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Save the Dates For Upcoming GO Virginia Region 2 Council Meetings

January 27, 2022: GO Virginia Region 2 Executive Committee, 1-3 PM

February 4, 2022: GO Virginia Region 2 Council Meeting, 1-3 PM

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, January 12, 2022

The deadline to submit your GO Virginia Region 2 proposals for this quarter is January 12, 2022. For FY 2022, there are \$1.2 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>.

2021 GO Virginia Region 2 Growth and Diversification Plan

GO Virginia Region 2 has updated their Growth and Diversification Plan for 2021. The Growth and Diversification Plan's goal is to provide empirically driven recommendations to guide economically sustainable growth in the area and sets the council's specific priorities for applicants to review and understand. The final draft is pending state approval.

You can view the plan at this link: https://cece.vt.edu/content/dam/cece_vt_edu/govirginia_documentation/Semifinal%20Growth%20and%20Diversification%20Plan%202021.pdf?utm_source=vt_oia_econdev&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=_DM902941

Meet a GOVA Region 2 Grantee: John Hull, Roanoke Regional Recovery Project



1. What made you interested in a career in economic development?

I grew up in a family that worked hard to ensure that we had the resources we needed. I witnessed friends and family impacted by layoffs and economic challenges. In economic development, we work to provide opportunity. That is a passion and drive for me – working to provide opportunities for the people who live in my region to earn a living wage and to progress along a career path.

2. What is your favorite part of your role as Executive Director of the Roanoke Regional Partnership?

I enjoy leading the regional economic development effort and leading a research-driven economic development agenda. I have a background in demographic and economic research, and identifying opportunities that are fact-based and then finding ways to communicate the advantage is a lot of fun for me.

3. What are some of the things the Roanoke Regional Partnership has done to advance economic recovery in the area?

When the pandemic first began and there were lockdowns and restrictions, we did a lot of work to assemble resources and share those resources with the audience of businesses. One of the things we developed was a survey instrument for businesses. When a business filled out a survey to indicate their challenges or concerns, we would refer them to local economic developers for follow-up and assistance. We did a mailing to every business license holder in the region so they would know about the survey and our online list of resources and business assistance programs. We also assembled a coalition of resource providers to work together, and the Roanoke Regional Recovery Project came out of that process. From a data and research standpoint, we are monitoring the recovery. And what we do generally – raising the

profile of the region and its opportunities, working to secure business attraction opportunities, and supporting expansions – ultimately supports the recovery.

4. In your project, you are working on a long-term recovery strategy. Could you talk about what this strategy looks like?

In working with regional businesses, economic developers, and resource providers we found the most immediate needs are centered around talent and workforce since talent availability is such a significant concern right now. We have developed with our consultant some targeted tactics to address. These tactics are being incorporated into the work we are doing jointly with the Western Virginia Workforce Development Board and through the Thrive 2027 plan, the new five-year strategic platform of action for the Partnership.

We are also working with the consultant and local economic developers to develop a series of recommendations that can strengthen the regional business retention and expansion program that the local governments are actively implementing. There are resources, protocols, customer relations management software, and a series of tactical recommendations that can be implemented to strengthen the program and provide a more consistent and efficient experience for all stakeholders in that process.

5. What are some of the talent retention goals you hope to accomplish?

The Roanoke Regional Partnership will continue and build upon talent retention programming such as the Experience conference and will continue to link college students and residents with our region's unique assets and career opportunities. The Partnership is working to support the Western Virginia Workforce Development Board in a host of talent development strategies through a joint GO Virginia application. There are a number of goals and strategies that revolve around talent, education and industry alignment, placemaking, and livability that will support retention. Review the plan at <https://roanoke.org/thrive-2027/>.

6. How do you hope this project will help businesses in the region recover from the effects of the pandemic?

By improving the efficiency and the effectiveness of the business retention and expansion process, we can 'touch' businesses in multiple ways. The process will be more effective if we provide support services to businesses using a consistent, layered approach, taking advantage of regional intelligence and sharing information across all the partners. That way, we can connect businesses to the services they need.

7. As you move forward with this project, is there anything you are looking forward to learning or doing?

The Partnership and its local government partners have learned a great deal about the challenges our businesses face. There has been tremendous learning in the realm of talent and regional systems for business retention. Intentional thought has been put into designing what the future of our process looks like in engaging with business and resource providers. I'm excited to have the opportunity to build a functioning plan and strategy. It's an exciting time because there is real, tangible interest in moving forward, collectively, with the regional system. To have that sort of partnership, energy, and excitement behind an initiative is a wonderful thing.

