



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

COLLABORATION  
INSPIRATION  
SUCCESS

March 22, 2023

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## Next Submission Deadline: June 23, 2023 by 5 p.m.

As of March 1, 2023, we have \$967,718 in funding available for Region 2 grants and up to \$150,100 for Enhanced Capacity Building grants.

Learn more on our website: <https://cece.vt.edu/GOVAR2/RequestforProposals.html>

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## Save the Date for Our Upcoming GO Virginia Region 2 Council Meeting

**April 28, 2023:** GO Virginia Region 2 Full Council Meeting, 1-3 PM, Roanoke, VA, Location TBD

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# GO Virginia State Board Approves Three Region 2 Projects

On March 14, the GO Virginia State Board approved the following three projects from Region 2.

## **Bedford Regional Metal Workforce Retention Center (Town of Bedford Economic Development Authority)**

The Bedford Regional Metal Workforce Retention Center project will repurpose a 60,000 square foot former steel shot foundry into a Central and Southwest Virginia regional workforce development center focused on metal fabrication skills training. The funding will be used to procure a consultant team to develop a master plan strategy for how to connect metal-working businesses that need targeted skills training with educators in metal fabrication skills. This project will further the work of a previous GO Virginia award to Central Virginia Community College (CVCC) to create a Regional Career and Technical Education Academy. The GO Virginia board approved a total of \$99,900 in state funds for the project, which is leveraging \$201,000 in non-state sources.

## **Career Acceleration Program (Beacon of Hope)**

The Career Acceleration Program will work to increase the career capacity of the region by retaining young workers graduating high school. Project goals also include reconnecting with individuals who have paused their educational journeys and engaging with two-generation households, where parent and children are prime age workers. The project will also create a long-term career case management system that allows workers to continuously learn and prepare for new job opportunities. The project builds on a previous GO Virginia planning grant, which helped Beacon of Hope develop a playbook for implementing Future Centers – resource hubs in schools that assist students with college and career preparation – across Region 2. The GO Virginia board approved a total of \$540,000 in state funds for the project, which is leveraging \$585,000 in non-state sources.

## **LRBA Center of Entrepreneurship (Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance)**

The Center of Entrepreneurship will serve as an anchor and catalyst for the Greater Lynchburg region's entrepreneurial ecosystem. The center will foster an environment for new and serial entrepreneurs to raise capital, access resources, and garner the support system needed to take their products into the marketplace. The project will provide direct assistance to entrepreneurs; increase the available support space for targeted startups by 5,000 square feet and access to capital by up to \$400,000; and offer 10-12 training and business development events to 200 attendees each year. The GO Virginia board approved a total of \$240,192 in state funds for the project, which is leveraging \$199,035 in non-state sources.

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# Meet a GOVA Region 2 Grantee: Elise Spontarelli, Workforce and Entrepreneurship Initiatives in a Regional Makerspace



*Elise Spontarelli received a bachelor's degree in visual communications at the University of South Carolina and founded her first company in 2009, a web and graphic design company called GetCreative Web Design. In 2017, she founded Vector Space, a non-profit makerspace in Lynchburg, Virginia, with her husband.*

## **1. What inspired you to start Vector Space?**

I have always been a person who likes to create. I have a background in graphic design, which involved a lot of digital creation. Both my husband and I also did home projects. When we learned about the makerspace concept, it sounded like something we wanted to be a part of. Lynchburg didn't have a makerspace, so we started exploring the idea of whether the model could work in the area if there was enough support and interest. After receiving a lot of positive feedback, we decided to start Vector Space.

## **2. Do you have a favorite thing you've created using the makerspace?**

Something I love about the makerspace is I don't have to stick to one medium or one type of project, and I can also apply my background in graphic design. I enjoy taking digital designs and making them into physical concepts, whether that's screen-printing t-shirts or using the CNC plasma cutter to create a piece of art.

## **3. How has GO Virginia helped you take your work at Vector Space to the next level?**

The GO Virginia grant is part of a larger campaign to completely move and expand the makerspace in a huge way. For the past seven years, the makerspace was located in a facility we rented. The grant played a key role in allowing us to purchase and renovate a new facility with double the square footage of the previous location. With this facility, we will be able to serve more makers and expand our programming, shop areas, and the types of tools we offer.

## **4. Can you tell me more about the 12-week Women in Machining program and how it has impacted women in the region?**

Lynchburg has a high demand for machinists, and women are largely not entering machine trades, so this program was born with the purpose of introducing women to this career path. We work with about five women per year, and over the course of 12 weeks, they learn the fundamentals, gaining skills with the milling machine, lathe, measuring tools, and bench work. At the same time, they are learning soft skills through updating their resume and participating in practice interviews. We work with Virginia Career Works to implement the SkillsUSA curriculum, helping prepare participants for the workforce. At the end of the program, we take them on tours of local machine shops, including Belvac Production Machinery, Wegmann USA, Automated Conveyor Systems, and BWX Technologies. After they complete the 12-week program, there are different paths they can take. We can work to place them in a job that is a good fit for them or they can choose to continue their education at Central Virginia

Community College. We have a partnership with CVCC, so once participants finish the program, they will have a credit for the first class in the Machine Shop Fundamentals 2-year degree program.

