



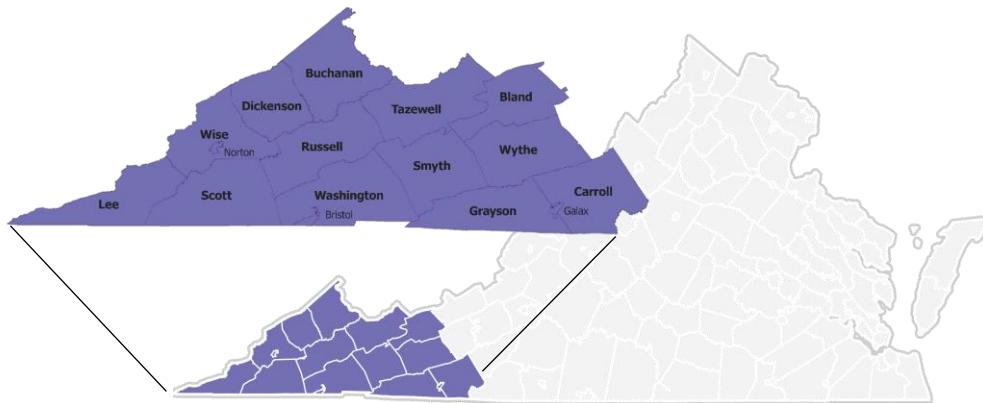
GO Virginia Region 1 Annual Report FY 2024 (July 1, 2024—June 30, 2025)

I. INTRODUCTION

The GO Virginia Region 1 Annual Report provides a detailed overview of the Region 1 Council's activities throughout fiscal year 2025. This report includes metrics, projects, pipeline activity, and analysis of collaborative partnerships within Region 1.

GO Virginia Region 1 is located in the southwestern corner of the Commonwealth, is mainly rural, and has historically had the weakest economic growth of all 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 the 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 present challenges, including a sparsely populated area and mountains that can pose navigation difficulties for residents seeking employment. 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 a realistic view of the region's opportunities and challenges. The plan has identified five target sectors and three target strategies to capitalize on true opportunities.

Target Sectors		Target Strategies	
Advanced Manufacturing		Innovation & Scale Up Support	
Agriculture & Food & Beverage Processing		Sites & Infrastructure	
Energy & Minerals		Talent Development	
Logistics, Transportation & Warehousing			
Information & Emerging Technology			

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 highlights necessary enhancements where GO Virginia grant funds can support collaborative programs involving at least two or more localities, leading to the creation of higher-paying jobs. With this plan guiding the regional Council's efforts to develop the talent pipeline, expand existing businesses, promote entrepreneurial activity, and advance joint site and infrastructure development, there has been significant capital investment in Region 1.

The 2025 Growth and Diversification Plan for GO Virginia Region 1 has been drafted and is scheduled for formal adoption by the Region 1 Council on October 16, 2025. As a living document, the plan continues to evolve in response to regional needs and opportunities. One noteworthy update is the addition of healthcare as a workforce development strategy, recognizing the critical role healthcare access plays in talent attraction and retention across Southwest Virginia.

III. SUMMARY OF PROJECTS

GO Virginia Region 1 has awarded 47 projects for a total of \$11,160,738.71. During FY25, the GO Virginia Region 1 Council received seven Per Capita proposals (four planning and three implementation) and one Helene Business Recovery Initiative proposal. All eight proposals were approved by the Region 1 Council and 6 were subsequently approved by the GO Virginia State Board. One implementation proposal was undergoing review by DHCD prior to being put before the GO Virginia State Board, but the applicant withdrew the pending application from consideration due to a change in the project budget. One planning proposal is still awaiting administrative approval from DHCD. Overall, in FY25, Region 1 awarded \$988,202 to Per Capita projects and \$97,500 to a Helene Business Recovery Initiative.

