



Virginia Growth and Opportunity Fund (GO Virginia) Competitive Grant Application Guidance

Section 1: Overview

Competitive Grants are designed for projects that involve two or more GO Virginia regions (multi-regional) or go beyond what a single region's annual allocation can support. They give regions the ability to collaborate or pursue initiatives that deliver substantial economic impact. To qualify, a project must present an extraordinary economic opportunity—one that is transformative in scale.

An extraordinary economic opportunity is a project that has the potential to:

- Create a significant number of high-paying jobs in targeted industries,
- Attract major private investment or new businesses to Virginia,
- Strengthening the Commonwealth's competitiveness in a key industry cluster, and
- Deliver broad benefits across multiple localities, even if the project is based in a single region.
- Leverage regional strengths and bring together partners across multiple regions
- Advance extraordinary opportunities within a single region that cannot be fully funded through per-capita resources.

Competitive Grants allow regions to scale their ideas, tackle challenges that cross boundaries, and pursue transformative projects leverage regional strengths aiming to expand opportunities that benefit multiple localities and industries.

Section 2: Eligibility

Eligible applicants are the same as other GO Virginia grants: local governments, political subdivisions, and organizations working on their behalf (such as regional economic development organizations, chambers, planning district commissions, colleges, and universities). Projects must demonstrate participation from at least two localities.

Eligible Projects

Multi-Region - must involve at least two GO Virginia regions, with each region including two or more localities. These projects may be funded as planning grants (up to \$250,000) or as implementation grants.



Single-Region - only considered if the request exceeds the region's available per-capita funds. These projects must demonstrate that they are an extraordinary opportunity and are subject to the same scoring and match requirements as multi-regional projects.

Section 3: Application Types

Competitive Grants can support planning or implementation projects. The type of application depends on whether your project is multi-regional or single region. Each application type is outlined below:

Multi-Region Applications

For all multi-region applications, a lead region must be identified. The leading region takes responsibility for managing the application process and ensuring collaboration across all participating councils. Each participating regions and applicant play a role in project development as well.

Lead Region Responsibilities

- Serve as the primary point of contact with the applicant (subgrantee).
- Convene partnering council chairs to review the project opportunity, concept, and potential impact.
- Involve each partnering council in the application development process and ensure they have a chance to provide feedback.
- Vote to approve the final application before submission.
- Share the final application with all partnering councils.
- Submit the application on behalf of the collaborating regions.

Partnering Region Responsibilities

- Participate actively in the cross-regional workgroup.
- Take a formal vote of support before the application can move forward to the scoring phase.
- Provide a council-approved letter of support for the project.
- Engage in advisory committees or project planning activities, as appropriate.

Applicant Responsibilities



- First engage with the lead regional council support organization to initiate the process.
- Work with the lead council and the multi-regional workgroup to develop the application.
- Collaborate on a communication strategy and timeline so all councils stay informed.
- Provide regular updates to all participating councils if the project is funded, in addition to quarterly reports required by DHCD.

Multi-Regional Planning Grants

Multi-Regional Planning Grants give regions the chance to work together on big ideas before moving into implementation. These grants support the research, coordination, and strategy development needed when challenges or opportunities cross regional boundaries.

The goal is to help regions align priorities, engage key industry partners, and produce a clear roadmap that positions them for a future implementation project. By investing in planning first, regions reduce risk, build stronger partnerships, and ensure that later projects are grounded in real data and regional consensus.

Multi-Regional Planning Grants are capped at \$250,000 per project.

A successful planning effort should include, at minimum:

- **Leadership Workgroup:** Convening a group of lead and partner council leaders to guide the process.
- **Stakeholder Workgroup:** Bringing together private industry partners, education institutions, local government representatives, and other key stakeholders to shape the project.
- **Strategic Plan:** Producing a clear, actionable plan (“playbook”) that outlines how the regions will move forward into a future implementation project.

Only planning projects that demonstrate a clear path toward a future multi-region implementation project of extraordinary economic opportunity will be considered for funding.

Multi-Region Implementation Grants

Multi-Region Implementation Grants are designed to turn collaborative plans into action. The goal is to deliver projects that create broad economic impact, strengthening targeted industry sectors, growing higher-paying jobs, and expanding opportunities across all participating regions. Because these projects represent a significant investment, applicants must



demonstrate strong regional collaboration, clear economic outcomes, and a plan for sustaining results beyond the grant period.

A strong implementation project will:

- Demonstrate close coordination and communication among all participating regions.
- Deliver measurable results aligned with the [GO Virginia Core Outcomes](#) (such as job creation, business growth, or talent development).
- Demonstrate a positive economic impact to the Commonwealth.
- Provide regular updates to each participating Regional Council, including quarterly reports on progress and outcomes achieved.

Successful projects should create benefits that are shared across all participating localities, not concentrated in just one community. In other words, the project's impact—such as new jobs, business growth, or expanded industry capacity—should be visible in each region that is part of the application.

Single Region Implementation

Single-Region Implementation Grants are available for extraordinary opportunities within one region that cannot be fully supported by that region's annual allocation. These projects are intended to address unique, high-impact needs where the scale of investment exceeds local resources but still delivers outcomes consistent with the goals of GO Virginia.

