



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

AGENDA
VIRGINIA GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY BOARD
PROGRAM PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION (PPE) COMMITTEE
May 29, 2026
1:00 – 2:00PM
[Virtual link](#)

- I. OPENING
 - a. Call to order Chair
 - b. Roll Call Billy Gammel
 - c. Public Comment Chair

- II. CONSENT AGENDA – **Action Item** (pg. 1) Chair
 - a. Approval of March 24, 2026 Meeting Minutes

- III. JLARC RECOMMENDATION #12 – Return on Investment (ROI) Model Discussion – **Action Item** (pg. 4) Sara Dunnigan
 - a. DHCD program guidelines and application amendments
 - b. Award threshold determination – No threshold for Board approved projects
 - c. Return on Investment (ROI) Determination Methods – Staff Recommendation
 - i. State Fiscal Return Model
 - 1. Break Even Analysis Tool
 - a. DHCD staff performed using applicant inputs
 - b. Third-party evaluation if break-even is greater than 5 years
 - ii. Next Steps (Administrative Guidelines)
 - 1. Revised GO Virginia Core Outcomes Worksheet
 - 2. Outcome-to-Employment Conversion Methodology
 - 3. Regional Training Q&A Sessions

- IV. FY26Q3 CLOSED PROJECT REVIEW (pg.12) Billy Gammel
 - a. Implementation
 - b. Planning, Feasibility, and Small-Scale Pilot

- V. PROJECT EVALUATION RFP UPDATE Sara Dunnigan

- VI. NEXT MEETING Chair
 - a. In-person meeting TBD

- VII. ADJOURNMENT Chair



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**VIRGINIA GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY BOARD PROGRAM PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION
COMMITTEE
March 24, 2026
11:00 AM
Virtual Meeting**

Members Present

Jim Cheng
Nancy Agee
Emily O’Quinn

Members Absent

Jon Peterson
Cliff Fleet

Call to Order

Mr. Jim Cheng, Chair of the Virginia Growth and Opportunity (GO Virginia) Program Performance and Evaluation Committee, called the meeting to order.

Roll Call

Mr. Billy Gammel, GO Virginia Senior Program Administrator for the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), called the roll and noted that a quorum was present.

Public Comment

Mr. Cheng opened the floor for public comment.

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

The public comment period was closed.

February 5, 2026
Meeting Minutes Review

Mr. Cheng noted that the consent agenda consisted of the February 5, 2025, meeting minutes.

A motion was made by Ms. Emily O’Quinn and seconded by Ms. Nancy Agee to approve the minutes. The motion passed (Yea: Cheng, O’Quinn, Agee; Nay: None).

GO Virginia Program
Performance Dashboard

Ms. Sara Dunnigan provided an overview of the GO Virginia performance dashboard which shows all 138 implementation projects closed to date. This dashboard tracks the outcomes these projects achieved and can be sorted by GO Virginia region, investment type, investment strategy, and targeted industry. Ms. Dunnigan walked

through the functionality of the dashboard showing the different filter options and looked at individual projects, results for a particular region, and compare outcomes committed vs. achieved. Committee discussion followed to provide feedback to include a data dictionary or fact page, giving further context of what the dashboard is tracking to help with the story telling of the program.

Contract Compliance of Projects Mr. Billy Gammel presented how staff tracks performance and ensuring contract compliance of projects through quarterly reporting to monitor progress towards goals, highlighting how reports are reviewed/accepted by DHCD staff; and fiscal monitoring through reimbursable remittances.

Mr. Gammel discussed how there are currently 91 active projects. Since the beginning of the fiscal year 2026, starting July 1, 2025, DHCD has processed 272 project remittances for a total of \$16.6M, 250 quarterly reports, and 36 performance closeout reports.

JLARC Recommendation #4 Ms. Dunnigan provided an update for the next steps in addressing JLARC Recommendation #4 from the 2023 Report which speaks to assessing the long-term impacts of the program. An RFP has been drafted and ready to send to university partners that can address the following evaluation measures. 1) sustainability of projects post-grant; 2) economic and regional impact beyond the grant period; 3) additional funding or resources leveraged after the grant completion; 4) continued regional collaboration and partnerships; and 5) perceived value and influence of GO Virginia funding. This assessment will take a sample of the 138 completed projects, ensuring regional diversity and analysis across the four priority investment strategies. The results of the assessment will be shared with this Committee as well as the Regional Councils and the State Board.

JLARC Recommendation #12 Ms. Dunnigan lead the discussion on JLARC Recommendation #12, which recommends the Board should revise its policies to clarify that only grant applications that seek a significant award amount are required to include an estimated ROI, and that the return on investment (ROI) should be tailored to each project and calculated by experienced professionals using established methodologies, and the costs should be paid for the GO Virginia program out of its existing fund balances. Ms. Dunnigan provided data points representing the median per capita and competitive awards to help in determining threshold amount for requiring a ROI. She presented the current 3-year and 5-year ROI calculator that is required in applications, and described some of the challenges using a third-party evaluation for competitive proposals. Ms. Dunnigan walked the

Committee through what a proposed break-even analysis would look like, and laying the groundwork for the decisions the Committee would need to make to address this JLARC Recommendation, which included 1) should the program define an award level where an ROI calculation is required; and 2) Who should perform it – a) application using existing model; b) staff using existing model with applicant inputs; c) third-party using applicant inputs; or d) staff using enhanced model (break-even analysis tool) with applicant inputs. After Committee discussion Mr. Cheng mentioned there will be a virtual meeting in May in which the Committee will need to advance a recommendation to the GO Virginia State Board at their June 9, 2026 meeting to allow staff to implement the new ROI process for the start of fiscal year 2027.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.

DRAFT



Memorandum

TO: GO Virginia Program Performance and Evaluation Committee

FROM: DHCD Staff

RE: JLARC Recommendation #12

DATE: 5/29/2026

Background:

As part of the 2023 JLARC Report regarding the GO Virginia Program, the Commission adopted a series of recommendations. Specifically, Policy Consideration #12 recommended developing a dollar threshold for choosing which applications must utilize the Return on Investment (ROI) tool for evaluation; and be calculated by an experienced professional using established methodologies.

The specific language of Policy Consideration #12 reads as follows:

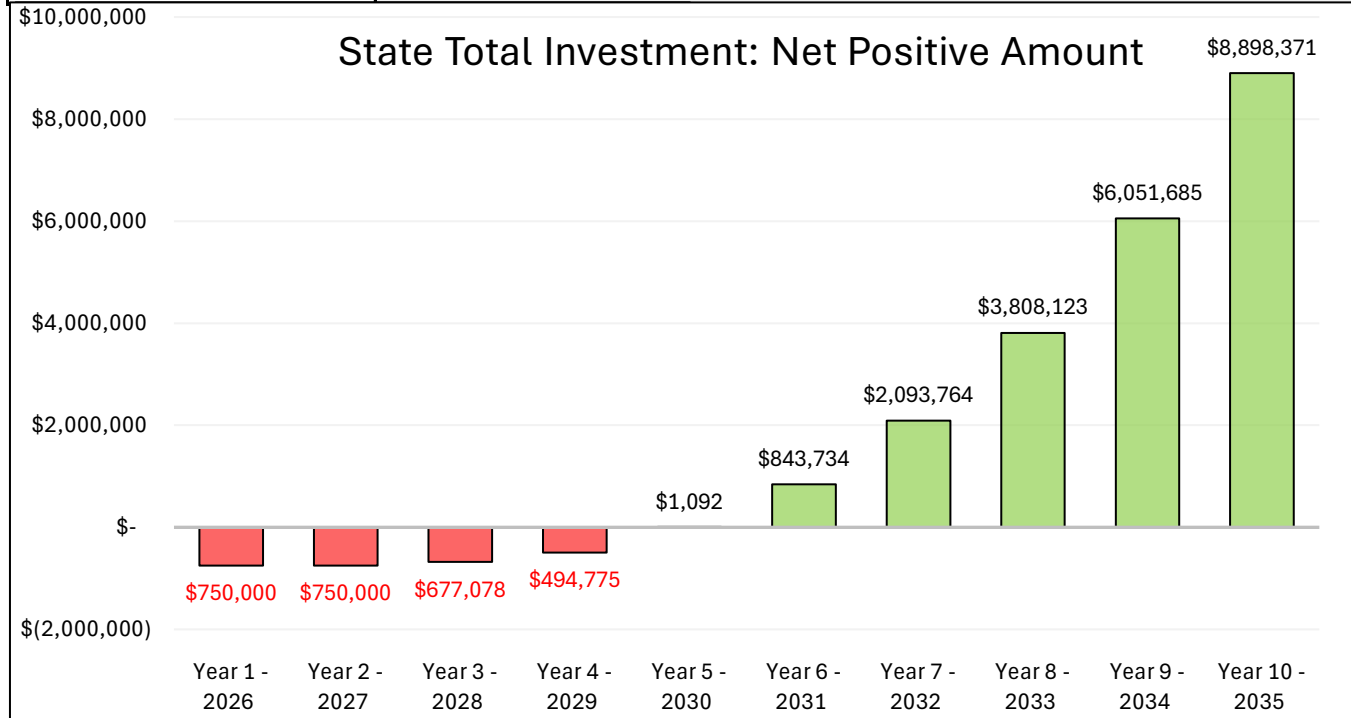
“The GO Virginia board should revise its policies to clarify that only grant applications that would require a significant investment of state funds are required to include an estimated return on investment (ROI). The ROI should be tailored to each project and calculated by experienced professionals using established methodologies, and the costs should be paid for by the GO Virginia program out of its existing fund balances.”

Soon after the JLARC report was published DHCD staff amended program guidelines and the relevant applications stating that the ROI is used as an evaluation criterion but a positive return is not an eligibility requirement.

As part of reviewing this recommendation, DHCD staff evaluated past funded projects based on size and determined the most equitable approach was to apply a standard state fiscal return model uniformly across all implementation project sizes.

