



VIRGINIA INITIATIVE FOR
**GROWTH &
OPPORTUNITY**
IN EACH REGION

AGENDA
VIRGINIA GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY BOARD REGIONAL COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, October 22, 2025
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
[Virtual Link](#)

I. OPENING

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| a. Call to order | Chair |
| b. Roll Call | Shara Gibson |
| c. Public Comment | Shara Gibson |
| d. May 29, 2025 Meeting Recap | Chair |
| e. State Board Retreat Recap | Shara Gibson |

II. PRODUCTIVITY

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| a. Planning Grant Analysis Report Update – JLARC Recommendation #16 | Chair |
| b. Regional Council Certifications | Chair |
| c. Resource Utilization | Shara Gibson |
| d. Regional Council Self-Assessments | Chair |

III. COLLABORATION & CONNECTIVITY

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| a. Growth and Diversification Plan - Best Practices | Shannon Holland |
|---|-----------------|

IV. ADJOURNMENT



VIRGINIA INITIATIVE FOR
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VIRGINIA GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY BOARD REGIONAL COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, May 29, 2025

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

In-person & Virtual

Members Present

Jim Cheng

Leah Fremouw (Committee Chair) John
King

Members Absent

Delegate Michele Maldonado

Call to Order

Leah Fremouw, Chair of the Virginia Growth and Opportunity (GO Virginia) Regional Council Committee, called the meeting to order.

Roll Call

Ms. Shara Gibson, GO Virginia Program Manager at the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), called the roll, and stated that a quorum of the Committee was present.

Public Comment

Chair Fremouw opened the floor for public comment.

No members of the public appeared before the Committee for the public comment period.

Ms. Gibson noted that the staff had not received written public comment prior to the meeting

The public comment period was closed.

Productivity

Leah Fremouw introduced this section by highlighting its relevance to the committee's core focus area of productivity.

Shara Gibson from DHCD presented the findings from the planning grant analysis. The study evaluated 116 planning grants issued since 2018 to determine their effectiveness in producing future implementation projects. The data was collected through internal analysis, regional support staff input, and performance close-out

reviews. The findings highlighted both successes and challenges in the planning-to-implementation pipeline, reinforcing the importance of early-stage funding in driving innovation and strategy.

Ms. Fremouw introduced a discussion on leadership development and the rollout of a voluntary Regional Council Self-Assessment tool. She explained that this initiative builds on feedback from the February committee meeting where regions expressed interest in strengthening council leadership pipelines and governance structures.

The self-assessment is designed to help councils evaluate engagement, succession planning, and internal processes. Committee members were asked to share whether they believed their region would be interested in piloting the tool. Several members noted it would be useful in supporting onboarding and recruitment efforts, as well as benchmarking council performance over time.

Collaboration

Ms. Fremouw introduced the item on the upcoming State Board Retreat and the opportunity to ensure Regional Councils are meaningfully represented. She emphasized that while the retreat is intended for State Board members, regional voices are essential to informing strategy and strengthening board-council alignment.

Committee members discussed potential formats for participation, including regional storytelling, thematic roundtables, and breakout discussions focused on cross-regional collaboration and lessons learned. There was consensus that incorporating regional leaders into the retreat adds value and reinforces shared ownership of GO Virginia's future direction.

The Virginia Economic Development Partnership presented an overview of opportunities for Regional Councils to work closely with VEDP industry leads. He encouraged Councils to proactively engage with VEDP to explore alignment between regional growth and diversification plans and the Commonwealth's high-opportunity industry targets. Participants discussed the potential for deeper regional collaboration with VEDP on workforce planning, industry engagement, and the development of scalable projects that address sector-wide needs.

Innovation

Ms. Fremouw provided a recap of the recent GO Virginia Innovation and AI Panel, which was held earlier in the spring. She explained that the event was convened in response to growing interest among regional leaders in understanding how artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming the economic landscape.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.



Memorandum

TO: Regional Council Committee

FROM: DHCD Staff

RE: Follow Up to Planning Grant Analysis

DATE: 10/22/2025

BACKGROUND:

On July 15, 2025, DHCD conducted an analysis of the implementation of planning grants funded by GO Virginia. The results of this analysis were clarifying technical amendments to Board Policies #3 and #9, both of which were approved by the GO Virginia State Board at the meeting on September 9, 2025.

A summary of the technical amendments to the stated Board Policies are as follows:

Board Policy #3:

- Site planning grants and broadband planning grants are now excluded from counting towards each region's \$250,000 planning grant cap per fiscal year.

Board Policy #9

- Single-region competitive grants are now eligible to be used for site development activities.
- Reflects that site planning grants and broadband planning grants are now excluded from counting towards each region's \$250,000 planning grant cap per fiscal year.

For further information please see Board Policy #3 and Board Policy #9.

GO Virginia Planning Grant Analysis: 07/15/2025

Overview:

DHCD conducted a study to analyze the impact of Planning, Pilot, Feasibility Grants, or Planning Grants, by reviewing 72 GO Virginia planning grants. The goal was to assess the outcomes of these grants and determine if they have successfully transitioned into full-scale projects, either within or outside the GO Virginia framework. This study focused on whether a planning grant led to project implementation, assessing each against five criteria. If an implementation project met at least three of these criteria, it was considered linked to the planning grant. Findings are categorized into two groups: 1) those that resulted in tangible impacts, and 2) those that have not yet produced significant results. Some planning grants recommended not advancing specific projects, which is acknowledged as a valuable outcome. This study does not aim to define the successes or failures of any individual planning grant. DHCD acknowledges the inherent limitations of the data and recognizes that certain critical information may be unavailable or incomplete during this study.

Methodology:

DHCD first eliminated planning grants initiated on or after January 1, 2024, and those lacking a performance closeout report. This was due to unrealistic expectations regarding the impact of recent projects. Additionally, DHCD removed nineteen planning grants focused on site development. DHCD then reviewed the remaining 72 planning grants. If an implementation project could link to at least three factors from a planning grant, it was considered a successful indicator of future project impact.

A Stakeholders – did the planning grant outline at least three key stakeholders in the region or project area to consult with, partner with, or otherwise work together for a specific implementation project

B Recommendations – did the planning grant outline at least three key next steps to follow to start a specific implementation project

C Potential Challenges – Did a planning grant outline at least three barriers to entry, roadblocks to achieving the result, or any issue that has yet to be addressed that could prevent implementation

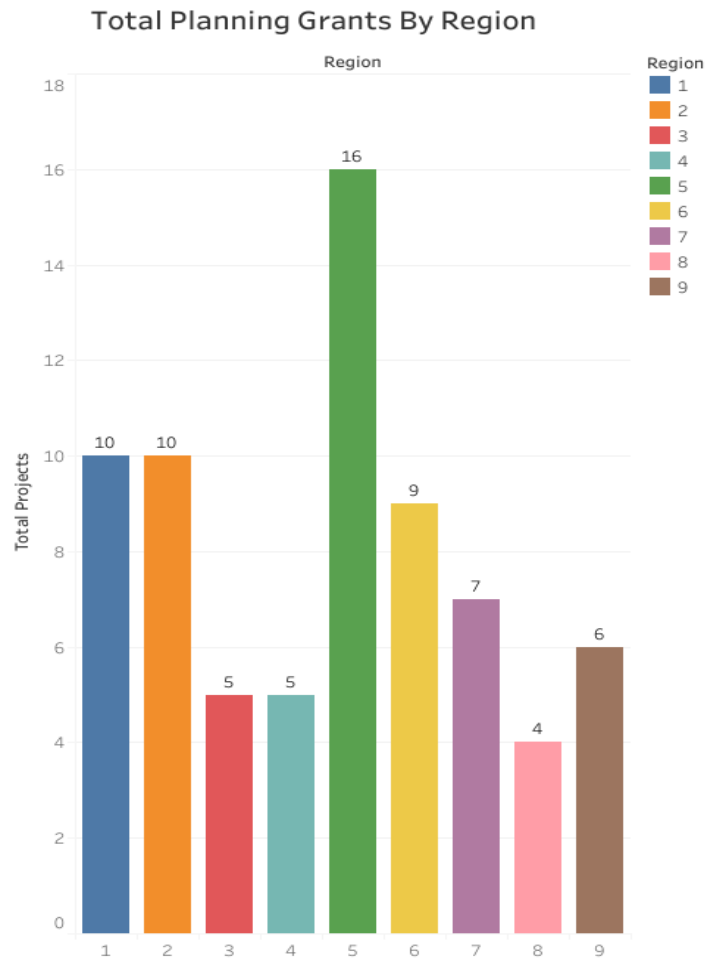
D Budget – Did a planning grant provide a specific financial overview with at least three steps, resources, or any line item that would ensure a project could be implemented.

