

GO VIRGINIA REGION 3 FY20 ANNUAL REPORT

Report Period July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020

During the July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020 time frame, pursuant to the Virginia Growth and Opportunity Act (§ 2.2-2484, *et seq.*, of the *Code of Virginia*), the Southside Planning District Commission (SPDC), serving as GO Virginia Region 3 Support Organization and Fiscal Agent, has complied with all notices, deadlines, reporting, and regional requirements in accordance with the provisions of the Act and under the leadership of the GO Virginia Region 3 Council.

General Obligations

The SPDC through its staff and contract vendors and under the direction of the GO Virginia Region 3 Council, performed the following:

- Submitted all required documents to the Department of Housing & Community Development and sought Region 3 Council approval where necessary.
- Organized and executed regular monthly meetings of the Council and/or Executive Committee.
- Prepared press releases for all meetings and posted on the Region 3 Website; prepared meeting packets and minutes of all monthly Council /Executive Committee meetings and posted on the Region 3 Website.
- Updated Council members on relevant state requirements.
- At the recommendation of the Communications Committee, the Council approved the renewal of the Letterpress Contract to continue serving as the communications vendor for Region 3. The purpose of the investment in this strategy is to create a more robust project pipeline by more effectively informing and educating local and regional stakeholders. Letterpress handles media alerts for meetings/events, Facebook page posts, website management and staff support for special events such as All-Hands meetings or project pipeline development.
- Participated in DHCD Support Organization calls to obtain updates, program changes and “best practices” from other GO Virginia regions.
- Facilitated all necessary administrative duties for the Council, including relaying pertinent information from the State Board, i.e. policy changes, funding updates, etc.
- Provided administrative support services for all Region 3 approved projects which include reviewing and submitting draw requests, quarterly reports, and final closeout documents.
- Provided Fiscal Agent services to the Region 3 Council. Such duties included:
 1. The approval and payment of invoices
 2. Reconcile bank statements and prepare financial reports for all Region 3 Executive Council and Executive Committee meetings
 3. Prepare monthly financial reports of all approved projects including the Capacity Building Operational Fund.
 4. Prepare draw remittances through DHCD’s CAMS system
 5. Utilize QuickBooks software for the tracking of revenues and expenditures

6. Track non-GO Virginia funds separately for match documentation
7. Contract agent for consultants and other vendors as directed by the Region 3 Council
8. Prepare “DHCD GO Virginia Annual Financial Report” as required

Council Initiatives/Updates

Region 3 Growth and Diversification Plan Update – The G&D Plan Update was prepared by The RiverLink Group under the guidance of the Region 3 Growth & Diversification Plan Committee led by Dennis Witt. It was presented to the Executive Committee/ Council and approved for submission to DHCD. Various stakeholder sessions were held throughout the update process to receive input on topics related to the economy, regional issues, workforce development, business-ready site development and entrepreneurship. Several discussion questions were provided to the Executive Committee to collect valuable input. Two sectors that continue to resonate within the region are broadband and health care. Mangum Economics and Community Futures provided the statistical updates. There were few changes in the overall economy of the region, and stakeholders overall felt that the economy had stabilized. Target sectors remain the same with specific subsectors identified. The Update incorporated recommendations on entrepreneurship/innovation and business-ready sites, as required by State guidelines.

Region 3 Council Prioritized G&D Strategies – The G&D Plan Update identified 28 potential investment strategies. The Council reviewed the strategies and selected two priority strategies for each sector that provide a framework for Council decisions on its investments to build the project pipeline.

Communications with Stakeholders: All-Hands Meeting, February 18, 2020 - The Region 3 Council continued its proactive outreach to stakeholders through its All-Hands Meeting, which incorporated a presentation from the Virginia Economic Development Partnership team updating attendees on the results of the VEDP Site Readiness Program. The event also updated participants on the status of the GO TEC project and the Entrepreneurial and Innovation Investment Strategy. Over 130 stakeholders participated, and LetterPress Communications was able to secure a significant number of one-on-one interviews that have been used in Region 3’s social media strategy.

New Region 3 Program Director – In partnership with the University of Virginia’s Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, Bryan David was hired as the new GO Virginia Region 3 Program Manager to replace the services currently provided by the Riverlink Group. His employment started on June 15, 2020.

Completed DHCD Survey - Region 3 Council responded to DHCD’s invitation requesting that the Chairs/Vice-Chairs of all regions to complete a survey to gather input on program policies and suggestions on ways to improve delivery of the GO Virginia Program.

Region 3 Communications Plan - Letterpress Region 3's Communications vendor, prepared the Communications Plan, which is designed to help Region 3 staff, council members, partners and champions increase visibility in the region and solicit involvement from community members and stakeholders. The Plan provides a supporting framework for foundational communications efforts. It is designed to grow with the organization, providing space to experiment, quickly evaluate success and focus energy on activities that bring high engagement from constituents. The Plan was last updated September 2020.