DHCD staff developed an alternative State Fiscal Return Model that determines the approximate break-even point for projects based on the estimated tax revenue associated with key outcomes (or inputs) which are then converted into employment. Moving towards the State Fiscal Return Model will take the confusion away from the applicant and ensure DHCD staff are completing the model based on the applicant’s inputs. A third-party evaluation will be sought if a break-even analysis is greater than five years. To implement the new model, staff are updating a series of guidance documents and applicable application questions associated with the former economic impact analysis model (also known as the ROI template). This will include revising the GO Virginia Core Outcomes worksheet so that the applicants will be able to input those committed outcomes within years 1-3 which will then be plugged into the model. Additionally, a series of trainings sessions will occur with the regional support organizations for Q&A.

Project Name:	Project ABC				
GO Virginia Request:	\$500,000	Regions:	5	7	
Additional Funds Leverage:	\$250,000	Avg Industry Salary:	\$111,792		
Break Even Forecast	<i>Year 5 - Project will break even by the end of year</i>				



Grant Performance Outcome Sheet

Example — Workforce Development

Grant Performance Outcomes	Fiscal Year 1	Fiscal Year 2	Fiscal Year 3	Total (FY1 + FY2 + FY3)	Steady State (Annual, post-project)
Number of people trained	15	20	15	50	25
Number of job placements	0	8	12	20	20
Number of credentials awarded	10	12	13	35	25

Read row 1 as: the program trains 50 unique people across the three fiscal years, then sustains 25 trainees per year once the program matures.

Example — Cluster Scale-Up

Grant Performance Outcomes	Fiscal Year 1	Fiscal Year 2	Fiscal Year 3	Total (FY1 + FY2 + FY3)	Steady State (Annual, post-project)
Number of jobs created	0	2	8	10	25
Total funds raised by businesses served (dollars)	50,000	150,000	300,000	500,000	400,000
Number of businesses attracted	0	0	1	1	2

Note the lag pattern: most jobs and funds materialize late in the project or in Steady State, not in FY1. This is typical for cluster work and is the intended use of the Steady State column.

Workforce Development

Project Name	Region	Grant Start Year	Investment Strategy
			Workforce Development

Grant Performance Outcomes	Fiscal Year 1	Fiscal Year 2	Fiscal Year 3	Total (FY1 + FY2 + FY3)	Steady State (Annual, post-project)
Number of people trained					
Number of job placements					
Number of businesses served					
Number of new interns placed					
Number of new apprenticeships created					
Number of new programs implemented					
Number of credentials awarded					
Students completing Dual Enrollment					

Metric	Definition and counting rule
Number of people trained	Unique individuals who complete a course or sequence of courses required to enter employment. Count each person once across the three fiscal years.
Number of job placements	New jobs filled by participants who successfully exit a workforce program supported by this project. Count each placement once.
Number of businesses served	Unique firms receiving targeted or individualized assistance (training design, hiring pipeline, curriculum input). A firm served in more than one fiscal year counts once in Total.
Number of new interns placed	Students placed into a paid or stipended internship as a direct result of project activity. Internship must involve meaningful work tied to a student's field of study or career interest.
Number of new apprenticeships created	Structured employment-training arrangements hosted by a sponsoring employer, combining paid work with related instruction. Registered or unregistered both qualify.
Number of new programs implemented	Workforce training programs newly stood up as a result of project activities. Counted once at launch; do not re-count in subsequent fiscal years.
Number of credentials awarded	Certificates, degrees, or certifications generally recognized by employers as evidence of qualification for a specific occupation.
Students completing Dual Enrollment	High school students who enrolled in and completed a community-college-level course supported by the project.

Cluster Scale-Up

Project Name	Region	Grant Start Year	Investment Strategy
			Cluster Scale-Up

Grant Performance Outcomes	Fiscal Year 1	Fiscal Year 2	Fiscal Year 3	Total (FY1 + FY2 + FY3)	Steady State (Annual, post-project)
Number of jobs created					
Total funds raised by businesses served (dollars)					
Number of businesses served					
Number of existing businesses expanded					
Number of businesses attracted					

Metric	Definition and counting rule
Number of jobs created	Net new jobs created by businesses supported by the effort. Lag metric — most realization occurs after FY3; report projections in Steady State.
Total funds raised by businesses served (dollars)	Dollars raised by served businesses, including venture capital, R&D funding, SBIR, grants, and private investment. Enter in actual dollars.
Number of businesses served	Unique firms receiving targeted or individualized assistance. Counted once across the three fiscal years.
Number of existing businesses expanded	Existing businesses or startups that demonstrated measurable growth (revenue, headcount, footprint) attributable to the effort.
Number of businesses attracted	Unique new businesses relocating to the region as a result of the project's work.

Site Development & Infrastructure

Project Name	Region	Grant Start Year	Investment Strategy
			Site Development & Infrastructure

Grant Performance Outcomes	Fiscal Year 1	Fiscal Year 2	Fiscal Year 3	Total (FY1 + FY2 + FY3)	Steady State (Annual, post-project)
Acres advanced — starting VBRSP tier (1–5)					
Acres advanced — ending VBRSP tier (1–5)					
Number of acres advanced to a higher VBRSP tier					
Engagement in establishing a RIFA (count of localities)					
Miles of middle-mile broadband completed					
Linear feet of water infrastructure					
Linear feet of sewer infrastructure					
Linear feet of gas infrastructure					
Acres impacted (sites not advancing tier)					

Metric	Definition and counting rule
Acres advanced — starting tier	VBRSP tier of the site at project start (Tier 1–5). Specify the starting tier so the magnitude of the lift is unambiguous.
Acres advanced — ending tier	VBRSP tier of the site at project completion. Combined with starting tier, this reflects the actual site readiness gain.
Number of acres advanced to a higher VBRSP tier	Acres moved to a higher level on the VBRSP scale during the three fiscal years. See vedp.org/vbrsp .
Engagement in establishing a RIFA	Localities engaged in forming a Regional Industrial Facility Authority or comparable shared-revenue agreement, including pre-formation discussion.
Miles of middle-mile broadband completed	Fiber or conduit extending telecommunication networks in partnership with private sector, focused on community business needs.
Linear feet of water infrastructure	Total linear feet of water lines and supporting improvements installed.
Linear feet of sewer infrastructure	Total linear feet of sewer lines and supporting improvements installed.
Linear feet of gas infrastructure	Total linear feet of gas lines and supporting improvements installed.
Acres impacted (sites not advancing tier)	Acres affected by infrastructure improvements that increase site marketability without changing VBRSP tier.

Startup Ecosystem

Project Name	Region	Grant Start Year	Investment Strategy
			Startup Ecosystem

Grant Performance Outcomes	Fiscal Year 1	Fiscal Year 2	Fiscal Year 3	Total (FY1 + FY2 + FY3)	Steady State (Annual, post-project)
Number of new businesses created					
Number of existing businesses expanded					
Number of jobs created					
Number of businesses served					
Number of new mentors					
Total funds raised by businesses served (dollars)					

Metric	Definition and counting rule
Number of new businesses created	New businesses formed as part of the effort. A business counts as new once it holds an operating license or permit.
Number of existing businesses expanded	Existing businesses or startups showing growth attributable to the effort.
Number of jobs created	Net new jobs created by businesses supported. Lag metric — report projections in Steady State.
Number of businesses served	Unique firms receiving targeted or individualized assistance.
Number of new mentors	Individuals newly engaged in providing advice and coaching to founders. Count once per mentor across the three fiscal years.
Total funds raised by businesses served (dollars)	Dollars raised by served businesses (VC, R&D, SBIR, grants, private investment). Enter in actual dollars.

Data source and certification

For each metric reported in the tables above, list the source data and the party responsible for verification at closeout. Incomplete certification will result in the application being returned for revision.

Metric reported	Data source	Responsible party	Verification method

Applicant certification

I certify that the outcomes projected on this form are realistic, supportable, and aligned with the project workplan. I understand that Steady State projections will inform GO Virginia's evaluation of long-term return on investment, and that material divergence from these projections at closeout may affect the applicant's standing in future funding cycles.

Authorized signatory (printed name and title)	
Signature	
Date	
Primary data steward (name and email)	



Memorandum

TO: GO Virginia Program Performance and Evaluation (PPE) Committee

FROM: DHCD

RE: FY26 Q3 Closed Projects

DATE: 05/29/2026

Background

Part of the Growth & Opportunity Board bylaws requires the PPE Committee ensure projects approved by the Board meet established criteria consistent with the GO Virginia mission by conducting regular review of funded projects. The enclosed detailed project performance closeout narrative includes all planning and implementation projects staff have reviewed and approved in quarter 3 of fiscal year 2026 (January-March 2026). The narrative description details project specific background, project impact, activities, outcomes (if applicable), sustainability, and lessons learned.

Special attention should be focused on the enclosed two-page cover sheet, which is organized by implementation and planning projects, highlighting the portfolio snapshot of project results/performance and visuals of where the projects are geographically located.

This past quarter there were a total of 16 projects that were closed – 8 implementation and 8 planning projects. These are detailed in the following pages.

GO Virginia Implementation Projects Portfolio: Q3 Fiscal Year 2026

Closed Implementation Projects

Eight Projects Across Six Regions | \$6.11M Total Investment | Performance Closeout Overview

This portfolio summarizes eight GO Virginia implementation projects completed across Regions 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, and 9, representing a combined investment of \$6.11M. Together the projects advanced three complementary strategies — workforce training, site development, and entrepreneurship/cluster support — serving 730+ businesses, training 2,000+ individuals, advancing 970+ acres of industrial sites (including 134 acres newly certified at VBRSP Tier 3 and one site sold), and securing \$6M+ in direct matching commitments. The Coastal Resilience initiative additionally anchors a broader RISE program ecosystem that has generated \$48M+ in follow-on investment to its funded pilot companies since 2018.

