**GO Virginia Region 2 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes**

**April 28, 2022, 1:00p.m.- 2:30p.m.**

**Roanoke Higher Education Center, Room 709, 108 N Jefferson St, Roanoke Virginia, 24016.**

Executive Committee members in attendance: Beverley Dalton, Ray Smoot (Chair).

Executive Committee members participating remotely: Sandy Davis.

Staff in attendance: John Provo, Scott Tate, Rachel Jones, Quina Weber-Shirk, Elli Travis, Alyssa McKenney.

Public in attendance: Alisha Meador, Ken Miller, Lynchburg Economic Development and Tourism, Megan Lucas, Pam Bailey, Traci Blido.

The meeting convened at 1:05p.m. and adjourned at 2:34p.m.

***Financials Review***

John Provo began with an overview of the financial report. Council has a remaining balance of $1,002,882 in per-capita funds. John Provo then reviewed drawdown status of all active Region 2 projects per fiscal year.

 ***Intentional Project Development Discussion***

***Project Pipeline Review***

Scott Tate provided an overview of the current Region 2 project pipeline, stating the Vector Space proposal previously approved by the regional council has been deferred at the state level and will be reviewed by the state board at its next meeting following guidance from state staff. A proposal led by Virginia Tech computer science faculty is expected to come before the council, this proposal will focus on a pre-launch entrepreneurship tech assistance in areas such as cybersecurity, blockchain, cloud, quantum computing, AI, and systems design. Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, GenEdge, and additional partners will submit a statewide application related to the continued development of a coalition around the transportation and logistics sector in southwest and southern Virginia. Additional discussions held include a statewide proposal, expansion of GOTECH, that would include Franklin County in Region 2, a proposal from the Town of Bedford regarding a partnership program, a machining training center, with Central Virginia Community College, and a targeted worker training program from VA Career Works, central region.

***Growth and Diversification Plan Messages***

John Provo and Quina Weber-Shirk began by presenting important information from the updated Region 2 Growth and Diversification Plan (2021). This plan is a roadmap for utilizing GO Virginia funding for regional projects focused on industries with high growth potential, featuring in-demand occupations with higher wages. John Provo continued by sharing key takeaways from the 2021 updates, highlighting the 4 target industry clusters of Transportation and Autonomy, Life Sciences and Healthcare, Materials and Machinery Manufacturing, and IT and Emerging Tech. With projected data (2021-2026) of 32 high-wage occupations and 3,716 regional annual job openings, these 4 interrelated clusters offer the greatest potential for sustainable, scalable, future growth in the region. Quina Weber-Shirk continued by sharing core strategies related to each cluster and how this information can be useful to prospective applicants. John Provo then discussed previous council activities such as a speaker’s bureau, which played an essential role in awareness of the program and encouraged local government participation. The state board recently voted to extend the relaxed match policy of a $1:2 match, with local match waived, however, more than one locality must be active participants.

***Special Updates***

***Cluster Conversations: Internships (Regional Internship Collaborative)***

Quina Weber-Shirk provided the committee with an overview of the Regional Internship Collaborative, stating the driving priority of the initiative is to give students deep roots in our business community prior to graduation so they choose to live and work here. The Regional Internship Collaborative is funded by the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV). SCHEV funded the Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership, which is a statewide initiative looking to increase the readiness of both employers and students around internships and work-based learning. The Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership is funding internship initiatives in each GO Virginia region. Chairman Smoot inquired if the internships are paid. Quina responded the program is emphasizing paid internships as the quality of the experience tends to be higher for both the employer and intern. Beverley Dalton stated paid internships also encourage employers to ensure they are receiving the quality of work that they are paying for, as well as potential future talent. Quina Weber-Shirk continued by stating the framework is about recognizing that there are strong programs and initiatives around internships- workforce development and talent development already exist in Region 2, SCHEV aims to build a network to better share information across these groups so there are no duplications. The Regional Internship Collaborative will link and leverage existing efforts and scale these efforts across our region through increased awareness and access to work-based learning experiences, improve connections and internship placements, and increase the placement or retention of students in full-time jobs. Quina Weber-Shirk then shared highlights of the recently held virtual employer roundtable discussions in the focused clusters of IT and Emerging Tech and Materials and Machinery Manufacturing. Key takeaways from these conversations include the real importance of growing talent through creating clear career pathways and providing multiple entry points for perspective employees comprising of high school students, college students, and career-changers.

***Project Evaluation Highlight***

Elli Travis began by providing an overview of data pertaining to the IT and Emerging Tech cluster included in the updated Region 2 Growth and Diversification Plan. There are 11,000 IT jobs across the region with average annual salaries of around $93,000. There seems to be a slight decline in IT and Emerging Tech employment in the region from 2016 through 2021, however, a moderate increase is expected over the next 5 years. This moderate increase is lower than what is expected in other regions. Elli Travis then reviewed locations of the existing IT jobs within the Region 2 footprint. The cluster’s gross regional product (GRP) has experienced expediential growth between 2007-2012, then leveled off, with a steady increase by 2020. During the cluster conversations held with local businesses existing in the IT and Emerging Tech company, two issues were identified: poor access to investment and low access to the attainment and retention of talent. Elli Travis continued by highlighting Region 2 Talent focused projects who are addressing the critical need for talent attraction and retention efforts.

***Council Business***

***Quarterly Project Reporting***

Elli Travis provided a quick update on active Region 2 projects, stating all projects are on track with their milestones and deliverables. There is one project, ELITE Internship Program, who is lagging behind on the number of internships completed. Region 2 staff have been in regular contact with the project lead to work together to determine a solution.

***Minutes***

The committee reviewed meeting minutes from the GO Virginia Region 2 Executive Committee Meeting, held on January 27, 2022. Chairman Smoot asked if there were any corrections, additions, or questions regarding the minutes; there were none.

Beverley Dalton motioned to approve the minutes, with Sandy Davis seconding. All were in favor and none opposed.

The meeting adjourned at 2:34p.m.