K-12 education. These occupations should represent varying skillsets and levels of education. Career and technical education should be the emphasis of the speakers' bureau. Relationships should be built with related employers so that both the education provider and the employer/business have a common understanding of the skillsets and education needed for successful job placement.



When available, involving parents who are subject-matter experts in their field of practice should be utilized. For areas where parents don't have the expertise, other speakers should be sought out to ensure students are getting a wide range of occupational exposure.

## Job Shadowing

Each school should have an opportunity to engage in job shadowing for a wide range of occupations where safety can be ensured, and job scenarios are presented in a manner that is appropriate for the student. Job shadowing should not be limited to parents and their occupations. Many students may not have parents that are employed and making sure that everyone has a fair opportunity is essential.

## Job Fairs

All middle schools and high schools should participate in at least one annual job fair and/or reverse job fair. Job fairs should be age-appropriate and, when possible, on school premises. The idea behind job fairs is not only to offer jobs to high school graduates but to expose students to as many occupations and industries as possible.

Additionally, relationships between employers and future employees can be established at an earlier level thus allowing students to focus on career opportunities with unfiltered knowledge and a clear understanding of what it takes to get a specific job and excel in a specific occupational area.

Interview skills with an emphasis on communication should be established as soon as possible. Elementary schools should offer career day opportunities where subject matter experts visit the classrooms to discuss a variety of occupations and industries. Feedback from participating employers should be collected at all points of engagement and utilized by educators to develop student understanding and success.

## Internships and Externships

Area employers should be invited to participate in and offer internships/externships (paid or unpaid) as long as safety is ensured and tasks are age appropriate. All internships and externships shall be approved by the school district. Feedback should be collected and evaluated from both the employer and student perspective. Such feedback should be considered and utilized to drive student understanding and success.



Internships/externships should represent a wide range of occupations and varying degrees of education required. Special attention should be paid to ensure that students with fewer resources have an equal opportunity to be considered. A recognition program should be established to recognize participating students for their work and success.

## Integrated Pathways

K-12 public education, community and technical colleges, and higher education should collaborate to ensure that students have an efficient and secure way to obtain varying levels of qualified education necessary to secure a job and to advance within their career field. All education providers should be embedded in all levels of workforce development and career readiness. This will ensure their awareness of the skillsets, knowledge, and degrees required by industry and employer thus closing the loop on wasteful spending.

## Additional Recommendations

Hardy County should consider its top employers as a primary resource for career readiness. Those employers are:

- Pilgrim's Pride
- American Woodmark
- Hardy County Board of Education
- Wal-Mart
- Summit Community Bank

Hardy County Schools and the Hardy County Chamber of Commerce should apply the Career Readiness WV model and provide leadership to the local career readiness advisory committee that is established from its local stakeholders. Strategic partnerships should be developed with existing businesses but also with emerging industry leaders. The small business community should be engaged as well as the larger employers.

The career and technical education centers should offer open houses to employers of the Moorefield and Wardensville areas and surrounding counties. This showcases the programs and skillsets being developed and deployed. An annual employer-sponsored professional etiquette workshop should be offered to students and parents.



As part of the district's professional development program for teachers and administrators, Hardy County should include employers and occupational specialists as speakers for its professional development program. This will assist educators with a better understanding of the demand for skillsets and key employee characteristics of the local economy.

All participants in the collaborative should be surveyed on an annual basis for input and ideas. This will allow for continued growth and development of the model. The success of West Virginia's economy greatly depends on diversification. Local districts should not limit themselves to the current industry landscape and should ensure that students are being exposed to careers from a global perspective.



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