FY25 Region 1 Funded Projects:

Project	GO VA Funds	Locality Match	Non-Locality Match	Other Leverage
SWVA Higher Education Center Foundation: Middle School Energy Education Academy Pilot Study	\$52,500	\$0	\$26, 250	\$0

SWVA Higher Education Center Foundation: Middle School Energy Education Academy Pilot Study

The Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center Foundation, working in partnership with Virginia Tech's Southwest Center, will utilize Region 1 Per Capita funds for their pilot study, Middle School Energy Education Academy. The planning effort will research the need, explore career pathways, identify benchmark data, determine best practices from neighboring programs, and develop a curriculum for a Southwest Virginia Energy Education Academy focused on students of middle school age.

The project is a partnership between the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center and Virginia Tech's Southwest Center with additional engagement from Russell County Public Schools, Smyth County Public Schools, Washington County Public Schools, and City of Bristol Public Schools.

Project	GO VA Funds	Locality Match	Non-Locality Match	Other Leverage
Blue Ridge Crossroads Economic Development Authority (BRCEDA): Wildwood Park Site 1 Due Diligence and Design Services	\$100,000	\$0	\$50,000	\$25,000

BRCEDA: Wildwood Park Site 1 Due Diligence and Design Services

Blue Ridge Crossroads Economic Development Authority (BRCEDA) will utilize Region 1 Per Capita funds to support their sites planning effort to complete due diligence and design services for Wildwood Commerce Park Site 1. The planning effort will enable Site 1 at Wildwood Commerce Park to be elevated from a Tier 2 to a Tier 4 site through the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program (VBRSP). The required studies and reports will be completed for both Tier 3 and Tier 4 designation so that future funding can be sought out for Site 1 grading and construction.

The Blue Ridge Crossroads Economic Development Authority (BRCEDA) consists of the localities of Carroll County, Grayson County and the City of Galax. These localities are active participants in the planning effort and have committed financial resources to the project. BRCEDA will also

engage Appalachian Natural Gas and Appalachian Power for information needed regarding natural gas or electricity. Mount Rogers Regional Partnership and Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission are also partnering on the project.

Project	GO VA Funds	Locality Match	Non-Locality Match	Other Leverage
Joint IDA of Wythe County: Progress Park Lot 10 Site Development	\$425,876	\$213,000	\$0	\$6,546,750

Joint IDA of Wythe County: Progress Park Lot 10 Site Development

The Joint IDA of Wythe County will utilize Region 1 Per Capita funding to support their site implementation project for Progress Park Lot 10 Site Development. The project consists of developing a 62-acre site in the Progress Park industrial area near Wytheville. The development of Progress Park Lot 10 would provide a graded and sizeable site that could leverage significant existing investments in infrastructure (fiber, gas, water, wastewater, electricity), and provide a prospect with substantial acreage. A finished pad of 52-54 acres is expected to be constructed, which would accommodate facilities larger than 1 million square feet.

The Joint IDA of Wythe County is founded and funded by Wythe County and the towns of Wytheville and Rural Retreat. The Joint IDA of Wythe County also collaborates frequently with Bland County, who is participating in this project for Lot 10 development.

Project	GO VA Funds	Locality Match	Non-Locality Match	Other Leverage
Virginia Highlands Community College: Electrical Technology Program Modernization	\$312,326	\$31,233	\$124,930	\$0

Virginia Highlands Community College: Electrical Technology Program Modernization

Virginia Highlands Community College will use Region 1 funding to modernize, enhance, and expand its Electrical Technology Programming by purchasing updated industry-standard equipment, resulting in improved lab space utilization and course scheduling that would accommodate increased enrollment. Although the project proposes the purchase of equipment to upgrade an existing program, the new equipment should increase enrollment and credentials awarded, including Career Studies Certificates, Associates of Applied Science Degrees and OSHA-10 certification, as well as better prepare students for the workforce. Current enrollment trends show a steady decrease from the years 2021 – 2024. As a result of this modernization initiative, VHCC anticipates an annual enrollment capacity increase of 17 students with a corresponding increase of 10 graduates each year. The equipment upgrade is

essential to continue the program and produce qualified workforce participants, as current equipment is outdated.

