

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Amendment to the 2017 and 2019 Growth and Diversification Plans focuses on strategies and opportunities for Region 6 to pursue over the next two years.

This report was written in August 2021 with much of the data used taken from Q32020, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, a review of the data and recent activities across the region, through both GO Virginia and non-GO Virginia funding, reaffirm the targeted industries for Region 6:

- Aquaculture/Seafood/Commercial Fishing/Marine Industries
- Forestry/Wood Products and Paper
- Manufacturing
- Distribution/Logistics
- Information/Data Centers
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services

From May 25th, 2021 through July 14th, 2021 Region 6 held seven stakeholder engagement sessions with partners throughout the region to provide input and share views about the current and future state of the Region's economy.

Session 1 laid the groundwork for stakeholders to understand the importance of all three priority areas as fundamental tools for successful economic development; understand the current status of assets of these priority areas in GO Virginia Region 6; and understand the linkage of all three priority areas as it relates to the economic health of the entire Region.

Sessions 2 and 3 divided stakeholders into the priority investment areas of Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Development, Site Development, and Workforce Development. Each investment area held individual meetings in which stakeholders discussed the gaps in the region and actionable strategies to recommend to the Council to help close these gaps.

Below outlines the priorities for the region identified through these stakeholder engagement sessions.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM

***Problem: What activities can we undertake to foster the development of entrepreneurial companies?
How can we foster an environment where existing small and medium businesses can grow?***

GOAL	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
Develop a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem	Establish an entrepreneurship ecosystem hub in the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem development plan for the region.• Develop a robust network of entrepreneurs from both 'main street businesses' and 'high growth businesses'• Develop programming to help businesses at all stages develop and grow.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalize on the large concentration of veteran population in the region to foster prospective entrepreneurs.
Identify, empower, and support entrepreneurs	Promote the development of 'main street businesses' and 'high growth businesses'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect to existing and develop new activities aimed to support entrepreneurs. • Build awareness around existing business support programs and resources in the region.
Enhance technology commercialization from research centers and institutions	Develop and construct a technology commercialization system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide counseling, mentoring and other instructional programs for technology and venture-backed startups, to facilitate innovators bringing new technologies to the marketplace. • Create industry review council to provide insight and expertise on technology commercialization opportunities. • Foster the development of maker's spaces for idea exploration.

SITE DEVELOPMENT

Problem: How can the region collaborate regionally to increase the inventory of shovel ready sites in the region to attract prospects? Keep in mind that the VEDP's VBRs and GO Virginia are not mutually exclusive and can be combined to solve this problem.

GOAL	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
Increase the number of business ready sites within the region to either Tier 3, Tier 4, or Tier 5 sites.	Fund 10 regionally significant sites grouped around priority industry clusters to move up the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program (VBRSP) tier scale to either Tier 3, Tier 4, or Tier 5 sites within 24 months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the understanding of the importance of site development and available sites with local elected officials and county administrators; public and private utility companies; utility cooperatives; regional planning organizations; and local and regional economic development organizations. • Support localities efforts in determining best grouping of sites from prioritization list. • Develop list of uncharacterized sites and determine regional significance. • Within 24 months, fund 10 regionally significant sites based on prioritized list to either Tier 3, Tier 4, or Tier 5 sites.
Improve Regional Site Development Collaboration	Establish one revenue sharing agreement (RIFA) between each of the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure understanding of RIFAs with the localities. • Complete the Fredericksburg Regional Alliance RIFA project. • Develop the legal formation of each RIFA.

	localities within the sub-regions.	
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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Problem: How can we solve the three major workforce challenges that the region faces: 1. Aligning Virginia talent with current and prospective job opportunities, 2. Adapting education and training programs to meet current and prospective Virginia business needs, and 3. Attracting and retaining talent from outside Virginia.

GOAL	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
Adapt education and training programs to meet current and prospective business needs	Strengthen and expand non-degree programs (e.g., certifications and credentials) that meet the needs of regional employers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Rappahannock Workforce Study • Implement Action Items Determined in Rappahannock Workforce Study • Examine current course offerings and gaps amongst Community Colleges and Universities with the needs of employers. • Determine training gaps based on needs from employers. • Organize regional cluster networks to promote collaborative workforce development and training solutions.
Align Region 6 Talent with Current and Prospective Job Opportunities.	Establish internship programs that connect students with employers in the region in priority industry sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage employers in priority industries and determine current programs. • Develop internship programs for employers in small to mid-sized companies.
	Establish programs for high school students to learn about jobs in the region and a pathway to entry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage K-12 schools to strengthen and expand non-college degree programs (e.g., certifications and credentials) • Enhance job shadowing programs with employers. • Establish regional career exhibitions to connect students with summer job opportunities.
Attract and Retain Talent in the Region	Establish pathway programs for workers within the region for career advancement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop work-based learning opportunities that incorporate soft skills training to keep employees. • Strengthen and expand programs that prepare mid-career personnel with the skills and certifications necessary to enter priority industry fields.