



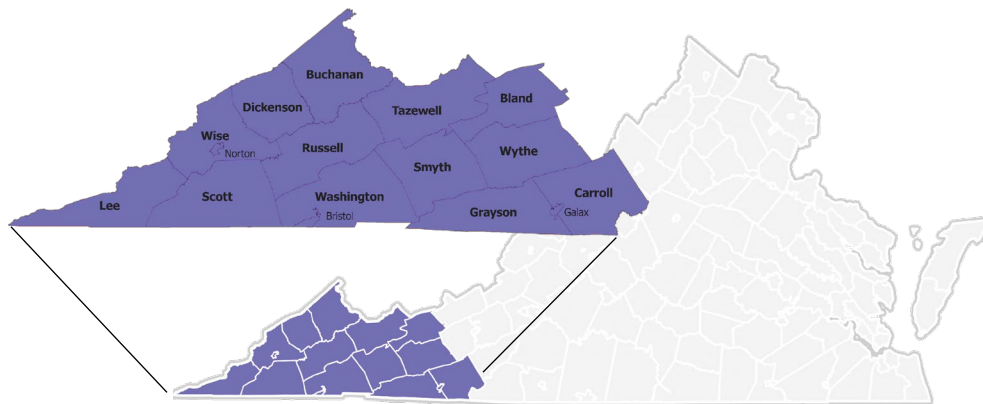
## GO Virginia Region 1 Annual Report FY 2023 (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023)

### I. INTRODUCTION

The GO Virginia Region 1 Annual Report is designed to provide a comprehensive detail of the Region 1 Council’s activity throughout Fiscal Year 2023. This report contains metrics, projects, pipeline activity, and collaborative partnership analysis of Region 1.

GO Virginia Region 1 is located in the most southwest corner of the Commonwealth, is mainly rural, and has historically had the weakest economic growth of all of the GO Virginia regions in the state. The Appalachian Mountains run through many of the 13 counties and three cities that comprise the region; this includes Counties of Bland, Buchanan, Carroll, Dickenson, Grayson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise, Wythe, and the Cities of Bristol, Galax, and Norton.

The beauty and rural amenities of the region also bring the challenges of a sparsely populated area and mountains that can present navigated difficulties to residents seeking jobs. The natural resources of the mountains have historically made coal mining one of the highest-paying industries in the region.



Each GO Virginia Region has a support organization that provides administrative support to applicants and subgrantees. The support organization for GO Virginia Region 1 is The University of Virginia’s College at Wise (UVA Wise), located in Wise, Virginia.

The Region 1 Growth and Diversification Plan for Southwest Virginia seeks to provide an honest look at the region’s opportunities and challenges, offering a realistic view of the region. This plan has identified four target sectors and three target strategies to be able to capitalize on true opportunities.

Target Sectors
Advanced Manufacturing
Agriculture and Food & Beverage Manufacturing
Energy & Minerals
Information & Emerging Technology

Target Strategies
Innovation & Scale Up Support
Sites & Infrastructure
Talent Development

**II. GROWTH & DIVERSIFICATION PLAN**

The GO Virginia Region 1 Growth and Diversification Plan identifies and prioritizes economic opportunities, needs, and challenges facing the region and is designed to assist the regional council in evaluating which potential projects best address the identified priorities. The plan outlines needed enhancements where GO Virginia grant funds may support collaborative programs between at least two or more localities that will lead to the creation of higher-paying jobs. With this plan guiding the regional council’s work to develop talent pipeline, grow existing businesses, encourage entrepreneurial activity, and advance joint site and infrastructure development, there has been significant capital investment in Region 1.

The Region 1 Growth and Diversification Plan will be updated in fiscal year 2024; however, work has been completed in fiscal year 2023 in order to analyze the region’s targeted industries and evaluate adding an additional industry. Region 1 engaged Chmura Economics & Analytics to conduct research on the opportunity for including Transportation, Logistics, and Warehousing as a potential industry target for Region 1. The data and opportunities outlined in the analysis support including the cluster as an emerging industry target in the 2023 GO Virginia Region 1 Growth and Diversification Plan. The cluster pays similar wages compared with the advanced manufacturing and food and beverage manufacturing industries and has seen growth in employment in the region. Work continues on the update of the Growth & Diversification Plan, which will be completed by December 2023.

