



- GO Virginia State Board Approves Region 2 Projects
- Meet Amy Ankrum, GOVA Region 2 Council Member and President and CEO of Qualtrax
- Meet Kevin Byrd, GOVA Grantee and Executive Director of the New River Valley Regional Commission
- Join the Port of Virginia for the State of the Port on October 1
- GOVA Funding for Manufacturers is Now Available

---

## GO Virginia State Board Approves Region 2 Projects

On September 22, the GO Virginia State Board announced its approval of three new Region 2 projects aimed at growing the regional economy.

### **Experiential Learning in Tech Employment (ELITE) Internship Program (Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council)**

The Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council will work with NextUp Solutions to strengthen the pipeline of talent to meet the Emerging Technologies and IT industry cluster's needs. The program will assist college students in the IT and software development fields by providing funding for 57 semester-long or summer paid internships in Professional Internship Organizations (PIOs). Students will gain experience in their respective fields under the expertise of mentor and also learn professional development skills.

### **Amherst LYH Region Site Readiness (Lynchburg Regional Alliance)**

The Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance will collaborate with municipalities in Region 2 including Amherst County and the town of Amherst to support the advancement of 15 publicly-owned sites to Tiers 3, 4, and 5. With the goal of attracting industry to the Lynchburg region, this project will continue moving

industrial property through the site readiness phase to prepare the sites for companies considering locating to the Lynchburg region.

### **New River Valley Business Continuity Team (New River Health District)**

The project will develop a Business Continuity Team that will provide access to the technical resources needed for business owners to operate in the COVID-19 environment, instilling confidence in consumers and employees. The Business Continuity Team will work with the New River Health District-Virginia Department of Health to provide 24/7 technical assistance from a multi-disciplinary team, public and employee messaging and education, facility cleaning, certification of best practices, and coordination of on-site testing, if deemed appropriate.

---

## **Meet Amy Ankrum, GOVA Region 2 Council Member and President and CEO of Qualtrax**



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

My first job was a cashier at Kroger. It was a great experience and my first exposure to providing customer service. I learned a lot about the impact you can have with a smile and being friendly. It was a good opportunity to learn about what you can do to make people's experiences enjoyable.

For me, that's translated directly to what I do today, as we're focused on customer service at Qualtrax. The customers' experiences are critical to us and we put a big focus on how we improve quality of life through our software.

### **2. Can you name a person who has had a significant impact on your leadership style?**

I've had the opportunity to work with so many great people that have influenced my leadership. My parents set a great example of what it looks like to take responsibility and set your path on good principles and values in life. As I've moved into my professional career again, there are so many folks that I've learned from, but I'd say at the top of that list are Marty Muscatello and Tim Lawson. These two individuals helped me have the confidence that I could be a CEO and take the reins at Qualtrax. The importance of strong core values and surrounding yourself with the best people is something that both of them



taught me.

### **3. How do you encourage creative thinking within Qualtrax?**

I love this question because “Create Something Great” is one of our core values at Qualtrax. I think creativity comes from having empowered teams and giving them the time and space to be creative. We put a lot of emphasis at Qualtrax on giving teams that time and space to improve upon what they're doing, whether that's coming up with new ideas for what our software could do, or how the way people work day-to-day could be different. Our team has initiated book clubs that they run as well as Agile workshops. We've had all kinds of book clubs from the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* to *Man's Search for Meaning*.

### **4. What led you to want to become a Region 2 council member?**

I was really excited to be asked to be a part of the council. I was very aware of GO Virginia in our region, but it wasn't on my radar that it might be something that I could participate in. To be invited was definitely an honor and an opportunity to be a part of an organization that's making a big difference in the region. Seeing GO Virginia fund initiatives around innovation and jobs in this area is important to me, especially as someone who grew up in this region. To be a part of a much larger effort is very exciting and rewarding.

### **5. How is your role as CEO of Qualtrax similar to your role as a GO Virginia council member?**

As a CEO, your team is depending on you to make the best decisions you can to generate the best outcomes for the team and for your customers. With GO Virginia, our role is very similar in that the region is looking to us to put our dollars to work in the best way possible.

### **6. What is your favorite part of being on the GO Virginia Region 2 Council?**

Getting to look at proposals for innovation in the region, helping to evaluate those and ultimately looking to push them forward, I think is my favorite part. Just in my short time as part of GO Virginia, we've been funding some really great projects and initiatives. To be part of that decision-making process is very exciting.

