



REGION 2

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

COLLABORATION
INSPIRATION
SUCCESS

April 20, 2026

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Stories of Impact

Hear stories of GO Virginia's impact

GO Virginia Region 2 staff have launched a video series, titled "Stories of Impact," that showcases how completed GO Virginia grants are driving economic growth across the New River Valley, Roanoke-Alleghany, and Greater Lynchburg regions.

The first two videos in the series spotlight:

- [Expanding welding training capacity in the Roanoke Valley](#) — GO Virginia funding helped the Botetourt County Economic Development Authority and partners install 10 new welding booths at the Botetourt Technical Education Center in Fincastle, increasing access to hands-on workforce training.
 - [Building a regional health sciences pipeline](#) — The Blue Ridge Partnership for Health Science Careers strengthened its organizational infrastructure through improved data collection, progress reporting, and information-sharing systems.
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Next submission deadline: June 26, 2026 by 5 p.m

Effective July 1, 2026, there will be \$1.5 million available for Region 2 grants, with up to \$250,000 for planning grants.

Please contact Jemma Sabokrouh at jemma@vt.edu if interested in applying for funding.

Mark your calendar for upcoming meetings

August 5, 2026: GO Virginia Region 2 Council Meeting, Virtual

GO Virginia State Board approves Region 2 projects

RICHMOND—On March 24, 2026, the GO Virginia State Board approved the following Region 2 projects aimed at growing the regional economy.

Randolph College Mechanical Engineering Program Expansion in Greater Lynchburg

Randolph College will implement a comprehensive training program to support regional company needs, emphasizing mechanical design, materials behavior, automation, and applied manufacturing systems.

The project will develop two new laboratories: a mechanical and materials engineering lab and a workforce training and applied manufacturing lab. The labs will house advanced equipment including

mechanical testing systems, composite processing tools, industrial grade additive manufacturing systems, and high-performance computing resources.

The GO Virginia board approved a total of \$686,340 in state funds for the project, which is leveraging \$667,167 in non-state sources.

[Learn more about the Randolph College Mechanical Engineering Program.](#)

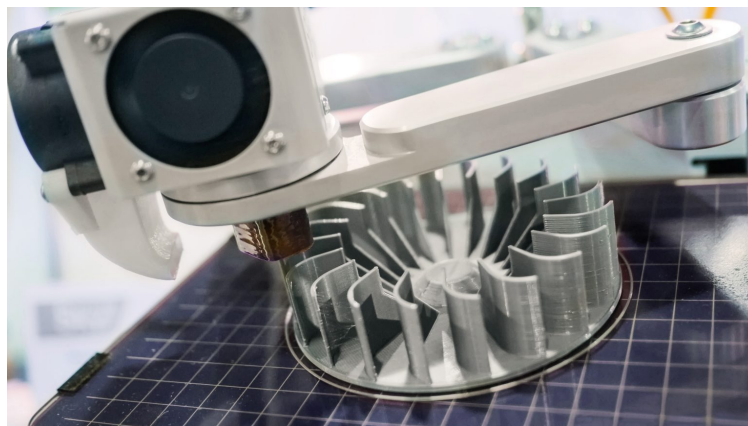


New River Valley Regional Commission AM2 Initiative to Grow Advanced Manufacturing in Regions 2 & 3

The New River Valley Regional Commission will use four strategies to create agile, resilient, and affordable solutions for advanced manufacturing with a focus on growing the regional market share in additive manufacturing and advanced materials (AM2) production. The project is supported by partners from across GO Virginia Regions 2 and 3, including the Institute for Advanced Learning & Research, Onward NRV, Roanoke Blacksburg Innovation Alliance, Southern Virginia Regional Alliance, the Virginia Tech Center for Economic and Community Engagement, and Virginia Tech MADE: Center for Advanced Manufacturing.

The GO Virginia board approved a total of \$4,230,160 in state funds for the project, which is leveraging \$2,115,080 in non-state sources.

[Learn more about the AM2 initiative.](#)



Welcome! Three new members join the GO Virginia Region 2 council

The following three council members have joined the GO Virginia Region 2 council.

[Daniel DiMarco](#)

Principal Architect, AECOM
Roanoke

[Dr. Frank Shushok, Jr.](#)

President, Roanoke College
Roanoke

[James "Jim" Richards](#)

Attorney, PLDR Law
Lynchburg

Meet GO Virginia Region 2 Grantees: Heather Fay and Anthony Grafsky, Ready for Anything: Strategies for Business Continuity and Sustainability in the NRV



Heather Fay



Anthony Grafsky

Heather Fay serves as the executive regional administrator and the director of the [Greater Roanoke and New River Valley Small Business Development Center \(SBDC\)](#). She has worked in higher education and economic development over the course of her career, holding roles in admissions for several public and private universities and serving as the director of events and member engagement for the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council and the assistant director for the Botetourt County Department of Economic Development. She has a bachelor's degree in business from William Woods University and a Master of Higher Education with a certification in enrollment management from Capella University.