Project	GO VA Funds	Locality Match	Non-Locality Match	Other Leverage
Wise County: Microreactor Feasibility Study	\$97,500	\$0	\$50,000	\$0

Wise County: Microreactor Feasibility Study

Working with the assistance of LENOWISCO Planning District Commission on behalf of the Region of Interest, the planning effort will utilize RFQ's to procure a Subject Matter Expert to conduct a feasibility study. The study will include the identification of potential microreactor sites, providing site requirements and infrastructure capabilities. The results of this planning effort will provide great insight into future growth opportunities for the Region, including those of renewable energy.

The identified Region of Interest (ROI) for this project includes a geographic footprint of Lee, Wise, Scott, and Dickenson counties, and the City of Norton in the Coalfields of Southwest Virginia. Wise County, with the assistance and on behalf of the Region, the LENOWISCO Planning District Commission, will oversee project administration.

Project	GO VA Funds	Locality Match	Non-Locality Match	Other Leverage
PBS Appalachia: VA Small Business Disaster Response Web Portal	\$97,500	\$0	\$48,750	\$11,000

PBS Appalachia: VA Small Business Disaster Response Web Portal

On September 27, 2024, Tropical Storm Helene crossed through Southwest Virginia, causing widespread damage to homes, infrastructure, utilities, and businesses. Region 1 Per Capita funds will be used to develop resources for a web-based portal to help businesses and citizens affected by Tropical Storm Helene access the help they need to rebuild and reactivate the economy in Southwest Virginia. PBS Appalachia will be able to utilize their expertise and position as a known and trusted non-profit media entity to both develop this web-based portal and to increase access and amplify the visibility of the resource through their existing relationships within the industry.

The counties of Bland, Buchanan, Carroll, Dickenson, Grayson, Russell , Scott, Smyth, Tazewell , Washington, Wise, and Wythe as well as the cities of Bristol, Galax and Norton have signaled immense support for this project and have offered to assist in providing input and developing the comprehensive range of resources that will be centralized on the portal platform.

IV. REGIONAL COLLABORATION & PARTNER SUPPORT

In fiscal year 2025, GO Virginia Region 1 staff continued community outreach to localities, nonprofits, higher education institutions, community colleges, K-12 school divisions, and a host of other various stakeholders in the region in order to raise awareness of the opportunities with the GO Virginia program.

Staff participates regularly in meetings of the Southwest Virginia Energy Research and Development Authority, the Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Facilities Authority, and Washington County Industrial Development Authority meetings, as well as additional roundtable discussions and community forums.

In fiscal year 2025, 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)
- Cumberland Industrial Facilities Authority (CIFA)
- Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission
- Emory & Henry University
- EO
- 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

