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RICHMOND—On September 12, 2023, the GO Virginia State Board announced its approval of two new Region 2 projects aimed at growing the regional economy. Region 2 consists of the cities of Covington, Lynchburg, Radford, Roanoke, and Salem and the counties of Alleghany, Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Botetourt, Campbell, Craig, Floyd, Franklin, Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski, and Roanoke.

Board Approved Projects:

Strengthening Entrepreneurs' Impact (Verge)

Strengthening Entrepreneurs' Impact seeks to support the evolving needs of early-stage entrepreneurs and ultimately strengthen the technology and biotech industry ecosystem in the New River Valley and Roanoke Region. Verge will launch programming and support for early-stage entrepreneurs as well as expanded support for the network of cohort companies that have completed the Regional Accelerator and Mentoring Program (RAMP). The project will also elevate the strategies in the Region 2: Innovation Ecosystem Report and focus on continuing education for RAMP alumni companies and founders, capital and funding opportunities for early-stage companies, better alignment with specific human capital needs, and greater mentorship development & retention. The GO Virginia board approved a total of \$577,800 in state funds for the project, which is leveraging \$288,900 in non-state sources.

"The Verge Alliance is the only organization in the state that marries together a technology and biotech accelerator and a technology council to look at the needs of the region's innovation economy from small startups to larger corporations," said Erin Burcham, president of Verge. "Through its success in the past two years, RAMP is seeing more applications at an earlier stage that need additional support not covered in their current model. This project will help more companies progress out of a higher education lab space, where they're still in a research and development phase, and into a commercialized space."

Region 2 Talent Pathways Initiative (TPI) Planning Application (Virginia Tech Center for Economic and Community Engagement)

The Region 2 Talent Pathways Initiative will be focused on two of the region's largest and fastest-growing clusters highlighted in the 2021 Growth and diversification plan, Life Sciences & Biotechnology and Transportation Manufacturing & Autonomy. The project will develop industry coalitions that engage workforce system partners to guide and advise on the planning elements, complete a quantitative and qualitative situational analysis of workforce needs, identify skills and training needed for people to fill jobs in the clusters, and support highest-impact pathway projects for future implementation. The GO Virginia board approved a total of \$250,000 in state funds for the project, which is leveraging \$292,529 in non-state sources.

"Currently life sciences and biotechnology industry leaders aspire to be better integrated, specifically between component industries in the sector, and across MSAs within Region 2," said Quina Weber-Shirk, program manager for GO Virginia Region 2 and the Region 2 Internship Collaborative. "In the Transportation Manufacturing & Autonomy cluster, leaders and ecosystem partners are motivated to create clearer talent pathway alignment across Region 2, from K-12 to credentials, to Associates through Ph.D. degree programs. The TPI planning effort will synthesize and share previously collected data with regional industry leaders to clarify, validate, and develop a more granular understanding of the needs to grow a pool of specialized talent for

manufacturing occupations at the local and regional level and engage industry leaders in the biotechnology industry cluster proactively and inclusively.”

GO Virginia is a statewide initiative designed to encourage Virginia’s economic growth through the creation of high-wage jobs. Virginia Tech’s Center for Economic and Community Engagement serves as Region 2’s support organization. For more information, please contact John Provo, jprovo@vt.edu.



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