E Timeframe – Did a planning grant outline at least three dates, times, or specific details associated with how long starting and completing an implementation project would take

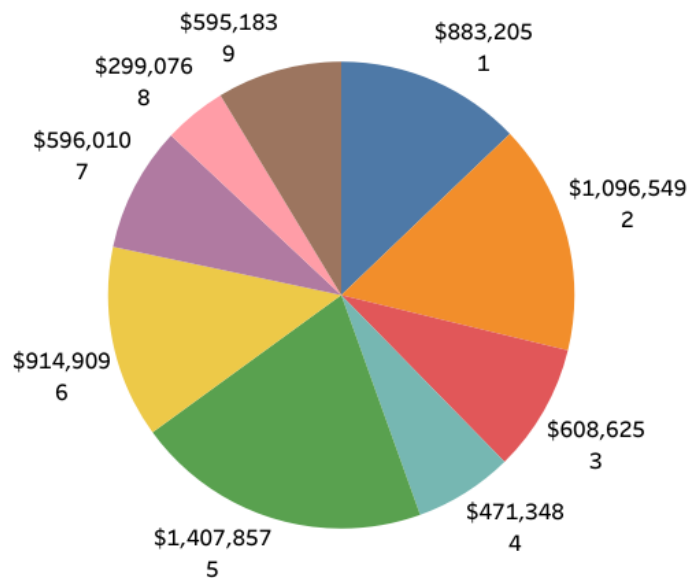
Study Results:

DHCD estimates that 37 out of 72 planning grants have led to tangible impacts from implementation projects, resulting in a rate of about 51% across participating regions. Of the remaining 35 grants, many have potential for high-impact initiatives but have yet to show results. DHCD found that Regions Five, One, and Two submitted the most planning grants (16, 10, and 10, respectively), while Region Eight submitted the fewest, with four grants. Four regions completed over nine planning grants, yet five completed fewer than seven. Regions One, Two, Five, and Six regularly utilized these grants, compared to fewer submissions from Regions Three, Four, Seven, Eight, and Nine. Success rates vary significantly, with five regions reporting future project impacts over 50%. Overall, regions secured \$6,872,762 in funding, averaging \$763,640 per region and \$76,004 per grant. Region Five and Region Two received the most funding, while Region Eight received the least at \$299,076. Planning grants focused on workforce development had the highest success rate of 45%, with 19 of the 36 related grants advancing to implementation. In contrast, cluster scale-up and startup ecosystem grants had success rates of 22% and 18%, respectively.

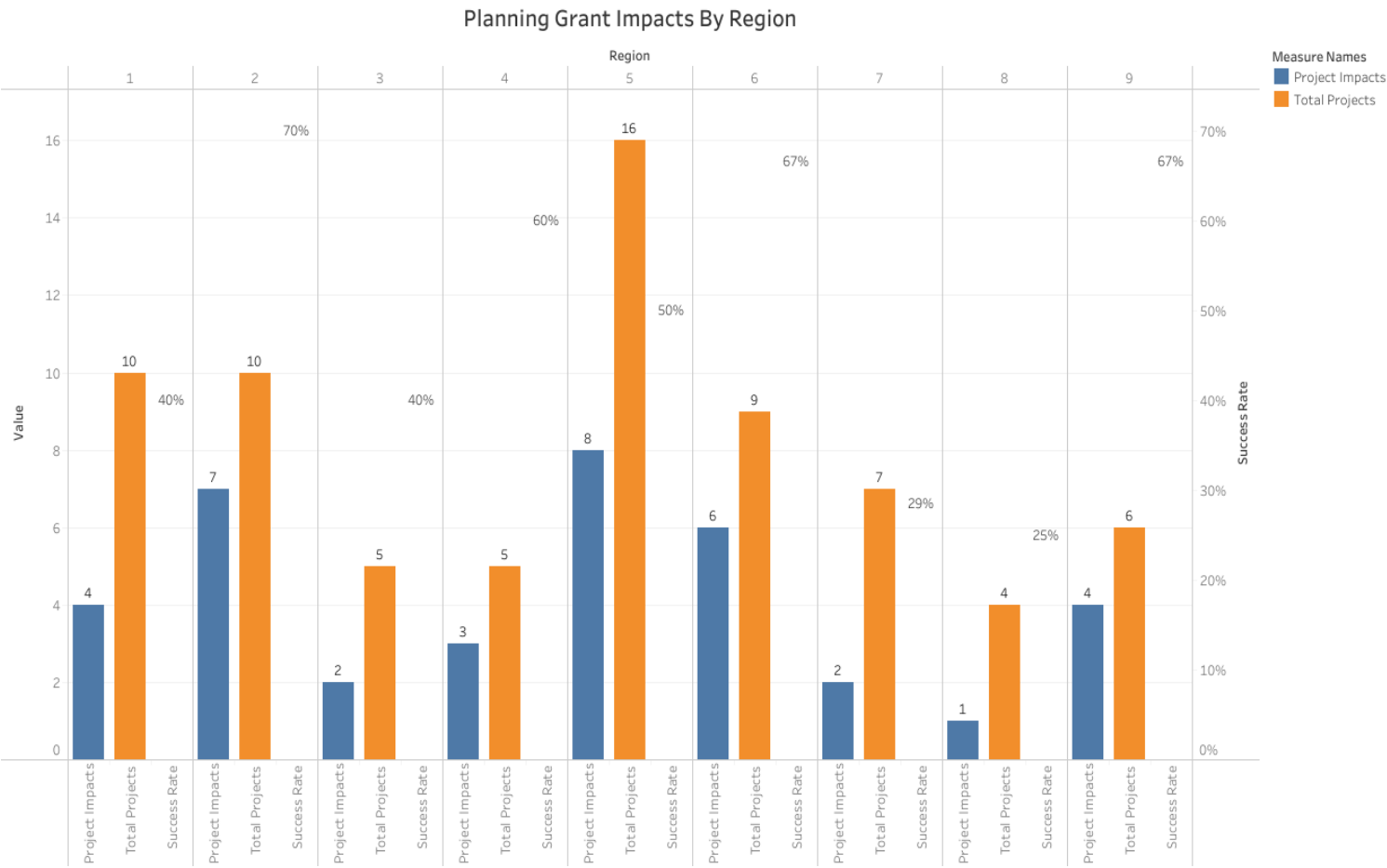
A. The graph below shows the total number of planning grants based on which region they originated from.