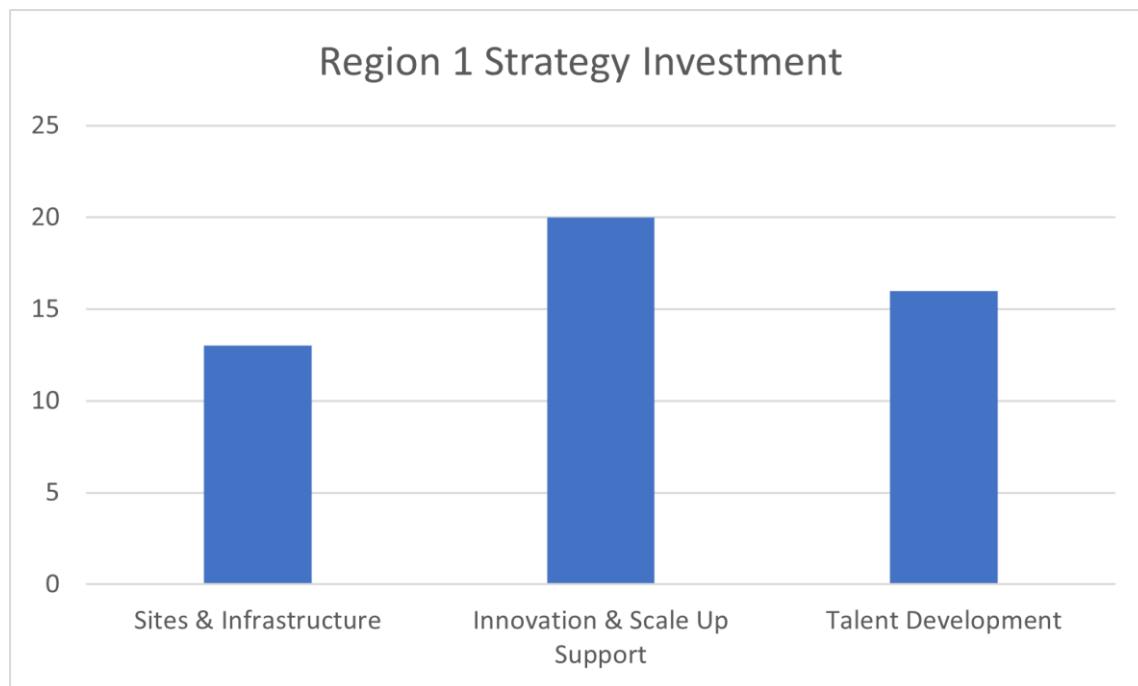
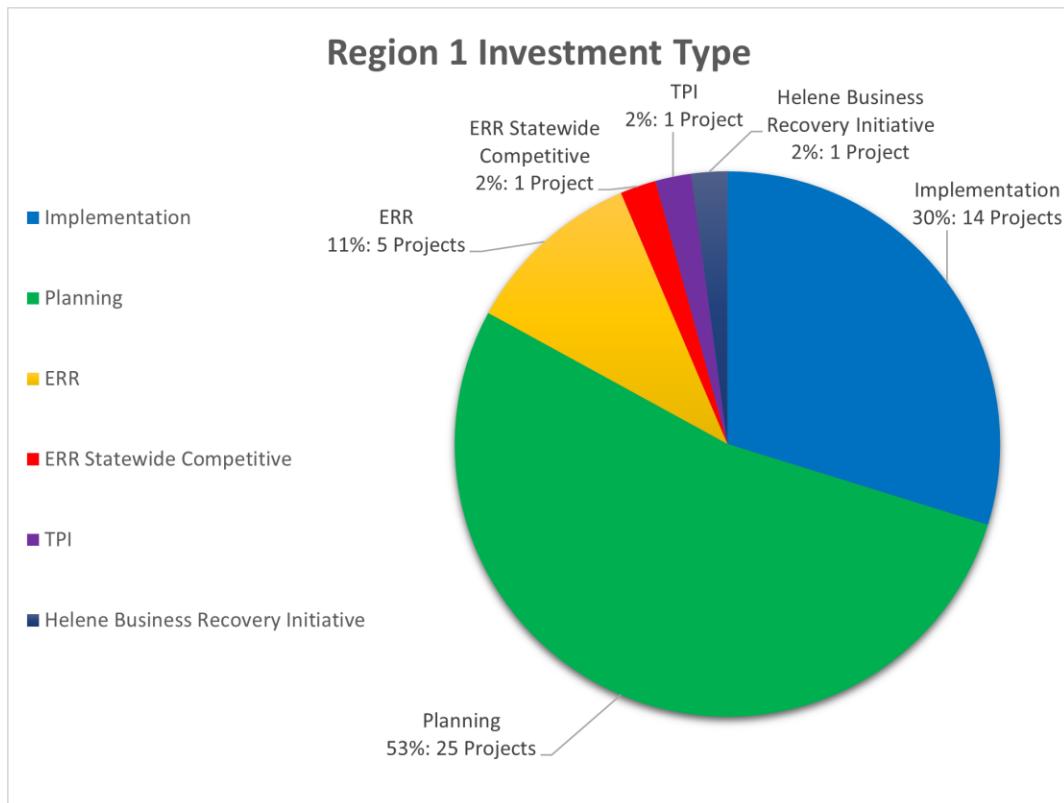
- Twin County Airport
- University of Virginia's College at Wise
- United Way of Southwest Virginia
- Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority
- Virginia Community Capital
- Virginia Cooperative Extension
- Virginia Department of Energy
- Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development
- 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