### **7. Is there anything that surprised you when you first stepped into your role as a council member?**

It was inspiring to see leaders from different backgrounds come together to think strategically about our region's needs. They're very passionate and they bring different perspectives to the table. GO Virginia is a take-action group and that's been so inspiring to see.

### **8. Is there anything GO Virginia has planned that you are looking forward to in particular?**

There are lots of great projects that have just been funded, so I'm looking forward to seeing what comes of those and what new opportunities arise. I was very impressed with how Go Virginia quickly pivoted during the pandemic to put our dollars to work to fund initiatives to help with innovation around COVID testing and supporting industry during this difficult time.

I know we were all excited to see the U.S. Department of Commerce award a grant of

nearly \$1 million to the Valleys Innovation Council (VIC) and its Regional Accelerator and Mentoring Program (RAMP) this past week. Knowing those dollars are going to our GO Virginia region to help with startup acceleration and that GO Virginia was involved in helping with some of the proposal writing and will provide some of the matching resources and support is a huge win for Region 2.

#### **9. What's one professional skill you're currently working on?**

I've always said being a good communicator is the key to happiness, both personally and professionally. I think it's a skill that you never fully master because you're always learning how to be better at listening, understanding others, and sharing your message in a way that people can receive it. I'm always looking to learn from my team, from other leaders, and from my family: What are the best ways to communicate and inspire others?

#### **10. Which season is your favorite and why?**

Fall is my favorite. If you live here in the New River or Roanoke Valley area, it's such a beautiful time of year. We hike a lot as a family. All things pumpkin are great. And I'm a Hokie, so I think anytime everything's orange and maroon is a good time.

---

### **Meet Kevin Byrd, GOVA Grantee and Executive Director of the New River Valley Regional Commission**



#### **1. What is your career history?**

I started working with the New River Valley Regional Commission as Executive Director in 2009. Prior to this role, I worked for Montgomery County as a long-range planner, and just before that I worked at the Regional Commission as a regional planner. After I finished graduate school I worked in Western North Carolina as a planning director for a small town. I also worked as a consultant in the land development arena in the triangle of North Carolina. Taken together, I have public sector and private sector experience, with

experience at the town, county, and regional levels of government.

## **2. What made you interested in regional planning?**

I think it all started when I was a kid growing up in North Carolina in a suburb of Raleigh, in the town of Cary. We had greenway trails in our neighborhood, and I would hop on my bike and explore the neighborhood on the trails. On Saturday mornings I'd take my fishing rod and fish in the neighborhood ponds. It wasn't until I got to college, when I realized those ponds that I was fishing were actually stormwater ponds, and they were all part of a bigger network. At the same time, the greenway trails were connected all over the town. That really spurred my interest in planning.

## **3. What is your favorite part about your job?**

The relationships that we build. So much of what we do at the Regional Commission is based on relationships. We get to work with the same communities day in and day out across the New River Valley. It's extremely rewarding to build those relationships, work on projects together and then see communities thrive. The diversity of work we are involved with is also very rewarding. Our local governments ask us to take on new and different things every year, so that keeps our role relevant and interesting. And then seeing the team here excel and grow with the organization – that's very meaningful. There are so many rewarding aspects involved with the work that we do.

## **4. What is the New River Valley Regional Commission doing to advance economic recovery in your area?**

Our role with economic recovery initially was based on coordination. We have a coordination role with our local governments and once COVID-19 hit in March, our coordination role really ramped up. Soon after COVID-19 hit, there were lots of state and federal dollars that were becoming available to support economic recovery. We helped the local governments access funds and also helped create some program designs for how to use those funds in impactful ways within their communities. And more recently, we've been asked to help with economic recovery by launching the New River Valley Business Continuity Team.

## **5. How do you hope the New River Valley Business Continuity Team will help businesses affected by COVID-19?**

The New River Business Continuity Team will help make sure employees can go to work on a regular basis and limit the amount of downtime to the greatest extent possible. Early on, when there was concern about a positive COVID-19 case, the advisement might have been to shut down for an extended period of time. Now, as we have learned more, we have realized there are ways to continue with operations safely. Our first goal is to make sure that businesses are operating and employees are able to work in a safe manner. The second piece is building confidence in employers, employees, as well as the general public, because we all have to learn to live and operate in a COVID world. We have to build our collective confidence to continue growing our economy and to keep going back to school and to work.

