



REGION 2

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

COLLABORATION
INSPIRATION
SUCCESS

January 30, 2023

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Next Submission Deadline: March 24th, 2023 by 5 p.m.

There is \$2,147,522 available for Region 2 focused projects, and additional statewide competitive funds are available for multi-regional proposals. There is \$250,000 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.

Learn more on our website.

<https://cece.vt.edu/GOVAR2/RequestforProposals.html>

Save the Date for Upcoming GO Virginia Region 2 Council Meeting

April 28, 2023: GO Virginia Region 2 Full Council Meeting, 1-3 PM

Meet a GOVA Region 2 Grantee: James Harder, cs/root



James Harder, external engagement project manager for Virginia Tech's Department of Computer Science, managed a prior GO Virginia Region 2 grant called "Blockchain Ecosystem Catalyst," which was an initiative focused on growing and strengthening the Blockchain Ecosystem through seminars, training, and resource sharing for startups, existing companies, and students. Blockchain Ecosystem Catalyst began in 2019 and over the course of the grant, trained 365 students in blockchain technologies. His second Region 2 grant, cs/root, was inspired by the desire to expand the lens of the first grant and incorporate a number of different computer science fields outside of blockchain.

"We knew the community was hungry to go beyond blockchain and that students love the idea of being entrepreneurial and starting their own companies," Harder said.

1. What are some of the specific activities cs/root will undertake to help entrepreneurs?

We're bringing a lot of Virginia Tech alumni who have successfully started companies to campus for speaking events and workshops. These alumni will interact with students in proactive ways to provide feedback on ideas they have for companies. We will develop a cohort where students and community members that have been accepted into the program will move through content that's designed to support an idea they're developing, similar to the way someone might work their way through early stage ideation in preparation for an incubator or an accelerator. We also will have a community advisory board that we will collaborate with on events and programming, and this board includes organizations such as the Apex Center for Entrepreneurship, Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council, Regional Accelerator & Mentoring Program (RAMP), and LINK + LICENSE + LAUNCH.

2. What kinds of technical startups will the project focus on assisting?

As long as it falls into the computer science realm, we would definitely help and could certainly design the services and the programming around whatever the idea is going to be. We are open to companies focused on artificial intelligence, cloud computing, app development, blockchain, and more. Any facet of computer science is welcome, and we like the idea of being open-minded to a wide variety of ideas within innovative tech.

3. What is your favorite part of working with Virginia Tech alumni?

They're a fascinating group of people. From companies focused on blockchain to cyber-security, these entrepreneurs' businesses encompass a wide variety of applications of computer science. It's a great opportunity to work with successful entrepreneurs who want to do what they can to help out the next generation.

I am really excited about the three alumni who are coming to campus this spring to help us kickstart activities in cs/root. Srinidhi Varadarajan, the speaker for our kickoff event, has founded four companies – Silverdraft Supercomputing, Cloudistics, Librato, and AppAssure – and used to be a faculty member in our department. The other two speakers – Jim Miller and Matt Pfeil -- both have lots of experience including founding companies in the national security space (Jim) and advising early-stage companies as an Entrepreneur in Residence at Top Tier Capital Partners (Matt).

4. What is something you are looking forward to learning or doing as you work on the project?

My primary interest is to support students who have a creative idea they think might become a company or an interesting disruptive technology. I'm definitely looking forward to seeing how students and community members use this programming to execute their ideas. That's why we're here – to provide participants with the support they need to accomplish their dreams.

5. What advice would you give to someone who wanted to start their own business?

Mentorship is key. It's important to identify people who have done this before and have them help you think about the next steps you need to take. Everybody has advice, especially for early stage companies. Shows like *Shark Tank* are popular for a reason. However, we believe that seasoned mentors who come from a similar background can provide sage advice and help you position yourself for success. That's a great resource. I'm proud we're putting this mindset front and center with our work with cs/root. There are so many critical early stage decisions and navigating those opportunities and threats can be best achieved by a closely aligned, neutral advisor.

Additionally, a big part of the programming at cs/root will be open-to-the-public events that help attendees learn about entrepreneurship and alumni success stories. I'm confident that the simple act of learning about how entrepreneurship operates and becoming "fluent" in the language of startups has tremendous value for Virginia Tech students and our local communities. The inception of a new idea may come immediately or we may lay the foundation of something on a longer-term horizon. Both have tremendous value.

6. What was the last book you couldn't put down?

Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens is excellent. I went to school at University of North Carolina Wilmington, and the author does a great job of capturing the feel of the coastal South.





Meet a GOVA Region 2 Council Member: John Putney, Broadband Director for Bedford County

Over the course of his career, John Putney has worked in federal, state, and local government as well as higher education. He served as a legislative aide for State Senator Kevin Miller, as Northern Virginia regional director for U.S. Senator George Allen, and spent 15 years at James Madison University as state director of government affairs. In 2021, he joined Bedford County in 2021 as their broadband director. He also currently provides services in research, RFP response, and general consultation for the public safety and professional communications company L3 Harris. Originally from Bedford, Putney attended James Madison University where he received a bachelor's degree and taught freshman composition while doing graduate work.

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

My first full-time job was in high school at the company Piedmont Label, now called Smyth. I operated a forklift, packed and wrapped boxes, and loaded them onto 18-wheelers. My shift started at 7:00 a.m. and lasted for nine hours. It taught my structure, the importance of hard work, and teamwork. While a good job, it also showed me that it was not what I wanted to do for the rest of my life and that I needed to be prepared to get an education in order to have the career I wanted.

