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Next submission deadline: September 19, 2025 by 5 p.m

There is \$505,788 available for Region 2 grants, with up to \$100,000 for planning grants.

[Apply on our website.](#)

Mark your calendar for upcoming meetings

July 16, 2025: GO Virginia Region 2 Executive Committee Meeting, 1-3 PM, Virtual

July 24, 2025: GO Virginia Region 2 Council Meeting, 1-3 PM, Virtual

GO Virginia State Board approves Region 2 project

RICHMOND—The GO Virginia State Board announced its approval of a new Region 2 project aimed at growing the regional economy.

Board Approved Project:

Region 2 GO TEC Launch in the New River Valley and Roanoke County

Montgomery County Public Schools will lead an effort to expand the proven GO TEC® (Great Opportunities in Technology and Engineering Careers) initiative into six school districts in Region 2, located in Montgomery County, City of Radford, Giles County, Pulaski County, and Roanoke County.

The GO TEC Career Connections labs will be established in strategic middle school locations, directly aligning educational pathways with the region's in-demand industries. These labs will serve as hubs for hands-on, industry-relevant learning, engaging students at a pivotal stage in their academic development. Specifically, the labs will be located at Christiansburg Middle School (Montgomery County), Dalton Intermediate School (City of Radford), Hidden Valley Middle School (Roanoke County), Narrows High School (Giles County), Pulaski County Middle School (Pulaski County), and William Byrd Middle School (Roanoke County).

The labs will introduce students to in-demand occupations and more than two dozen careers, effectively strengthening the region's talent pipeline.

“This focused investment will directly impact over 1,100 middle school students annually, exposing them to high-demand, high-wage career opportunities within the region,” said Megan Atkinson, career and technical education (CTE) and business partnerships administrator for Montgomery County Public Schools. “By fostering early career exploration, we anticipate a significant increase in student interest in CTE pathways, leading to a more skilled and readily available workforce.”

[Learn more about GO TEC.](#)

Meet a GOVA Region 2 Grantee: Erin Burcham, Project VITAL



Erin Burcham is passionate about tech-based economic development and growing biotechnology in Region 2. She has a bachelor's degree in public relations from the University of South Carolina and a master's degree in leadership studies with a focus on economic development from Virginia Tech.

While working on her master's degree, she served as a marketing and program coordinator for the Virginia Tech Roanoke Center's continuing and professional education programs.

When she graduated with her master's, she stepped into the role of director of talent solutions for the Roanoke Regional Partnership.

She now serves as the executive director of the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council and the chief executive officer of the Roanoke Blacksburg Innovation Alliance.

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

We are nearing completion of the 40,000 sq. ft. biotechnology incubator space in Roanoke; it will open at the end of this year. To date, our regional team has raised close to \$35 million for the project.

The project launched in 2021 with a \$100,000 grant from GO Virginia led by the VT Corporate Research Center. That first grant allowed us to complete a flexible laboratory space assessment, helping us understand what the region needed and giving us the roadmap to write grants and go after state dollars.

2. What do you enjoy most about leading the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council and the Roanoke Blacksburg Innovation Alliance?

I love convening people who have the common goal of building the biotech and technology sectors in the region. I enjoy working with a variety of partners, including those in government, higher education, industry, and healthcare. Magic happens when we find intersections and collaborate to drive this region forward.

Our board has nearly 40 members representing industry, higher education, community colleges, and organizations across the state. Being able to work with so many partners and leaders has been a great experience.

3. What do you hope the impact of Project VITAL will be?

Over the course of three years, we want to create 406 jobs and raise \$50 million in capital.

Our main goal is to remove barriers. We had multiple companies getting ready to move to Raleigh or elsewhere due to the lack of certain assets, consultants, and space in the region. We got together and had roundtable conversations with those companies and dug into what they needed in order to stay here. With this project, we want to be responsive to our growing biotech ecosystem and fill in gaps to make sure we can retain our companies and help them grow.

4. As you continue your work on Project VITAL, what are you most excited to learn or accomplish?

I am excited to form strong partnerships across the state, in addition to the region.

We worked on developing an asset map that includes resources for entrepreneurs across Regions 2, 4, and 9. We're focused on building a stronger network of capital and talent, so we have a recipe for successful biotechnology companies in the state of Virginia, whether they are a new startup or already established.

One of our biggest hurdles is getting biotechnology companies through U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval. On the programmatic side, we are focused on building in mentors, coaches, consultants, and educational programs for our biotech companies to get through the FDA approval process.

[Read more about Erin Burcham.](#)

Meet a GO Virginia Region 2 Council Member: Caley Edgerly, Sonny Merryman



Caley Edgerly has spent 31 years working in the commercial vehicle space. After graduating from Michigan State University with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering, he began his career working for Detroit Diesel, which was bought by Daimler Trucks in 2000. Over the course of his time at the company, he held roles in engineering, production, design, and remanufacturing. In 2012, he stepped into the role of vice president of operations for Thomas Built Buses and became president and CEO of the company in 2015. In 2021, he transitioned to president and CEO of Sonny Merryman, a transportation company that delivers thousands of buses across Virginia.

1. What made you interested in engineering and manufacturing?

My father worked as an auto body technician. He earned a degree midlife and began teaching auto body classes while still owning a shop.

Growing up in an auto body environment and working for my dad taught me that I like vehicles and engineering. However, I didn't enjoy working on repairing them.

I chose the engineering route, which I'd always been fascinated with. I enjoy numbers and science and bringing the two together. A lot of engineers care about how things work, and I always had that curiosity.

2. What is your favorite part of your role as president and CEO of Sonny Merryman?

Getting customers equipped in new buses is always a lot of fun. The segment of customers I work with are middle-class, hard-working people who are fun to hang out with and do business with.

I also enjoy the employee base and culture the Merrymans' built here. My fellow employees are focused on taking care of customers and putting a smile on a person's face.

It's a great culture to be a part of.

3. What projects are you currently working on at Sonny Merryman?

We continue to be active in the electric vehicle space. Electric vehicles are popular within school districts as they can operate three or four hours, charge, and then operate another three or four hours in the afternoon with zero emissions.

There are a lot of product changes we're dealing with, from new powertrains so we can meet emission requirements, to new electronics and technology on all of our vehicles.

Also, the commercial bus business in the state of Virginia has been tremendous over the last two to three years with large orders for transit agencies in central Virginia, Arlington, and greater Richmond.

One order is for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. We're in the midst of delivering over 300 Braun lift-equipped vans in a two-year period.

[Read more about Caley Edgerly.](#)

Region 2 in the news

[GO Virginia grant boosts biotech in Roanoke, New River Valley](#) (Virginia Business)

[Report highlights GO Virginia initiative's impact in Amherst County](#) (Lynchburg News and Advance)