Anthony Graftsky serves as a business advisor for the Greater Roanoke and New River Valley SBDC. Prior to joining the SBDC, he worked in the retail service industry and healthcare in strategic planning, marketing, and operational roles. He earned a bachelor's degree in economics and a Master of Business Administration from Ohio State University.

Their GO Virginia Region 2 project will build capacity to support existing businesses, mitigate risks, and foster long-term economic resilience through GO Virginia's Helene Business Recovery Initiative. The program's offerings – which include workshops, GrowthWheel peer groups, and one-on-one advising – are available at no cost to businesses.

1. What is your favorite part of your roles at the Greater Roanoke & New River Valley Small Business Development Center?

HF: My favorite part of my role is working directly with small business owners and being part of their journey from early ideas to growth, management, and even transition or exit. Every business is different, and I enjoy helping owners navigate challenges in a way that aligns with their goals.

Since stepping into the director role last summer, I have also gained a deeper appreciation for the collaborative side of our work. Initiatives like the Helene Business Recovery Initiative have created opportunities to partner more intentionally across the New River Valley region and explore new ways to support small businesses together.

What makes this work even more meaningful is the impact we're able to have. Through funding from the U.S. Small Business Administration, matched locally, we're able to provide no-cost, one-on-one advising to the businesses we serve. As part of the Virginia SBDC network, we work collaboratively to strengthen small businesses, which are truly the backbone of our communities. Every \$1 invested in the SBDC generates a \$5 return, amplifying the impact of small businesses in our communities.

AG: My favorite part is every day is a little bit different. Our clients come from all sorts of backgrounds. You have to be creative with these businesses because they're so resource constrained. A lot of our businesses are micro businesses. They have few, if any, employees. The business owners wear a lot of hats, and our resources can help them prioritize and focus their energy into activities that add the most value to their business.

2. What inspired your GO Virginia project?

HF: One of our guiding principles is doing the right thing for the right people at the right time. When we learned about the opportunity through GO Virginia focused on hurricane disaster recovery in the New River Valley, we knew it aligned closely with the needs we were seeing in our region.

You never know when a disaster will occur, so we wanted to be proactive by creating tools and resources that help business owners prepare, not just respond. At the same time, this project allowed us to expand our capacity in the New River Valley.

Anthony Graftsky has been instrumental in building relationships and strengthening connections across the region, which has helped ensure this work is both relevant and impactful for the businesses we serve.

AG: Last year, we attended the annual training event hosted by [America's SBDC](#). We both attended a session about another SBDC office's disaster recovery efforts following tornadoes in their region. It was inspiring to hear the stories of how essential these SBDCs became in helping small businesses make

some sense of all the chaos and – for those businesses that were able to continue – emerge from these natural disasters and be in a better position to sustain future events.

3. What have you accomplished with the project so far?

HF: So far, we have made strong progress in building both the foundation and the programming for this initiative.

We have partnered with regional stakeholders to launch the New River Valley Small Business Collective. Kevin Byrd, executive director of the New River Valley Regional Commission, described this group as “small business first responders,” which really captures the intent. It’s a network of trusted, on-the-ground partners who live and work in these communities and can quickly share information and resources with businesses, in times of crisis and during day-to-day work. This group has also been incredibly valuable in helping us think through how we communicate more effectively with business owners across the region.

We have also begun developing our “Ready for Anything” program. We have finalized the workshop topics and are actively building out the content. These sessions will focus on continuity planning and communications, financial resilience, disaster preparedness, risk management, cybersecurity, and marketing. We will offer three workshops this year and three next year, and business owners can attend any or all sessions. Each workshop will be recorded so participants can revisit the content as needed. The desired outcome is for business owners to develop a practical, adaptable continuity plan they can use as their business evolves.

In addition, we are starting recruitment for our [GrowthWheel](#) peer groups. We will host and facilitate two groups, supporting up to 20 businesses total and providing time for business owners to work on their businesses, opportunities and challenges, share strategies, and learn from one another in a structured environment.

The [Helene Business Recovery Initiative](#) is a special funding opportunity created to respond to the effects of Hurricane Helene. The initiative offers funding for business technical assistance for GO Virginia Regions 1, 2, and 3, with relaxed program requirements and is available through June 30, 2026.