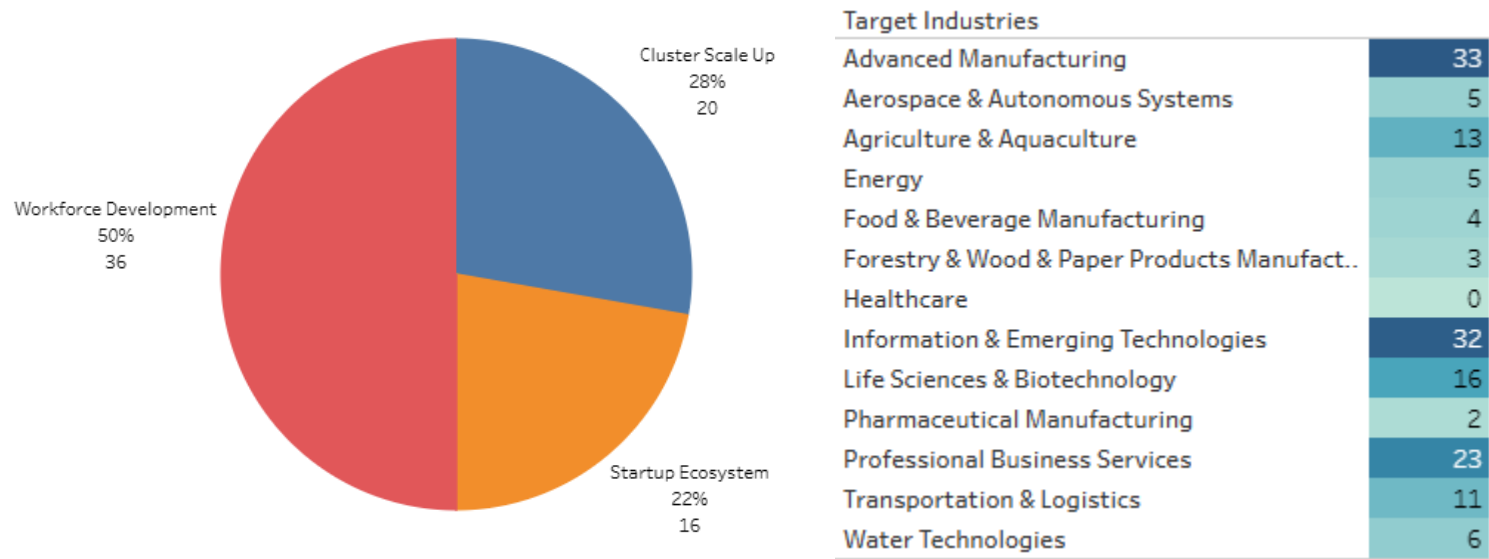
B. The graph below shows the total funding for GO Virginia planning grants, \$, broken down by region



C. The graph below shows the future project impacts that could be determined.



D. The following graphs outline total Planning Grants by Investment Strategy and Target Industries





Board Policy #3

TITLE: Administrative Approval Process for Grants under \$100,000 from Regional Per Capita Grant Allocations

EFFECTIVE DATE: 07/01/2025

AUTHORITY: § 2.2-2486 - §2.2-2487 of the Code of Virginia

POLICY STATEMENT: It is the policy of the Virginia Growth and Opportunity Board that each Regional Council will have the option to receive administrative approval for up to \$250,000 of its Regional Per Capita grant funds each fiscal year, with a limit of \$100,000 per project for Planning, Feasibility, and Small-Scale Pilot projects.

To receive administrative approval, the Regional Council must submit a Planning, Feasibility, and Small-Scale Pilot application for administrative approval to DHCD. An application considered for administrative approval must comply with all existing [DHCD Planning Grant Guidance](#) and [match policies](#). Administratively approved planning grants shall not require local match but must demonstrate [meaningful participation](#) from two or more localities. At each Board meeting, DHCD staff will present a summary of all administrative approvals granted during the interim between meetings.

Note that site planning grants and broadband planning grants are excluded from the \$250,000 regional planning grant limit.

APPROVAL AND REVIEW: This Board policy was reviewed and approved on 02/13/2018 and amended on 12/10/2024 and 09/09/2025.

SUPERSESSION: N/A

DHCD DIRECTOR: Maggie Beal



Board Policy #9

TITLE: Use of GO Virginia Funds for Site Development Investments

EFFECTIVE DATE: 07/01/2025

AUTHORITY: § 2.2-2486 - §2.2-2489 of the Code of Virginia

POLICY STATEMENT: It is the policy of the Virginia Growth and Opportunity Board that per capita and competitive funds may be used for site development activities that increase the number of business-ready sites available to accommodate the expansion or attraction of businesses in the region's targeted industry sectors.

Activities must advance sites towards becoming a Tier 4 site using the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program tier descriptions for site readiness for sites of at least 25 contiguous acres. Applicants may request a waiver of the 25-acre minimum if they can demonstrate the site is of significant regional importance. GO Virginia investments will support regions in advancing priority sites in Tiers 1-3. Sites that have been certified as a Tier 4 or 5 may be considered for funding if the applicant can demonstrate that the investment will significantly increase the marketability of the site. The Virginia Economic Development Partnership staff will be consulted in the review of all site-related applications.

Applications must describe activities that lead to the development of regionally significant sites - those identified by regional councils as a priority and aligned to support industry sectors in their Growth and Diversification Plans. All projects must include the collaboration of at least two localities with efforts to jointly contribute to the project through cost/revenue sharing, joint workforce development efforts, and/or other partnerships or agreements, such as Regional Industrial Facility Authorities (RIFAs).

Applicants are encouraged to consider how the Virginia Collaborative Economic Development Act could be leveraged to advance the development of the site(s) in the future.

Funds may not be used for property acquisition, construction of speculative buildings, or any site developments that benefit only a single, known end user. Funds may be used for activities such as site characterization and prioritization, site due diligence, infrastructure enhancements, and the development of cost/revenue sharing agreements, such as a RIFA.

Per Capita Funds

Regional Councils must demonstrate that they have considered VEDP site characterization and prioritization analysis and are focused on funding a limited number of sites within their region with the most potential to advance their Growth and Diversification plan, which enhance regional collaboration, and are most likely to attract private sector investment. Regions are encouraged to

consider sites' developability, location competitiveness, as well as sector suitability for their targeted sectors. Project activities should advance site readiness for future economic development opportunities. Applicants must describe their strategy to market and promote the site to targeted end users.

Project applications that include both planning and implementation activities will be considered and reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Planning Activities - Examples of fundable activities include site characterization and prioritization (for sites not previously fully characterized by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership) and activities to develop collaborative cost/revenue-sharing agreements. Planning projects should be designed to include recommendations for future investments that would advance a site's business readiness.

For site-related funding requests for planning of less than \$100,000, the application may be submitted as a planning grant request, which shall be eligible for administrative approval under the authority granted by [Board Policy #3](#).

Site development planning projects shall comply with existing [match policies](#). Site planning projects shall not require local match but must demonstrate [meaningful participation](#) from two or more localities.

Implementation – Examples of fundable activities include necessary due diligence (soft costs) and infrastructure enhancements (hard costs) that advance a site's readiness for development.

Site development implementation projects shall comply with existing [match policies](#).

Competitive Funds

Competitive funds may be used to advance regionally significant sites of 25 acres or more that will help grow the region's targeted industry sectors as described in their Growth and Diversification plan while supporting the state's economic development objectives. The results of VEDP's site characterization and prioritization process will play a key role in awarding competitive funds for site development but additional elements such as regional impact will be considered.

Competitive funds will be considered for projects that present an extraordinary economic opportunity. Applicants must incorporate collaborative cost/revenue sharing agreements, such as Regional Industrial Facility Authorities (RIFAs), or demonstrate joint funding commitments in workforce development, transportation, or other collaborative partnerships that demonstrate significant involvement of two or more localities.

Sites with high location competitiveness for target industries and high developability will be prioritized; however, sites not meeting these criteria will be considered but will require significant justification. Applicants must describe their strategy to market and promote the site to targeted end users.

Fundable activities include those that have the participation of two or more localities that would advance the site towards a Tier 4 status and/or improve its marketability and investment potential.

Site development implementation projects funded through the Competitive Fund shall comply with existing [match policies](#).

Privately Owned Sites

GO Virginia funds may be used to provide public infrastructure investments in privately owned sites under guidelines developed by DHCD. The guidance shall establish eligibility requirements, relevant agreements with the subgrantee/locality, and a grant repayment mechanism should the site cease to be used for an eligible GO Virginia use.

Changes to Projects Post-Board Approval

For site projects that have one or more sites that are sold or have pending sales before the execution of a contract, the Board will allow DHCD staff to administratively approve changes to the approved sites if the overall cost does not exceed the previously approved budget. The applicant must show that the new sites to be included in the project have been prioritized and meet all of the requirements as presented in the GO Virginia Regional Site Project Guidance.

APPROVAL AND REVIEW: This Board policy was approved on 12/9/2019, and amended on 12/7/2020 and 9/23/2021 and 12/10/2024 and 09/09/2025.

SUPERSESSION: N/A

DHCD DIRECTOR: Maggie Beal

Memorandum

TO: Regional Council Committee

FROM: DHCD Staff

RE: Regional Council Guidelines

DATE: 10/22/2025

BACKGROUND:

The Regional Council Guidelines were written in order to provide guidance as to the purpose, roles, responsibilities and powers of the regional councils in driving economic development through GO Virginia. In doing so, the guidelines establish and delineate the basic structure of councils, their governance, relationship to Regional Support Organizations, and requirements of each regional council and their members.