### **5. How has this project helped entrepreneurs in the region?**

Vector Space partners with the local Small Business Development Center and Office of Economic Development to host Co.Starters, a 10-week entrepreneur training class, once a year. With the expansion of our facility, we're able to add a lot of tools that are crucial to prototyping and product development. We're getting higher-end 3D printers and laser cutters that can engrave metal. The tool expansion made available through the GO Virginia funding is going to make a big difference for entrepreneurs.

### **6. Do you have a favorite memory or moment that stands out to you since you started working on your GO Virginia project?**

Two of our Women in Machining participants recently spoke at a Vector Space event. I've gotten to know these women very well over the past couple of years since they've been in the program. Hearing the pride in their voices as they talked about their experience was a reminder of what we're doing and why we're doing it. They're both employed at local machine companies. One of them is running the stockroom, so every piece of material that goes in or out of the whole company goes through her. It was inspiring to hear her talk about how she had reached that level of leadership in the company and how she wouldn't have known about the opportunity without the Women in Machining program. The second student talked about how much she enjoys machining. Her face lit up speaking about this skill that she never knew was available to her. Just within a couple of weeks of trying it, she fell in love with it. Now, she is able to participate in this hands-on skill every day.

### **7. What advice would you give to someone who wanted to start their own business?**

You need support and community to successfully launch a business. Sometimes people get concerned that someone might steal their idea, but what I like to remind entrepreneurs is their experience combined with their skill set and the solution they've developed is what makes their ideas unique. I encourage people to share their idea, ask for help, and find mentors. Also, all the opportunities we offer at Vector Space are helpful for a business's success.



# Meet a GOVA Region 2 Council Member: Raymond Smoot, Founding GOVA Region 2 Chair, Virginia Tech Foundation CEO Emeritus



*A native of Lynchburg, Virginia, Raymond Smoot earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Virginia Tech and a Ph.D. from the Ohio State University. Over the course of his 40-year career at Virginia Tech, he served in many roles, including chief executive officer of the Virginia Tech Foundation, vice president for administration and treasurer, vice president for business affairs, and vice president for finance. He was responsible for over \$1.3 billion in real estate development for the university and played a central role in the creation of the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center, the Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center, the Virginia Tech Research Center in Arlington, and the Turner Street development in Blacksburg. Smoot was the founding chair of the GO Virginia Region 2 council and is retiring from the role after nearly seven years of service. Since the GO Virginia program started, Region 2 has authorized over \$8 million in project funding and generated \$7.8 million in external investment. To date, 40 projects have been funded by the council.*

## **1. What was your favorite part of working at Virginia Tech?**

The opportunity to work with capable people focused on enhancing and growing the university. Virginia Tech's student population and campus is four times the size it was when I studied there, and it has a much richer variety of programs. By most objective standards, it would be considered a stronger university. It was a great experience working with dedicated people over the years to help that transformation happen.

## **2. What is your proudest accomplishment over the course of your career?**

One is the creation and development of the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center. The other is the redevelopment, then successful reopening, of the Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center. I had the responsibility to complete these projects for the university, and because of the good work of many, these projects are still with us today and still contribute to the university in significant ways. I'm proud to have been associated with them.

## **3. Do you have a favorite memory from your time on the GOVA Region 2 council?**

I grew up in Lynchburg, and early on in the council's formation, I would travel there to meet with some of the people we served. One day, I was sitting in a meeting and I looked out the window and realized I was looking at the high school I went to in Lynchburg. I could see what had been my original home room almost 60 years earlier. It felt like everything came full circle, and I was grateful to be doing something that connected to where I came from.

Beyond that personal anecdotal memory, what I value about GO Virginia is that Region 2 continues to bring together people from areas that have not traditionally worked together. The New River Valley and the Roanoke Region have worked together on projects over the last 25 years, but we had never engaged significantly with the Lynchburg region before GO Virginia was created. Those of us who live in the less populous areas of the state need to work together to make a difference, because we don't have a large number of people representing us in the legislature like the more populous regions do. Region 2 has created opportunities for those who might have not had them before by bringing together the Greater Lynchburg Region, the Roanoke-Alleghany Region, and the New River Valley.

#### **4. What did you enjoy most about being chair of the Region 2 council?**

I enjoyed engaging with the other members of council and staff who run the program. GO Virginia has, through its attention to enhancing the workforce, significantly enhanced quality of life, and I liked learning about the projects that are focused on attracting and retaining higher-wage jobs that allow for our region to grow.

