



Virginia Growth and Opportunity Fund (GO Virginia)

Competitive Fund – Project Guidance

Section 1: GO Virginia Program and Competitive Fund Intent

The GO Virginia program was designed to help grow and diversify regional economies and increase wages in every region of the Commonwealth. Nine regional councils have organized and developed Growth and Diversification plans and strategies organized around their own unique resources and assets.

The Code of Virginia established the Virginia Growth and Opportunity Fund and describes an allocation to be competitively awarded based on expected economic impact and outcomes without regard to a region's population. The Competitive Fund is established to create a shared pool of funding aside from each Region's per capita allocations to be accessed for project that represent an extraordinary economic opportunity.

The purpose of this guidance is to provide clarity on the process for developing and submitting an application requesting the use of Competitive Funds as well as the roles and responsibilities of participating Region(s).

Section 2: Overview of Fund Sources

The Competitive Fund is made up of two funding sources.

- 1) A yearly allocation as determined by the GO Virginia State Board following an appropriation by the Virginia General Assembly.
- 2) Resources recaptured as described in GO Virginia State Board Policy #14.

Section 3: Competitive Regional Performance Pool Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for the Competitive Pool, a region must satisfy one of the following criteria:

- 1) Multi-Regional Application – The project must involve two or more GO Virginia Regions. Request may be made for both implementation and planning projects.
- 2) Single Region Application – A single region may apply for implementation projects through the Competitive Fund if their funding request exceeds their available Per Capita Fund balance. Due to the recognized utility of planning, pilot, and feasibility studies for



future per capita pipeline development, Regions are not required to exhaust their yearly \$250,000 planning, pilot, and feasibility study allowance established by [Board Policy #3](#).

Section 4: Local Participation and Match

All GO Virginia projects must have participation from 2 or more localities. For multi-regional competitive performance pool applications, the participation of 2 or more localities in each participating region is required. All projects that include greater levels of local participation will benefit from higher scoring.

For multi-regional applications, it is required that each participating region cost share in the matching requirements associated with this funding pool. This match may be contributed by the subgrantee on behalf of private, public or non-profit sources across the project footprint.

For single region implementation applications, the applicant must demonstrate extraordinary economic opportunity by qualifying for 2:1 match via one of the available pathways outlined in the GO Virginia per capita allocation match waiver policy or must be a demonstrated concept already undertaken in a single Region that seeks to scale statewide.

Due to the extraordinary economic opportunity that is required to be eligible for State Board consideration as a result of the strict scoring criterion of the Competitive Fund application process, those successful applications will automatically qualify for the relaxed funding requirement of 2:1 match. At least 20% of the total required match for Competitive Fund applications must be sourced from participating local government entities.

Section 5: Competitive Pool Application Types

Multi-Regional Applications

For multi-regional applications, it is expected that the application will come from a “lead region”. The lead region assumes responsibility for receiving and vetting the application through its review process. The lead council staff will serve as the primary point of contact with the applicant and work to manage a streamlined and consistent communication process with the collaborating councils. The lead council chair is responsible for convening the chairs of the partnering councils to discuss the opportunity for collaboration, the project concept, and the potential economic impact of the application. The lead council must involve each partnering council in the application development process and provide an opportunity to provide feedback to the applicant. The lead council ultimately votes to approve the project, but the application cannot advance to the cut scoring phase of the application process until an action of support (in



the form of a vote) is taken by each partnering council. The partnering council must be provided access to the final approved application prior to taking an action of support.

A partnering region in a multi-regional application must participate actively as a member of the formed workgroup. Council leadership must engage with the lead council leadership and provide a letter of support for the project after acted upon by the council. Partnering council representatives are encouraged to participate in established advisory committees as described in the project application.

The applicant (subgrantee) should first engage with the lead regional council who will serve as a primary point of contact as well as the grantee for the project. The lead council will help to coordinate discussions with the formed workgroup. The workgroup members will develop a communication strategy and timeline with collaborating regional councils to ensure an efficient and effective application review process and ultimately approval of the project by the lead council and a fully informed action of support by the partnering councils. Should a multi-regional project be awarded funds, the subgrantee shall provide periodic progress reports to the collaborating councils in addition to the quarterly reports required by DHCD.

Implementation

A multi-regional implementation application shall include the meaningful participation and shared benefit of activities among two or more localities in multiple GO Virginia regions. A successful implementation effort will include extensive multi-regional coordination and communication, demonstrated outcomes associated with the project type as outlined in the GO Virginia Core Outcomes document, and a positive return on investment to the Commonwealth. Periodic updates to each participating Regional Council are required, including updates on outcomes achieved and quarterly milestone progress. It is expected that results matriculating from a multi-regional implementation project will include an impact footprint in all participating localities.

Planning

It is understood that the nature of multi-regional implementation includes both significant funding from the State as well as extraordinary effort by the lead council involved in bringing the application to fruition. In order to both alleviate the up-front burden of the lead region and to ensure the responsible and strategic utilization of State funding, the multi-regional planning application is established.