**III. SUMMARY OF PROJECTS**

During Fiscal Year 2023, Region 1 received four Per Capita proposals at the scheduled Region 1 application deadlines. Three projects are enhanced capacity building projects and one is an implementation project. All four projects were moved forward and approved by the Region 1 Council. Two of those projects will be considered by the State Board at their September 2023 meeting. The other two projects, both enhanced capacity building, were approved in fiscal year 2023 and totaled \$150,000.

Region 1 also participated in a Statewide Competitive project with Regions 3, 4 and 5 that was awarded \$3,474,821. The GO Virginia grant was awarded to the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research for GO TEC 2025 with Region 3 as the lead.

In fiscal year 2023, Region 1 held a Talent Pathways Initiative (TPI) Regional Roundtable to gather feedback regarding the \$250,000 TPI planning grant to focus on building a talent pathway for 1-2 of the Region 1 target industries. The group selected to move forward with advanced manufacturing and accepted applications for a TPI Coordinating Entity at the June 2, 2023 application deadline. The Region 1 Council selected the Appalachian Council of Innovation

with lead partner GENEDGE as the TPI Coordinating Entity. ACI’s application for the TPI will be submitted to DHCD for approval by the State Board in December 2023.

**FY23 Region 1 Funded Projects:**

Project	GO VA Funds	Locality Match	Non-Locality Match	Other Leverage
LENOWISCO: Small Modular Reactor (SMR) Site Feasibility	\$100,000	\$0	\$50,000	-

**LENOWISCO Planning District Commission’s SMR Site Feasibility** will submit a Request for Quote (RFQ) for a Subject Matter Expert (SME) to determine the feasibility of developing multiple SMR sites within the Lonesome Pine Region Industrial Facilities Authorities’ (LPRIFA) geography. This footprint includes the Counties of Dickenson, Lee, Scott, Wise, and the City of Norton. The study will explore existing SMR reliant infrastructure and additional infrastructure that will be needed to support such sites. The study will also reveal the direct and indirect regional economic impacts of SMRs, along with local revenue estimates.

Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) have capital investments from developers with projected long-term life cycles of 40+ years. SMRs are new, cutting-edge licensed technologies that are small nuclear power plants of up to 300 megawatts; they generate electricity 24/7 and are reliable zero carbon generators. Identifying potential SMR host locations is technical and complex related to the requirements of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and can be transformational for the Southwest Virginia region.

The completed study can be accessed on the [GO Virginia Region 1 website](#).

Project	GO VA Funds	Locality Match	Non-Locality Match	Other Leverage
LENOWISCO: Small Modular Reactor (SMR) Supply Chain Analysis	\$50,000	\$0	\$25,000	\$175,000

**LENOWISCO Planning District Commission’s SMR Supply Chain Analysis** will prepare the SWVA economy for future investments in a Small Modular Reactor (SMR) energy focused ecosystem. LENOWISCO, in partnership with Lonesome Pine RIFA, will release a Request for Proposals (RFP) designed to procure the services of a Subject Matter Expert (SME) that will prepare a Regional SMR Manufacturing Supply Chain Report. This report will be utilized to identify existing businesses for retooling and to recruit new businesses which will provide the baseline for manufacturing jobs needed to support the SMR supply chain. SMRs and their supply chain processes provide a unique ability for communities in far Southwest Virginia to position themselves as leader in the next wave of energy generation.

#### **IV. REGIONAL COLLABORATION & PARTNER SUPPORT**

In fiscal year 2023, GO Virginia Region 1 staff continued to coordinate and facilitate quarterly working group meetings; these meetings include participants from the public and private sector in advanced manufacturing, agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing, and information technology. Due to decreased attendance in the working group meetings and lack of project generation, staff decided to put these groups on hold for now to determine the best use of the working groups.