#### **5. What are you looking forward to seeing GOVA Region 2 do more of in the future?**

Through GO Virginia, I have seen how important it is to engage high school and middle school students in thinking about their future careers. I now better understand how vital paid internships, apprenticeships, certification programs, and community college instruction can be to obtaining career skills that can result in a very lucrative income. For example, the average nurse in Virginia today earns \$89,000 a year. GO Virginia has begun to give more attention to the need to engage our high school and middle school students, and there are additional opportunities in the future to continue that work that I look forward to seeing develop.

GO Virginia provides valuable services and opportunities to our region, and this will be even more true going forward. I was glad to be involved in getting it started, but the best time for GO Virginia is the future.

#### **6. What activities do you like to do in your spare time?**

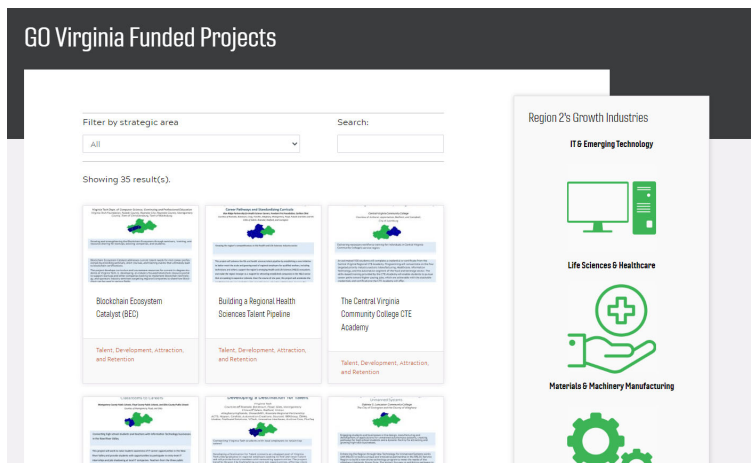
I live out in the county and have some land, so I really enjoy gardening. I also love cutting, curing, and burning firewood. And I enjoy trout fishing and floating the New River.

#### **7. What is the most memorable trip you have ever been on?**

My wife and I spent a week with friends on a barge on the Bourgogne Canal in France. We would get off the barge and ride bikes through the wine country of Chablis. Since the barge only went 3 miles an hour, we didn't have to worry about getting left behind. We'd ride through the vineyards and be at the next sets of locks to get back on the boat when it arrived. It was a wonderful experience with friends who have made a significant impact in our region.

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# Explore the GOVA Region 2 Project Database



We recently created a new database for GOVA Region 2 projects. If you're interested in learning more about Region 2 projects, you can visit the database here: <https://cece.vt.edu/GOVAR2/GOVirginiaFundedProjects.html>

## GOVA Region 2 In The News

### **Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance plans to open Center for Entrepreneurship (WSET)**

<https://wset.com/news/local/lynchburg-regional-business-alliance-virginia-plans-to-open-center-for-entrepreneurship-mentorship-program-march-2023>

### **Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance awarded funds to develop center for entrepreneurship (WSET)**

<https://wset.com/news/local/lynchburg-regional-business-alliance-awarded-funds-to-develop-center-for-entrepreneurship-virginia-support-development-organizations-march-2023>

### **GO Virginia awards \$880,000 to Bedford, Lynchburg projects; more ... (Cardinal News)**

<https://cardinalnews.org/2023/03/15/go-virginia-awards-880000-to-central-southwest-virginia-projects-more/>

### **Local projects receive state funding to further grow economy (WDBJ7)**

<https://www.wdbj7.com/2023/03/14/local-groups-receive-state-funding-further-grow-economy/>

### **If the Blacksburg-Roanoke-Lynchburg area wants a regional tech hub, here's a chance to help write the rules (Cardinal News)**

<https://cardinalnews.org/2023/03/01/if-the-blacksburg-roanoke-lynchburg-area-wants-a-regional-tech-hub-heres-a-chance-to-help-write-the-rules/>

### **House budget proposal would create program to pay tech workers \$10,000 to move to New River-Roanoke-Lynchburg area (Cardinal News)**

<https://cardinalnews.org/2023/02/23/house-budget-proposal-would-create-program-to-pay-tech-workers-10000-to-move-to-new-river-roanoke-lynchburg-area/>

### **Bank of Botetourt Names Austin its 7th President and Appoints to Board of Directors; Names CEO Hayth as Vice Chair of the Board of Directors (PR Newswire)**

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/bank-of-botetourt-names-austin-its-7th-president-and-appoints-to-board-of-directors-names-ceo-hayth-as-vice-chair-of-the-board-of-directors-301749230.html>

### **After seven years of service, Ray Smoot to retire as GO Virginia Region 2 Chair (VT Center for Economic and Community Engagement Blog)**

<https://blogs.tlos.vt.edu/cece/2023/02/14/after-seven-years-of-service-ray-smoot-to-retire-as-go-virginia-region-2-chair/>