2. What is your favorite part of your job as broadband director for Bedford County?

In our modern world, internet connectivity is no longer a nicety; it is a necessity. In Bedford, there are unfortunately still too many people who don't have reliable broadband options. I have been working with board members, the county administrator, staff and a variety of different Internet service providers to implement Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) grants to help pay for the installation of broadband throughout the parts of Bedford County that previously have not had viable service. It's some of the most rewarding work I've done in my life. The fact that fiber optic broadband is being deployed into remote parts of Bedford County is a pretty amazing accomplishment.

3. Do you have a favorite moment or memory from your time on the Region 2 council?

Probably when I learned I was selected, as that meant a lot to me. I knew GO Virginia was in the works before it was official, and I wanted to be a part of it because I've lived all over the commonwealth and have seen how some areas are really thriving. Part of my reason for getting involved was I wanted to see more good quality jobs in Bedford and do more to increase opportunity in the region in a responsible, appropriate prudent way.

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

I thought the Stopping the Brain Drain Strategy Development study was exactly what we needed to do as it identified how we go about keeping students in the region. I appreciate that's something our region has been focusing on, and I hope we do even more to keep talent here.

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

I've been blessed to have a lot of great mentors in my life. My dad was a lawyer for 54 years and only retired a couple of years ago. His work ethic is inspiring. I learned a lot from my uncle, Lacey Putney, who served 52 years in the Virginia House of Delegates. I always admired that he became an Independent and fashioned myself that same way. My former boss at James Madison University, Charlie King, was a mentor as well, in terms of commitment and know-how. Frank Atkinson, who I worked for at McGuire Woods Consulting, is also a hero of mine. He's a great legal mind and has written the best nonfiction accounts of politics in Virginia. And I would certainly include Ray Smoot. One of the highlights of my five years on the council has been seeing how Ray does things, and he's a man of enormous capability and integrity.

6. What is your favorite place to travel?

My family owns a place on the Outer Banks, and we go down there as much as we can. Also, I can't wait to go back to Yellowstone National Park. After I graduated from James Madison University, my friend and I drove across the country and worked at Yellowstone as room attendants. We proved we were good workers and got promoted to driving trucks and delivering supplies. It was a great job, and I loved being out there.

GO Virginia Region 2 In The News

City of Lynchburg, Campbell County, and LYH Regional team up for exciting new project, WSET

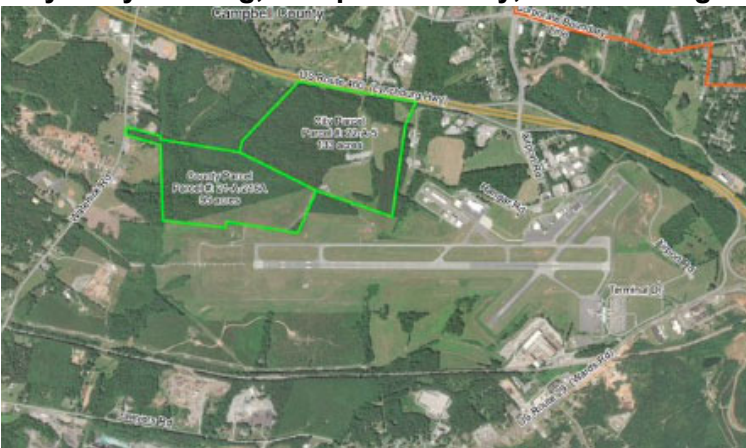


Photo by City of Lynchburg Department of Economic Development and Tourism

Read more about the Airport Commerce Park here:

<https://wset.com/news/local/airport-commerce-park-city-of-lynchburg-virginia-campbell-county-and-lyh-regional-team-up-for-exciting-new-project-go-virginia-december-2022>

Botetourt Technical Education Center receives grant funding to expand its welding program, WDBJ7



Read more about Expanding Welding Training Capacity & Jobs in the Roanoke Valley here: <https://www.wdbj7.com/2022/12/16/botetourt-technical-education-center-receives-grant-funding-expand-its-welding-program/>

GO Virginia grant to bolster next-generation transportation, manufacturing workforce, VT News



Photo by Diane Deffenbaugh

Read more about Industry 4.0 for the Automated-Connected-Electrified (ACE) Workforce here: <https://vtx.vt.edu/articles/2022/12/outreach-govirginia-industry-grant.html>

Grant helps open door for future project in Campbell County, WDBJ7

<https://www.wdbj7.com/2023/01/14/grant-helps-opens-door-future-project-campbell-county/>

GO Virginia approves \$190K for airport project, News Advance

https://newsadvance.com/business/local/go-virginia-approves-190k-for-airport-project/article_5ad221d6-7bca-11ed-99bd-536616e01043.html

Botetourt Technical Education Center gets GO VA Grant, will add 10 new welding booths, WSET

<https://wset.com/news/local/botetourt-technical-education-center-gets-go-virginia-grant-will-add-10-new-welding-booths-train-prepare-welders-45-new-county-december-2022#:~:text=They%20say%20the%20GO%20Virginia,initial%20three%2Dyear%20project%20term.>

Botetourt High School welding program gets a boost, WFIR News

<https://wfirmnews.com/news/botetourt-high-school-welding-program-gets-a-boost>

Blockchain Certificate Program creates a space for new ideas and applications, VT News

<https://vtx.vt.edu/articles/2022/12/cs-blockchaincertprogram.html>