PORTFOLIO SNAPSHOT

Project	Region	Grant	Headline Result	Committed Outcomes	Achieved Outcomes
Industry 4.0 for the ACE Workforce	2	\$500K	48 businesses served; 242 trained across three modules	530 trained	242 trained (46%)
VGA Site Development Project	3	\$335K	449 acres impacted; 4 sites advanced; 1 sold	407 acres VBRSP	362 acres VBRSP (89%)
Amelia Commerce Center Due Diligence	3	\$100K	134 acres advanced Tier 2 → Tier 3 (VBRSP)		
Coastal Resilience & Adaptation Economy	5 & 6	\$2.94M	363 served; 37 attracted, 4 expanded; \$48M+ follow-on	576 jobs created	110 jobs (19%)
Innovation Pathways	6	\$978K	1,291 trained; 104 credentials awarded	525 credentials	104 credentials (20%)*
GO2 Work in Manufacturing & Transportation	8	\$885K	589 trained; 93 apprenticeships; 550 credentials		
Clarke County — Camp 7 Site Development	8	\$171K	40 acres impacted; 7 due diligence studies; rezoned M-1		
Rural Entrepreneurship Ecosystem	9	\$200K	553 engaged; \$434,109 capital formed		
TOTAL	6 regions	\$6.11M	2,000+ trained • 730+ businesses • 970+ acres	Across 8 projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 4 green ● 1 yellow ● 3 red

■ Workforce ■ Site Development ■ Startup Ecosystem

GREEN	YELLOW	RED
All committed outcomes met or exceeded	An outcome at 50–99% of committed	Any outcome at ≤49% of committed

PORTFOLIO AT A GLANCE

EXHIBIT A · INVESTMENT IN

GO Virginia Regions

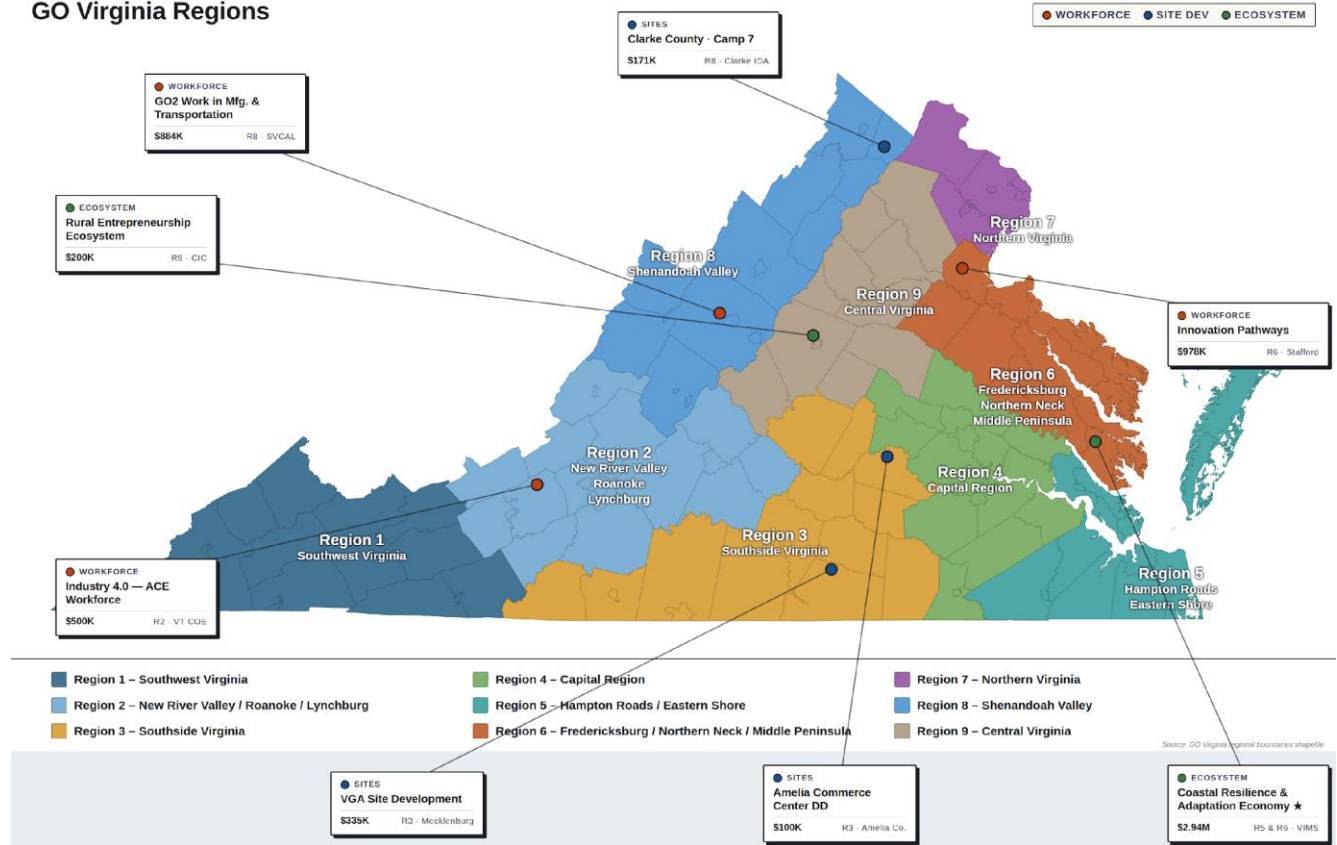


EXHIBIT B · RESULTS OUT

Project	GO Virginia Core Committed Outcomes (Achieved)			
ACE Workforce (R2)	242 people trained		48 businesses served	
GO2 Work (R8)	589 people trained	550 credentials	93 apprenticeships	94 businesses served
Innovation Pathways (R6)	1,291 people trained		104 credentials awarded	
VGA Sites (R3)	362 acres advanced (VBRSP)		449 acres impacted/developed	
Amelia Commerce (R3)	134 acres advanced to Tier 3			
Clarke County (R8)	40 acres impacted/developed			
Coastal Resilience (R5+6)	110 jobs created	253 businesses served	37 businesses attracted	4 existing expanded
Rural Ecosystem (R9)	553 people trained	301 businesses served	76 jobs created	15 new businesses

■ Workforce ■ Site Development ■ Startup Ecosystem

Industry 4.0 for the ACE Workforce

Region 2 • \$500K • Virginia Tech COE • Director: Nicole Akers

PROJECT BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

The ACE Workforce project addressed the need to strengthen advanced manufacturing innovation and workforce capability across Region 2, consistent with priorities outlined in the GO Virginia Region 2 Growth and Diversification Plan. The project sought to support regional industry by enhancing collaboration between industry partners and higher education to accelerate adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies and practices. By building these partnerships and training pathways, the project aimed to improve regional competitiveness, productivity, long-term economic growth, and worker retention.



PROJECT IMPACT & APPROACH

The project strengthened collaboration among industry, higher education, workforce, and economic development partners by delivering training and technical assistance through a three-module structure. It increased manufacturers' awareness of Industry 4.0 technologies and the workforce skills needed to implement them, and companies gained practical insights into tools and identified opportunities to incorporate new technologies and processes that support improved competitiveness. Relationships between regional manufacturers and higher education expanded, creating new opportunities for collaboration around workforce training and student engagement. Outreach activities also introduced younger students to Industry 4.0 concepts, building early awareness and supporting the long-term regional workforce pipeline.

KEY ACTIVITIES & DELIVERABLES

The project strengthened collaboration among industry, higher education, workforce, and economic development partners through a three-module delivery structure. Module 1 provided train-the-trainer programming, Module 2 combined asynchronous and in-person delivery, and Module 3 delivered Lean training. The GENEDGE technology implementation pathway supported 5 companies preparing to adopt Industry 4.0 technologies, and 99 regional partners across industry, education, workforce, and government were convened. Pipeline outreach engaged 144 middle school students to seed long-term interest in advanced manufacturing careers.

GO VIRGINIA OUTCOMES — COMMITTED VS ACHIEVED

GO Virginia Outcome	Committed	Achieved	% of Committed
People trained	530	242	46% 
Businesses served	35	48	137% 

SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE OUTLOOK

The ACE Workforce project will not continue beyond the GO Virginia funding period. The program did not generate income during the grant period, and no additional funding sources have been identified to sustain the program in its current form. Although the program itself concluded, the project served its purpose by establishing regional connections among industry, workforce development organizations, educational institutions, and economic development partners — relationships that helped raise awareness of Industry 4.0 technologies and workforce needs and supported companies in evaluating technology adoption.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

Industry workforce turnover significantly limited the effectiveness of the train-the-trainer model, as many trained participants changed roles or employers before they could deliver training within their companies. Corporate restructuring, a partner merger that restricted training involvement, and another company's international expansion all constrained participation. Federal policy changes in 2025 and a government shutdown further disrupted program momentum. These experiences required the project team to be nimble and highlight the importance of flexible training delivery models in industry environments. Future workforce grants should build a graduation plan or industry co-investment in at the design stage.

VGA Site Development Project

Region 3 • \$335K • Mecklenburg County • Director: David Denny, VGA

PROJECT BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

Advanced Manufacturing and Natural Resource Products are two of the top targeted sectors for both VGA and GOVA Region 3, and were identified as best suited for the sites included in this project. The approach followed VEDP guidance to ensure regional alignment with state priorities and impactful investments. Analysis of 6.5 years of data from VEDP confirms a direct and positive correlation between the availability of prepared business and industrial sites and suitable industrial activity — meaning that increasing site readiness directly supports economic growth and industry attraction in the region.

PROJECT IMPACT & APPROACH

Increasing the number of shovel-ready sites was the central goal of this project. Four sites were advanced: 45 acres of the I-85 Industrial Park site in Brunswick County advanced from Tier 2 to transitional site status; 265 acres at Heartland Industrial Park in Charlotte County advanced from Tier 2 to Tier 4 along the VBRSP scale, including initial A&E well drilling design work; 97 acres at Lunenburg Commerce Center in Lunenburg County advanced from Tier 2 to Tier 4; and 42 acres at the FASTA site in Greenville County were retained at Tier 4 through updated due diligence work and an A&E site plan for a 20-acre pad. Notably, a company has since purchased the FASTA property for occupation. The project met expectations by creating sites that are more ready for companies seeking locations.

KEY ACTIVITIES & DELIVERABLES

Four sites were advanced through due diligence: 45 acres at the I-85 Industrial Park in Brunswick County (Tier 2 to transitional); 265 acres at Heartland Industrial Park in Charlotte County (Tier 2 to Tier 4, including A&E well drilling design); 97 acres at Lunenburg Commerce Center in Lunenburg County (Tier 2 to Tier 4); and 42 acres at the FASTA site in Greenville County (retained at Tier 4 via updated due diligence and an A&E site plan for a 20-acre pad). The FASTA property was sold to a company for occupation during the performance period.