Staff participates regularly in the Southwest Virginia Energy Research and Development Authority meetings, Southwest Virginia Solar Workgroup meetings, Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Facilities Authority meetings, Cumberland Industrial Facilities Authority meetings, and additional roundtable discussions and community forums.

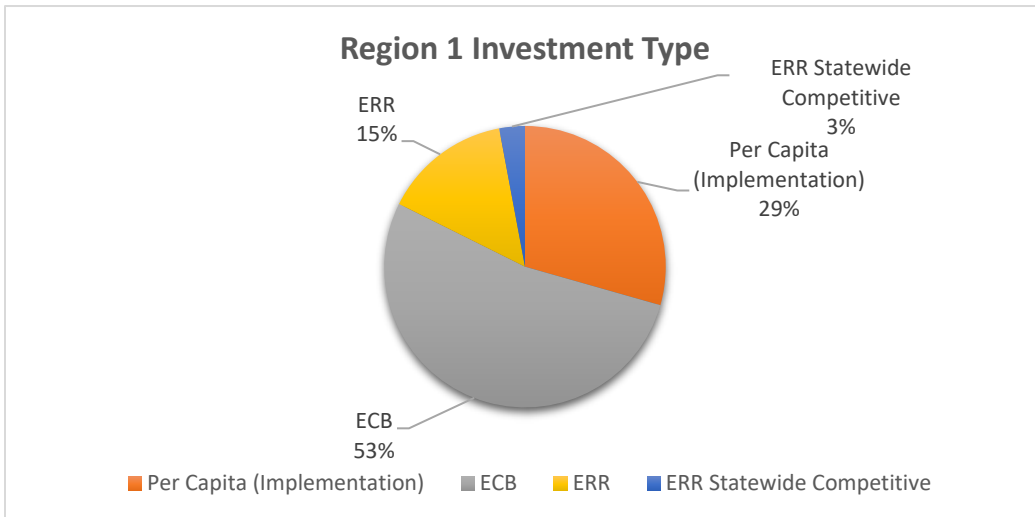
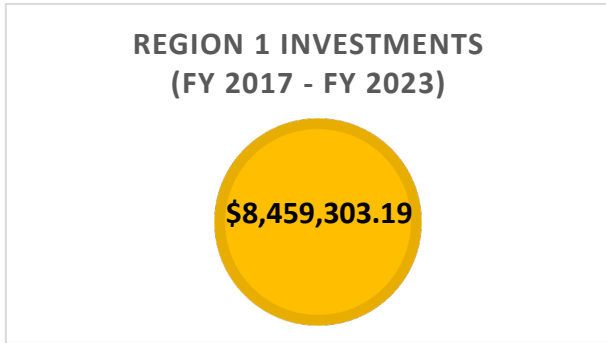
In Fiscal Year 2023, partnerships that have led to GO Virginia projects or activities for Region 1 include, but are not limited to:

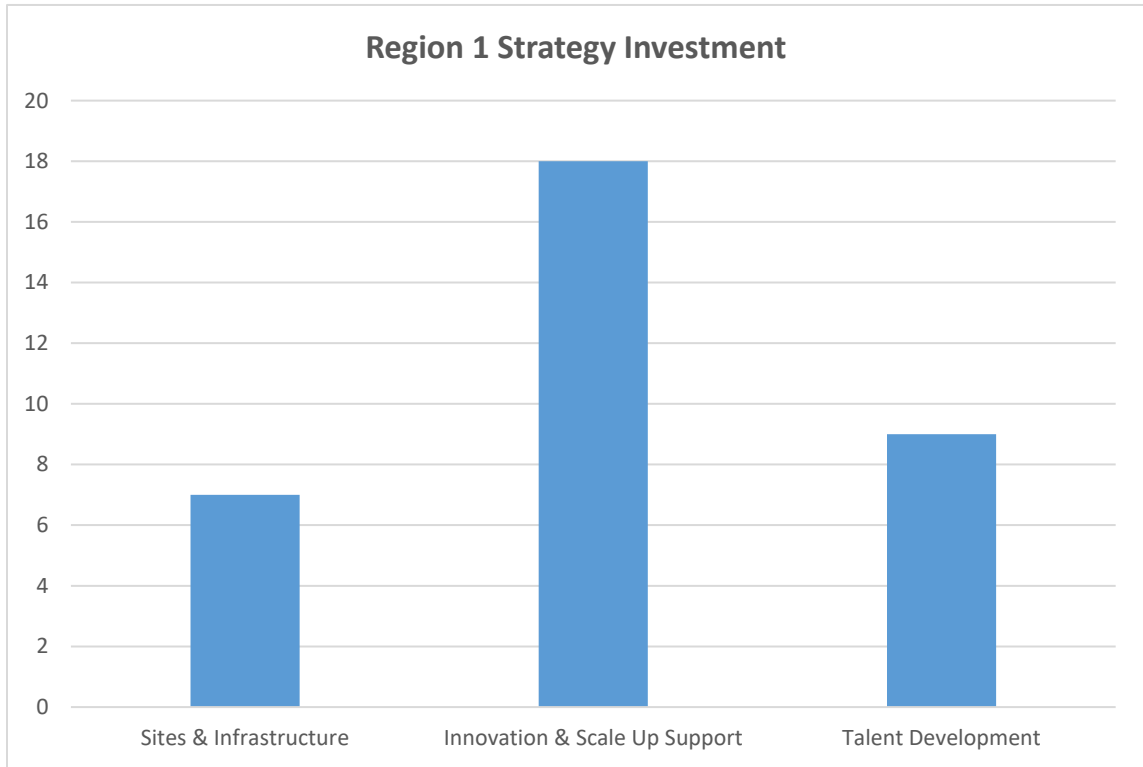
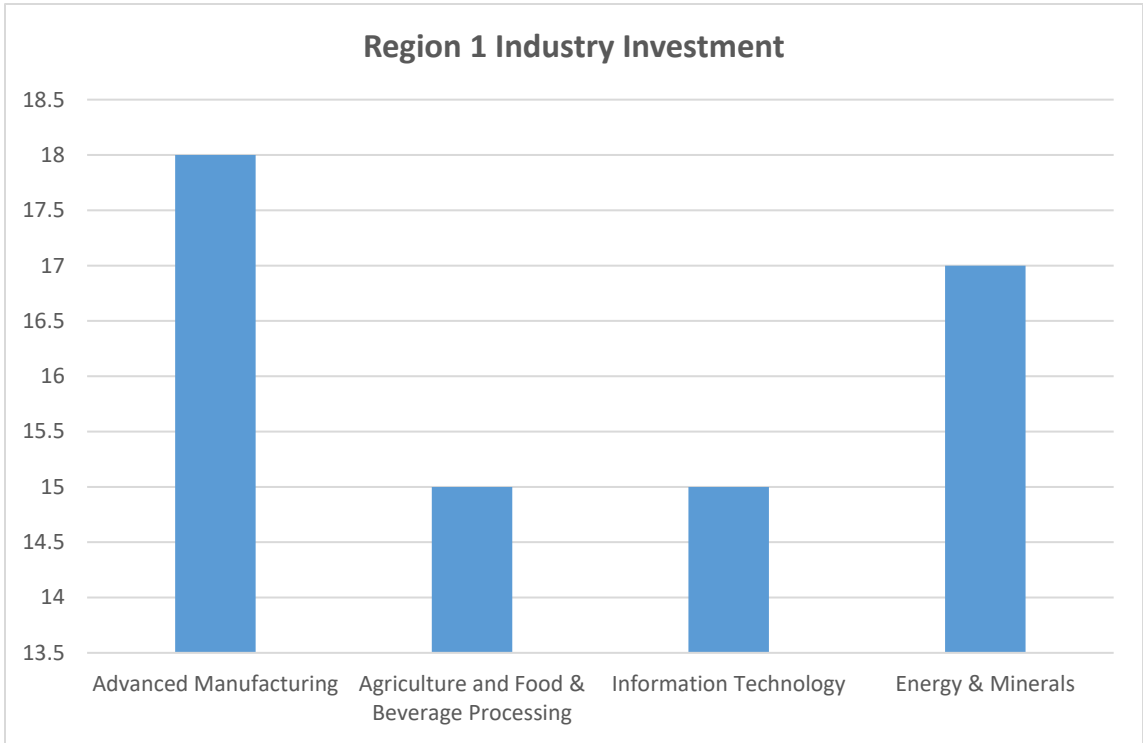
- Appalachian Council for Innovation
- Appalachian Sustainable Development
- Appalachian Voices
- Bluefield University
- Breaks Regional Airport Authority
- Bristol Chamber of Commerce (To and Thru Bristol Passenger Rail)
- InvestSWVA
- Cumberland Industrial Facilities Authority (CIFA)
- Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission
- Emory & Henry College
- Friends of Southwest Virginia
- GENEDGE
- Institute for Advanced Learning and Research
- LENOWISCO Planning District Commission
- Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Facilities Authority (Lonesome Pine RIFA)
- Mountain Empire Community College
- Mountain Empire Community College Small Business Development Center
- Mount Rogers Planning District Commission
- Mount Rogers Regional Partnership
- New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board
- Opportunity Appalachia
- Opportunity SWVA
- People Incorporated
- Southwest Virginia Alliance for Manufacturing, Inc.
- Southwest Virginia Community College
- Southwest Virginia Community College Small Business Development Center
- Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center
- Southwest Virginia Research and Development Energy Authority
- Southwest Virginia Workforce Development Board