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

I appreciate that the program exists and there are resources to do better work. Without GO Virginia resources, our work would either be impossible or would be of lesser quality. We can complete a project more effectively with resources and it is excellent to have the support of GO Virginia and the leadership of those on the regional council.

9. What advice would you give to a young person living in Region 2 who isn't sure what they want

to do for a career?

I would advise them to take stock of their interests and also evaluate some of the career pathways in the region. I would recommend that young person to take note of the opportunities, take advantage of programs that could potentially connect them with regional employers, and explore those opportunities and see where their interest lies. And then pursue the opportunity. If the opportunity requires training, either on the job or at the community college level, do a little exploratory work. A lot of career-based decisions are made by youth in the absence of good information and research. There are plentiful opportunities – I'd recommend finding one that excites them and provides financial reward.

10. What is your favorite place to visit?

I really enjoy vacationing in Virginia Beach and doing some occasional running events there. But I do enjoy the solitude, peace, and tranquility of a paddle to Deer Island in the middle of Philpott Lake. There are few spots as tranquil as Deer Island – the perfect spot for a late fall camping adventure for absolute serenity.

Meet a GOVA Region 2 Council Member: Victor Iannello, CEO and Founder of Radiant Physics, Inc.**1. What was your first job and what did it teach you?**

My first job was delivering newspapers, and it was like running a small business. I learned a lot about customer service, how to retain customers and generate new ones, and the importance of being reliable. It was a great way for a young person to learn about business.

2. What inspired you to start your own company, Radiant Physics?

I was the director of development for a company in Roanoke. From a technology and business point of view, I thought the direction the company was headed wasn't viable, and I decided to leave the organization and start my own company. I submitted some proposals on innovative ideas, and I began to win some Small Business Innovation Research awards with NASA and the Department of Defense. That really got me going.

3. What projects are you currently working on?

I spend most of my time with a start-up named Chorda Pharma. The company is dedicated to developing painkillers that don't use opioids, and we have a topical cream we are going to be taking to market soon.

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

I've learned a lot about the region and the role different organizations play in growing the economy. I've also learned that there's a lot of commonality across the Region 2 landscape. I've met some great leaders across the region, from the Roanoke and New River Valleys and from the Lynchburg area and Alleghany Highlands.

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

We've had some interesting projects that require support from the entire region for them to go forward. I'd say ten years ago those projects wouldn't have been possible because there wasn't that level of collaboration across our region. I've been very heartened to see the leaders from all the sub-regions come together to promote projects. Some projects have benefited the entire region, and some have benefited smaller subregions. Even for those projects that are centered on a smaller subregion, it's been gratifying to see support for those projects throughout the entire region.

6. What skills have you found valuable to your work as a council member?

Having the willingness to meet with people outside the GOVA meetings and figure out commonalities and goals.

7. Is there anything that you would like to see GO Virginia Region 2 do more of in the future?

I think we need to be willing to take some more risks. I look for the opportunity to bring and discuss truly revolutionary projects that wouldn't otherwise be funded if GO Virginia didn't exist. That's easy to say, but it's hard to identify these projects, which may be large, high-risk projects with very high upside potential.

8. What are some similarities between your role at Chorda Pharma and your work on the Region 2 Council?

As a region, we've determined that life sciences and health care is an important focus for Region 2, and the work I do with Chorda Pharma plays into that in a very big way. There's a tremendous amount of overlap.

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

I swim on a regular basis as my form of exercise. I recently got my private pilot license so I've been doing a lot of flying, which has been a lot of fun. I also have a drone I like flying and I enjoy amateur radio.

10. What do you most enjoy reading?

I've been gathering a lot of information about a lot of different things - scientific, political, even mystery. Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 disappeared back in 2014, and I've been heavily involved in researching the disappearance with an international group that's trying to crack that case. I've done a lot of research, and I've developed theories and written papers and articles which are published on my blog (mh370.radiantphysics.com). The blog has about 30,000 comments from people around the world, and the articles are often cited by news outlets. At this point, I think we have a pretty good idea of what happened. For those interested that don't want to delve into the technical details, I think the best overview is an article by William Langewiesche for the Atlantic magazine.