GO VIRGINIA OUTCOMES — COMMITTED VS ACHIEVED

GO Virginia Outcome	Committed	Achieved	% of Committed
Acres advanced to higher tier (VBRSP)	407	362	89%
Acres impacted/developed	449	449	100%

SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE OUTLOOK

Tier designations in this project are based on due diligence activities with varying terms of validity — generally valid up to 5 years and renewable upon re-certifying applicable items such as wetlands delineation. All of the sites are now more marketable than before the project, enhancing the ability to attract companies and create income, jobs, and capital investments. The FASTA site sale during the performance period validates the approach. The IDA is exploring access road options for the I-85 park to address the railroad easement issue and enable future tier advancement.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

The I-85 Industrial Park could not reach Tier 5 as originally planned because the railroad crossing the park advised the IDA that they will no longer honor the granted easement after five years. Engineers at Dewberry advised that without the easement, an access road would need to be completed to reach Tier 5. This highlights the critical need to identify infrastructure, legal, and easement barriers during the earliest planning stages of site development projects, so goals can be set realistically and contingency options mapped in advance.

Amelia Commerce Center Due Diligence Studies

Region 3 • \$100K • Amelia County • Director: Neal Barber

PROJECT BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

The Amelia County EDA purchased a 130-acre site at the intersection of Richardson Road and Rt. 360, rezoned as M-1 industrial and designated a “Tier 2” site under the VEDP Virginia Business Ready Sites Program. One of Region 3’s top priorities is to increase the Tier level of industrial sites across the region. This project advanced the Amelia Regional Commerce Park from Tier 2 to Tier 3 through the completion of comprehensive due diligence and planning analyses, strengthening the region’s inventory of business-ready industrial properties.


PROJECT IMPACT & APPROACH

The Regional Commerce Park is strategically located fronting Rt 360, four miles west of Amelia Courthouse — the closest site in Region 3 to the rapidly growing Richmond Metro area. To accelerate development of the appropriately zoned industrial property, it was critical to conduct the necessary investigations supporting future development. This project enabled Amelia County and its EDA to complete the due diligence and planning analysis required to certify the site at VBRSP Tier 3. Analysis of business location data in Region 3 revealed that the vast majority of traded sector business announcements occur when industrial sites are properly vetted and prepared — making Tier advancement a direct contributor to regional competitiveness and economic diversification.

KEY ACTIVITIES & DELIVERABLES

Completed due diligence included Phase I and Phase II environmental site assessments, geotechnical and boundary surveys, topographic survey, cultural resources review, threatened and endangered species review, wetland delineation with ACOE confirmation, floodplain study, master plan of development, and a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) for water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure. The County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution to file a VDOT Access Road funding application for the Rt 360 access and internal roads.

GO VIRGINIA OUTCOMES — COMMITTED VS ACHIEVED

GO Virginia Outcome	Committed	Achieved	% of Committed
Acres advanced to higher tier (VBRSP)	134	134	100% 

SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE OUTLOOK

The project did not generate income but completed all proposed outcomes. The next step is detailed planning and development of access off Rt 360 and internal access roads. VDOT Access Road funding has been identified as the source. An application has been prepared and the County Board of Supervisors passed the appropriate resolution for filing; it is anticipated the application will be filed with VDOT in January 2026. Once detailed planning is approved, the County will pursue VDOT construction funding for the Rt 360 access and internal roads — creating a clear runway to continued investment without additional grant support.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

The project was a complete success and will accelerate development of the Amelia Regional Commerce Park. With due diligence and planning complete and the VBRSP Tier rating raised from 2 to 3, more detailed infrastructure planning can now proceed. The planning required to prepare sites for future industrial location or expansion requires time, patience, and significant investment of resources — the sooner this planning can begin, the shorter the time frame for future development. It is important to have trusted, competent professionals familiar with the County working on the project; this knowledge and expertise helps expedite work, keeps the schedule on track, and reduces expenditures during the process.

Launching a Coastal Resilience and Adaptation Economy

Regions 5 & 6 • \$2.94M • VIMS / Virginia Sea Grant • Directors: Troy Hartley, Sabine Rogers

PROJECT BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

Virginia’s economy relies heavily on the resilience of its coastal zones and inland waterways. Growing threats from flooding, erosion, and saltwater intrusion present an urgent need — and opportunity — for new technologies, nature-based solutions, and adaptive infrastructure. With the highest rate of sea level rise on the East Coast, the Commonwealth is uniquely positioned to lead innovation in this space. Building on a prior GO Virginia planning grant, this implementation project established a foundation for a long-term, high-wage economic cluster in coastal resilience and adaptation across Virginia.

PROJECT IMPACT & APPROACH

The project laid the groundwork for a water management innovation ecosystem centered in the Middle Peninsula. Key components included fostering resilience-focused entrepreneurship, creating R&D test sites (Resilience Innovation Center), and forming a business-driven Region 5-6 Consortium. The project catalyzed a new economic cluster by integrating R&D, workforce development, entrepreneurship, and regulatory coordination. It served as a critical catalyst — enabling businesses to establish operations, develop innovative technologies, and expand into new markets through collaboration with VIPC, VEDP, community colleges, and the Public Access Authority.

KEY ACTIVITIES & DELIVERABLES

The project laid the groundwork for a water-management innovation ecosystem in the Middle Peninsula by fostering resilience-focused entrepreneurship, establishing the Resilience Innovation Center as an R&D test site, and forming the business-driven Region 5–6 Coastal Virginia Adaptation and Resilience Consortium (CoVA A&R) with a Steering Committee and formal bylaws. RISE accelerator and business-plan-competition services were expanded, and partnerships were built with VIPC, VEDP, community colleges, and the Public Access Authority. The Fight the Flood Program issued \$4.4M+ in direct loans to property owners, and since 2018 RISE has channeled \$9M+ to 40+ pilot projects — generating \$48M+ in follow-on investment for portfolio companies including Natrx, Triangle Environmental, and Biogenic Solutions.

GO VIRGINIA OUTCOMES — COMMITTED VS ACHIEVED

GO Virginia Outcome	Committed	Achieved	% of Committed
Jobs created	576	110	19%
Businesses served	100	253	253%
Businesses attracted	10	37	370%
Existing businesses expanded	—	4	—

SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE OUTLOOK

The GO Virginia grant served as a critical catalyst for launching a Coastal Resilience and Adaptation Economy in Virginia. Participating businesses are now collaborating with each other and private-sector partners to secure additional funding and CAPX, helping ensure long-term sustainability. The Coastal Virginia Adaptation and Resilience Consortium (CoVA A&R), initiated under this project, has been structured for longevity with a Steering Committee and formal bylaws to guide governance beyond the grant — and has built strategic partnerships with key organizations to carry the work forward.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Coastal Resilience and Adaptation Economy Initiative — supported by \$2.9M in GO Virginia investment and leveraging more than \$6M in matching funds — achieved significant success in launching a resilience and water management innovation ecosystem in Coastal Virginia, demonstrating the state’s capacity to lead in climate adaptation while creating a foundation for long-term economic growth. Sustained investment is essential to maintain momentum: future growth depends on stronger incubator and accelerator support (particularly from VIPC and VEDP) to help early-stage companies scale and commercialize, and continued workforce development through R&D technician programs and community college engagement to align training with employer needs.

Innovation Pathways

Region 6 • \$978K • Stafford County Public Schools • Director: Abby Wicker

PROJECT BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

The need for cybersecurity professionals has been growing rapidly, even faster than companies can hire, and that demand is expected to continue. The number of unfilled cybersecurity jobs worldwide grew 350% between 2013 and 2021, from 1 million to 3.5 million. Even with undergraduate or graduate degrees in cybersecurity or computer science, workers often need specific credentials to land jobs in the industry. Stafford Schools, through the Innovation Pathways Workforce Development Project, prepared its workforce of tomorrow to take entry-level cybersecurity certification tests — specifically Security+, which validates baseline security skills and fulfills DoD 8570 compliance. The project leveraged the existing G3CS Extraordinary Young Minds (EYM) program, which serves 90 students per month through STEAM activities.


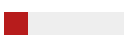
PROJECT IMPACT & APPROACH

The project delivered training for 1,291 students, educators, and adult learners, including student groups in Stafford County schools plus community members and local organizations. Community outreach and school-system collaboration through Canvas substantially expanded enrollment. The project specifically extended to adult learners — career changers, displaced workers, and high school graduates — giving a separate spectrum the opportunity to gain credentials while pursuing new career goals. Security+ certification emphasizes hands-on skills in risk assessment and management, incident response, forensics, enterprise networks, hybrid/cloud operations, and security controls.

KEY ACTIVITIES & DELIVERABLES

The project delivered Security+ certification training to student groups across Stafford County schools alongside community members and local organizations. Delivery leveraged the G3CS Extraordinary Young Minds (EYM) program (serving 90 students per month through STEAM activities), Canvas-based community outreach, and school-system collaboration that substantially expanded enrollment. Programming specifically extended to adult learners — career changers, displaced workers, and recent high school graduates — pursuing Security+ as a route to the cybersecurity workforce. Final credential counts will not be known until the April 2026 CompTIA exam window closes.

GO VIRGINIA OUTCOMES — COMMITTED VS ACHIEVED

GO Virginia Outcome	Committed	Achieved	% of Committed
People trained	336	1,291	384% 
Credentials awarded	525	104	20% 

SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE OUTLOOK

The project has a long-term sustainability issue. The burden placed on community partners became too much of a financial barrier to continue issuing test vouchers, and the pathway partnership broke down. Limited time between program quarters poses a challenge, particularly for students who need additional independent study to feel confident for the CompTIA exam. Many participants report extra test preparation time — reflecting strong motivation but also highlighting readiness gaps in study skills and test-taking habits the project was not designed to address. The need remains, and this project can be considered a pilot that requires refinement to build sustainable community traction.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

Bringing this opportunity to the region benefited students and the community, but much more work is needed to build partnership and sustainability. When a program is free to participants and no accountability factors are in place, completion is challenging — accountability structures must be addressed in future iterations. Potential improvements include virtual presence in classrooms from someone other than the instructor, review sessions (virtual or in person) if funds allow, and structured test preparation support. Test-taking anxiety and competing work/life commitments were consistent barriers. Education is key, and with specific lessons and accountability from all involved, this could become a successful pathway for gaining employees for the regional workforce.