## **6. What challenges is your organization currently facing and how do you plan to address those challenges?**

I think the challenges in our organization are similar to what other organizations are trying to navigate with COVID. How do you quickly adjust what you're doing in such uncertain

times? Thankfully, everybody here in our organization is contributing and helping us figure out the next moves that we need to make. When we all went home and worked remotely in March, we all figured out quickly what platforms we needed to utilize in order to communicate effectively. And then as we were reintroducing employees back to our workspace in July and August, we all talked about the protocols that we wanted to have in place. We also had to do some infrastructure upgrades to our organization, such as installing new phones and buying AV equipment.

**7. What advice do you have for entrepreneurs just starting their businesses in the current COVID-19 environment?**

I'm seeing numerous businesses start now and that's exciting. The first piece of advice I would offer is to talk to the Small Business Development Center. They know the pitfalls that businesses are going to come across and they also know about all the resources available, from grant funds that may be CARES Act related to loan funds through banks. From there, I would recommend that they have a strong network of people they can talk with about the challenges of their business because everything is so unique right now. Connecting with chambers of commerce is a great place to start network building for entrepreneurs.

**8. What is a book you have read recently that you would recommend?**

I regularly recommend *13 Ways to Kill Your Community* by Doug Griffiths, which is really entertaining and informative. The book is a satirical approach to community development and the 13 things that you shouldn't be doing in your communities if you want to find success in revitalizing your community. The author affirms the message about successful community development that we frequently observe at the regional commission. It's not just a government role; it's not just a private sector role. Everybody in the community has to play a part.

**9. What is a recent accomplishment you have made that you are proud of?**

On my birthday in June, I set out and ran a marathon on the New River Trail and carried my own water and fuel. It went well. Next, I have the Richmond marathon coming up in November, so I'm hoping to officially check the box with a real race, but that was a lot of fun in June.

**10. What is your favorite place to visit?**

That's hard because travel is so important to me. I think that you gain a lot of perspective by being in other places and learning from other people. There are a couple of places I've visited that really stood out to me and continue to resonate. The Semien Mountains in Ethiopia and Riomaggiore in Italy – a series of five towns on the coast that you can hike between – were absolutely beautiful and full of culture, which is so much fun to take in when traveling.

**Learn about the GOVA Region 2 Projects on our website.**

---



# SAVE THE DATES

## Future GO Virginia Meetings

**October 14:** GO Virginia Region 2 Executive Committee Meeting, 1 PM - 3 PM

**October 28:** GO Virginia Region 2 Full Council Meeting, 1 PM - 3 PM

---

## Join the Port of Virginia for the State of the Port on October 1



CMA CGM Brazil approaching Virginia International Gateway, September 15, 2020

© Aerophoto America.

This free livestream event will be presented by John Reinhart, CEO and Executive Director of the Virginia Port Authority, and it will include an update on the port's performance, land and waterside infrastructure projects, and its impact as an economic engine for the entire Commonwealth. In addition, the Port of Virginia will be asking for donations to the Virginia Food Bank to support our fellow Virginians.

[Register Here](#)

[Learn More On Our Blog](#)

---

## GOVA Funding for Manufacturers is Now Available



GENEDGE is now accepting applications for Phase 1 of the GO Virginia Re-tooling Virginia Manufacturers for Strategic Industries Program.

Over the course of two years, GENEDGE will manage this program to implement a mid-to-long term approach to responding to the COVID-19 crisis by re-tooling Virginia manufacturers for strategic industries.

The first year of the program will **address the needs for medical supplies and PPE with the expectation that additional critical supply chain opportunities will be identified** at the industrial sector, state, or federal level. The processes and tools developed in the first year can easily be redirected to additional critical strategic supply chains as they are identified. Given the expected focus on additional reshoring efforts for strategic supply chains, we can follow the guidance to prioritize activities in the second year of the program.

**The project will involve two phases:**

1. Phase 1 will focus entirely on PPE
2. Phase 2 will engage with other emergent critical industry supply chain retooling and continue PPE capacity additions

[Apply Here](#)

---



## FOLLOW US

