

Vibrant Virginia

Virginia Tech

Vibrant Virginia began in 2018 as a statewide effort to address disparity and division, partly through university and community collaboration. The initiative is included in the University's Beyond Boundaries Strategic Plan and guided by a University Council on Vibrant Virginia. The effort is jointly led by the Virginia Tech Center for Economic Community Engagement and Virginia Cooperative Extension. Vibrant Virginia engages the university in advancing vibrant and flourishing places in every part of the state.

Get involved

1.) Share: We invite all interested individuals to share information on existing projects and research that advance vitality in Virginia communities.

2.) Start: Faculty, graduate students, and community partners can speak with us about ideas and possibilities for new or emerging projects and research aligned with the Vibrant Virginia focus areas.

3.) Support: Virginia Tech entities and community organizations are invited to join our sustained collaboration model. We encourage ongoing partnership around shared issues through communities of practice and co-investment opportunities.

Vibrant Virginia carries out this mission through support for projects to bridge divides, reduce disparities, or broaden prosperity in one or more specific Virginia communities.

Our activities are distinguished by three key characteristics:

Generative or additive

Rather than duplicating or seeking to replace existing work, we encourage new activities or help emerging activities to grow.

Place-specific, pilot-scaled, and possibility-oriented

We prioritize community-focused work that pilots or explores a new approach or idea and is solutions-centered and strengths-focused.

Building capacity or knowledge

The initiative seeks to build knowledge and capacity for communities, researchers, students, and practitioners around community-engaged work that supports more vibrant and thriving communities.



A joint meeting of the Center for Economic and Community Engagement advisory board and the Virginia Tech Council on Vibrant Virginia took place on September 30, 2024.



**CENTER FOR ECONOMIC AND
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**
VIRGINIA TECH.

Three areas of work

Place-based partnerships and exploratory projects

We build sustained collaborations in specific Virginia places—ongoing engagement with an anchor partner around a pressing, community-defined issue or opportunity. We also lead or support short-term exploratory projects, often planning or research-focused.

Faculty-initiated micro-projects

We help Virginia Tech faculty start or grow Vibrant Virginia-related projects through seed awards, technical assistance, and/or resource linkages.

Civic well-being

We develop and offer capacity-building tools and resources that support civic well-being in Virginia communities through skill-development, knowledge-building, and experiential activities.



A table discussion at the June 16 community convening in Alleghany County included John Rainone, president of Mountain Gateway Community College; Ken McFadyen, county administrator; and other attendees.



Route 76 at the Montgomery-Roanoke county line.

Recent examples

Enhancing economic opportunity in the Alleghany Highlands

Over the past year, we have worked with the Alleghany Foundation and a regional advisory group on identifying asset-aligned economic opportunities.

The community engagement process included input from 400 survey respondents, 14 interviewees, 3 input session groups, and over 80 attendees at a community-wide convening.

Results include sustained collaboration around a strategic road map with prioritized actions to grow local capacity, reduce economic disparity, and strengthen the regional economy.

Supporting faculty-initiated micro-projects

In 2025, we helped over a dozen faculty explore Vibrant Virginia project ideas and identified four projects for \$10,000 seed funding awards:

- Identifying and reducing barriers to rural Emergency Medical Service (EMS) care delivery in Virginia;
- Facilitating community visioning and planning with Amonate, an unincorporated former coal-company town in Tazewell County;
- Providing STEM kits and decision science instruction through neighborhood outreach to underserved communities in Northern Virginia;
- Supporting the creation of community-focused exhibits and events along Route 76 in Virginia, to promote recreation tourism along a historic cycling route