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Save the Dates for Upcoming GO Virginia Region 2 Council Meetings

August 2, 2022: GO Virginia Region 2 Full Council Meeting, 1 PM - 3 PM

November 2, 2022: GO Virginia Region 2 Full Council Meeting, 1 PM - 3 PM

Next Submission Deadline: July 5, 2022 by 5 p.m.

There are \$940,133 in implementation grant funds available for Region 2 focused projects, and additional statewide competitive funds are available for multi-regional proposals. There is \$130,000 available for Enhanced Capacity Building (planning) projects. Relaxed match requirements of 2:1 with a waived local match remain in effect; however, local participation is still required.

GO Virginia State Board Approves New Project

On June 14, 2022, the GO Virginia State Board announced its approval of one new Region 2 project aimed at growing the regional economy.

Board Approved Project: Workforce and Entrepreneurship Initiatives in a Regional Makerspace (Vector Space)

Vector Space, a community makerspace located in Downtown Lynchburg, will work to employ participants in their Women in Machining Program in entry level manufacturing jobs. Participants in the machining program will have the opportunity to be promoted to a higher placement as they continue their machinist education at Central Virginia Community College or through on-the-job training. Vector Space will also support entrepreneurs through Co.Starters, a ten week entrepreneur training program, with recruitment efforts focused on micro-manufacturers and technology startups. The project seeks to grow Vector Space's membership with a goal to onboard sixty new members and aims to increase the number of youth that participate in making activities through after school programs for high school students and partnerships with local colleges and universities. The GO Virginia Board approved a total of \$324,000 in state funds for the project.

Making an Impact: Virginia Tech's Developing a Destination for Talent Project



Introduction

The Developing a Destination for Talent project, managed by Virginia Tech's Associate Vice Provost Catherine Amelink, wrapped up in 2022, after two years of working to retain talent in the region. The project sought to connect an untapped pool of Virginia Tech undergraduates to regional employers and also provided faculty members with networking opportunities. The Virginia Tech Office of the Vice Provost for Learning Systems Innovation and Effectiveness, inclusive of the Career and Professional Development Office, coordinated with local businesses to share student internship opportunities and provide students with appropriate training materials and general work etiquette needed to succeed in the workforce.

Project activities included facilitating internships in local companies for students, advancing project-based work opportunities that would bring real-world challenges into the classroom, and providing exposure to live, work, and play opportunities in the local region for student interns.

"Through this project, we learned what students are looking for, what formats to reach them through, and how they are willing to engage with our local employers," Catherine Amelink said.

Achievements

- Developing a Destination for Talent provided **217+** internships over the course of two years. In addition to the 217 internships facilitated through GO Virginia funds, an additional **102** interns were funded using employer funding exclusively.
- **52** new local employers posted jobs for Virginia Tech students that had not previously engaged with Virginia Tech in the past.
- Interns had the opportunity to apply for **150** new jobs that were created. **Eight** of the employers were able to hire interns into full-time positions that were advertised.
- **15** projects were funded that allowed for employer, faculty, student engagement on real world problems affecting employers in the local region.

"The student interns who got to work with our local employers said they found them to have engaging and supportive work environments. They really liked the ability to apply content knowledge in new and diverse settings," Amelink said. "The students also said they desired to be part of a larger work-life culture. They wanted to know how they could connect with other young professionals in the region. Through our grant, we did do some of that kind of networking, which the students enjoyed and wanted more of. Supporting a work-life culture would be a big piece of what we would need to do in terms of talent retention in the region."

Highlights

Job fairs for local employers and networking sessions with faculty helped to develop project-based work opportunities in the region.

Engaging online professional development and networking sessions were used to expose student interns to live, work, play opportunities in the region. Presenters included representatives from the tourism offices in local governments, the Chamber of Commerce, members of regional young professional organizations such as Blacksburg Young Professionals, and other individuals that graduated and started careers in the local region.

To share local internship and job opportunities on campuses, the project used broad (Handshake software) and targeted (faculty to student) distribution channels.

Virginia Tech collaborated with Onward NRV and Roanoke Regional Partnership to leverage existing summer intern leadership programs by collaborating with local employers to help them understand how the programs were working together for talent development and retention.