Region 3 "Best Practices" Initiatives –

- The Executive Committee made the decision as "best practices" to notify Region 3 legislators when projects have received approval in an effort to keep them informed of successes throughout the region.
- The Region 3 Council reviewed the results of the "8 Weeks to Application" project, which was developed by the Communications Committee to provide coaching and mentoring to potential applicants. Council concurred that tools created for the training had long-lasting value and deferred to the Communications Committee on when to launch a second phase of the program.

Partnering with Regional Economic Development Organizations - The Executive Committee acknowledged the importance of ensuring alignment with various economic development organizations throughout the region to collectively collaborate on economic development initiatives and discuss how Region 3 Council could support these efforts. Specifically, the leadership of the Council met with the leadership of the Southern Virginia Regional Alliance and Virginia's Growth Alliance as Region 3's primary regional economic development partners.

Region 3 Outreach Initiative - The Communications Committee recommended that each Council member present the "Roadshow PowerPoint" to various civic groups to promote GO Virginia throughout the communities. As of the time of this report the Roadshow is under development.

Region 3 Council & Staff Participate in State Roundtable Discussion – Region 3 Chair/Vice-Chair and staff attended the State Board meeting held December 10, 2019 that was followed by a meeting with the Chairs, Vice-Chairs, and State Board members. Topics of interest included match adjustments, project ROI calculations, consideration of healthcare as a traded sector, redefining a quorum, and project pipeline development.

Region 3 Council & Staff Participate in State Work Group Sessions - In response to comments received from the State Board roundtable discussions and in follow-up, the State Board reconvened the GO Virginia Work Group that was originally tasked with providing input into the design and structure of GO Virginia. The Region 3 Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Principal of The RiverLink Group participated in all four discussion sessions, which resulted in recommendations to the State Board at its March 2020 meeting.

Region 3 Staff Attend Support Organization Breakfast Work Session - Region 3 staff attended a Breakfast Work Session which included staff from all GO Virginia regions. VEDP presented the Site Characterization Report results. The Work Session also included a review of “best practices” and suggestions for improved reporting and project application processes.

Region 3 Broadband Initiative – Ubiquitous coverage of broadband remains a high priority with Region 3 leadership. On behalf of Region 3 leadership, the RiverLink Group consulted with Kyle Rosner, Commonwealth Connect, Tad Deriso, Mid-Atlantic Broadband, and Tamarah Holmes, DHCD, to gather broadband information for the Region 3 area and understand what steps had already been taken by DHCD and Commonwealth Connect. While consideration was given by the Regional Council to hosting a Region-wide broadband summit, ultimately The RiverLink Group worked with DHCD to convene a virtual discussion session with representatives from Charlotte, Lunenburg, Nottoway and Prince Edward Counties to encourage them to consider upcoming VATI grants as a tool for broadband planning and deployment.

Approved Projects

1) Entrepreneurship & Innovation Strategy Study – Date of Award 10/09/19

Through a Request for Proposals process, the Longwood Small Business Development Center and Mid-Atlantic Broadband were selected to collaborate and develop a comprehensive strategy and framework for a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem for the region. The two partners completed the report which mapped traded-sector businesses and entrepreneurship resources available within the region to support entrepreneurial ecosystem activities. No matching funds were required for Regional Entrepreneurship Initiative; however, total match to date for the project is \$64,074.07. The Region 3 Council will make decisions in FY 21 about how to implement the recommendations of the report. Region 3 Strategy – Startup Ecosystem

2) Operation Last Mile Drone Project – Date of Award 04/15/20

A short-term pilot project to test the efficacy of unmanned system delivery in a small urban environment in order to 1) develop the ability for unmanned system delivery of items (medical equipment/supplies) related to COVID-19 pandemic to locations that could be cut off due to quarantine, and 2) to demonstrate the particular site can be utilized by unmanned systems’ companies on a more routine basis to help attract companies to the site. Region 3 Strategy – Cluster Scale-Up

3) IALR Common Platform – Date of Award 04/15/20

IALR implemented a common career development and exploration online platform to be used by Region 3’s middle and high school students and businesses in the Region to increase students’ participation in work-based learning experiences and maximize participation from employers. Employers will utilize the platform to list work-based learning experiences such as job shadowing, internships, and apprenticeships which

support development of career pathways in strategic sectors. The project will be useful as the GO TEC project is implemented. Region 3 Strategy – Workforce Development

4) Bridge to Recovery – Date of Award 06/23/20

Southern Virginia Regional Alliance and Virginia's Growth Alliance are leading a comprehensive and collaborative approach to building a supply chain within the Region responsive to the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic. The project will provide technical assistance and subsidize support to key business sectors in order to prepare for the multiple recovery stages of COVID-19. This project took ready advantage of the Economic Resiliency and Recovery program made available by the GO Virginia State Board. Region 3 Strategy – Cluster Scale-Up

5) GO TEC-Phase 2B – Date of Award 06/23/20

This project, an extension of GO TEC Phase 2A, will expand on instructor training, program outreach, equipment and build-out of 10 middle-school career connection labs, and program materials focusing on the areas of precision machining, welding, IT/cybersecurity, robotics/mechatronics/automation, and advanced materials. Region 3 Strategy – Workforce Development