- The Nature Conservancy’s Clinch Valley Program
- Tri-Cities Airport Authority
- Twin County Airport
- University of Virginia’s College at Wise
- United Way of Southwest Virginia
- Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority
- Virginia Community Capital
- Virginia Cooperative Extension
- Virginia Department of Energy
- Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development
- Virginia Economic Development Partnership
- Virginia Highlands Community College
- Virginia Highlands Community College Small Business Development Center
- Virginia Nuclear Energy Consortium
- Virginia Tech
- Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission
- Virginia Tourism Corporation
- Wellspring Foundation of Southwest Virginia
- Wythe County IDA
- Wytheville Community College

**V. OUTCOMES & IMPACT**

Since Fiscal Year 2018, the GO Virginia Region 1 Council has invested in 34 projects and has distributed \$8,459,303.19 in GO Virginia funds. Of the 34 projects, 24 have successfully closed and 10 remain active.





Region 1 Project Metrics (FY 2018 – Present)	
# of acres advanced to a higher VBRSP Tier	188 acres
Credentials Awarded	135
Students Trained	825
New Products Created	13
Jobs Created	308
Jobs Retained	469
Businesses Expanded	33
Businesses Created	19
Businesses Engaged/Served	251
Internships Completed	120
School Districts Engaged	16
Students Participating in Awareness Activities	4,656
Farmers Reporting 10% Increase in Production	16
Farmers Upskilled	152
Market Analysis/Studies Completed	12
Organizations Successfully Formed	2

**VI. COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH**

The Eighth Annual Southwest Virginia Economic Forum took place on May 25, 2023 at the David J. Prior Convocation Center at The University of Virginia’s College at Wise. As in previous years, GO Virginia Region 1 was a presenting sponsor of this annual event that brings together partners from across Region 1 to learn about what’s happening in the region, see friends and colleagues, meet new people and envision the future for the region.

The theme for the day-long conference was *The Pursuit of Prosperity*. The event explored creative solutions to the talent pipeline, Southwest Virginia's role in energy innovation, changing dynamics of coal-impacted communities, and new avenues for regional transportation. This regional economic gathering is aimed at collaboration, innovation, and growth.

One of the panels titled *Creative Solutions to the Talent Pipeline* outlined how stakeholders are utilizing innovative solutions and data to alleviate workforce pains for their regional employers.

Panelist Matthew Rose with Mountain Empire Community College shared the innovative approach of Project WELD and the impact it is creating for the individuals trained, as well as the impact for regional employers. Another panel, *The New Wave of Energy*, focused on how Virginia is taking strides to be one of the nation’s leaders in energy innovation and how Southwest Virginia is keeping its energy roots while pivoting into a wave of new opportunity.