Outcomes

The project was focused on building relationships with companies that did not have existing deep relationships with Virginia Tech. It helped employers understand what's needed for a quality internship experience and led to employer supported internship programs as well as the hiring of intern supervisors.

The project also developed and piloted a project-to-internship model, which exposed students to local employers through project-based work and gave them the opportunity to intern with the company.

The project identified new ways to reach potential interns who would be better suited to local employers and highlighted additional infrastructure needed at Virginia Tech and other institutions to connect employers with talent.

The project work yielded additional grant opportunities and research collaborations.

"We need to connect employers with talent, making sure our faculty are letting students know about local employers. Students really value faculty members' input," said Amelink.

Meet a GOVA Region 2 Grantee: Laura Hamilton, Future Centers Expansion Project



1. What was one lesson you learned from college?

Being flexible and building relationships. Professors are in the roles they're in because they love sharing knowledge. Building a relationship with somebody who wants to share that kind of knowledge is so special. For more shy and introverted students, it can be a long road learning that lesson, but they're always so glad when they do.

2. What do you like most about your job as executive director of Lynchburg Beacon of Hope?

I love getting to watch students launch to their next place. We have so many different kinds of students that come from different places here in Lynchburg. For the last ten years, I've seen that students rarely have a linear pathway. A lot of the times the pathways are squiggly, and it's really special to see kids pop out of the squiggles and launch into the real world successfully. I've enjoyed seeing them figure out how to navigate their own challenges and then come back to help other students and pay it forward.

3. Can you describe what the Future Centers are, for those who may not know?

The Future Centers are privately funded spaces within the walls of our high schools. We have two in Lynchburg, one in each of our public schools. They serve as a hub for anything a student would do after high school. We like to think of them as an urgent care facility for your future, where you don't even need a diagnosis to come in. You can drop by for 15 minutes and either get a prescription that lays out your next steps, or make an appointment to come back. We work alongside our school counselors and administrators to assist students with college applications, the FAFSA, SAT prep, college board exams, and more. We also help students think about what they're good at and what their assets are through career inventories.

4. What are a few of the ways the Future Centers have helped students?

The Future Centers have evolved over the last ten years. For the first year, the Future Centers focused on helping seniors navigate their final year of high school.

In the second year, we did all kinds of work with students in grades 9-12 and families in the community centers.

Within a year, we recognized middle school is a place where a lot of students make decisions that can affect their future, whether it's not doing well on classes that count toward their high school GPA, or making behavioral decisions that might negatively impact them. To tackle this problem, we created a range of programs in the middle schools, and one of these is a college symposium where every year, 8th graders get to visit a college campus.

In 2019, we launched the Stay Close, Go Far Scholarship, which is the first Promise program in Virginia. With this program, we raised enough private money so every student who graduates from Lynchburg City Schools can either go to community college for free or receive an \$8,000 scholarship to attend one of our local partner colleges.

A scholarship is great, but the Future Centers help shepherd students through the application process, which is by far the most important part of what they do – helping to solve problems.

5. What inspired the Future Centers Expansion GO Virginia project?

We had initially operated the Future Centers exclusively in the city of Lynchburg. The project was designed to help expand opportunity for Lynchburg City School kids and we kept finding success. The program caught the attention of people across the state, and we ended up talking to some folks in Richmond. We believe all students should benefit from this kind of opportunity and we recognize kids all over the state need help. We helped Richmond get started with the Future Centers back in 2015, and some of the folks connected with the GO Virginia council heard about it and suggested adopting the Future Centers model for all county schools. We thought we could help save communities years of trial and error and share what we've learned from the process. Through this project, we are testing what we've learned in Lynchburg and figuring out what works in places with different demographics.

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

We have worked to develop the Future Centers with superintendents in Lynchburg, Amherst County, and Altavista. All three of our local Future Center models are funded differently and operate differently, so we're able to learn what works and what doesn't. What we are seeing at the initial outset is it doesn't matter where our students come from or whether they're first generation or not: kids and families need a lot of help in navigating what comes next after high school.

We've learned a nonprofit partner is a key ingredient at each of the sites, because there are so many discretionary items including field trips to college campuses and mini grant programs that help pay for an extra SAT or a residential deposit. We've also learned it's essential to get involved early with a strategic plan and work to understand the DNA of the community you're in. We needed to put each community's superintendent, principal, director of school counseling, and Future Center director in the same room, and make sure everyone was on the same page when we started.

