



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

COLLABORATION
INSPIRATION
SUCCESS

April 9, 2025

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Next submission deadline: June 20, 2025 by 5 p.m

There is \$1.5 million available for Region 2 grants, with up to \$100,000 for planning grants.

[Apply on our website.](#)

Mark your calendar for upcoming meetings

April 16, 2025: GO Virginia Region 2 Executive Committee Meeting, 1-3 PM, 701A in the Roanoke Higher Education Center, 108 N Jefferson St, Roanoke, VA 24016

[Join webinar.](#)

Webinar ID: 890 0689 1337
Password: 953615

April 23, 2025: GO Virginia Region 2 Council Meeting, 1-3 PM, Fralin Biomedical Research Institute, Room G-101A/B, 4 Riverside Circle, Roanoke, Virginia, 24016

Join a GO Virginia industry workgroup: Shape the future of your industry



HELP GUIDE INVESTMENT IN REGION 2

GO Virginia Region 2
**2025 Growth and
Diversification Plan**
Industry Work Groups



Join our industry work groups to incorporate your insight and experience into our 2025 Growth & Diversification Plan. Work groups will include a quick review of our region and industry trends, a design-thinking exercise to brainstorm future opportunities for industry businesses, and an opportunity to prioritize strategies for future state funding.

Meet other industry, education, and community partners. Share your current and future needs. Help strengthen strategies and assets that drive growth, talent, and business success in our region. Join our GO Virginia Industry Work Groups—let's build the future together!

Register for a work group:

IT, Engineering Services, and Emerging Technologies

When: April 25, 2025, 1-3 PM

Where: Roanoke Higher Education Center, 108 Jefferson St, Roanoke, VA 24016

Register: <https://forms.office.com/r/92WHs0RPQz>

Life Sciences & Biotechnology

In partnership with Roanoke-Blacksburg Innovation Alliance and Roanoke Regional Partnership

When: May 9, 2025, 9-11 AM

Where: Roanoke Higher Education Center, 108 Jefferson Street Roanoke VA 24016

Register: <https://forms.office.com/r/5H9Ss24neW>

Manufacturing & Advanced Materials (2 sessions)

In partnership with Onward NRV

When: May 15, 2025, 3-5 PM

Where: 1900 Kraft Drive, Blacksburg, VA 24061 (Curiosity Conference Room)

In partnership with Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance

When: May 22, 2025, 1-3 PM

Where: Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance, 300 Lucado Pl, Lynchburg, VA 24504

Register: <https://forms.office.com/r/Lg6czqQ1Ld>

Please also share this invitation with industry leaders within your networks.

[Learn more about the work groups.](#)

Participate in the Blueprint Virginia 2035 regional tour for Region 2

BLUEPRINT VIRGINIA 2035

The Virginia Chamber Foundation invites you to play a pivotal role in shaping the Commonwealth's economic future by participating in the Blueprint Virginia 2035 Regional Tour.

As a respected industry and community leader, your voice and expertise are essential to the development of Blueprint Virginia 2035. By registering for the Regional Tour, you will gain access to the Blueprint Virginia 2035 survey, where your input will help inform policy priorities that directly impact your region and industry.

April 30, 2025: 11 AM-1 PM, Shenandoah Club, 24 Franklin Rd SE, Roanoke, VA 24011.

Register: <https://vachamber.com/event/blueprint-virginia-2035-regional-tour-region-2/>

May 7, 2025: 7:30-9:00 AM, Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance, 300 Lucado Pl., Lynchburg, VA 24504.

Register: <https://vachamber.com/event/blueprint-virginia-2035-regional-tour-region-2-2/>

Meet a GOVA Region 2 Grantee: Nicole Akers, Industry 4.0 for the Automated-Connected-Electrified (ACE) Workforce



Nicole Akers is the assistant director of research for the Virginia Tech College of Engineering. She is an army veteran and spent many years in social work before coming to Virginia Tech. She has a bachelor's degree in counseling from Bluefield University, a Master of Education from Liberty University, and is currently working on a Ph.D. in higher education administration at Virginia Tech.

1. What is your favorite part of working at Virginia Tech's College of Engineering?

Getting to see our engineers solve real-world problems.

2. What projects are you currently working on in the College of Engineering?

There is so much great work going on in the College of Engineering. I am supporting an incredible team of engineers and scientists working on a proposal to study the complex patterns of space weather in the Earth's upper atmosphere. Those weather patterns can cause disruptions in satellite communications, GPS signals, and even our electrical grid.