Eight Annual SWVA Economic Forum Outreach Statistics	
Virtual Registrants	29
In Person Registrants	299
Promotional & Post Event News Outlets Coverage	17
Website Views (05/18/23 – 05/25/23)	706
UVA Wise Facebook Page (average reach per post)	1,137
SWVA Economic Forum Facebook Page (average reach per post)	1,137
UVA Wise LinkedIn Page (total unique impressions)	2,827

Region 1 staff continues to utilize [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), Constant Contact, and the [website](#) to disseminate information to regional partners.

GO Virginia Region 1 Outreach Statistics	
Facebook followers	552
LinkedIn followers	201
Constant Contact subscribers	838
GO VA Region 1 Website unique visitors (07/01/22 - 06/30/23)	765

**VII. PROJECT PIPELINE**

The Region 1 Council submitted a Per Capita application for United Way of Southwest Virginia’s GO TEC Expansion (\$600,055) to be acted on at the September 12, 2023 State Board meeting. At DHCD’s November 2, 2023 deadline, Region 1 will be submitting an application for the Talent Pathways Initiative in partnership with the Region 1 TPI Coordinating Entity, Appalachian Council of Innovation (\$250,000).

Region 1 staff is also working with several organizations on projects that are anticipated to be submitted at Region 1’s November 17, 2023 application deadline. Specifically, staff has been reaching out to regional economic developers on potential site projects that may qualify for GO Virginia funding.

Region 1 is aware that the project pipeline has decreased over the last fiscal year. Staff is analyzing the program to determine any existing barriers and is working to identify opportunities for increasing the pipeline. Similar to efforts made in 2018 to build regional projects, Region 1 staff will develop a plan that includes specific strategies focused on increasing the pipeline of collaborative, impactful projects. One such strategy will utilize the partnership formed with regional grant organizations to identify potential projects eligible for funding.



**VIII. COUNCIL MEMBERS**

GO Virginia Region 1 held four Council Meetings in fiscal year 2023 and realized a quorum for all meetings. The Region 1 Council had four members resign at the end of fiscal year 2022 and welcomed nine new council members from across the region in fiscal year 2023. The Region 1 Council will start fiscal year 2024 with 25 council members. The Regional Council is comprised of leaders across many sectors of the economic development and workforce development landscape, with the majority of the council mandated to be private business leaders. The private sector as percentage of total membership is currently 60%.

<b>GO Virginia Region 1 Council Members</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Email</b>
Moir Beamer	CEO, Virginia Produce Company	<a href="mailto:moir@vaproduce.com">moir@vaproduce.com</a>
Dennis Carter	Superintendent, Smyth County Public Schools	<a href="mailto:denniscarter@scsb.org">denniscarter@scsb.org</a>
Sam Cassell	Plant Manager, Utility Trailer-Glade Spring, VA	<a href="mailto:Sam.Cassell@utm.com">Sam.Cassell@utm.com</a>
Lois Clarke	President, CIO, & Treasurer, The United Company	<a href="mailto:lclarke@unitedco.net">lclarke@unitedco.net</a>
Pamela Collie-Price, Vice Chair	Talent Acquisition Manager, EarthLink	<a href="mailto:pamela.collie-price@elink.net">pamela.collie-price@elink.net</a>
Richard Edwards	Clerk, Dickenson County Circuit Court	<a href="mailto:rwedwards@vacourts.gov">rwedwards@vacourts.gov</a>
Todd Elswick	President, Paul’s Fan Company	<a href="mailto:fanmantwo@gmail.com">fanmantwo@gmail.com</a>
Mark Eschle, Chair	Vice President of Operation, Wize Solutions	<a href="mailto:meschle@wizesolutionsva.com">meschle@wizesolutionsva.com</a>
David Graf	President, American Mine Research Inc. & PEMCO Corporation	<a href="mailto:dgraf@amrpemco.com">dgraf@amrpemco.com</a>
Nichole Hair	Executive Director, Mount Rogers Regional Partnership	<a href="mailto:nhair@wcc.vccs.edu">nhair@wcc.vccs.edu</a>
Rodney Halsey	Executive Vice President & COO, Skyline National Bank	<a href="mailto:rhalsey@skylinenationalbank.com">rhalsey@skylinenationalbank.com</a>
Donna Henry	Chancellor, University of Virginia’s College at Wise	<a href="mailto:dhenry@uvawise.edu">dhenry@uvawise.edu</a>
John Jeter	Vice President & CEO, Bristol Regional Medical Center & Johnston Memorial Hospital, Ballad Health	<a href="mailto:john.jeter@balladhealth.org">john.jeter@balladhealth.org</a>
Steve Jones	Executive Vice President & CFO, VFP	<a href="mailto:sjones@vfpinc.com">sjones@vfpinc.com</a>
Melanie Protti-Lawrence	President, Lawrence Brothers, Inc.	<a href="mailto:melaniepl@lbiweb.com">melaniepl@lbiweb.com</a>
Duane Miller	Executive Director, LENOWISCO Planning District Commission	<a href="mailto:dmiller@lenowisco.org">dmiller@lenowisco.org</a>
David Olive	President, Bluefield University	<a href="mailto:david.olive@bluefield.edu">david.olive@bluefield.edu</a>
Keith Perrigan	Superintendent, Washington County Public Schools	<a href="mailto:kperrigan@wcs.k12.va.us">kperrigan@wcs.k12.va.us</a>