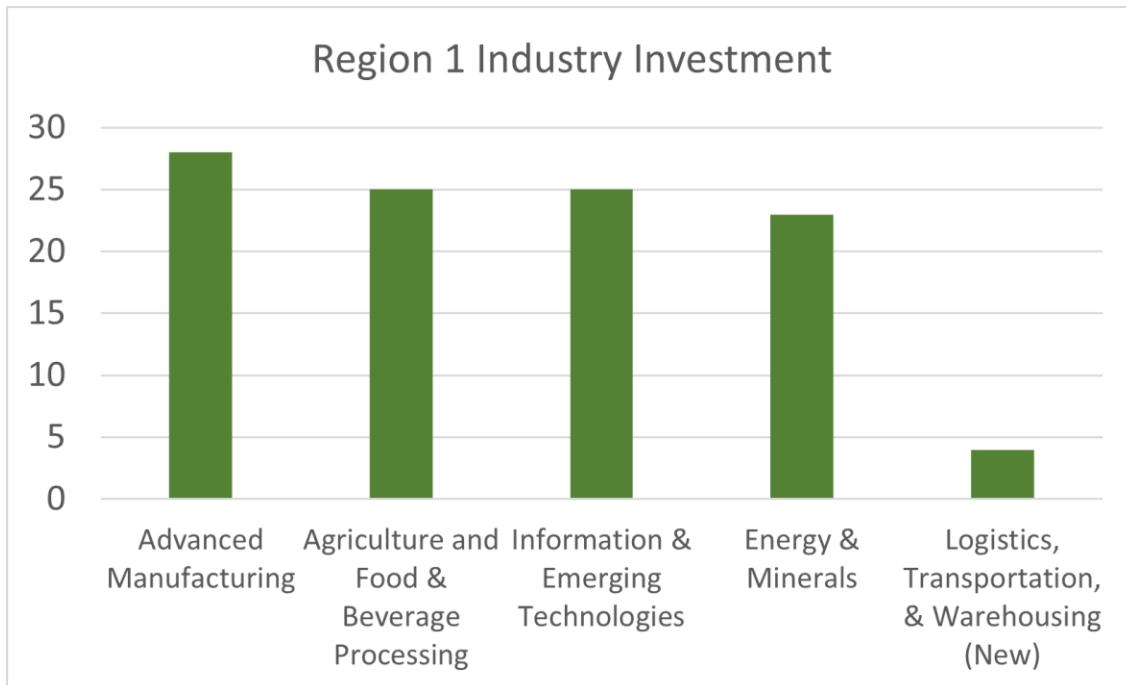
V. OUTCOMES & IMPACT

Since fiscal year 2018, the GO Virginia Region 1 Council has invested in 47 projects and has distributed \$11,160,738.71 in GO Virginia funds. Of the 47 projects, 11 are active, 35 have successfully closed, and one closed early due to barriers and scope of work change. As of Quarter 2 2025, GO Virginia Region 1 subgrantee projects have reported 389 jobs created, 586 jobs retained, 26 businesses created, 57 businesses expanded, and 310 credentials awarded.