The Regional Council Guidelines is divided into the following eight sections:

- I. Introduction, which describes why regional councils were created.
- II. Regional Council Functions, which describes the purpose, core responsibilities of members and the Growth and Diversification plans.
- III. Formation and Certification of Regional Councils, which describes the formation and annual certification processes.
- IV. Membership, which describes the required membership of councils, leadership requirements and election processes, and voting and quorum policies.
- V. Governance, which describes the bylaws, role of the council in the project development process, and requirement to complete an annual governance review.
- VI. Regional Support Organizations, which describes the purpose, characteristics, and roles of regional support organizations.
- VII. Transparency and Compliance, which describes the requirements of the regional councils surrounding public noticing laws, freedom of information act (FOIA) disclosures, conflicts of interest (COIA), and financial disclosure.
- VIII. Additional Resources and References.



Regional Council Guidelines

Section 1: Introduction

Introduction

The *GO Virginia Regional Council Manual* provides a structured framework for the formation, governance, and ongoing operation of Regional Councils certified under the Virginia Growth and Opportunity Act. These Councils are tasked with advancing regionally driven economic development strategies and recommending projects for funding through the GO Virginia program.

Developed in accordance with the Growth and Opportunity Act, this manual is designed to guide Regional Councils operate with transparency, inclusivity, and long-term impact in mind. It outlines expectations for effective governance, transparent operations, and alignment with GO Virginia’s mission to promote regional collaboration and economic growth and diversification. The manual serves as a foundational reference to ensure consistency, accountability, and impact across all regions.

Regional Collaboration and Meaningful Local Participation

Foundational to the GO Virginia program is the concept of regionalism and growing and diversifying regional economies through the collaboration of at least two Virginia localities on a region. The enabling legislation for GO Virginia funds states in [§ 2.2-2489](#) :

“Moneys in the Fund shall be used to facilitate regional collaboration on economic growth and diversification. Specifically, the Fund shall be used to incentivize and encourage cooperation among business, education, and government on regional strategic economic development and workforce development efforts.”

To demonstrate this collaboration, eligible projects must demonstrate the participation of two or more localities, political subdivisions, or public bodies. The [Memo on Regional Collaboration and Local Participation](#) provides additional information.

Section 2: Regional Council Functions

Purpose of Regional Councils

Regional Councils are formed to bring together business, education, and government leaders to promote private sector growth, economic diversification, and workforce alignment. Councils serve as the strategic body recommending projects for GO Virginia funding and guiding regional economic priorities. Councils are tasked with fostering activities that strengthen economic competitiveness, grow existing clusters, scale small and mid-size companies, and support entrepreneurs.



Core Responsibilities of Regional Council Members

Regional Councils are the official entities through which the GO Virginia State Board receives project recommendations, monitors program outcomes, and ensures responsible stewardship of public funds. The structure incentivizes regional collaboration to diversify economies, grow high-paying jobs, and align workforce and economic strategies.

Regional Council members play a central role in the success of GO Virginia. Members are expected to:

- Advance regional goals by participating in strategic decision-making and contributing to the development of regional priorities.
- Recommend and approve projects that align with the region's Growth and Diversification Plan and GO Virginia funding requirements.
- Represent key sectors by bringing forward the perspectives of business, education, workforce, local government, and community organizations.
- Participate actively in Council meetings, strategic planning sessions, and relevant committee work.
- Support Council effectiveness by helping identify, recruit, and retain members who reflect the region's economic diversity and strategic needs.

Through these responsibilities, Regional Council members help shape the long-term economic future of their regions and strengthen the Commonwealth as a whole.

Growth and Diversification Plan

Each Regional Council is required to develop a Growth and Diversification Plan that meets standards established by the GO Virginia State Board. The plan serves as a strategic blueprint to guide regional collaboration, support economic diversification, and create high-paying jobs by addressing workforce gaps and leveraging emerging opportunities.

To be effective, the plan must be tailored to the unique assets and needs of the region and should align with existing strategies or initiatives. The plan should outline actionable strategies to:

1. Recruit and retain talent aligned with business and industry needs
2. Grow and scale existing businesses and industry clusters
3. Prepare a portfolio of economic development sites for targeted industry clusters
4. Develop, implement, and support regional entrepreneurial initiatives building regional
5. Advance joint economic development initiatives across locality boundaries

This plan is foundational to the Council's ability to recommend projects, prioritize investments, and demonstrate impact. It is updated periodically to reflect evolving regional priorities and economic conditions.

Section 3: Formation and Certification of Regional Councils

Formation Process

Although the GO Virginia regions are already established, this section outlines the procedures that would apply if a new region is approved or an existing region is restructured. These guidelines reflect the enabling legislation outlined in Title 2.2, Chapter 24, Article 26 of the Code of Virginia.¹

Upon the approval of new regional boundaries by the GO Virginia State Board, the region must submit a Letter of Intent to the Board through the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). A template is available from DHCD to assist with this submission. Failure to submit a letter of intent may result in the Board initiating efforts to establish a Regional Council for that region.

The Letter of Intent must include:

- A statement of intent to organize a Regional Council
- A proposed membership list and description of the member selection process, demonstrating broad representation of the region
- A proposed leadership structure and how leadership was selected
- Identification of the sector each proposed member represents
- Evidence of public input and stakeholder engagement in the formation process

If a region fails to organize a Council within a reasonable timeframe, the GO Virginia Board may establish a Formation Committee, consistent with § 2.2-2485. This committee shall include a chair and two members from the region and is responsible for consulting with local stakeholders and recruiting members to form a certified Regional Council. Members of the Formation Committee may also serve as officers or members of the Council, once certified.

Before a Regional Council is certified, the proposed membership must be posted publicly by DHCD for public review. The Board will accept public comments both prior to and during the meeting at which certification is considered.

Before a region may apply for grant funding, the Board must certify the Council for that region. To become certified by the Board, a proposed Regional Council must:

- Submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) through DHCD, including:
- Statement of intent to organize
- Proposed membership and selection process
- Proposed leadership and sector representation
- Evidence of stakeholder engagement and public input
- Undergo public comment at the Board level and regional level

¹ Footnote: For reference, see Code of Virginia Title 2.2, Chapter 24, Article 26 – Virginia Growth and Opportunity Act: <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodefull/title2.2/chapter24/article26/>



- Receive Board approval

Annual Certification

At the start of each fiscal year, regional council must certify their councils with the State Board prior to the disbursement of grant funds. To be certified, regions must submit:

- Capacity Building Budget
- Regional Council Memorandum of Understanding (KOU)
- Capacity Building Contract
- Updated Authorized Signatories List
- Regional Council Certification form
- Regional Support Staff organizational chart

Section 4: Membership

Membership Requirements

Regional Councils must be broadly representative of the region they serve. The Code of Virginia requires membership from the following sectors:

1. The business community: A majority of the of the members of the regional council must be from the private sector, and have demonstrated significant business experience. As noted below, the Chair of each region must be a citizen member with significant private-sector business experience
2. The education sector: this could include representatives from K-12 school systems, community colleges, and public institutions of higher education
3. Local Governments: elected officials or senior staff representing counties, cities, or towns in the region
4. Planning District Commissions: Commission members or senior staff representing planning district commissions within the region
5. The economic development and workforce development sector: individuals affiliated with organizations responsible for promoting economic growth, business retention or recruitment at the regional level and individuals affiliated with organizations responsible for workforce development at the regional level.
6. Nonprofit Organizations
7. Other entities that significantly affect regional economic or workforce development

The goal of the membership structure is to ensure that key regional stakeholders are intentionally brought together to collaborate on economic development priorities. Each Council should reflect the unique economic, geographic, educational, and demographic characteristics of its region.