GO2 Work in Manufacturing and Transportation in the Valley

Region 8 • \$885K • Shenandoah Valley Center for Advanced Learning • Director: Lee Ann Whitesell

PROJECT BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

Valley Career and Technical Center (VCTC) sought to address critical workforce talent pipeline challenges in manufacturing and transportation — Region 8’s number one strategic priority. Operating in a fifty-year-old facility with equipment two to three generations behind current technologies, VCTC needed to modernize training capabilities to meet industry demands for skilled technicians. The 2021 Growth and Diversification Plan identified outdated CTE equipment as a challenge and opportunity, which this project addressed by upgrading equipment and adding new programs in industrial maintenance, aviation technology, and heavy equipment.

PROJECT IMPACT & APPROACH

During the grant period, this project trained 589 students in modernized manufacturing and transportation programs, directly addressing Region 8’s top strategic priority of strengthening the talent pipeline for these critical sectors. By upgrading outdated equipment and expanding program offerings in industrial maintenance, aviation technology, and heavy equipment, VCTC prepared students with current industry-relevant skills for the Valley’s 24,000+ manufacturing jobs and growing transportation sector. The project enhanced the region’s competitive advantage in attracting and retaining manufacturers and transportation companies. All four projected performance measures were exceeded.

KEY ACTIVITIES & DELIVERABLES

VCTC modernized its training capabilities by upgrading outdated equipment and adding new programs in industrial maintenance, aviation technology, and heavy equipment alongside existing manufacturing-core offerings in precision machining, welding, auto, and diesel technology. The equipment investment is positioned to last 15–20 years, and program delivery extends VCTC’s reach across Region 8’s 24,000+ manufacturing jobs and growing transportation sector. Downstream employer engagement was strong, driving an apprenticeship total more than 2.5× the original projection.

GO VIRGINIA OUTCOMES — COMMITTED VS ACHIEVED

GO Virginia Outcome	Committed	Achieved	% of Committed
People trained	420	589	140%
Credentials awarded	420	550	131%
New apprenticeships created	35	93	266%
Businesses served	60	94	157%

SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE OUTLOOK

As one of nine regional Career and Technical Education Centers in Virginia, VCTC has a long-standing history of training people for industry. This project procured equipment for new programs and replaced outdated equipment to match current technologies — a one-time investment that will last 15-20 years. Existing personnel continue to implement the program. Staffing and material costs have been consistently supported by localities for almost 50 years, and facility projects at the center are included in the localities’ current strategic plans, providing a durable sustainability foundation without need for additional grant funding.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

The addition and replacement of equipment for training in manufacturing and transportation made a significant impact on VCTC’s capacity to develop the regional workforce. The grant also became a catalyst in working with businesses, industries, and other state economic development personnel, building long-term support. The grant management process was a challenge but well-supported by Region 8 personnel. The primary lesson for future first-time grantees: document progress continuously as you go, and plan for sustainability from the beginning rather than at grant close — ensuring the investment outlasts the funding period.

Clarke County — Camp 7 Site Development

Region 8 • \$171K • Clarke County IDA • Contractor: Hurt & Proffitt

PROJECT BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

Clarke County has had two welcoming opportunities in the growth-designated area of Double Tollgate (White Post). First: collaboration of Frederick County, Frederick Water, and Clarke County to bring public sewer to Double Tollgate by March 2026 — a \$19.6 million investment. Second: the Commonwealth’s surplus of the Camp 7 property, purchased by Clarke County for \$100K in December 2024 to develop into a light industrial business park. The Berryville-Clarke County Business Park is at capacity and there were no industrial-zoned sites for new businesses. The Clarke County IDA plans to reuse and lease the main prison building and generate revenues for additional economic development.

PROJECT IMPACT & APPROACH

The Camp 7 site development project is creating a shovel-ready, light industrial zoned commercial property in Clarke County and the Northern Shenandoah Valley — addressing GO Virginia Region 8 and VEDP goals to increase site-ready properties in the Northern Sub-region. Public sewer is estimated for completed installation by March 2026 through a Frederick Water/Frederick County/Clarke County partnership, addressing a lack of infrastructure that had stalled Double Tollgate economic development. The Clarke County IDA is focused on attracting light industrial manufacturing sectors — Food & Beverage, Bio-Medical, Transportation, Agriculture/Value-Added Foods, and Logistics — five of the targeted industries in the GO Virginia Economic Growth and Diversification Plan.

KEY ACTIVITIES & DELIVERABLES

Clarke County purchased the 40-acre Camp 7 property in December 2024; Hurt & Proffitt conducted assessments March–September 2025 and delivered seven comprehensive due diligence reports: Environmental Site Assessment, Aquatic Resources, Geotechnical Engineering, Existing Facilities (Water & Sewer), Industrial Hygiene, Traffic and Roadway Assessment, and Cultural Resources & Risk Review. The assessments were presented to the Clarke County IDA in October 2025 and adopted by the Board of Supervisors on November 18, 2025. The property has been rezoned Light Industrial, and the new Double Tollgate Pump Station has been built.

GO VIRGINIA OUTCOMES — COMMITTED VS ACHIEVED

GO Virginia Outcome	Committed	Achieved	% of Committed
Acres impacted/developed	40	40	100%

Performance measures for Businesses Served and New Jobs Created are not yet reportable — those follow tier advancement and tenant attraction, which will be pursued via a second GOVA Region 8 Site Development Planning Grant.

SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE OUTLOOK

Clarke County has allocated \$250,000 in the FY2027 Capital Improvements budget for Camp 7 site development. VDOT road improvements on Ray of Hope Lane will be paid for by the County, with extra funds set aside for the Double Tollgate sewer project in case work is encountered during installation. The project has not generated income to date. Eventually, Clarke County intends to lease the renovated prison building and sell the property to businesses or developers — generating real estate, personal property, and machine and tools taxes plus business license permitting. A \$317,298 VBAF award from VEDP has been received to remove asbestos and lead paint.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

The project has not served its purpose yet — Clarke County is in the initial stages of Camp 7 site development. The assessments were the first of many steps needed to increase site readiness and prepare for renovation of the main prison building. The County has applied for a second GO-VA Region 8 Site Development Planning Grant (\$250,000) and will apply for a 2026 IRF grant for blight removal — converting closeout momentum into next-phase work. Primary recommendation: stay in close contact with state agencies and be persistent to keep project momentum.

Rural Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

Region 9 • \$200K • Community Investment Collaborative • Director: Stephan Davis

PROJECT BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

This project aligns with the Region 9 Growth & Diversification Plan Update (2021), including five priorities for Startups/Innovation/Commercialization and one for Growing Existing Businesses. It addressed recommendations from the Region 9 Rural Entrepreneurship Report through ecosystem building, outreach, and sector-specific support. CIC’s mission is to fuel the success of under-resourced entrepreneurs — with target populations including low-to-moderate income, BIPOC, and women entrepreneurs across rural Central Virginia.

PROJECT IMPACT & APPROACH

The project addressed Rural Entrepreneurship Report recommendations through coordinated interventions — creating multiple reinforcing entry points into the regional startup ecosystem for under-resourced entrepreneurs, including low-to-moderate income, BIPOC, and women entrepreneurs across rural Central Virginia.

KEY ACTIVITIES & DELIVERABLES

An ecosystem builder was hired to serve as business navigator and concierge across rural counties, and 19 local and target-sector champions were identified across 5 sectors in every county. The project delivered streamlined permitting and licensing guides, specialized food and beverage manufacturing support (1:1 advising, pricing, launch strategy, operations), and inclusive services through CIC and CV SBDC loan programs, early-stage loans, and entrepreneurship training. Capital-formation assistance totaling \$434,109 leveraged the \$200K grant at better than 2:1, and the food and beverage sector work directly informed a follow-on Food and Beverage Accelerator Planning Grant proposal.

GO VIRGINIA OUTCOMES — COMMITTED VS ACHIEVED

GO Virginia Outcome	Committed	Achieved	% of Committed
Entrepreneurs served	250	553	221%
Businesses served	200	301	151%
Jobs created	30	76	253%
New businesses created	15	15	100%
Existing businesses expanded	60	60	100%

SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE OUTLOOK

CIC will leverage storytelling and quantifiable impact to seek additional funding from private, corporate, and foundation sources. A strong, inclusive rural entrepreneur ecosystem is an asset that outside funders are expected to invest in. The organization will utilize project funds (with permission) as matching support for the USDA Rural Business Development Grant and other opportunities. The project also directly informs the approach for a related Food and Beverage Accelerator Planning Grant — demonstrating how findings from the Rural project translate into follow-on investment opportunities.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

The transition in staffing from the previous Rural Ecosystem Builder to new team members required on-boarding time early in the quarter. Finding target traded sector champions in each county proved difficult. Engaging and building networks across multiple communities is challenging, especially when targeting specific sectors or company types. A key insight emerged: in rural communities, you have to engage the broader community consistently in hopes of identifying and working your way to target sectors. This approach has the added benefit of strengthening the overall ecosystem by making more connections — suggesting that breadth-first engagement is the right path to depth in rural economic development work.

GO Virginia Planning Grants Portfolio: Q3 Fiscal Year 2026 Closed Planning Grants:

Eight Planning Grants Across Five Regions | \$618K Total Investment | Performance Closeout Overview

This portfolio summarizes eight GO Virginia planning grants completed in Regions 1, 3, 4, 5, and 8, representing a combined investment of \$618K. Projects are organized by GO Virginia’s four investment strategies. Three Workforce Development grants in Region 1 supported small-business disaster response, VR-based career exploration, and middle-school energy education. Four Cluster Scale-Up grants delivered the Hampton Roads DEAL Framework and a Jefferson Lab HPDF action plan (Region 5), the Greater Richmond Cluster Study (Region 4), and an IALR data center / CEA greenhouse co-location feasibility report (Region 3). One Sites and Infrastructure grant in Region 8 — the Blue Mountain RIFA Feasibility Study — confirmed site viability projecting \$2B+ in investment and 4,000 jobs.