A multi-regional planning application is limited to no more than \$250,000 in request per project. A successful planning effort will include, at minimum, convening of a workgroup comprised of lead and partnering council leadership as described in the multi-regional implementation application process, convening of a stakeholder workgroup that must include the participation of applicable private industries, educational partners, participating local governing body representation, and other stakeholders as needed, and development of a strategic plan which will demonstrate a viable playbook for the a future implementation project representing an extraordinary economic opportunity to the partnering regions. It is expected that only multi-regional planning applications with a demonstrated eye toward a future multi-regional implementation project will be considered.

Single Region Implementation Application

A single region implementation project may include a requested amount entirely from the Competitive Fund or may be a combination of funding from a region's per capita allocation and the Competitive Fund if the request would completely exhaust the available unobligated fund balance of the applying region less unobligated funding reserved for planning, pilot, and feasibility study projects. Regardless of funding composition, a successful application must score a minimum of 75 points during the scoring process in order to qualify for State Board consideration.

It is expected that projects requesting funds from the Statewide Competitive Fund will present an extraordinary economic opportunity and are eligible for relaxed match. Applications must complete the Total Match Waiver form and indicate the qualifying criteria for extraordinary economic opportunity.

Section 6: Review and Approval Process

All applications received for the Competitive Fund will be scored based on a scoring rubric adopted by the GO Virginia State Board. Applications must score 75 points (out of 100) or better to access this fund.

For multi-regional projects, the lead region assumes responsibility for submitting the application to DHCD and, if awarded, will serve as the grantee for the project. An MOU among the collaborating regions will describe roles and responsibilities post award and will be included as part of the project contract.



Applications for funding through the Competitive Pool will be accepted on a first come, first serve basis quarterly on the same deadline cycle established for Per Capita allocation applications. In the event that multiple applications are submitted in a given quarter in which the existing funds in the Competitive Fund cannot satisfy all qualifying applications, the application with the highest cut score will be prioritized for State Board consideration.

State law requires that no single region receive total awards in excess of 25% of the total Virginia Growth and Opportunity Fund. For the purposes of multi-regional projects, funds will be assigned to the collaborating regions based on the breakdown of the project budgets. If a proportionate distribution cannot be determined, it may be assigned on a per capita basis. DHCD, in consultation with the collaborating regions, may determine an alternative distribution method.

References:

[Virginia Growth and Opportunity Act](#)

[GO Virginia Competitive Application](#)

[GO Virginia Core Grant Outcomes](#)

[Competitive Scoring Matrix](#)



Competitive Fund Scoring Matrix

Economic Impact – 40%

1. Project application outlines the expected return on investment of the proposed project and the timeline for achieving that return.
2. Project application demonstrates the proposed project's alignment with and how it will address the prioritized needs and opportunities of the growth and diversification plan, and alignment with the Region's identified priority industry clusters.
3. Grant requests that have a larger impact with regard to the creation of higher paying jobs and economic diversification, based on a return on investment model, in a locality experiencing above average economic distress shall receive higher scores.
4. Project outlines both behavioral as well as anticipated tangible results that will come from the collaboration.

Regional Collaboration – 20%

1. The number and percentage of localities within the region that are participating in the proposed project and the portion of the region's population represented by the participating localities.
2. Participation of localities or regions (including interstate collaborations) that are outside the applying region.
3. Cost efficiencies, repurposing of existing funds, leveraging of existing assets, or other evidence of collaboration that can be demonstrated as a result of the proposed project.
4. The amount of involvement in the project by businesses, colleges and universities, and other public and private entities within the region in the conceptualization of and the implementation of the project.
5. The amount, timing, and form of the proposed project match that outlines the depth of the commitment by the public and private funding partners to the effort.
6. Inventory existing grant requests or programs with similar goals to ensure the proposed project is not duplicative of, but additive to, other efforts to support economic diversification and the creation of more higher-paying jobs.

Project Readiness – 20%

1. Project application demonstrates that the project partners have the capability to successfully execute the project.
2. Project application demonstrates that the regional council has consulted with subject matter experts regarding the efficacy and viability of the proposal
3. Project application outlines how the project may be coordinated with existing efforts in the region.
4. Project application fully analyzes the barriers to successful implementation and other associated risks along with a plan to overcome them.



5. Project application reviews any prerequisite activities undertaken by the collaborating parties to increase efficiency with regard to program delivery and to ensure a deeper and consistent level of support for the project once launched.
6. Project application demonstrates the project partners, including the lead public or private administering entity, have sufficient financial management and personnel to ensure compliance with the grant agreement.

Project Sustainability – 20%

1. Plan for how a project will be sustained after grant funds are exhausted.
2. Demonstrated ability to meet the project performance metrics and to take remedial actions in the event those measures are not achieved.
3. Demonstrate leverage above the required amounts from any source. Demonstrated commitment of resources from private industry shall receive higher scores.