When determining representation, regions should consider factors such as key industry sectors, workforce and education alignment, urban and rural balance, and demographic diversity. Representation must be inclusive, strategic, and grounded in the long-term needs of the region. Sector-based composition provides a foundation for broad expertise and balanced decision-making across Council activities



Leadership Requirements

Each Regional Council must be chaired by a citizen member from the region with significant private-sector business experience. Both the Chair and Vice Chair must meet this requirement, along with a majority of the Council's membership:

- **Chair:** The Chair is a citizen member of the Council with significant private-sector business experience, responsible for presiding over meetings, guiding strategic discussions, representing the Council in official capacities, and ensuring the overall effectiveness of the Council's governance.
- **Vice Chair:** The Vice Chair is responsible for supporting the Chair, presiding over meetings in the Chair's absence, and assisting with governance duties as needed.

Among the business representatives, there should be individuals with direct experience managing both small and large enterprises to ensure Council decisions are informed by diverse operational perspectives.

Council Officer Roles and Election Process

Each Regional Council should clearly define the roles, responsibilities, and selection process for its

- Officers should be elected by a majority vote of the full Council, following a nomination process outlined in the bylaws.
- Officer terms should be clearly defined (e.g., two years), with guidance on reappointment and succession planning.
- Councils are encouraged to stagger officer terms to promote continuity and leadership development.

Each Council may adopt additional officer positions or modify role descriptions based on the size, needs, and structure of the region. Regardless of variation, clear documentation of roles and transparent election processes are essential to ensuring accountability and shared leadership.

Membership Size

Councils must have no fewer than 15 members and no more than 25 members during any time of operation. Any request to operate outside of this range must be accompanied by a written justification and submitted for approval by the GO Virginia State Board.

Representation and Vacancy Policies

In cases where multiple organizations in the region share similar missions, the Council should designate one representative entity from each functional group. This representative will serve as the liaison and be responsible for communication across its broader network.

Councils should adopt a policy outlining how vacancies will be filled and whether appointments are tied to an individual or the position they hold at the time of appointment. Additionally, councils should ensure gender, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity in their membership, as part of a commitment to inclusive and representative governance.



Nominating New Members

New member nominations should be part of a transparent and inclusive process led by the Council in coordination with its support organization. Nominations must be based on current regional priorities and representation needs and should be reviewed periodically to maintain alignment with Council goals.

Quorum and Voting

A quorum, defined as a majority of appointed voting members, must be present to conduct official Council business. Council actions should be approved by a majority vote of the members present, unless otherwise specified in the Council's bylaws.

Orientation and Training

All new members are encouraged to participate in an onboarding process. This may include a review of this manual, the region's Growth and Diversification Plan, FOIA and COIA guidelines, and other Council-specific policies or procedures.

Attendance and Engagement

Council members are expected to actively participate in quarterly Council meetings, serve on committees if requested, and contribute to the strategic work of the Council. Sustained engagement is essential to maintaining a high-performing, representative body.

Membership Engagement and Participation

Council engagement helps ensure that Council members are well-prepared to fulfill their responsibilities and contribute to the long-term success of the region and the GO Virginia program. To promote an active, informed, and effective Regional Council, the following engagement practices are recommended as a best practice:

- **Conduct Annual Orientation Sessions**
All new and returning members should participate in an annual orientation. This session should provide an overview of the GO Virginia program, available grant types, Council responsibilities, regional planning documents, and key governance expectations.
- **Establish a Mentorship Approach**
Councils are encouraged to pair new members with experienced Council members who can offer guidance on navigating the Growth and Diversification Plan, project evaluation, committee participation, and meeting protocols.
- **Set Clear Expectations for Active Participation**
Council members are expected to be active contributors—not passive attendees. Members should regularly participate in quarterly meetings, engage in strategic planning discussions, and serve on committees or working groups when requested.

Section 5: Governance

Council Bylaws



Each Regional Council must adopt bylaws that outline the Council's governance framework and operating procedures. At a minimum, bylaws must include:

- A description of sector group representation and the process for member selection and appointment
 - The Council's meeting schedule, quorum requirements, and voting procedures
 - The length of member terms, reappointment processes, and procedures for removal or replacement of member
 - Provisions to ensure compliance with the Virginia Conflict of Interest Act (COIA), the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and applicable indemnification or liability standards for public bodies
- The optional inclusion of advisory councils or committees to provide additional support and subject matter expertise

Project Development, Approval, and Oversight

Regional Councils play a critical role in shaping regional priorities and recommending high-impact projects for GO Virginia funding. Each Regional Council must demonstrate, in a format acceptable to the State Board, that it has effective internal processes for organizing, supporting, and overseeing the implementation of GO Virginia-funded projects. Councils are responsible for monitoring performance, ensuring compliance, and participating in audit and assessment activities as required.

Council Role in Project Development and Approval

While support organizations manage project oversight and implementation, Councils are responsible for guiding project development, ensuring alignment with strategic goals, and exercising due diligence during the review and approval process.

- **Identify Strategic Project Opportunities**
Council members should actively engage in identifying challenges, opportunities, and partnership ideas within their region that could lead to impactful GO Virginia projects. Members are encouraged to share insights from their respective sectors to help shape responsive, forward-looking initiatives.
- **Review and Evaluate Proposed Projects**
Councils must review proposed projects for alignment with the region's Growth and Diversification Plan, funding eligibility, regional impact, private sector support, and sustainability. Councils may use scoring tools, rubrics, or committee processes to facilitate a transparent and consistent review.
- **Recommend Projects for State Board Approval**
Only projects approved by a certified Regional Council may be submitted to DHCD and the GO Virginia State Board for funding consideration. Councils should ensure that recommended projects:
 - Are feasible and well-defined
 - Include realistic and measurable outcomes
 - Demonstrate strong regional collaboration



- Meet match requirements and leverage local/private resources
- **Participate in Strategic Project Planning**
Councils may work with their support organization to refine project ideas, connect potential partners, and request planning grants or pilot funding to test concepts before full-scale implementation.

Annual Governance Review

Each Regional Council is encouraged to conduct an annual review of its governance practices, including its bylaws, structure, and compliance procedures. This review may be completed through a self-assessment process or as part of a board planning session. The purpose is to ensure continued alignment with GO Virginia’s goals, operational effectiveness, and adherence to public governance standards.

Section 6: Regional Support Organizations

Each Regional Council must be affiliated with, or supported by, an existing or newly established organization with expertise in collaborative planning, economic development, or workforce initiatives. This designated support organization is responsible for assisting the Council with functions such as data analysis, evaluation of best practices, review of project proposals, and other duties as assigned by the Council.

- a. Eligible support organizations may include, but are not limited to, planning district commissions, institutions of higher education, regional economic or workforce development partnerships, community foundations, and other nonprofit organizations with a regional scope. A new organization can be established for the specific purpose of supporting the Regional Council.
- b. The contractual agreement between the Regional Council and its support organization must clearly define the support organization’s responsibility for fiduciary oversight and administrative services related to activities funded by GO Virginia and other matching sources. In all matters pertaining to the GO Virginia program, the support organization shall operate under the direction and with the advice and consent of the Regional Council.
- c. The support organization must demonstrate capacity in financial management, including sound accounting practices, grant administration, project management, and the ability to track and report performance metrics and comply with audit protocols. DHCD will review audits, contracts, and performance data submitted by the Regional Council and its affiliated support organization to ensure compliance and accountability.

A new organization may be established solely to support the Council if no suitable existing organization is available. The contractual agreement between the Regional Council and its support organization must clearly define roles and responsibilities, including:

- Fiduciary oversight and administrative services related to GO Virginia and other matching funds



- Operation under the advice and consent of the Council in matters related to GO Virginia programming
- Demonstrated capacity in financial management, including accounting, grant administration, project management, and performance tracking

DHCD is responsible for reviewing audits, contracts, and performance reports submitted by both the Council and its support organization to ensure compliance and accountability.

Role of the Support Organization

While Regional Council members provide strategic leadership and decision-making, the Support Organization handles the administrative, logistical, and programmatic functions that enable effective implementation. By managing these essential functions, Support Organizations enable Regional Councils to focus on high-level strategic leadership while ensuring that GO Virginia funds are deployed effectively, compliantly, and in service of regional economic goals.

