Virginia Growth and Opportunity Fund (GO Virginia) Planning Grant Administrative Guidance & Application

Section 1: Overview

GO Virginia is a collaborative economic development program that promotes private sector growth in targeted, traded industry clusters and creates high-paying jobs through regional collaboration. Regional Councils are allotted *per capita* funds annually to award to projects through either *implementation grants* or *planning grants.* Implementation grants are intended to create higher paying jobs, whereas GO Virginia Planning Grants (formerly Enhanced Capacity Building or ECB Grants) are intended to build regional capacity for project development and implementation. **Planning grants are awarded to planning projects and pilot projects.** Regions are limited to allocating $250,000 per fiscal year towards planning grants. Individual planning grants may not exceed $100,000.

Per Board Policy 3, DHCD staff can administratively approve planning grants for applications with a request for less than $100,000. Unlike per capita implementation applications that are reviewed by the GO Virginia State Board, planning grants may be submitted to DHCD staff and administratively approved on a rolling basis. At Board meetings, staff present a summary of all administrative approvals granted during the interim between meetings.

Section 2: Allowable Activities & Evaluation Criteria

> A. *Eligible Applicants*

See the GO Virginia Program Manual for eligible applicants.

Note: Multiple regions can cost share in a planning effort. Each region would contribute per capita funding for the project.

> B. *Allowable activities:*

Included below is a list of allowable activities for GO Virginia Planning Grant Applications. Please note that an application may propose multiple activities as part of one grant request.

1) **Planning:** includes activities such as development of a feasibility study, need analysis and prioritization, strategy development activities, a business plan, etc. Planning work should determine whether a future GO Virginia investment is feasible or determine industry demand to validate any future GO Virginia implementation grants. Activities will generate one or more products, such as a business plan or strategic plan.

2) **Pilots:** conduct small-scale pilots or proof of concept work to strengthen relationships and produce preliminary data for a future GO Virginia implementation grant. Activities may generate one or more core GO Virginia grant outcomes.

Note: Planning activities related to site development and broadband require a separate application – please see the Site Development Planning application and Site Development project guidance or the Regional Broadband Infrastructure Project Guidance.

C. *Evaluation Criteria*

The following table summarizes criteria used when evaluating GO Virginia Planning Grant applications. Planning grants should reflect these core program principles in their application responses. An application where any of these criteria are not met is likely not a good fit for GO Virginia grant funding.

Criteria	Description
Targeted industry sector / industry need	GO Virginia grant-funded projects support the growth of targeted industry clusters identified in each region's Growth & Diversification plan. These are industries that Regional Councils have identified as opportunities for diversification and growth specific to their region's assets. Planning grants should provide service to grow and expand at least one targeted industry sector.
Regional Collaboration	A minimum of two (2) localities are required to meaningfully participate in each project (See "Memo on Regional Collaboration and Local Participation" for more details).
Investment strategy	Planning grants should impact the targeted industry sector using one of four GO Virginia investment strategies: cluster scale-up, sites and infrastructure development, talent and workforce development, or startup ecosystem. Please see the Program Manual for more information.
Regional importance and strategy	Planning grants should be strategic for a Regional Council. They should support one more of the big picture strategies identified in the regional Growth & Diversification Plan.
Line of sight to implementation	Planning grants are viewed as an initial step to set up a project for a Per Capita Implementation Projects to build the infrastructure necessary for the creation of higher paying jobs, if the planning or pilot activity demonstrates industry demand and success.

This is not an exhaustive list. DHCD staff reserves the right to evaluate applications based on additional criteria.

Section 3: Application Process & Post-Award

A. *Submission*

Planning grants are submitted by support organizations in CAMS, DHCD's application management system. See the [GO Virginia Calendar](#) for Planning Grant application deadlines and support organization contact information. The first step should be to contact your support organization.

B. *Project Budget and Matching Funds*

Applications are required to submit a "Per Capita Application Sources and Uses Budget" based on the [GO Virginia provided template](#). Each budget category should be listed using the dropdown menu, alongside a description of the use of GO Virginia funds, amount, and description for each budget category. In the "Description" column please provide more detail about the proposed uses of the funding including, if applicable, what organization will be receiving/managing those funds (i.e. grant recipient or third-party).

Matching funds are required for GO Virginia planning grants. The enabling legislation regarding match for GO Virginia funds states in [§ 2.2-2489](#) that any grant awarded from the Fund to a regional council shall require matching funds. For more detailed information about match, the documentation for match, and conditions and restrictions regarding match, please see the [GO Virginia Match Guidelines](#).

Match documentation should be submitted and complete at the time of project submission. [Match verification forms](#) ensure match is qualified prior to the project start date. Failure to submit match documentation may impact the project review process.

C. *Outcomes and products*

Planning activities are expected to result in products, such as reports or studies. Pilot activities are expected to result in either products or [outcomes](#), or a combination of the two.

D. *Grant period and performance period*

Planning grants shall not exceed a one-year duration, from start date to end date of the project. Products and/or outcomes are expected to be reported at the end of the three-month performance period after the end date of the project. Additional time may be granted with DHCD approval.

E. *Post-Award Process*

For post-award information including quarterly reporting, closeout process, extensions, etc. please see the GO Virginia <u>Program Manual</u>.

Virginia Growth and Opportunity Fund (GO Virginia)

Planning Grant Application

REGION:

SUPPORT ORGANIZATION:

APPLICANT:

PROJECT NAME:

Please limit your responses to 500 words.

1. Identify the targeted industry that this project will impact.
2. Identify the participating localities (a minimum of 2 is required) and describe their role in the project.
3. Please describe the opportunity or challenge the project intends to explore or address.
4. Provide a summary of the project's scope of work. What are the final project deliverable(s)?
5. Describe the project budget and sources of matching funds.
6. Describe how this project aligns with the region's Growth and Diversification Plan, and why this is a priority for the regional council.
7. Describe the line of sight from this planning work to an eligible GO Virginia implementation project. Describe the project outcome(s) that you would hope to gain from this implementation project.

Required Attachments

- o Match Verification Form(s)
- o Sources & Uses Budget (DHCD Template- please submit EXCEL version, not PDF)
- o Letters demonstrating meaningful local participation