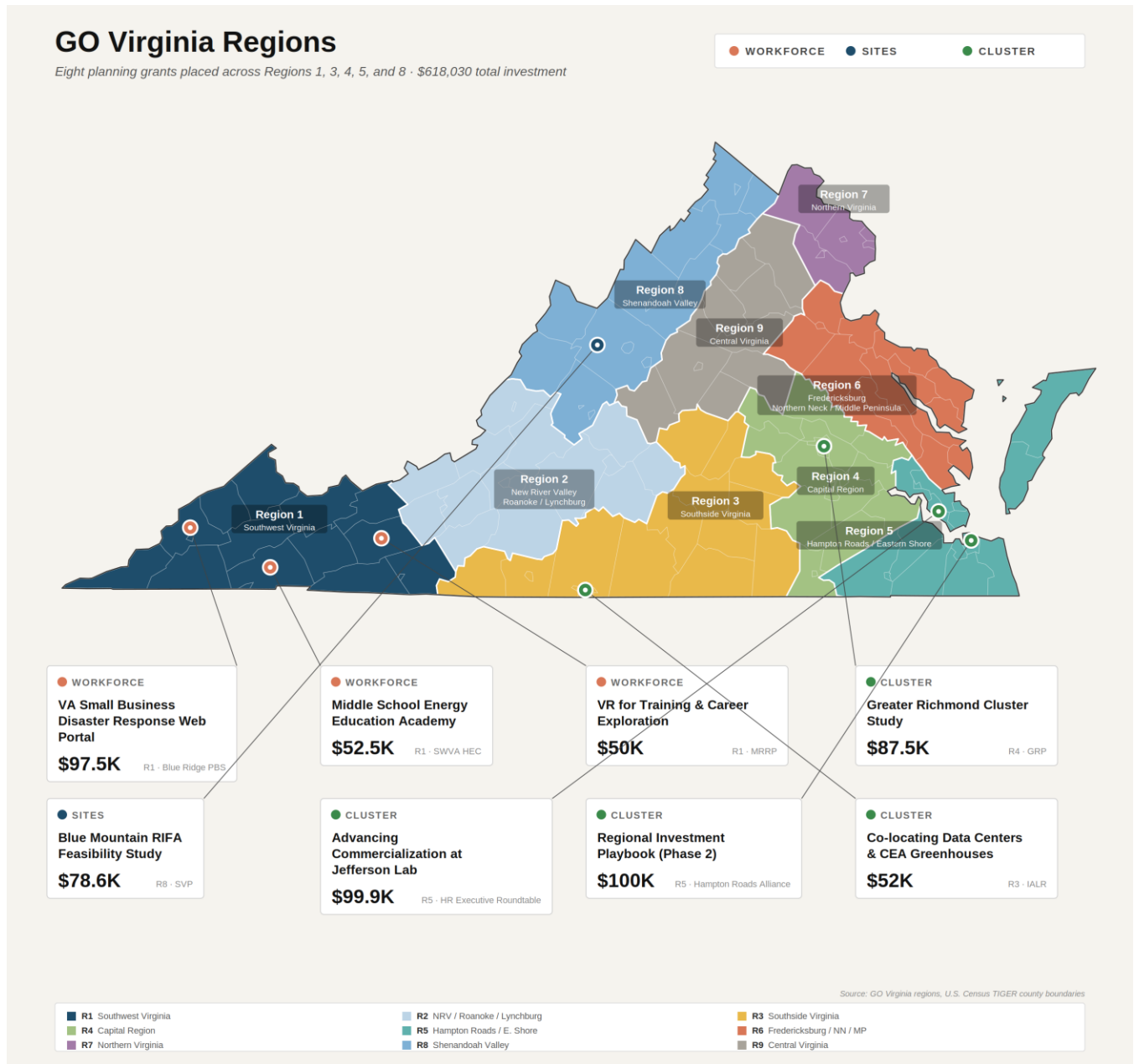
PORTFOLIO SNAPSHOT

Project	Region	Grant	Headline Result	Targets	Deliverables
VA Small Business Disaster Response Web Portal	1	\$98K	36 verified resources; 67,899 portal clicks; 3,756 PSA airings over ~11 months		
VR for Training and Career Exploration	1	\$50K	Feasibility study completed by VT CECE; final report, presentation, and summary delivered		Funding seeking
Middle School Energy Education Academy	1	\$53K	Pilot camp (27 students); 36 teachers trained; KidWind debut with 1st–3rd place wins; energy curriculum hub launched		Funding seeking
Co-locating Data Centers and CEA Greenhouses	3	\$52K	Feasibility report delivered (RII partnership); 140–270 jobs per 65-acre greenhouse; Microsoft + Bright Farms engaged		
Greater Richmond Cluster Study	4	\$88K	120+ stakeholders engaged; refreshed cluster strategy; foundational research delivered for PlanRVA CEDS		
Regional Investment Playbook (Phase 2)	5	\$100K	DEAL Framework launched; 8 transformative projects defined; ~600 attendees at public launch		
Advancing Commercialization at Jefferson Lab	5	\$100K	Strategic action plan delivered; 60+ tech-convergence firms identified; nine-part implementation framework for HPDF commercialization		Funding seeking
Blue Mountain RIFA Feasibility Study	8	\$79K	Site viability confirmed; \$2B+ potential investment and 4,000 jobs projected; RIFA formation recommended		
TOTAL	5 regions	\$618K	8 projects • 67,899 portal clicks • 36 teachers trained • \$2B+ projected • 140–270 jobs/greenhouse	8 projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 5/8 met ● 3/8 almost met

■ Workforce Development
 ■ Cluster Scale-Up
 ■ Sites and Infrastructure
■ Met all targets
 ■ Met 50%+ of targets
 ■ Met less than 50% of targets

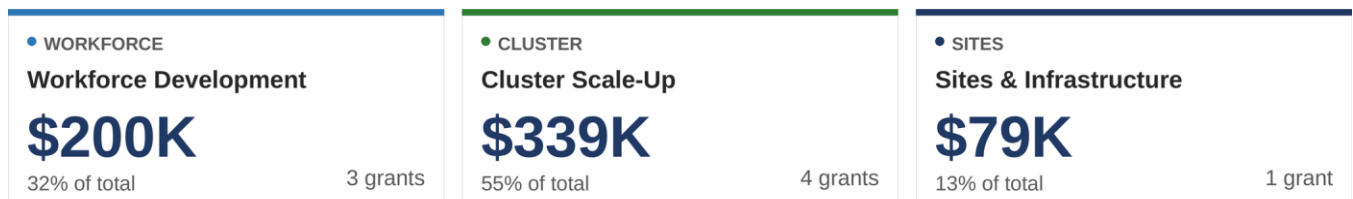
Portfolio at a Glance

Where the eight planning grants landed and how they map to GO Virginia's four investment strategies



INVESTMENT BY STRATEGY

\$618K total · 8 grants



VA Small Business Disaster Response Web Portal

Region 1 • \$98K • Blue Ridge Public Television, Inc. • Project Director: Julie Newman

PROJECT BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

Tropical Storm Helene caused widespread disruption to small businesses across Virginia, impacting every targeted industry identified in Region One’s Growth and Diversification Plan. When PBS Appalachia applied for GO Virginia funding, the primary challenge was the lack of a centralized, accessible mechanism for small businesses to quickly identify and navigate federal, state, and local recovery resources. This project sought to address Region One’s priorities around business retention, entrepreneurial support, and economic resilience by enabling faster recovery and stabilization of existing businesses following a natural disaster.

PROJECT IMPACT & APPROACH

The Virginia Small Business Disaster Response Web Portal directly addressed the fragmentation of recovery resources by creating a single, trusted entry point for small businesses affected by Hurricane Helene. By consolidating and curating active assistance programs, the project reduced barriers to access, shortened recovery timelines, and supported business continuity across all participating localities. In doing so, the project advanced GO Virginia’s core goals of regional collaboration, economic resiliency, and support for existing employers — helping stabilize the regional economy so that longer-term growth and diversification efforts outlined in the Growth and Diversification Plan could continue.

KEY OUTCOMES & PERFORMANCE METRICS

As of the close of the grant period, the portal maintained 36 verified, active state, federal, and community-based resources and generated 67,899 recorded clicks, demonstrating strong utilization by the intended audience. A 30-second Public Service Announcement aired a total of 3,756 times between November 24, 2024 and October 16, 2025 on PBS Appalachia and Blue Ridge PBS, providing sustained statewide awareness of the portal over nearly eleven months. The portal infrastructure design allows it to be repurposed for future disaster response efforts, preserving the investment in centralized recovery information for the next event.

SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE OUTLOOK

While the project did not generate direct income, the core infrastructure and administrative tools developed through the grant will be sustained using existing PBS Appalachia staff capacity and technical resources. The portal can remain live as a reference tool and can be rapidly updated or duplicated in response to future disasters without the need for significant new investment. PBS Appalachia is exploring future partnerships with state agencies and regional organizations to support maintenance and potential expansion of the model. Even if active updates are paused, the project has served its intended purpose by establishing a scalable, proven framework for disaster-response resource coordination, addressing an ongoing and recurring regional need.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Small Business Disaster Response Web Portal successfully met its objectives by delivering a timely, highly utilized tool that supported economic stabilization following Hurricane Helene. Key lessons learned include the importance of trusted conveners in crisis response, the value of centralized information for small businesses under stress, and the need to design systems that are flexible and reusable for future events. The project demonstrates a replicable model that other GO Virginia regions or rural localities can adopt to improve disaster preparedness and economic resilience, particularly in regions with limited administrative capacity and geographically dispersed resources.

Virtual Reality for Training and Career Exploration

Region 1 • \$50K • Mount Rogers Regional Partnership (MRRP) • Project Director: Ashlyn Shrewsbury

PROJECT BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

There is a need to cultivate a talent pipeline for Region 1's target industries and employers by expanding opportunities for career exploration for the region's youth. Students receive exposure to career curriculums from the GO TEC labs in middle school and continue with Career and Technical Education (CTE) offerings in 11th and 12th grades, but a meaningful gap exists between those two phases. This project supported a feasibility study to bridge that gap and to determine the specific skill, awareness, and curriculum gaps that regional employers experience when hiring from the local talent pool.