The expectation is that single-region projects will demonstrate the same level of rigor as multi-regional efforts—clear economic impact, measurable outcomes, and long-term sustainability—while making the case for why Competitive Grant support is essential. In some cases, the request may use a mix of per-capita funds and Competitive Grant funds; in other cases, it may rely entirely on Competitive Grant funds.

To be considered, applications must:

- Exceed the region's unobligated per-capita balance, as described above.
- Present an extraordinary economic opportunity that justifies the use of competitive fund resources.

Section 3: Match Requirements

Competitive Grants require a 2:1 match — for every \$2 of GO Virginia funds requested, the



project must provide \$1 in non-state matching funds. The match requirement shows that local governments, businesses, and other partners are invested in the project's success. Stronger and more diversified match contributions will strengthen an application. Match may come from local governments, industry partners, education partners, or other non-state sources across the regions.

For Multi-Regional Projects, each participating region is expected to share in the match contribution.

Local Match Requirements

At least 20% of the total match must come directly from participating in local governments (cash or in-kind). In some cases, a local match waiver may be requested.

Refer to the [GO Virginia Match Guidelines](#) for more details regarding match requirements, local match waiver requests and required forms.

Section 4: Review and Approval

Competitive Grant applications go through a **competitive review process** to ensure strong, highest-impact projects are funded. Every application is scored against clear criteria set by the GO Virginia State Board. The process is designed to be transparent and consistent, so applicants know exactly how their proposals will be evaluated.

All Competitive Grant applications must earn a minimum score of 75 out of 100 on the GO Virginia scoring rubric to be eligible for funding.

For multi-regional applications, the applicant from the lead region is responsible for submitting the application to the lead regional council. If approved, the application will be sent to DHCD for review. To ensure clarity in how the project will be managed, the collaborating regions will develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This MOU, which becomes part of the project contract, outlines the roles and responsibilities of each region after the award so that all partners are clear on how the grant will be administered and reported. Applicants should begin drafting the MOU during the application process, so it is ready to include the contract if the project is awarded.

Application Cycle

Applications are reviewed by the GO Virginia State Board on a quarterly cycle. If multiple applications qualify but funding is limited, projects with the highest scores will be prioritized for State Board consideration. Applicants should contact their regional Support Organizations for a full listing of deadlines and the process



Award Terms and Conditions

For multi-regional projects, funds are assigned to regions based on the project budget breakdown. If a clear breakdown is not available, funds may be assigned on a per-capita basis or another method agreed upon by DHCD and the collaborating regions.

Competitive Fund Scoring Matrix

Economic Impact – 40 points

- 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. If applicable, application demonstrates alignment with other regionally significant studies such as Talent Pathways Initiative (TPI), or the Regional Entrepreneurship Initiative (REI).
- Project application includes relevant facts and data that illustrate the regional need or problem to be solved.
- Application demonstrates how the project addresses unmet industry needs, strengthens traded-sector ecosystems, and/or creates a new asset/activity that supports long-term regional growth.
- Expected tangible results that drive high impact GO Virginia core performance outcomes during the grant period and beyond (not applicable for planning grants)
- Applications must include an Economic Impact Model that outlines the expected benefits relative to costs

Regional Collaboration – 20 points

- Application demonstrates the participation of key regional stakeholders such as businesses, colleges and universities, and other public and private entities in the conceptualization and the implementation of the project.
- Participation of localities or regions (including interstate collaborations) that are outside the applying region.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 higher-paying jobs.



Project Readiness – 20 points

- Project application demonstrates that the project partners have the capability to successfully execute the project, including the ability to execute a contract within six months and complete the scope of work within the contracted grant period.
- Project application demonstrates that the regional council has consulted with subject matter experts and local governments regarding the efficacy and viability of the proposal
- Project application fully analyzes the barriers to successful implementation and other associated risks along with a plan to overcome them.
- Project application provides a realistic timeline with milestones, drawdown schedule, and reimbursement plan, and analyzes potential risks with a clear strategy to overcome them.
- Application demonstrates the project partners have sufficient financial and administrative, and personnel capacity to ensure compliance with the grant agreement.
- Application demonstrates cost share, the portion of project costs contributed by the project stakeholders
- Project application includes a comprehensive and realistic budget with relevant matching resources. Match must be reasonable, necessary, and sourced outside of state funds. Applications should demonstrate sufficient cash resources to manage cost changes, and all match must be fully documented through letters of commitment, in-kind forms, or equivalent

Project Sustainability – 20 points

- Project application includes a detailed and realistic plan for financial sustainability after grant funds are exhausted. Projects should not be one-time programs or events and should provide evidence of long-term financial support or revenue models (e.g., funding for future phases of development, or operations for construction projects). Commitments should be documented through letters of commitment or other evidence of support.
- Application highlights detailed plan for future commitment from private industry and other stakeholders.
- Project application demonstrates a clear pipeline of demand from private industry and/or end users. Evidence should include letters of support or commitment from partners. Projects that are scalable and replicable across regions and show strong private sector engagement will score higher.