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Upcoming GO Virginia Region 2 Council Meetings

Today, January 27, 2022: GO Virginia Region 2 Executive Committee, 1-3 PM, Roanoke Higher Education Center, Room 709, 108 N Jefferson St, Roanoke, VA 24016. Please find Zoom connection information below:

Join the webinar: <https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/86556250908?pwd=bHI5dEFQSFloRHRwcEc2ZDZBekQyUT09>

Webinar ID: 865 5625 0908

Passcode: 815907

February 4, 2022: GO Virginia Region 2 Council Meeting, 1-3 PM, Carilion Children's Tanglewood Center, Mill Mountain Conference Room, 4348 Electric Rd, Roanoke, VA 24018. Please find Zoom connection information below.

Join the webinar: <https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/82488161750?pwd=M3NNRmVNMUsxeENXU2NMU3ZuaEF6dz09>

Webinar ID: 824 8816 1750

Passcode: 470778

April 21, 2022: GO Virginia Region 2 Executive Committee, 1-3 PM

May 5, 2022: GO Virginia Region 2 Council Meeting, 3-5 PM

Next Submission Deadline, April 1, 2022

The deadline to submit your GO Virginia Region 2 proposals for this quarter is April 1, 2022. For FY 2022, there is \$1,274,132 million in implementation grant funds available for Region 2 focused projects, and additional statewide competitive funds are available for multi-regional proposals. There is very limited Region 2 money available for Enhanced Capacity Building (planning) projects. Relaxed match requirements of 2:1 with a waived local match remain in effect during quarter one; however, local participation is still required.

Learn more on our website: <https://cece.vt.edu/GOVAR2/RequestforProposals.html>

GO Virginia State Board Approves Project Eagle+



Brett Malone speaks at the Project Eagle+ announcement event at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center.

On December 15, 2021, the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center (VTCRC) held a press conference and reception to announce the approval of their GO Virginia project, Project Eagle+. The GO Virginia State Board approved a total of \$599,437 in state funds for the project, which is leveraging \$503,687 in non-state sources.

The shared wet lab space will be built in the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center KnowledgeWorks I building, where the COgro coworking space is located. Opening in 2022, COgro LABS will provide space for researchers to discover, test, and advance ideas. Twenty-five wet and dry labs will be available.

“Shared lab space is something vitally needed in Roanoke and Montgomery County and the project is an example of a great collaboration between our two communities,” said Marc Nelson, the economic development director for the City of Roanoke.

The Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center will contract with a project leadership team that includes Johnson & Johnson Innovation – JLABS (JLABS), EDC, and SMBW to build a pilot shared lab facility in Blacksburg; launch JLABS accelerator programming in the region; and conduct site design and engineering work for a future lab facility in Roanoke.

“We're excited that our coalition has mobilized and attracted Johnson & Johnson Innovation to come to the region and build a virtual JLABS, and lead off, in our own ecosystem, world-class incubator and accelerator programming for our youngest start-ups,” said Brett Malone, Ph.D., president and CEO of VTCRC. “This collaboration means we're going to be able to translate critical research from our research institutes, including Carilion Clinic Innovation, Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC, and many other startups from around our ecosystem.”

The Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center’s previous GO Virginia Region 2 capacity study, Flexible Lab Space Assessment, concluded that the region has an unmet need for flexible space and would benefit from a deeper network of life-science specific investment capital. Project Eagle+ builds on the findings of this study.

“Today in Montgomery County marks opportunity,” said Craig Meadows, administrator for Montgomery County. “Opportunity to create solutions, opportunity to help researchers near and far continue to enhance the biotechnology field, and opportunity that not only pays dividends today in a variety of industries throughout the New River and Roanoke valleys, but will also do so for hopefully generations to come.”

Learn more here: <https://cogrolabs.com/>



The shared wet lab space will be built in the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center KnowledgeWorks I building, where the COgro coworking space is located.