Our final product will be a playbook, and we're still deciding what it will look like. We're thinking it could function as a 'choose your own adventure' kind of playbook, that is malleable for whatever the community needs. There's a lot of diversity in our region, so it's going to be fun to see what can work in places.

7. What is your favorite part of being a GO Virginia grantee?

GO Virginia has provided an incredible support structure. We love you guys down in Blacksburg, from Elli Travis who came down and ran these amazing evaluation workshops for us, to the team working on keeping us up to date on the grants and shepherding us through the reimbursement process. All of the logistics of granting have been easy. But the best part is the GO Virginia team on the Region 2 council, who jumped in feet first, believed in what we were talking about, and gave us the wings to try to figure it out.

8. What advice would you give to a student who wasn't sure what they wanted to do for a career?

All Virginia colleges have incredible career development resources, so start there to discover your assets. The earlier you get started, the better. Very few of us know what we want to be when we grow up. And I'm not even sure I know what I want to be when I grow up. So be open to the experiences. We look at a lot of asset mapping, and we encourage our students to explore, so don't be afraid to try something. At the very least, you're going to learn what you don't like. That's part of why we launched the Stay Close, Go Far scholarship because we believe everybody should have the opportunity to go to college if they want to. Cost should not be a barrier that stops a student from exploring how far they can go.

9. What hobbies do you like to do in your spare time?

I'm a private pilot; I fly airplanes for fun. I got my private pilot's license about 22 years ago. It's the fastest, most fun, utilitarian hobby you can get, so my family and I fly a lot. I'm a big snowboarder and cross-country skier. I've got three awesome children and a great husband, so we are chasing kids to a lot of sporting events these days. I also referee and coach lacrosse.

10. If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go?

I would love to go to Australia or New Zealand. I have never been on that side of the world. I hear you can see every possible temperate zone in the country of New Zealand in one trip. I think that would be a really cool place to visit.

Meet a GOVA Region 2 Council Member: Fourd Kemper, Woods Rogers Attorneys at Law



1. What was your first job and what did it teach you?

My first job was mowing lawns and working on a cattle farm as a teenager. I learned the importance of manual labor and having to show up early for work.

2. What is your favorite part of your job at Woods Rogers?

Helping clients plan for success, trying to avoid legal issues on the front end and then, of course, problem-solving when issues do arise.

3. How would you describe your leadership style?

Servant leadership. I look at a leadership role as a way to help the people you're serving.

4. What have you learned from being on the GOVA Region 2 council?

I'm very impressed by how the different government organizations and institutional leaders are cooperating and working together toward a common goal. That is something I have observed in my time on the council and my hope is to be able to help more actively.

5. Can you talk about why a program like GO Virginia is important for community and economic development?

There's a great opportunity, particularly in today's economy where there's not enough workers, for more workforce development. GO Virginia has done a lot of work to help institutions and organizations in our region place people in quality jobs they like. Also, we have an incredible amount of government funded research in the region. GO Virginia can assist efforts focused on supporting entrepreneurs and scientists who want to spin off businesses from the government funded research.

6. What is one of your favorite parts of living in GO Virginia Region 2?

The combination of living in the mountains—having the outdoors so accessible—while having a cool downtown and affordable housing; to me, that's a great and very special match.

7. What are some of the similarities between your role at Woods Rogers and your work on the Region 2 council?

As a business lawyer, I help startup companies get underway and plan for success, which fits in well with what we're trying to accomplish in our region. I work with a lot of spin-off and small technology companies and have good visibility regarding the challenges they may face in terms of spinning off, getting funded, and growing their business.

8. What do you look forward to seeing GO Virginia Region 2 do more of in the future?

I'm very excited about the work some of these community colleges are doing, in helping match people with quality job opportunities. It's also important to work hard to accelerate and accentuate the strengths we already have. I'm a pretty big believer in getting the word out about our community nationwide as a place with awesome outdoors, tons of universities, great downtowns, relatively affordable housing and an incredible and surprising amount of funded research.

9. What activities or hobbies do you like to do in your spare time?

I like to ski, and I've coached a lot of youth lacrosse.

10. What is your favorite place to travel?

Bath County, which is just one county away from Region 2! I like to inner-tube on the Cowpasture River, and going to the Homestead is pretty fun too.