Region 1 Investments (FY 2017 - FY 2025)

\$11,160,738.71





Region 1 Project Metrics (FY 2018 – FY 2025)	
# of acres advanced to a higher VBRSP Tier	501 acres
Credentials Awarded	310
Students Trained	3446
New Products Created	19
Jobs Created	389
Jobs Retained	586
Businesses Expanded	57
Businesses Created	26
Businesses Engaged/Served	251
Internships Completed	120
School Districts Engaged	16

VI. COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH

In May 2025, UVA Wise hosted the 10th Annual Southwest Virginia Economic Forum, welcoming over 300 attendees. The event, sponsored by GO Virginia Region 1, featured a wide-ranging agenda focused on regional economic and workforce development. Key discussions addressed demographic trends and insights from leaders of state agencies operating under the Virginia Secretary of Commerce and Trade. Breakout sessions provided in-depth exploration of pressing issues and emerging opportunities in tourism and outdoor recreation, regional resiliency planning, community development, and agriculture. A notable highlight was the Rural Virginia Opportunity Dashboard, an innovative digital platform introduced by the Virginia Rural Center to empower rural communities across the Commonwealth.

This year's Forum was followed by a regional Housing Symposium, which addressed critical challenges in housing across Southwest Virginia. In addition, the Southwest Virginia Solar Workgroup held their Solar Summit at UVA Wise on the day before the Forum, strategically scheduled to coincide with the event, further amplifying regional collaboration and impact.



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	675
LinkedIn followers	635
Wix Email Marketing subscribers	311
GO VA Region 1 Website unique visitors (07/01/24–06/30/25)	929

VII. PROJECT PIPELINE

This year's Region 1 project pipeline reflects both strategic growth and responsive innovation. In the wake of Hurricane Helene, which significantly impacted Southwest Virginia, DHCD launched the Helene Business Recovery Initiative—a dedicated funding stream designed to support recovery and resilience. Grants of up to \$250,000 are voted on by the Region 1 Council and administratively approved by DHCD. The first award was made to PBS Appalachia (\$97,500), with two additional proposals from Friends of Southwest Virginia and Washington County slated for consideration at our upcoming Council meeting.

At our July Council meeting, Region 1 formally added healthcare as a workforce development strategy within the Growth and Diversification Plan. This decision reflects the reality that many parts of our region function as healthcare deserts, creating barriers to talent attraction and retention in traded sectors. We anticipate future applications aimed at scaling capacity for high-demand occupations on the Virginia Office of Education and Employment (VOEE) list—such as dental assistant programs at our Region 1 community colleges.

Finally, Appalachian Sustainable Development is preparing a follow-up implementation proposal to build on their earlier planning grant focused on the development of an Agriculture

Campus, further advancing innovation and workforce alignment in the region's food and farming sector.

Region 1 staff is also working with several organizations on projects anticipated to be submitted by the application deadline on November 14, 2025. Specifically, staff has contacted regional economic developers on potential site projects that may qualify for GO Virginia funding.

The Region 1 GO Virginia Support Organization has focused on several goals moving into the next fiscal year:

1. **Strategic Spend Down and Maximize Impact:** Implement a focused approach to spending down GO Virginia Region 1 resources, ensuring that GO Virginia investments are directed towards more diverse initiatives that make a tangible difference in the GO Virginia Region 1 area.
2. **Empowered Engagement:** Actively engage GO Virginia Region 1 Council members more, fostering their support of projects and involvement in work groups and subcommittees to harness their expertise and drive impactful outcomes.
3. **Collaborative Commitment:** Cultivate a culture of encouraging active participation/collaboration and shared vision among GO Virginia Council members to ensure the success of projects aimed at improving Southwest Virginia's economic landscape.
4. **Energized Partnerships:** Foster dynamic partnerships between GO Virginia Council members, local stakeholders and community leaders to create a network of support that accelerates the realization of economic development goals in Southwest Virginia.