GO Virginia Paves Path to Create a Hub for Biotech in Roanoke

GO Virginia has paved the way for the Roanoke Biotech Project, which has evolved from two GO Virginia Region 2 studies: the Flexible Laboratory Space Assessment and Project Eagle+.

The Roanoke Biotech Project has the goals of creating more than 250 jobs, attracting 25+ companies to the region, and building enough capacity for 25 startups by increasing accessibility to flexible lab space, as well as mentoring and programming to incubate and accelerate companies.

“Our vision is to have the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center come together with Verge and the City of Roanoke to support the region with an entire building based on a shared lab space concept,” said Brett Malone.

In the next few months, the Corporate Research Center will conduct studies of the building and prepare the site for construction.

“We’re looking at multiple large grant opportunities for the Roanoke Biotech Project, including General Assembly funding, but these asks couldn’t be possible without the foundational studies from prior GO Virginia projects,” said Erin Burcham, president of Verge and the executive director of the Roanoke Blacksburg Technology Council (RBTC).

“The city and other organizations have identified this need for lab space and this hole in our ecosystem for years,” said Marc Nelson. “Brett and Erin and their organizations played an active role in helping us fill that void.”

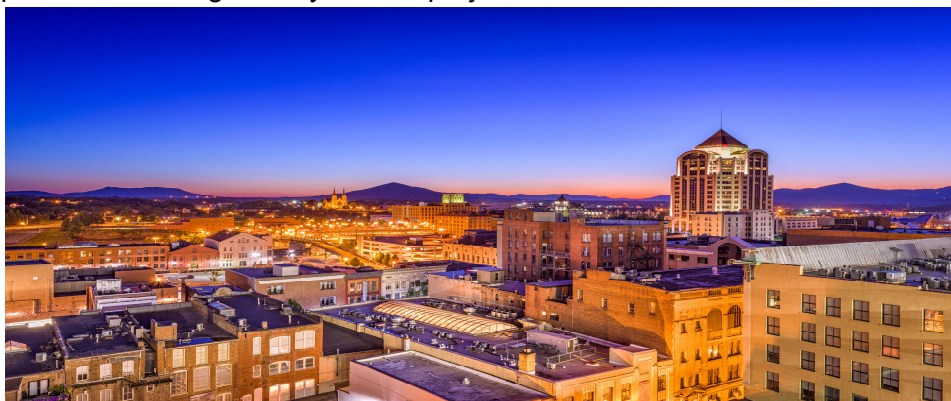
“Previously, the City of Roanoke had come in to do some of the business accelerator work ourselves because the ecosystem was not yet at a point where it could do it on its own,” Nelson said. “I think what we’re seeing now is a transition where more groups are stepping in to support the work. It’s so great to have partners that are willing to work with you and embrace a vision you have for your community.”

The City of Roanoke has supported the project with matching funds and will work to recruit companies to the region and revitalize the area, with the objective of turning Roanoke into a hub for biotech.

GO Virginia Region 2 projects focused on talent and business retention have contributed to the Roanoke Biotech Project as well. These include Stopping the Brain Drain, Developing a Destination for Talent, the Roanoke Regional Recovery Project, and the Regional Acceleration and Mentorship Program (RAMP) Expansion.

Verge, an alliance between the RBTC, RAMP, and the Valleys Innovation Council (VIC), will be in charge of programming for entrepreneurs, providing training and mentorship to accelerate startup growth in the region. Small startups and life science companies will have the opportunity to participate in cohorts to gain expert mentoring from RAMP and Johnson & Johnson Innovation – JLABS.

“The Roanoke Regional Recovery Project,” said Burcham, “which was a deep dive into technology and biotech companies, looked at what these companies needed to grow in the region, and a big part of it was infrastructure and capital for startups. It set the stage nicely for this project.”



