

VIRGINIA GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY BOARD REGIONAL COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, May 29, 2025

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

In-person & Virtual

Members Present

Jim Cheng

Leah Fremouw (Committee Chair) John
King

Members Absent

Delegate Michele Maldonado

Call to Order

Leah Fremouw, Chair of the Virginia Growth and Opportunity (GO Virginia) Regional Council Committee, called the meeting to order.

Roll Call

Ms. Shara Gibson, GO Virginia Program Manager at the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), called the roll, and stated that a quorum of the Committee was present.

Public Comment

Chair Fremouw opened the floor for public comment.

No members of the public appeared before the Committee for the public comment period.

Ms. Gibson noted that the staff had not received written public comment prior to the meeting

The public comment period was closed.

Productivity

Leah Fremouw introduced this section by highlighting its relevance to the committee's core focus area of productivity.

Shara Gibson from DHCD presented the findings from the planning grant analysis. The study evaluated 116 planning grants issued since 2018 to determine their effectiveness in producing future implementation projects. The data was collected through internal analysis, regional support staff input, and performance close-out

reviews. The findings highlighted both successes and challenges in the planning-to-implementation pipeline, reinforcing the importance of early-stage funding in driving innovation and strategy.

Ms. Fremouw introduced a discussion on leadership development and the rollout of a voluntary Regional Council Self-Assessment tool. She explained that this initiative builds on feedback from the February committee meeting where regions expressed interest in strengthening council leadership pipelines and governance structures.

The self-assessment is designed to help councils evaluate engagement, succession planning, and internal processes. Committee members were asked to share whether they believed their region would be interested in piloting the tool. Several members noted it would be useful in supporting onboarding and recruitment efforts, as well as benchmarking council performance over time.

Collaboration

Ms. Fremouw introduced the item on the upcoming State Board Retreat and the opportunity to ensure Regional Councils are meaningfully represented. She emphasized that while the retreat is intended for State Board members, regional voices are essential to informing strategy and strengthening board-council alignment.

Committee members discussed potential formats for participation, including regional storytelling, thematic roundtables, and breakout discussions focused on cross-regional collaboration and lessons learned. There was consensus that incorporating regional leaders into the retreat adds value and reinforces shared ownership of GO Virginia's future direction.

The Virginia Economic Development Partnership presented an overview of opportunities for Regional Councils to work closely with VEDP industry leads. He encouraged Councils to proactively engage with VEDP to explore alignment between regional growth and diversification plans and the Commonwealth's high-opportunity industry targets. Participants discussed the potential for deeper regional collaboration with VEDP on workforce planning, industry engagement, and the development of scalable projects that address sector-wide needs.

Innovation

Ms. Fremouw provided a recap of the recent GO Virginia Innovation and AI Panel, which was held earlier in the spring. She explained that the event was convened in response to growing interest among regional leaders in understanding how artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming the economic landscape.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.