VIII. COUNCIL MEMBERS

GO Virginia Region 1 held four Council meetings in FY25 and achieved a quorum for each of four meetings. In June, GO Virginia Region 1 held its first-ever board retreat at the Southwest Virginia Cultural Center. This milestone gathering provided a valuable opportunity for Council members to reflect on regional progress, align on strategic priorities, and set clear goals for the year ahead. The retreat fostered collaboration and renewed momentum for advancing economic development across Southwest Virginia. In addition to full Council meetings and the Council Retreat, Region 1 staff coordinated four Joint Subcommittee meetings to review strategic priorities; and also held four quarterly meetings across three active Region 1 workgroups: Economic Development & Infrastructure, Talent Development, and Entrepreneurship, Small Business & Innovation. These workgroups continue to play a vital role in shaping regional strategies and informing the Growth and Diversification Plan. Additionally, one Executive Committee meeting was convened during the fiscal year to conduct business on behalf of the Council.

This year, two Region 1 Council members stepped down—one after completing their term of service, and the other following a professional transition to a neighboring region. The Region 1 Nominating Committee is actively working to identify and recommend strong candidates to fill these vacancies and continue advancing our regional mission.

The regional Council is comprised of leaders across many sectors of the economic development and workforce development landscape. The majority of the Council is mandated to be private business leaders, and the private sector's percentage of total membership is currently 59%.

GO Virginia Region 1 Council Members		
Name	Organization	Email
Dennis Carter	Vice President of Strategic Partnerships & Innovation, Emory and Henry University	dgarter@emoryhenry.edu
Pamela Collie-Price, Chair	Talent Acquisition Manager, EarthLink	pamela.collie-price@elnk.net
Todd Elswick	President, Paul's Fan Company	fanmantwo@gmail.com
Mark Eschle	Vice President of Operation, Wize Solutions	meschle@wizesolutionsva.com
David Graf	President, American Mine Research Inc. & PEMCO Corporation	dgraf@amrpemco.com
Rodney Halsey	Executive Vice President & COO, Skyline National Bank	rhalsey@skylinenationalbank.com
John Jeter	Vice President & CEO, Bristol Regional Medical Center & Johnston Memorial Hospital, Ballad Health	john.jeter@balladhealth.org
Steve Jones, Vice Chair	Executive Vice President & CFO, VFP	sjones@vfpinc.com
Hal Keene	Executive Bluefield University	Vkeene@bluefield.edu
Joe Kiser	Vice Chancellor for Finance & Operations UVA Wise	Jbk5b@uvawise.edu
Thomas Lawson	Regional Planner LENOWISCO	tlawson@lenowisco.org
Freddie Mullins	President Mullins Law, PLC	mullinslaw@fempc.net
Becky Nave	Mayor City of Bristol	Becky.nave@bristolva.org
Melanie Protti-Lawrence	President, Lawrence Brothers, Inc.	melaniepl@lbiweb.com
Byran Phipps	President & CEO People's Inc.	bphipps@peopleinc.net
Wes Poole	Superintendent Wytheville County Public Schools	wpoole@wythek12.org

Will Payne	Managing Partner Coalfield Strategies, LLC.	Will.Payne@CoalfieldLLC.com
Andy Smith	8 th Generation Farmer, Smithfield Farms	jhasmithiv@gmail.com
Scotty Wampler	Executive Director Cumberland Plateau Planning District	swwampler@cppd.org
Will Wampler	Attorney Kilgore Law, PLC.	wampler@kilgorelawoffice.com
Kris Westover	President Mountain Empire Community College	kwestover@mecc.edu
Browning Wynn, II	Senior Vice President Powell Valley Bank	bwynn@powellvalleybank.com

IX. SUPPORT ORGANIZATION

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

The GO Virginia Region 1 support organization is now strengthened by a fully staffed team, with Program Manager Sydney Boggs joining in August 2023 and Program Director Jenny Nichols in October 2023. Their combined expertise and dedication have significantly strengthened the organization's ability to lead impactful regional projects. Additionally, Robyn Lee plays a key role in maintaining sound fiscal management as the Program Manager for Finance and Grants.

Jenny Nichols

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Robyn Lee

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Sydney Boggs

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