Meet a GOVA Region 2 Grantee: Brett Malone, Flexible Laboratory Space Assessment



1. What is your career history?

In 1995, right out of graduate school, I started my first company, Phoenix Integration, at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center. I ran the company for about ten years before I sold it. I had received my Ph.D. in Aerospace Engineering at Virginia Tech, but I wanted to shift gears from aerospace engineering to biotech and life sciences. For a large part of my career, I have worked with early-stage startup companies and have focused on the areas of life sciences, cancer diagnostics, and research. I've started two other companies and throughout my career have served as CEO and consultant for multiple positions across the United States, including San Francisco, California; Denver, Colorado; Northern Virginia; and Rockville, Maryland. I was invited to come to the Corporate Research Center and stepped into my new role in July 2020.

2. What did you learn from launching your first company?

Never give up. When I started Phoenix Integration, everything was new, and anything we tried to do was the first time we tried it. I had a great partner, and we were able to successfully divide the work. We learned from our mistakes and got a little bit better each year. Having options is important; don't bet on just one thing.

3. What is your favorite part of your role at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center?

The best part of this job is being able to interact with all the inventors and entrepreneurs who are working on new technologies. Talking with the excited entrepreneurs who are creating a business out of a new piece of technology they've created – that, to me, is the fun part. I get to work with a diverse array of technologies as well, which keeps it fresh.

4. What was the initial inspiration behind the Flexible Lab Space Assessment project?

The Corporate Research Center had traditionally always built on demand, so if somebody wanted a lab they had to pay to have it built, which is very expensive. It is also very prohibitive for small startup companies, who want to build labs but don't have enough funds. Small startups would approach us and say they couldn't afford to build a lab but would rent if we had a space available. From time to time, a company might leave and that would free up some lab space, but our lab space is usually 100 % occupied. What we wanted to do through this project was create something more accessible for small companies. We wanted to build labs they could rent affordably and make it easy for them to get started.

5. Was there anything you found from the project's market analysis that surprised you?

The lack of capacity. This product does not exist within 200 miles of Blacksburg. What's surprising is how much demand we have. We have a backlog of about nine companies that want this kind of space, and yet, we can't find this space anywhere in the region. That fact gave us a lot of confidence to make the decision to go forward with this project.

6. One of the Lab Space Assessment's products is a design concept for the laboratory space. Could you describe the process behind creating the design?

A team of engineers and consultants looked at how a small company would want to operate and what they would want in their personal space. We also thought about what kinds of companies would be in the space. Along with companies who want wet lab space, we could also have somebody who wants dry lab space to build electronics, drones, or sensors. We wanted to make it as appealing to as many types of startups as possible. Also, interested businesses don't have to be startups and might find that economically, it's better for them to be in the space than try to build their own labs.

7. How do you hope the additional lab space will affect start-ups and companies in the region?

I'm hoping this product will provide initiative for people who want to move forward with startups, because they'll see that it's easy to get going. Also, we work with the entrepreneur proof of concept program created by the LINK + LICENSE + LAUNCH group at Virginia Tech. This lab space is very amenable to people going through a proof of concept program. I'm hopeful also that it will help companies win more grants, as they'll have a place to go for a short period of time. In the lab, they will be able to collect valuable information, helping them to write a more compelling grant to win more money.

8. You are working with many stakeholders and partners in the region. What have you enjoyed most about getting to collaborate with these organizations and individuals?

What has been most fun is creating this revolution. We purposefully name it that because we've got a lot of young new leaders stepping into the area. It's so much fun to work with people where you have good chemistry and you complement each other's skills. Everyone has a role to play, and everyone has a lot of respect for and loyalty to the team of revolutionaries building this.

9. What is your favorite part of being a GOVA Grantee?

GO Virginia provides a platform to build what we want to do. It provides great validation to get started, do capacity studies, create prototypes, and then demonstrate what our vision is to investors and the Commonwealth of Virginia, which makes it easier for us to go out and raise more money.

10. If you could invent anything, what would it be?

A time machine.



The above image depicts a 3-D rendering of the future lab space.