- **Prepare Meeting Materials and Facilitate Communication**
Coordinate logistics for Council and committee meetings, including drafting agendas, preparing background materials, and recording and distributing meeting minutes. Support Organizations also serve as a communication bridge between Council members, partners, and stakeholders.
- **Manage Grant Applications and Deadlines**
Assist applicants in navigating the GO Virginia application process. This includes providing technical assistance, ensuring application completeness and alignment with regional priorities, and tracking deadlines for submission to DHCD and the State Board.
- **Coordinate Project Reviews and Evaluations**
Organize internal and external review processes for proposed projects. This includes preparing materials for Regional Council review, facilitating Council deliberation, and managing any required pre-review steps such as scoring or initial staff assessments.
- **Serve as Liaison to DHCD**
Maintain ongoing communication with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to ensure compliance with program guidelines, timely submission of required documentation, and alignment with state-level directives and funding strategies.
- **Track Project Performance and Submit Reports**
Monitor active projects for progress toward stated outcomes, financial compliance, and reporting obligations. The Support Organization collects performance data, compiles quarterly and final reports, and submits all required documentation through the state's reporting system.

Section 7: Transparency & Compliance

Regional Councils are expected to uphold the principles of public transparency, responsible governance, and programmatic accountability.

Public Notices:

In accordance with § 2.2-3707 of the Code of Virginia, all public bodies are required to provide notice of their meetings at least three (3) working days in advance. The notice must include the meeting's date, time, and location, A statement if the meeting will be held electronically or include a virtual participation option, The agenda or a summary of key topics to be discussed.

As a best practice to ensure public awareness and participation, Councils should:

- Make agendas clear and user-friendly, with action items and topics written in plain language. Agendas should support the strategic direction of the regional council
- Include supporting materials (e.g., project lists, presentations) alongside the posted agenda
- Post all materials in a prominent and easy-to-find location on the Council's website

If changes are made to the date, time, or location of a previously announced meeting, a revised notice must be issued as soon as practicable, following the same posting requirements.

Freedom of Information Act

Regional Councils must comply with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), § 2.2-3707, which ensures public access to meetings and records of public bodies. Under FOIA:

- Meeting notices must be posted at least three working days in advance, including the date, time, and location.
- Meetings of three or more members discussing Council business are considered public meetings and must be open to the public—whether held in person or electronically.
- Meeting minutes must be recorded, include summaries of discussions and votes, and be posted publicly in a timely manner.
- Councils must make public records available upon request, unless an exemption applies.

Closed sessions are allowed only for specific, limited statutory purposes such as discussion of personnel matters, consultation with legal counsel or the development of confidential grant proposals containing proprietary or financial information not subject to public disclosure (see Va. Code § 2.2-3711).

Councils should ensure meeting materials and records are easy to access and understand, and work with their support organization to uphold FOIA requirements in all operations.

Conflict of Interest (COIA)



Although Regional Council members are not formally required to file financial disclosures or complete COIA training under Virginia law, GO Virginia encourages Councils to adopt conflict of interest best practices that promote public transparency and ethical decision-making.

Recommended practices include:

- Encouraging all Council members to complete the online COIA training available through the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council: <https://ethics.dls.virginia.gov/>
- Establishing a local policy requiring disclosure of any personal, financial, or organizational interests that may influence Council decisions
- Requiring members to recuse themselves from voting on matters where a conflict or appearance of conflict exists
- Including a standing agenda item to remind members to disclose any conflicts at the start of each meeting
- interest policies to promote transparency and accountability in decision-making.

As a best practice, councils should consult legal counsel when questions arise about personal interests in Council business or potential conflicts.

Financial Disclosure

Regional Council members are not required to file a Financial Disclosure Statement under the State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act (COIA), § 2.2-3100 et seq. This is because Regional Councils, as established under the Virginia Growth and Opportunity Act, are not classified as public bodies whose members fall under COIA's formal filing or training requirements.

As such, DHCD does not recommend that Councils develop or require their own financial disclosure forms. Imposing local disclosure requirements may unintentionally create confusion, deter participation—particularly from private-sector members—or introduce legal or administrative risk. However, if a Regional Council chooses to implement a voluntary internal disclosure process to promote transparency and reinforce ethical governance, DHCD encourages the following best practices:

- **Use Official Templates**
Councils should use disclosure templates developed by the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council, which are designed to align with statewide standards.
- **Obtain Legal Guidance**
Councils should consult with legal counsel to ensure that any adopted process or form complies with applicable law and does not conflict with state-level policy.
- **Define the Scope and Purpose**
If implemented, the disclosure process should clearly outline its purpose (e.g., identifying potential conflicts), frequency (e.g., annual or upon appointment), and how disclosures will be reviewed and retained.

A voluntary disclosure process, if structured appropriately, may serve as a helpful tool to strengthen



accountability and build public trust—especially in matters involving funding decisions, partnerships, or potential conflicts of interest.

Compliance and Corrective Action

If a Council or its support organization fails to operate within these guidelines—whether due to noncompliance, negligence, or inattention to core responsibilities—DHCD and the GO Virginia State Board may initiate corrective action. Actions may include:

- Written notification and technical assistance
- Required governance or leadership changes
- Suspension of funding
- Decertification of the Council

DHCD will conduct ongoing monitoring of governance practices, project oversight, and documentation compliance. Councils are expected to respond promptly and transparently to any formal requests from DHCD.

Section 8: Additional Resources & References

To support the effective operation of Regional Councils, this section provides a curated list of tools, templates, and references that Council members and support organizations may find helpful. These resources are intended to supplement the guidance in this manual and promote consistency, transparency, and high performance across all regions.

Key Resources

- [GO Virginia State Board Overview](#)
 - Summary of the boards mission, policies, and meeting materials.
- [Growth and Diversification Plan Guidelines](#)
 - Template and instructions for developing or updating a regional plan.
 - Available through DHCD or your regional support organization.
- FOIA and COIA Training
 - Online training for Conflict of Interest (COIA): ethics.dls.virginia.gov
 - FOIA compliance guidance: dhcd.virginia.gov FOIA Policy

Conclusion

Regional Councils are at the heart of GO Virginia’s mission to drive regionally led economic growth and innovation. Through committed leadership, strategic investments, and cross-sector collaboration, Council members help strengthen Virginia’s workforce, business climate, and long-term economic vitality.

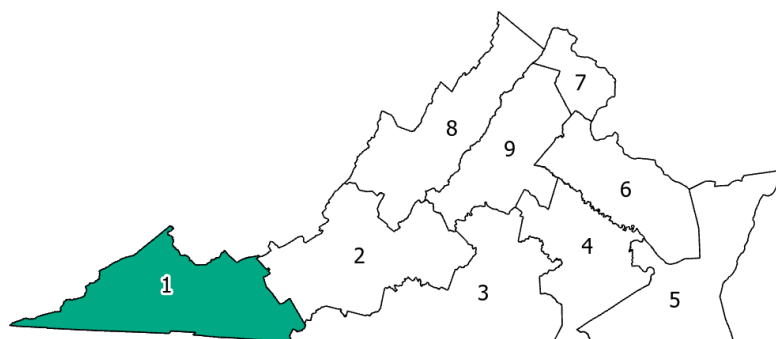
Thank you for your service and dedication to advancing regional opportunity and prosperity across the Commonwealth.

GO Virginia Regions

Region 1

Region One includes the counties of Bland, Buchanan, Carroll, Dickenson, Grayson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise, and Wythe, and the cities of Bristol, Galax and Norton.

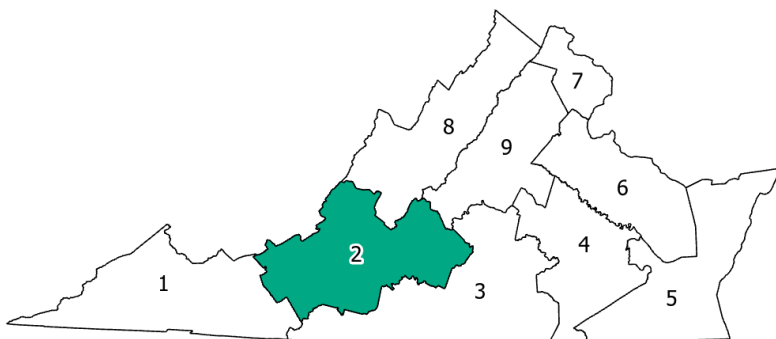
<https://www.goswva.org/>



Region 2

Region Two includes the counties of Alleghany, Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Botetourt, Campbell, Craig, Floyd, Franklin, Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski, and Roanoke, and the cities of Covington, Lynchburg, Radford, Roanoke and Salem.