Mike Quillen	Chair, Southwest Virginia Energy Research & Development Authority	<a href="mailto:mquillen30@comcast.net">mquillen30@comcast.net</a>
Beth Rhinehart	President & CEO, Bristol Chamber of Commerce	<a href="mailto:brhinehart@bristolchamber.org">brhinehart@bristolchamber.org</a>
Andy Smith	8 <sup>th</sup> Generation Farmer, Smithfield Farms	<a href="mailto:jhasmithiv@gmail.com">jhasmithiv@gmail.com</a>
Dean Sprinkle	President, Wytheville Community College	<a href="mailto:dsprinkle@wcc.vccs.edu">dsprinkle@wcc.vccs.edu</a>
Travis Staton	President & CEO, United Way of Southwest Virginia	<a href="mailto:tstaton@unitedwayswva.org">tstaton@unitedwayswva.org</a>
Scotty Wampler	Executive Director, Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission	<a href="mailto:swampler@cppdc.org">swampler@cppdc.org</a>
Browning Wynn, II	Senior Vice President & Market Executive, Powell Valley National Bank	<a href="mailto:bwynn@powellvalleybank.com">bwynn@powellvalleybank.com</a>

**IX. SUPPORT ORGANIZATION**

The University of Virginia’s College at Wise under the Office of Administration, Government Relations, & Strategic Initiative serves as the support Organization for GO Virginia Region 1.

In April 2023, Kalen Hunter, Director of Economic Development & GO Virginia Region 1, resigned and accepted a new position at Virginia Tourism Corporation. In July 2023, Tommy Asher, Program Manager for GO Virginia Region 1 also resigned and accepted a position at UVA Wise in Advancement. The GO Virginia program in Region 1 has continued to move forward under the direction of the Interim Program Director, Robyn Lee, who has been working with the GO Virginia program since 2018 in various capacities. Shannon Blevins, Vice Chancellor of Administration, Government Relations, & Strategic Initiatives continues to support the program through program oversight. UVA Wise recently hired Sydney Boggs as the new Program Manager to replace Tommy Asher. The search for the GO Virginia Program Director will end in September 2023. It is anticipated that GO Virginia Region 1 will be fully staffed by October 2023.

**Robyn Lee**

Interim Program Director, GO Virginia Region 1  
[rlee@uvawise.edu](mailto:rlee@uvawise.edu) | 276-254-2396

**Sydney Boggs**

Program Manager, GO Virginia Region 1  
[snp6c@uvawise.edu](mailto:snp6c@uvawise.edu) | 276-870-7731

**Shannon Blevins**

Vice Chancellor of Administration, Government Relations, & Strategic Initiatives  
[sblevins@uvawise.edu](mailto:sblevins@uvawise.edu) | 276-328-0162