PROJECT IMPACT & APPROACH

This study explored strategies to align educational opportunities with the evolving workforce demands of Region 1's target industries, ensuring that students are equipped with the skills and career awareness needed for future employment and economic growth. By introducing early career exploration opportunities and identifying where current programming falls short, the study supports the GO Virginia Region 1 talent development goals and strategies, fostering a stronger, more prepared workforce. The findings emphasized the importance of early exposure to career pathways, particularly in high-demand fields, and outlined strategies to enhance hands-on learning opportunities, curriculum alignment, and workforce engagement.

KEY OUTCOMES & PERFORMANCE METRICS

The Mount Rogers Regional Partnership commissioned a comprehensive feasibility study led by the Virginia Tech Center for Economic and Community Engagement (CECE), in collaboration with the Center for Rural Education (CRE) and the Virginia Tech Southwest Center. The study focused on strengthening Career and Technical Education and workforce readiness across the Mount Rogers region and produced three contracted deliverables: a final report from VT CECE, a report presentation, and a report summary. The work engaged regional educators, business leaders, and workforce development professionals — producing an understanding of the CTE landscape, surfacing funding constraints, staffing shortages, and misalignment between industry needs and CTE curricula, and yielding targeted, recommendations grounded in feedback and workforce analysis.

SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE OUTLOOK

The project did not generate income. Sustaining the work will require collaboration among regional stakeholders, and the primary barrier to implementing the recommended steps is the cost to local school systems. To address this, the advisory committee will work to identify the most feasible and effective programs for schools in the region and develop a strategy for implementation. This will include exploring funding opportunities such as state and local workforce grants, partnerships with industry and higher education institutions, and potential philanthropic support. Even if immediate implementation is not possible due to funding constraints, the feasibility study has served its purpose by highlighting a clear need and providing actionable recommendations — with next steps focused on securing the resources and partnerships needed.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

Key successes of the study included the comprehensive engagement of regional stakeholders — educators, business leaders, and workforce development professionals — whose insights produced a well-rounded view of the current CTE landscape and clear areas for improvement. The study's data-driven approach allowed for targeted, actionable recommendations grounded in stakeholder feedback and workforce trend analysis, and surfaced critical issues including funding constraints, staffing shortages, and the misalignment between industry needs and CTE curricula.

Middle School Energy Education Academy

Region 1 • \$53K • Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center Foundation • Project Director: David Matlock

PROJECT BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

Region 1's Growth and Diversification Plan specifically lists the energy sector as a growing targeted industry, and the region has prioritized talent development focused on educational and industry alignment. Southwest Virginia is a key player in Virginia's energy network — producing the coalbed methane that supplies a meaningful share of the Commonwealth's natural gas — yet middle-school students had limited exposure to energy careers within their own region. This project gave the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center Foundation an opportunity to introduce middle school students to different types of energy and emphasize Southwest Virginia's significant role in energy production for the state.

PROJECT IMPACT & APPROACH

The grant supported the creation of an advisory committee composed of educators, industry representatives, regulatory agencies, and energy experts, plus a teacher focus group from the four schools that submitted letters of support. Funding employed a part-time staff member to lead research coordination, curriculum development, and pilot launch — visiting the JMU Center for Advancement of Sustainable Energy, the Center for Energy Education (Roanoke Rapids), the VT Center for Coal and Energy Research, NEED training (Arlington), Solar Fest (UVA Wise), and the VT Think-A-Bit lab (Roanoke) to identify best practices. The Foundation then launched an Energy Education section on its website serving as a hub for educators, students, and community members, offering curated curriculum resources and career pathway links to the rapidly expanding energy sector.

KEY OUTCOMES & PERFORMANCE METRICS

Pilot delivery exceeded what a planning grant typically yields. Southwest Virginia made its debut at the Virginia Tech Blacksburg Regional KidWind Competition with teams from six regional middle and high schools — students earned 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in the Wind Challenge; 1st and 2nd in the Solar Challenge; plus Blade's, Judge's, and Sportsmanship Awards. Teams advanced to the state-level competition at JMU in April 2025, where Lebanon Middle brought home the People's Choice Award. The grant also funded a community "Energy 101" event, a full-day professional-development training that reached 36 teachers from four partner districts, and a 27-student Energy Education Summer Camp featuring field trips to the Virginia City Hybrid Energy Center, TVA's South Holston Dam, and Bristol Virginia Utilities, plus on-site presentations from Virginia Clean Cities and the Metallurgical Coal Producers Association.

SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE OUTLOOK

The grant was not designed to generate income; it was structured to test the need for a middle school energy academy and to research what a full-scale program would require. The study's recommended is creating a full-time Education Coordinator to serve middle and high schools across Southwest Virginia, building a collaborative regional network across teacher development, curriculum, career pathways, and regional coordination. Without additional funding, the only component expected to continue is KidWind 2026 — the JMU Center for Sustainable Energy has secured \$20,000 from Google to host a regional KidWind challenge at the Higher Education Center on March 10, 2026, and UVA Wise will host teacher training in fall 2025 to expand participation. The Summer Energy Camp could potentially be sustained through participant fees offsetting program costs.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

The underlying question — is there a need for energy education in Southwest Virginia? — can be answered without hesitation: yes. Five lessons stood out: Southwest Virginia is a key player in Virginia's energy network; the region is home to bright young minds eager to learn; training one teacher creates a ripple effect that multiplies impact across schools; and the Higher Education Center is well-positioned as a regional convener.

Co-locating Data Centers and CEA Greenhouses Feasibility Project

Region 3 • \$52K • Institute for Advanced Learning and Research • Project Director: Dr. Scott Lowman

PROJECT BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

This project addressed a critical regional need to strengthen and diversify Southern Virginia’s innovation economy by exploring opportunities at the intersection of the data center and Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) sectors — two priority clusters identified in Region 3’s Growth and Diversification Plan. By evaluating the feasibility of co-locating high-tech greenhouses with data centers to utilize waste heat, the project aimed to reduce operating costs, support carbon-reducing technologies, and create new pathways for business expansion, advancing the region’s goals of fostering advanced technology ecosystems, promoting energy innovation, and generating long-term economic and workforce development opportunities.

PROJECT IMPACT & APPROACH

The project successfully advanced the region’s efforts to capitalize on the emerging opportunity at the intersection of two priority clusters in Region 3’s Growth and Diversification Plan. By conducting a comprehensive feasibility study on co-locating data centers and CEA greenhouses, the project delivered the technical, economic, and industry-informed insights needed to pursue energy-efficient models that reduce operating costs and strengthen competitiveness. IALR partnered with the nonprofit Resource Innovation Institute (RII) to produce the study, supporting GO Virginia goals of innovative cluster development and laying the groundwork for high-quality job creation and long-term economic growth.

KEY OUTCOMES & PERFORMANCE METRICS

The feasibility study delivered substantial, data-driven insights demonstrating the economic, environmental, and workforce potential of co-locating data centers with CEA facilities. Drawing on global best practices — including the Agriport A7 model in the Netherlands — the final report shows how shared infrastructure (waste heat, CO₂, energy) can reduce operating costs, increase energy efficiency, and support year-round agricultural production while creating a broader mix of jobs than either sector can generate independently. The report quantifies the opportunity for each 65-acre greenhouse to support between 140 and 270 jobs. Qualitative outcomes include strengthened partnerships with Microsoft and Bright Farms, expert validation from the CEA Innovation Center, and new engagement across state agencies and regional stakeholders — aligning Region 3 with national efforts such as the U.S. Department of Energy’s CEA Accelerator.

SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE OUTLOOK

The project did not generate direct income, but its work will be sustained beyond the grant period because the feasibility study itself created a foundation of knowledge, partnerships, and industry alignment. The findings have already prompted continued interest from data center operators, CEA companies, and public sector partners exploring efforts — including site evaluations, demonstration projects, and planning for future Farm Park developments. An implementation project is forthcoming, with federal programs at the U.S. Departments of Energy and Agriculture and state programs tied to clean energy and rural development identified as potential funding sources. The Southern Virginia Regional Alliance is engaged in planning to position Region 3 for private sector investment and to recruit companies that can take advantage of the concept.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

The project demonstrated that co-locating data centers with CEA facilities is a realistic and promising strategy for economic development in Region 3 and across Virginia, with Region 3 uniquely positioned given its broadband access, available industrial sites, the CEA Innovation Center, and strong regional partnerships. Post-project, the workgroup convened on February 23, 2026 for a final briefing and to plan next steps for the cluster scale-up initiative under the working title “Farm Park Implementation Playbook.”

Greater Richmond Cluster Study

Region 4 • \$88K • Greater Richmond Partnership • Project Director: Jennifer Wakefield

PROJECT BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

Greater Richmond’s 2024 Cluster Study was initiated to address the need for an updated, data-driven analysis of the region’s competitive industry clusters, last evaluated more than a decade ago. This project aimed to sharpen the region’s focus on sectors best positioned for long-term growth — particularly those aligned with GO Virginia Region 4’s priority clusters of advanced manufacturing, information technology, logistics, and bioscience. These efforts directly support regional goals to grow high-wage traded sector employment, scale up emerging clusters, and strengthen talent development pipelines identified in the Growth and Diversification Plan.

PROJECT IMPACT & APPROACH

The project directly addressed the challenges of outdated industry targeting and fragmented regional economic planning by delivering a comprehensive, data-driven analysis of the clusters best positioned to drive Greater Richmond’s future economic growth. By engaging more than 120 stakeholders through interviews, focus groups, and public forums, the project produced a shared regional vision and strategic framework that aligns closely with GO Virginia Region 4’s industry sectors, while providing the foundational research for PlanRVA’s forthcoming Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) — reducing duplication and equipping GRP and its partners with intelligence to pursue collaborative, high-impact initiatives.

KEY OUTCOMES & PERFORMANCE METRICS

The cluster analysis evaluated each sector’s concentration, growth, and regional assets. Advanced manufacturing employs over 30,000 in the Richmond MSA, offers above-average wages, and is projected to grow 6%, with 80% of jobs accessible without a bachelor’s degree. Life sciences remain a strategic priority given the region’s research institutions and momentum from federal Tech Hub and NSF Engines designations. While IT is less concentrated, it provides essential cross-sector skills and supports the region’s growing digital infrastructure. Corporate services is the region’s most concentrated cluster, with the area remaining highly competitive due to its robust talent pool and strong business environment. As a planning-stage cluster study, the project’s primary deliverable was the analytical foundation itself.

SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE OUTLOOK

While the 2024 Richmond MSA Cluster Study was a one-time planning initiative, its results have laid the groundwork for long-term strategic action sustained through GRP’s existing operations and partner initiatives. The project did not generate income directly but has already informed several ongoing efforts — including PlanRVA’s CEDS — that will carry its impact. GRP will use findings to guide its efforts and investor engagement strategy, integrating cluster recommendations into its FY26–30 strategic plan. Future implementations will be pursued through competitive funding opportunities, philanthropic support, and partnerships.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2024 Richmond MSA Cluster Study provided a timely, data-driven roadmap to prioritize industry clusters best positioned to drive long-term economic growth in the region. Through robust stakeholder engagement — including interviews, focus groups, and regional forums — the project built consensus around strategic priorities and informed multiple initiatives, including GRP’s FY26–30 strategic plan and PlanRVA’s CEDS. Key lessons learned include the importance of early and sustained stakeholder involvement, alignment with existing regional efforts, and the value of third-party validation to build credibility and momentum. A major success was leveraging the study to inform other planning efforts and reduce duplication across organizations.

Regional Investment Playbook (Phase 2)

Region 5 • \$100K • Hampton Roads Alliance • Project Director: Doug Smith

PROJECT BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

The Regional Investment Playbook was developed to provide a clear, data-driven understanding of the Hampton Roads economy and its position within a rapidly changing global environment. The project sought to maximize the region's potential by focusing on high-growth GO Virginia priority clusters — maritime shipbuilding, uncrewed systems and aviation, advanced manufacturing, and water technologies — organized into four broader themes: Defense, Energy, Aerospace, and Logistics. The Playbook aimed to identify strategic, high-impact projects capable of driving tangible economic outcomes across these sectors.

PROJECT IMPACT & APPROACH

The Playbook established a clear framework of industries and cross-cutting growth drivers that allowed the region to identify, map, and assign potential economic opportunities to the appropriate stakeholders. Using this framework, six strategic projects were initially developed to accelerate growth in the defense, energy, aerospace, and logistics sectors; two additional projects were later added as the framework enabled new opportunities to emerge. Following completion of the Regional Investment Playbook, the Hampton Roads Alliance and its partners expanded the work into a comprehensive Hampton Roads Playbook, publicly launched on October 29th before an audience of approximately 600 regional leaders and industry stakeholders. The Playbook directly supports the Growth & Diversification Plan by prioritizing innovation within key industry clusters and outlining strategies to close workforce and skills gaps through coordinated action.

KEY OUTCOMES & PERFORMANCE METRICS

The Regional Investment Playbook, developed by Bruce Katz and New Localism Associates, was completed in summer 2025 and presented at the Alliance's mid-year event in June. Following stakeholder feedback, the Alliance expanded the narrative and analysis into the comprehensive Hampton Roads Playbook, and a dedicated website (HamptonRoadsPlaybook.com) was launched to provide public access to the full suite of materials — including Bruce Katz's complete report, the Alliance-generated Playbook, and supporting resources. All materials were formally released at the October 29th launch event, which drew nearly 600 attendees. The project produced the region's first unified economic strategy built around its core strengths in Defense, Energy, Aerospace, and Logistics (the DEAL Framework) and delivered eight transformative, implementation-ready projects aligning workforce, innovation, infrastructure, and supply-chain priorities across all 15 localities.

SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE OUTLOOK

The work completed through this planning grant provides the Alliance and its partners with a long-term, measurable framework to implement the regional Playbook strategy at scale. The Alliance intends to pursue a GO Virginia per capita implementation grant to support continued progress, with a particular focus on advancing the eight transformative projects and strengthening the targeted industries identified in the DEAL Framework. Each project team was required to identify a preliminary capital stack to support execution within the designated timeline, positioning them for future investment and grant opportunities. The Alliance is also working closely with the Hampton Roads Workforce Council to identify supplemental funding sources — federal, state, philanthropic, and industry-supported grants.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

Key lessons from the Playbook's development reinforce the importance of structuring collaboration deliberately, integrating sectors rather than treating them separately, and embedding workforce solutions into every initiative. The project also confirmed that shovel-ready sites and disciplined governance are essential to attracting investment and maintaining momentum.

Advancing Commercialization and Innovation Opportunities at Jefferson Lab

Region 5 • \$100K • Hampton Roads Executive Roundtable • Project Director: Drew Lumpkin

PROJECT BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

This planning grant was designed to help Hampton Roads capitalize on Jefferson Lab's High Performance Data Facility (HPDF) and strengthen one of Region 5's priority clusters: Cybersecurity, Data Analytics, and Modeling & Simulation. The project responded directly to the region's Growth and Diversification Plan by advancing cluster scale-up, entrepreneurship and innovation, and collaboration around high-wage, traded-sector growth opportunities tied to federal alignment, digital infrastructure, and commercialization. The region had valuable research assets but needed stronger commercialization pathways, a more cohesive innovation strategy, and better alignment across institutions to translate Jefferson Lab's nationally significant data and computing assets into broader economic value for Hampton Roads.

PROJECT IMPACT & APPROACH

The project addressed a core regional opportunity identified in the Region 5 Growth and Diversification Plan: using major federal and research assets to accelerate innovation-driven economic diversification in high-wage traded-sector clusters. By assessing how Jefferson Lab's HPDF could support applied research, industry engagement, commercialization, and university collaboration, the project advanced Region 5's cluster scale-up and entrepreneurship/innovation priorities. The resulting action plan gave the region a more concrete framework for translating Jefferson Lab's nationally significant data and computing asset into broader economic value for Hampton Roads, especially within data science, AI, and related target industries.

KEY OUTCOMES & PERFORMANCE METRICS

The principal product of the grant was a final strategic action plan for leveraging Jefferson Lab's HPDF to grow Hampton Roads' innovation-based economy in data science, AI, and high-performance computing. The report included benchmarking of leading national laboratories and high-performance computing centers, a quantitative and stakeholder-based situational assessment of the region, and a nine-part implementation framework organized around collaboration, innovation, and talent. The analysis documented key regional assets and market indicators including a base of 60+ companies active in tech convergence fields, 19 venture-capital-backed companies, 27 regional SBIR/STTR award recipients, and 21 companies each generating more than 100 unique tech jobs — establishing the quantitative foundation for targeted cluster investment.

SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE OUTLOOK

The planning grant was not designed to generate program income; its primary purpose was to produce the analysis and action framework needed to support follow-on implementation. The final report recommends sustaining momentum by embedding specific action steps within existing regional organizations, identifying dedicated coordinators for implementation activities, organizing an industry-led regional steering group, and pursuing future GO Virginia and other matching funds to support program development. Because the project clarified both the opportunity and pathway, it demonstrated that work is needed to advance commercialization, research partnerships, internships, workforce upskilling, and innovation districts around Jefferson Lab.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

This project confirmed that Hampton Roads has a credible platform for growth in data science, AI, and high-performance computing, anchored by Jefferson Lab's HPDF and reinforced by Region 5's Growth and Diversification Plan's prioritizations. It reinforced a key regional lesson: strong underlying assets are not enough on their own. To generate a durable economic impact, the region must improve commercialization pathways, strengthen cross-institutional collaboration, connect research assets more directly to industry demand, and align implementation with broader strategies.

Blue Mountain RIFA Feasibility Study

Region 8 • \$79K • Shenandoah Valley Partnership • Project Director: Jay A. Langston, Ph.D.

PROJECT BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

Region 8 needed a third-party determination of the viability of a premier large business site — the Blue Mountain site — that could serve as the foundation of a Regional Industrial Facility Authority (RIFA) and provide an excellent return on investment for the funds spent to develop the site and create the Authority. With increasingly competitive advanced manufacturing and large-employer prospects requiring shovel-ready megasites, Region 8 lacked an independent, defensible analysis to confirm whether the Blue Mountain site was suited to the region’s economic targets and worth the substantial public investment a RIFA-backed development would require.

PROJECT IMPACT & APPROACH

The RIFA Feasibility Study confirmed that work on the Blue Mountain site was both appropriate for the region’s business targets as outlined in the Economic Diversification Plan and could deliver very high fiscal impact from a future economic development project on the site. The study also recommended moving forward with the creation of the RIFA itself — a governance structure that inherently mandates cooperation among multiple localities and can benefit those localities that cannot actively participate in economic development projects on their own. This dual recommendation — site viability plus governance pathway — advanced GO Virginia’s core priorities of regional collaboration and capital investment in shovel-ready industrial inventory.

KEY OUTCOMES & PERFORMANCE METRICS

Both contracted performance measures were achieved at 100%: the Planning Grant deliverable (1 of 1) and the Economic Impact analysis (1 of 1). The Advanced Manufacturing Operations impact analysis for the Shenandoah Valley region projected the potential economic impact from the future Regional Commerce Park site at more than \$2 billion in investment and approximately 4,000 jobs across direct, indirect, and induced effects. These projections establish the site as one of the most consequential development opportunities in the region and provide the quantitative foundation localities need to commit to the RIFA structure and the public investment required to bring the site to readiness.

SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE OUTLOOK

The Shenandoah Valley Partnership (SVP) is currently working with the localities to formally create the RIFA. The follow-on Enhanced Due Diligence project will be completed by SVP — or by the RIFA itself once it is established — to seek grant funding from the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program for construction on Phase A of the Shenandoah Regional Commerce Park site. The pathway from feasibility study to due diligence to construction funding is well-mapped and underway, which positions the project for sustained progress without additional GO Virginia planning support. The project did not generate income; the value captured is the validated \$2B+ investment thesis and the governance framework now in formation to capture it.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

Working with the Region 8 Executive Director from concept through grant submission was beneficial for the project’s success, and reaching out to the DHCD representative early for feedback was crucial in making the application stronger. Using the positive results of a previous related project provided a level of comfort to the Region 8 Grant Review Committee and the Region 8 Council during evaluation. Collaboration and backing of the localities was essential. The clearest replication recommendation: site-feasibility planning grants benefit enormously from a track record of prior successful regional work — the credibility earned on previous projects compresses review timelines and unlocks more confident locality buy-in than a first-time pitch could.