



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

GO Virginia Region 2

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GO Virginia Region 2 joins multiregional initiative to make Virginia a biotechnology hub

RICHMOND — GO Virginia will invest \$14.3 million to support Project VITAL: Virginia Innovations and Technology Advancements in Life Sciences, a multiregional initiative to establish new research cores, expand workforce development programs, and create a collaborative network connecting academic institutions with industry partners across the commonwealth's biotechnology corridor.

Region 2 consists of the cities of Covington, Lynchburg, Radford, Roanoke, and Salem and the counties of Alleghany, Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Botetourt, Campbell, Craig, Floyd, Franklin, Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski, and Roanoke.

Project VITAL ([Roanoke Blacksburg Innovation Alliance](#))

Virginia has the potential to become a thriving life sciences innovation and commercialization hub. In Region 2, Virginia Tech and Carilion Clinic are already at the forefront of medical devices, oncology therapeutic research, and neurotechnology.

Project VITAL will build on those critical assets by developing a stronger talent pipeline for the sector, bolstering the creation and protection of intellectual property, organizing and strengthening access to capital, and encouraging collaboration within pivotal biotech hubs throughout the state over a three-year period.

The initiative follows a \$90 million state investment in research institutions announced in late 2023.

“This investment represents a pivotal moment for Virginia’s biotechnology ecosystem,” said Erin Burcham, president of the Roanoke Blacksburg Innovation Alliance (RBIA), a regional organization focused on growing the technology and biotechnology sectors in Region 2. “Project VITAL will provide emerging companies in this region with access to advanced laboratory facilities, shared equipment, and specialized programming designed to support their growth and success. Funds will support talent recruitment, capital attraction, new startup programming, branding for the sector, and operations to maximize Virginia's economic potential in biosciences.”

Creating a total of 1,315 jobs over five years, Project VITAL is expected to lead to a total economic impact of \$40.8 million by supporting bioscience startups, including attracting top talent to the commonwealth, boosting research and development spending, and developing the future biosciences workforce. Progress will be tracked and shared using metrics of companies launched, compensation growth, research funding secured, internships offered, and venture growth indicators.

While RBIA will work closely with Virginia Tech and Carilion Clinic on the initiative in Region 2, it also will collaborate with similar efforts led by Virginia Commonwealth University and Activation Capital in Region 4 and the University of Virginia and CvilleBioHub in Region 9.

“The collaboration between the regions exemplifies the power of partnership in driving job creation and

fostering innovation. By working together, we are enhancing our economic landscape and setting a precedent for how collaborative efforts can lead to substantial growth and development in the bioscience sector,” said William E. Amos, chair of the Region 2 Council. “This award is a testament to public-private partnerships’ impact on our communities, the region, and the Commonwealth of Virginia.”

The funding will lend crucial enhancements to strengthen the innovation corridor in Southwest Virginia, including through a proof-of-concept program and support for innovation fellowships facilitated through [LAUNCH, the Center for New Ventures at Virginia Tech](#), both of which are specifically designed to encourage biomedical start-ups out of the university.

“At Virginia Tech, enterprising faculty and students are making discoveries and developing technology that offer foundations for the nation’s next great companies,” said Brandy Salmon, associate vice president for innovation and partnerships. “This program offers what is needed to ensure that the innovations in the university’s labs are moved into the commercial sector for human and economic impact.”

[Carilion Clinic Innovation](#) will establish a compliance resource for industry partners, higher education institutes, and health and life sciences startup companies across the three regions. Access to this resource will streamline the approval process, ensure compliance, and accelerate time-to-market for medical devices.

Carilion Clinic Innovation Director Aileen Helsel said Carilion’s innovation and human factors teams are excited to be partners in broadening the region’s biotech sector. “Carilion will transform GO Virginia’s support into building resources that guide medical device startups as they navigate federal regulations with the help of streamlined documentation and risk management and device testing and validation, making it possible to move the devices closer to helping us care for our patients,” Helsel said.

[Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine](#)’s faculty will offer human-centered design and informatics consultation for innovations, while at the [Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC](#), the initiative will expand and enhance the [Fralin Commercialization Fellows Program](#) to encourage entrepreneurship. And Virginia Western Community College, the Roanoke Blacksburg Technology Council, and the Blue Ridge Partnership Health Science Careers will work to boost the biotechnology talent pipeline in the region.

Michael Friedlander, vice president for health sciences and technology at Virginia Tech and executive director of FBRI, emphasized the initiative’s significance for advancing biomedical innovation.

“It has been very gratifying to see the substantial growth and cooperation between diverse organizations that has occurred in GO Virginia Region 2 over the last decade in the life and health sciences innovation and commercialization sectors,” Friedlander said. “We have come a long way, and are now well positioned to become a true destination for attracting talent and investment with all the necessary elements in place. From a globally recognized fundamental base of scientific discovery to the thriving health care enterprise and a committed innovation and business network, working together with local and state government and organizations such as RBIA to convene the stakeholders, Project VITAL will leverage all the elements of the biotechnology ecosystem to make the whole so much greater than the sum of its parts.”

GO Virginia is a statewide initiative designed to encourage Virginia’s economic growth through the creation of high-wage jobs. Virginia Tech’s Center for Economic and Community Engagement serves as Region 2’s support organization. For more information, please contact John Provo, jprovo@vt.edu.



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