



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

## 2021 Growth and Diversification Plan Update Guidelines

### Section I: GO Virginia Program Intent and Growth and Diversification Plans

The GO Virginia program goal is to facilitate regional collaboration to grow and diversify the economy through supporting projects leading to the creation of more, higher paying jobs through revenue derived from out-of-state sources. Programs and projects recommended by the Regional Councils and approved by the GO Virginia state board shall be consistent with the strategies and targeted industry clusters outlined in the Regional Growth and Diversification Plans.

The Virginia Growth and Opportunity Act establishes that each Regional Council is required to develop an economic growth and diversification plan to (i) promote private-sector growth and opportunity in the region; (ii) identify issues of economic competitiveness for the region, including gaps in education and skills required to meet existing and prospective employer needs within the region; and (iii) outline steps that the collaborating business, education, and government entities in the region will pursue to expand economic opportunity, diversify the economy, and align workforce development activities with the education and skills needed by employers in the region. Each Regional Council is required to review their Plan not less than biennially while receiving grants from the GO Virginia fund.

For the required 2021 review, each Regional Council shall submit an amended growth and diversification plan to DHCD no later than **October 15, 2021** for consideration at the December 2021 GO Virginia Board meeting. We are requesting that GO Virginia Regional Councils approach this effort with an eye towards supporting ongoing economic recovery efforts.

The overall goals of this plan update is to reevaluate each Council's overall goals and strategic priorities, with a focus on accelerating economic recovery efforts in the near-term while supporting investments that will advance longer-term economic growth strategies within each region.

The amended plan is intended to describe specific goals and actionable strategies that will produce measurable results over a two-year period. Additionally, the plan should consider how these efforts can be coordinated and sustained over a 5-10 year horizon, and the broad steps to be taken in key categories i.e. site development, entrepreneurship, commercialization, or workforce, should be provided.

Councils must engage a broad range of stakeholders in the plan update process. Councils should demonstrate stakeholder participation in the plan revision process from local and regional economic development organizations, education and workforce training partners, planning



district commissions, nonprofits, community groups, workforce boards, as well as coordinators of regional entrepreneurial activities.

Councils are encouraged to approach their revisions with consideration for other regional economic development and workforce development plans, including those developed by regional economic development organizations and planning district commissions.

## Section II: Plan Elements

At a minimum, the amended plan should include the following activities and plan activities/elements:

**1. EVALUATE THE PERFORMANCE OF YOUR REGIONAL ECONOMY:** Regional Councils should reflect on the performance of their regional economy with a focus on the performance of their previously identified targeted industry sectors. This review should consider at least the past five years' economic performance and generally result in an assessment of economic conditions in the region.

DHCD will provide a JobsEQ data package to support this effort and allow for analysis of the items noted below; however, Regional Councils may elect to supplement with additional data sources, as well as quantitative and qualitative analysis, or prepare their own data for review. In addition, Regional Councils and/or their Support Organizations are encouraged to check with DHCD staff to see if other specific data sets they may need can be provided via JobsEQ.

Such evaluation should reflect on the following:

- a. Employment growth across all sectors
- b. Wage growth across all sectors
- c. Employment growth in targeted traded industry sectors
- d. Wage growth in targeted traded industry sectors
- e. New business formation activity (source: VEC or TEconomy)
- f. New business formation in targeted traded sector industries (source: VEC or TEconomy)
- g. Economic development announcements (new and expanding businesses) (source: VEDP website/announcements)

**2. A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS FOR EACH TARGETED INDUSTRY SECTOR:** The identification of targeted sectors or clusters must be centered on empirical data, and based on results that are realistic given the drivers of the region's economy. Each Regional Council should consider their current targeted sectors, as well as any potential new targeted sectors identified in the data analysis.

Regions are encouraged to conduct a situational analysis that identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the future economic performance of each sector. Regional Councils



should approach this activity with a consideration for GO Virginia's four priority investment areas (Talent Development, Start Up Ecosystem, Cluster Scale Up, Sites/Infrastructure Development). Regions should also review their current inventory of sites relative to their targeted traded industry sectors to inform and prioritize future sites investments.

This analysis should be informed and validated by business leaders and other stakeholders.

**3. SKILLS GAP ANALYSIS FOR YOUR TARGETED INDUSTRY SECTORS:** Evaluate labor requirements and regional capacity to train workers. Update the previously identified workforce gaps in the availability of immediately employable talent in the targeted sectors or clusters. The prioritization of workforce gaps to be addressed will serve as guidance to the Regional Council and Board in the evaluation of future funding decisions. If a gap exists in a newly identified target sector, identify current efforts to address this gap, being specific as to the skills/credentialing/experience/education required, and whether these efforts are adequate to address the shortage and to support long-term growth. Councils are encouraged to collaborate with workforce development boards and other workforce/education system stakeholders.

**4. IDENTIFICATION OF PLAN GOALS AND ACTIONABLE STRATEGIES:** Review the priority goals and strategies in your plan and refine using the information and data gathered previously. Map your active project portfolio against these strategies, including those in your project pipeline.

Use the GO Virginia program's four priority investment areas (Talent Development, Start Up Ecosystem, Cluster Scale Up, and Sites/Infrastructure) as a framework to describe the newly prioritized strategies and proposed activities that will advance the goals of the GO Virginia Program and the Regional Growth and Diversification Plan.

Councils should identify a framework for evaluation of efforts and the progress towards implementation of the Growth and Diversification Plan. For example, each strategy should identify one or more measures of performance that will indicate progress towards achieving the Plan goals.

**5. IDENTIFY STRATEGIC PARTNERS FOR COLLABORATION:** The amended plan should identify opportunities for collaboration or complementary efforts for each of the strategies outlined in the amendment. Councils should identify organizations and other non-GO Virginia activities that could/should collaborate to support the goals of the plan.