Meet a GOVA Region 2 Council Member: Michelle Austin, Executive Vice President of the Bank of Botetourt



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

I got my first job at a local John Deere dealership when I was sixteen years old. It was exciting for me because I had just gotten my license and could drive to work. I did parts and inventory for the John Deere equipment, including tractors and lawnmowers. It was my first time working with adults and learning what a work environment was like. It taught me independence and having responsibilities, like arriving to work on time. It was a great first experience.

2. What made you interested in the business administration field?

My interest in business was an inherent part of my personality. Even in childhood, I always had an interest in business. My dad ran a business and I was always fascinated by the payments coming in. When I was in elementary school, I wanted a date stamp and office supplies for Christmas. From a young age, I knew I was going to major in business when I went to college.

3. What skills have you found vital to your job at the Bank of Botetourt?

Communication has been vital. You have to be able to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing, and you have to be able to communicate with happy and angry customers. In that same vein is public speaking, which I've done a lot of in my role.

4. How would you describe your leadership style?

I describe myself as a coach. Not only do I try to motivate the people who work for me, I find out what motivates them and what makes them engaged and passionate. I want to see everybody succeed, and when you can find out a person's motivators, that makes for good results.

5. What have you learned so far as a GO Virginia Region 2 Council member?

I've been part of the council for six months, having joined in July 2021. I had my orientation and was able to get up to speed on the bylaws and current Region 2 projects. I joined at a good time because we were working on updating our Growth and Diversification Plan. During that process, I received a lot of insight into what the council is planning for the next few years and had the opportunity to give input as well. This past fall, I was also able to see how much Governor Ralph Northam allocated to our region for projects, so I've learned a lot in the few months I've been a member.

6. Are there any specific ways your work at the Bank of Botetourt has tied into your work on the Region 2 Council?

I think of banking as the lifeblood of a community, in regards to economic development. When we loan money to businesses or individuals, it helps the local economy thrive. The GO Virginia mission is similar, as the outcomes it's aiming for – high-paying jobs for certain sectors – are going to drive growth in the community and attract talent. When there is high job growth, a positive trajectory follows, including a healthy economy, good schools, and low crime. Similarly, banking helps a community get on a positive economic path.

7. What would you like to see the GO Virginia Region 2 Council do more of in the future?

We are living right now in the Great Resignation. Everywhere you go there are Help Wanted signs. I participated in a Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond webinar last week, and the president of the Richmond Federal Reserve, Thomas Barkin, said the manufacturing sector needed jobs filled quickly to help solve the supply chain disruption. One of GO Virginia Region 2's main industry clusters is manufacturing. It would be beneficial if our region and council could help generate those high-paying jobs and create match for where there is currently a big gap in the labor force. I'm eager to see if our work on the council can help alleviate some of those labor shortages we're experiencing right now.

8. Do you have a favorite part or memory from being on the GOVA Region 2 Council?

I've had two meetings, one virtually and one in-person. The in-person meeting was my first in-person meeting after about a year and a half of the pandemic. Most people had had an opportunity to get vaccinated and it was before the new variants caused disruption, so there were some in-person meetings during that time. It was exciting to be in a community type of forum and to have the opportunity to interact with other leaders in the Roanoke Valley, New River Valley, and Lynchburg region.

9. Who has been your greatest mentor and what did you learn from them?

His name was Watts Steger. He was the president and CEO of Bank of Botetourt when I was early in my career, and he took me under his wing. He led by example, teaching me good values to have in the business world and how to be a community banker. He was a proponent of lifelong learning and a proponent of continuing your education throughout your career. He instilled that same mindset in me. He also taught me the technical skills I needed for my job. I'm grateful for the opportunities I had under his leadership.

10. What is the most memorable place you have ever visited?

Buckingham Palace in London. I have a great memory of going there because I got to see the changing of the guards. While I was in London, I got to go on the London Eye and the Tower Bridge. I also got to tour the Crown Jewels of the Royal Family. It's the only time I've traveled internationally, so it holds a special memory for me.