<https://cece.vt.edu/GOVAR2.html>



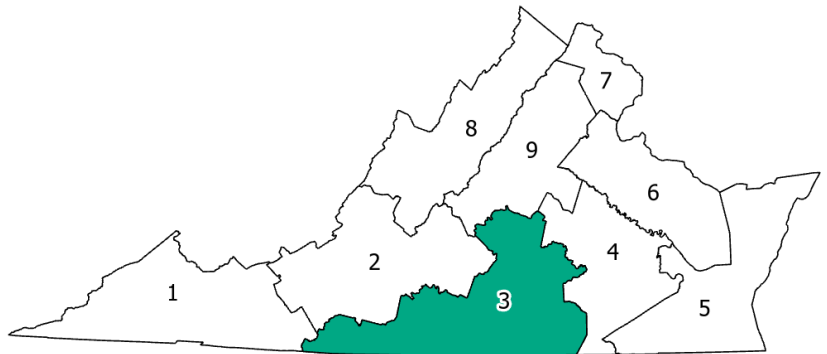


VIRGINIA INITIATIVE FOR
**GROWTH &
OPPORTUNITY**
IN EACH REGION

Region 3

Region Three includes the counties of Amelia, Brunswick, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Halifax, Henry, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nottoway, Patrick, Pittsylvania, and Prince Edward, and the cities of Danville and Martinsville.

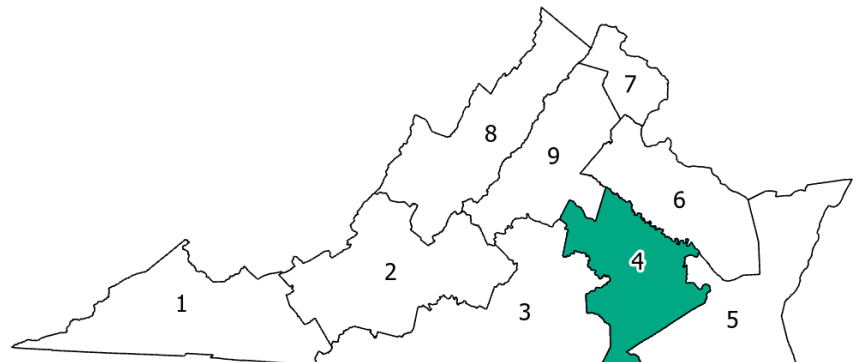
<https://govirginia3.org/>



Region 4

Region Four includes the counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Goochland, Greenville, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, Powhatan, Prince George, Surry, and Sussex, and the cities of Colonial Heights, Emporia, Hopewell, Petersburg and Richmond.

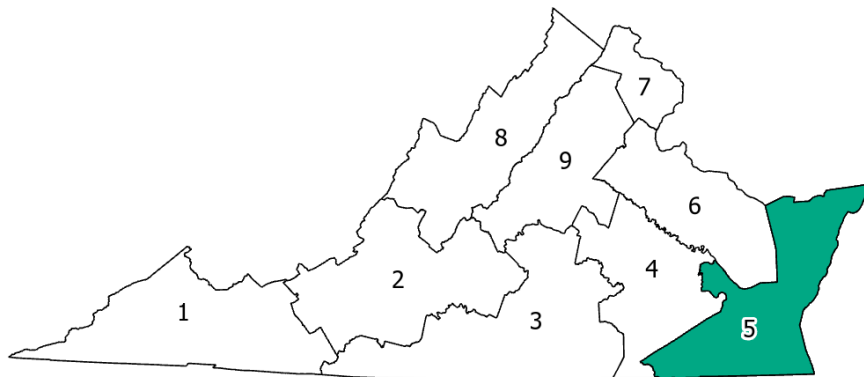
<https://growcapitaljobs.org/>



Region 5

Region 5 consists of the cities of Chesapeake, Franklin, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach, and Williamsburg; and the counties of Accomack, Isle of Wight, James City, Northampton, Southampton, and York.

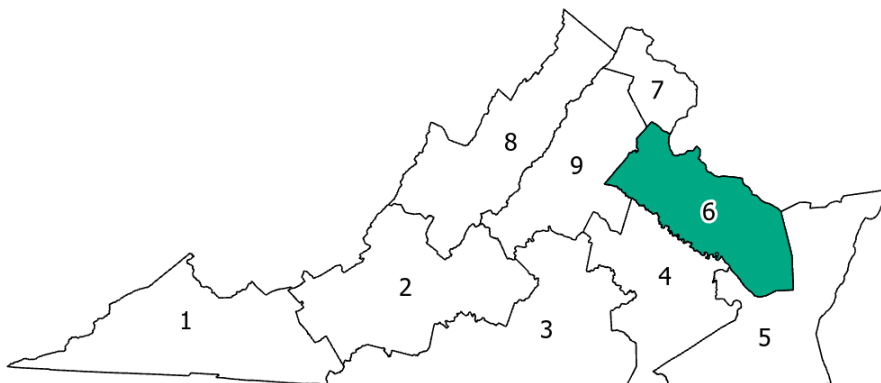
<https://www.reinventhr.org/>



Region 6

Region 6 consists of the city of Fredericksburg; and the counties of Caroline, Essex, Gloucester, King and Queen, King George, King William, Lancaster, Mathews, Middlesex, Northumberland, Richmond, Spotsylvania, Stafford, and Westmoreland.

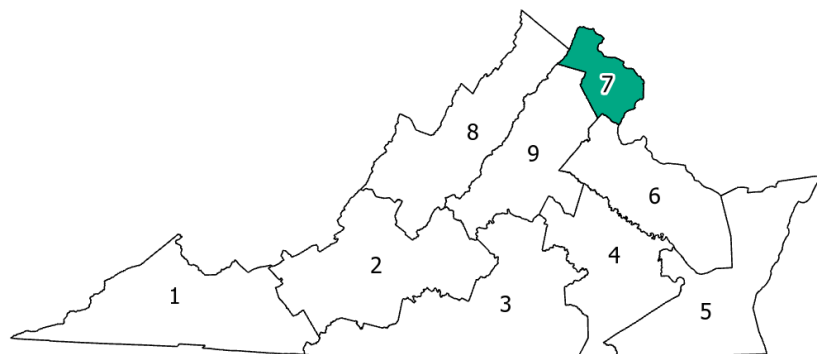
<https://govirginia6.org/>



Region 7

Region 7 consists of the cities Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas, and Manassas Park; and the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William.

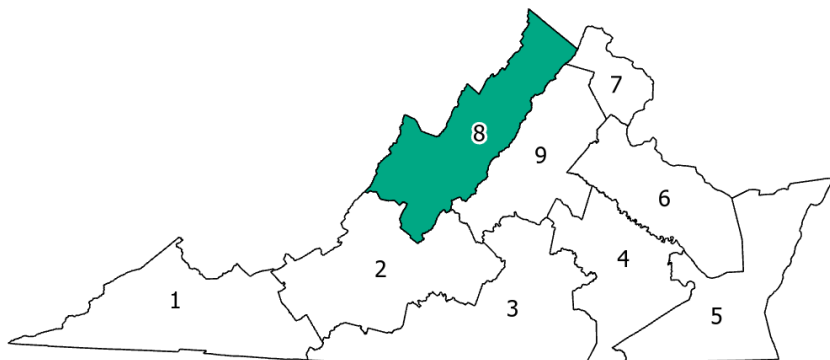
<https://www.gonorthernva.com/>



Region 8

Region 8 consists of the cities of Buena Vista, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Staunton, Waynesboro, Winchester; and the counties of Augusta, Bath, Clarke, Frederick, Highland, Page, Rockbridge, Rockingham, Shenandoah, and Warren.