[Read more about Heather Fay and Anthony Grafsky.](#)

Meet a GO Virginia Region 2 Council Member: Daniel DiMarco, AECOM



Daniel DiMarco serves as a principal architect at global infrastructure firm AECOM, leading its health and science market. He has worked at AECOM for 22 years. He holds a bachelor's degree in history and a master's degree in architecture, both from Virginia Tech.

1. What made you interested in studying architecture?

Growing up in Alexandria, I was surrounded by beautiful architecture in the Washington D.C. area. My family had a hardware store and sheet metal fabrication business in upstate New York and Syracuse, so my interest in the field is generational. During undergrad, I worked in construction in the summers. In the four years I took off between my degrees, I did construction full time. Architecture has always been of interest to me. I enjoy the creative process, being able to design a project, and then participate in the construction process. With a career in architecture, I get to have the best of both worlds.

2. Over the course of your career, what is your proudest accomplishment?

When I graduated with my master's, I moved west and practiced architecture in Denver for 10 years, and that's where I met my wife. We moved to Roanoke after our son was born. My son will be graduating from Virginia Tech this spring in chemical engineering, and that is certainly a proud achievement for our family. He's an incredible student and emerging researcher in areas that will benefit others, and our environment.

One of the first things I was able to work on with AECOM when I moved to Roanoke was final revisions to the master plan for the Riverside Center, which had been a brownfield site in Roanoke. I was the lead project architect on all the buildings that were constructed at the site, including Riverside 1 (interior fit outs), 2, 3, and 4. For Riverside 3, we toured the Mayo Clinic with Carilion leadership, and we studied their buildings to bring back some of the ideas they had, which helped us to make a healthcare environment that was adaptable and flexible, serving as a multi-specialty medical hub for the region.

I'm proud of the work I did on this project, because – and this is where it connects to my interest in GO Virginia – I enjoy seeing the transformational power that facilities can have if they're done the right way in a good location. The decision to build this project between downtown and Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital has been incredible for the city, and the region.

3. What is your favorite part of working at AECOM?

At AECOM, I get to work on projects all over the world. This always leads to appreciating how special Roanoke is. I'm currently working on a new school of medicine in Lima, Peru. It will be similar to what we've done here in Roanoke with the VTC School of Medicine, being based on a patient-based learning (PBL) model. Though it will not be located on a brownfield site, it involves urban redevelopment. I recently worked at the University of Michigan as well as parts of Europe and Asia. I get to see a lot of places, but I also get to see how vibrant Roanoke has become.

4. What projects are you currently working on at AECOM?

We're fortunate to be partners with Virginia Tech. We've just been awarded a contract to design a new dining services facility for Virginia Tech, which will be located in the Corporate Research Center and serve as a food production center for their dining halls. As an architect, I enjoy adaptive reuse of older buildings as well as designing new buildings. We recently completed the Roanoke Biotech Lab, which is now the RoVa Labs on Jefferson Street in Roanoke. We're also working at James Madison University. We did a project for JMU in their historic core to upgrade a former residence hall that had been converted to offices in the 1970s. We added classroom space, additional office space, and flexible learning space.

5. What do you enjoy most about living in GO Virginia Region 2?

Since traveling around and seeing other parts of the country and world, I've realized how special Region 2 is. It has unique qualities geographically, and it's a great place to raise a family. We don't have the kind of traffic and congestion you see around D.C. or other large hubs, yet we can get to big cities quickly.

The access to nature we have here is incredible. Since COVID, I've noticed in our neighborhood, there are more people moving here who work remotely; they can take advantage of the region's natural assets on the weekend, whether they are biking or hiking or just enjoying a less hectic lifestyle. There is also an opportunity for future growth here, in areas such as healthcare, research, and advanced manufacturing.

[Read more about Daniel DiMarco.](#)

Region 2 in the news

[\\$4.2 million grant strengthens region's advanced manufacturing future](#) (Virginia Tech News)

[Cardinal Commerce Notes: Credit union steps into NRV, Bobe to begin new role in Danville, Randolph College mechanical engineering to get a boost, loan to help restart Henry County sawmill](#) (Cardinal News)

[Grant to boost advanced manufacturing in Virginia](#) (AdvancedManufacturing.org)

[New lab removes barrier between research and patient care](#) (Virginia Tech News)

[Randolph College receives GO Virginia grant to expand mechanical engineering program](#) (Lynchburg News and Advance)

[Randolph receives Go Virginia grant to expand mechanical engineering program](#) (Randolph College News)

[Tech Briefs: Grant money flows to 3D manufacturing in Southwest, Southside](#) (Cardinal News)

[Torc Supports GO Virginia-Funded Effort to Align Autonomous Vehicle Workforce Training Across the Commonwealth](#) (Business Wire)