Recently, I co-submitted a project proposal to secure some ongoing funding for a program that prepares undergraduate students for graduate education. The program runs from April to December, and it offers students the opportunity to work closely with a writing coach. Students participate in group sessions and individual counseling to craft written components of the graduate student application as well as funding opportunity applications, such as fellowships.

It's a lot of fun, and it's been super successful. It has helped increase our admissions rate for the students.

3. What are some of the impacts the Industry 4.0 for the ACE Workforce has had on the region?

We have delivered sessions of Train the Trainer Module 1 in Roanoke, the New River Valley, Lynchburg, and Botetourt, reaching 21 companies in our region. We've got stellar participant feedback saying the lean manufacturing training – which looks at ways to reduce waste in the manufacturing process – was so helpful and

that additional training would be even more beneficial. We have modified our project plan and are going to be offering another lean session.

Also, we have reached over 140 students in Virginia through our middle school STEM outreach program.

4. How has the Industry 4.0 project helped to retain talent in the region?

This project provides professional development training in addition to hands-on manufacturing support. Through the Train the Trainer program, participants learned presentation and communication skills and how to understand change. We had folks in our sessions where this was the first time they had ever presented to an audience. They learned real professional development skills as well as technical skills from GENEDGE to then take back to their home companies. Companies are investing in their people through participation in this program, helping to retain talent in the region.

5. What are the next steps for the Industry 4.0 project?

We are so excited to be finishing the technical assessments for companies in the region. We have been reviewing feedback and working on implementation road maps. We're going to choose one or two technologies for companies to implement. In addition, we're also working on finalizing and delivering Module 2, which is focused on cybersecurity, quality in manufacturing, and technical communication.

[Read more about Nicole Akers.](#)

Meet a GO Virginia Region 2 Council Member: Nanci Hardwick, MELD Manufacturing and Aeroprobe Corporation



Nanci Hardwick has been an entrepreneur for over 20 years. She has a background in software design, aerospace avionics, and 3D printing.

She is CEO of MELD Manufacturing Corporation, MELD PrintWorks Corporation, and Aeroprobe Corporation.

Hardwick led MELD Manufacturing Corporation from a 3D metal printing concept to commercialization that has received several awards, including R&D 100's most disruptive new technology worldwide and the Edison award. MELD® has changed the scale of metal additive manufacturing with its solid-state printing process and holds over two dozen patents. The company's industrial MELD printers are capable of printing aluminum, magnesium, copper, titanium, steel, and more. Due to demand, a spin out company dedicated to making parts with the MELD technology was formed. MELD PrintWorks Corporation serves as a service bureau printing metal parts.

Aeroprobe Corporation, which developed the MELD technology, provides the aerospace industry with avionics and smart air data systems designed to improve safety and performance of unmanned aerial vehicles. Aeroprobe also designs, manufactures, and calibrates multi-hole probes used around the world for design validation.

1. What is your proudest accomplishment over the course of your career?

Successfully launching businesses and technologies.

Seeing ideas become reality and working with my team and customers to create solutions is exciting and something I'm proud of.

2. What made you interested in engineering?

Designing solutions for advanced or challenging problems. I love innovation, and I love helping people innovate.

3. What lessons have you learned from starting your companies?

Perseverance is required. I've learned not to give up, that failure is a part of the process and that people are a critical part of the solution. And I've learned to remember that it's fun.

4. What are some of the ways you would like to explore additive manufacturing in the future?

Within the MELD technology, the things I look forward to exploring next are utilizing MELD for applications that allow for recycled material to be reused as well as portability and manufacturing in space.

5. What do you like most about serving on the GO Virginia Region 2 council?

I love our region, and it's important to me to volunteer to help bolster our region's economic development. Learning about the initiatives of people and organizations to make our region better inspires me. Serving on the Region 2 council is where I can witness and support innovation. Virginia has many great programs to support communities by growing businesses in them. GO Virginia is another great example of that investment in communities.

[Read more about Nanci Hardwick.](#)

Region 2 in the news

[Group works to highlight high-tech manufacturing in New River Valley, Danville regions](#) (Cardinal News)

[NRV Poised to Benefit from Project VITAL](#) (Onward New River Valley)

[Statewide initiative aims to position Virginia as a leading hub for biotechnology innovation](#) (Virginia Tech News)

[Virginia Tech leads \\$4.9M biotech initiative to accelerate medical breakthroughs](#) (13 News Now)