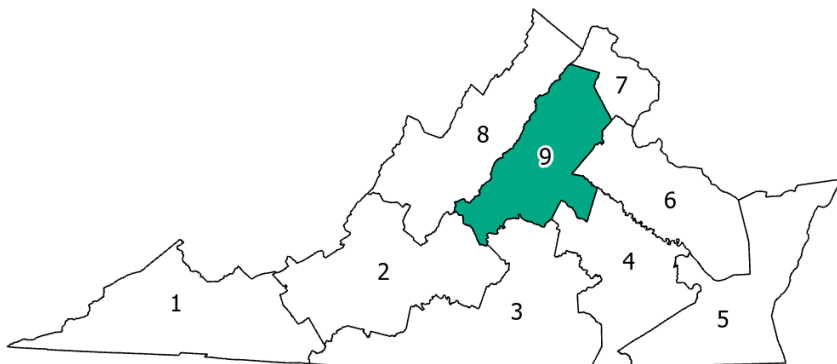
<https://govirginiaregion8.org/>



Region 9

Region 9 consists of the city of Charlottesville; and the counties of Albemarle, Culpeper, Fauquier, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Madison, Nelson, Orange, and Rappahannock.

<https://www.govirginia9.org/>





Memorandum

TO: Regional Council Committee

FROM: DHCD Staff

RE: Growth and Development Plan Guidelines

DATE: 10/22/2025

BACKGROUND:

As a part of the Regional Council Guidelines, once every two years each GO Virginia region must conduct either a full or interim review of their regional Growth and Diversification Plans (henceforth G&D plans). These plans serve to aid in the identification of critical economic opportunities for each region and provide a roadmap for strategies for the GO Virginia region to invest in. The G&D plan guidelines were developed to guide the successful creation of G&D plans, through developing a framework of elements that each G&D plan should have present. These elements consist of the following:

1. An evaluation of the performance of the regional economy.
2. A situational analysis for each of a region's targeted industry sectors.
3. A skills gap analysis for each of a region's targeted industry sectors.
4. The identification of clear plan goals and actionable strategies for investment.
5. The identification of strategic partners for collaboration in achieving these goals and strategies.

2025 Economic Growth and Diversification Plan Full Review Guidelines

Section I: GO Virginia Program Intent and Growth and Diversification Plans

The goal of the GO Virginia program is to facilitate regional collaboration and to grow and diversify the economy by supporting projects that lead to growth in traded industry clusters that drive the production of higher-wage jobs. As defined by [Board Policy #4](#), a traded industry cluster is an industry sector(s) where the majority of goods and services are sold or have the potential to be sold outside the Commonwealth of Virginia. Programs and projects recommended by the Regional Councils and approved by the GO Virginia State Board shall be consistent with the strategies and targeted industry clusters outlined in the Regional Economic Growth and Diversification Plans.

The Virginia Growth and Opportunity Act establishes that each Regional Council is required to develop an Economic Growth and Diversification Plan to (i) promote private-sector growth and opportunity in the region; (ii) identify issues of economic competitiveness for the region, including gaps in education and skills required to meet existing and prospective employer needs within the region; and (iii) outline strategies that the collaborating business, education, and government entities in the region will pursue to expand economic opportunity, diversify the economy, and align workforce development activities with the education and skills needed by employers in the region. According to [§ 2.2-2489 of the Code of Virginia](#), each Regional Council must review its Plan at least every two years while receiving grants from the GO Virginia fund.

For the required 2025 Full Review, each Regional Support Organization shall submit a draft amended Economic Growth and Diversification Plan to DHCD no later than **September 15, 2025**, for DHCD staff review and feedback. The final Plan must be approved by the Regional Council and submitted to DHCD no later than **October 31, 2025**, for consideration at the December 2025 GO Virginia State Board meeting.

In compliance with the Code of Virginia, DHCD requires biennial reviews of each Region's Economic Growth and Diversification Plan. These biennial reviews take the form of alternating Full Reviews and Interim Reviews. The overall goal of a Full Review is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of all aspects of the Plan with an eye toward near-term economic acceleration opportunities as well as investments in longer-term economic growth strategies. The Plan shall demonstrate an understanding of the economic challenges and opportunities associated with localities encompassed in the Region as well as their population demographics.

The Economic Growth and Diversification Plan is intended to describe specific goals and actionable strategies that will produce measurable results over a two-year period. Additionally, the plan should consider how these efforts can be coordinated and sustained over a 5 to 10-year horizon, and the broad steps to be taken in four GO Virginia investment strategies: workforce development, start-up ecosystems, site development and infrastructure, and cluster scale-up.

Councils must engage a broad range of stakeholders in the Full Review process. Councils should demonstrate stakeholder participation in the plan review process from local and regional economic development organizations, education and workforce training partners, planning district commissions, nonprofits, community groups, workforce boards, as well as coordinators of regional entrepreneurial activities.

Councils are encouraged to approach their reviews with consideration for other regional economic development and workforce development plans, including those developed by regional economic development organizations and planning district commissions.

Section II: Full Review Plan Elements

At a minimum, an Economic Growth and Diversification Plan Full Review should include the following activities and plan activities/elements:

1. EVALUATE THE PERFORMANCE OF YOUR REGIONAL ECONOMY: Regional Councils must evaluate the performance of their regional economy, with a focus on the performance of their previously identified targeted industry clusters. This review shall consider at least the past five years' economic performance and generally result in a comprehensive assessment of the region's economic conditions,.

DHCD will provide a JobsEQ data package to support this effort and allow for analysis of the items noted below; however, Regional Councils may elect to use additional data sources, as well as quantitative and qualitative analysis, or prepare their own data for review. Throughout **October and November 2024**, DHCD staff will hold meeting(s) with the Regional Council's supporting organization to discuss and determine the specific data needs for the Full Review cycle. DHCD staff will provide these data packages no later than **January 31, 2025**.

Such evaluation shall reflect on the following:

- a. Employment growth across all sectors
- b. Wage growth across all sectors
- c. Employment growth in targeted traded industry sectors
- d. Wage growth in targeted traded industry sectors
- e. New business formation activity (source will be provided by DHCD)
- f. New business formation in targeted traded sector industries (source will be provided by DHCD)

- g. Economic development announcements (new and expanding businesses) (source: VEDP website/announcements)
- h. VEDP Site Inventory Data (source: VEDP)

2. A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS FOR EACH TARGETED INDUSTRY SECTOR: The identification of targeted sectors or clusters must be centered on empirical data, and aligned with realistic results based on the region's economic drivers.. Each Regional Council should assess its current targeted sectors, as well as any potential new targeted sectors identified in the data analysis.

Regions are encouraged to conduct a situational analysis that identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the future economic performance of each sector. Regional Councils should approach this activity with consideration for GO Virginia's four priority investment strategies. Regions should also review their current inventory of sites relative to their targeted traded industry sectors to inform and prioritize future site investments.

This analysis must be informed and validated by business leaders and other stakeholders.

3. SKILLS GAP ANALYSIS FOR YOUR TARGETED INDUSTRY SECTORS: Evaluate labor requirements and regional capacity to train workers, with a particular focus on reaching historically underserved populations. Update the previously identified workforce gaps in the availability of immediately employable talent in the targeted sectors or clusters. The prioritization of workforce gaps to be addressed will serve as guidance to the Regional Council and Board in the evaluation of future funding decisions. If a gap exists in a newly identified target sector, identify current efforts to address this gap, being specific as to the skills/credentialing/experience/education required, and whether these efforts are adequate to address the shortage and to support long-term growth. Councils are encouraged to collaborate with workforce development boards and other workforce/education system stakeholders.

4. IDENTIFICATION OF PLAN GOALS AND ACTIONABLE STRATEGIES: Review the priority goals and strategies in your plan and refine them using the information and data gathered previously. Map your active project portfolio against these strategies, including those in your project pipeline.

Use the GO Virginia program's four priority investment strategies as a framework to describe the newly prioritized and proposed activities and longer-term efforts that will advance the goals of the GO Virginia Program and the Regional Economic Growth and Diversification Plan.

Councils should identify a framework for the evaluation of efforts and the progress made toward the implementation of the Economic Growth and Diversification Plan. For example, each strategy shall identify one or more measures of performance that will indicate progress towards achieving the Plan goals.



5. IDENTIFY STRATEGIC PARTNERS FOR COLLABORATION: The plan review shall identify opportunities for collaboration or complementary efforts for each of the strategies outlined in the Plan. Councils must identify organizations and other non-GO Virginia activities that could/should collaborate to support the goals of the Plan.