



2025 Economic Growth and Diversification Plan Full Review Guidelines

Section I: GO Virginia Program Intent and Growth and Diversification Plans

The goal of the GO Virginia program is to facilitate regional collaboration and to grow and diversify the economy by supporting projects that lead to growth in traded industry clusters that drive the production of higher-wage jobs. As defined by [Board Policy #4](#), a traded industry cluster is an industry sector(s) where the majority of goods and services are sold or have the potential to be sold outside the Commonwealth of Virginia. Programs and projects recommended by the Regional Councils and approved by the GO Virginia State Board shall be consistent with the strategies and targeted industry clusters outlined in the Regional Economic Growth and Diversification Plans.

The Virginia Growth and Opportunity Act establishes that each Regional Council is required to develop an Economic Growth and Diversification Plan to (i) promote private-sector growth and opportunity in the region; (ii) identify issues of economic competitiveness for the region, including gaps in education and skills required to meet existing and prospective employer needs within the region; and (iii) outline strategies that the collaborating business, education, and government entities in the region will pursue to expand economic opportunity, diversify the economy, and align workforce development activities with the education and skills needed by employers in the region. According to [§ 2.2-2489 of the Code of Virginia](#), each Regional Council must review its Plan at least every two years while receiving grants from the GO Virginia fund.

For the required 2025 Full Review, each Regional Support Organization shall submit a draft amended Economic Growth and Diversification Plan to DHCD no later than **September 15, 2025**, for DHCD staff review and feedback. The final Plan must be approved by the Regional Council and submitted to DHCD no later than **October 31, 2025**, for consideration at the December 2025 GO Virginia State Board meeting.

In compliance with the Code of Virginia, DHCD requires biennial reviews of each Region's Economic Growth and Diversification Plan. These biennial reviews take the form of alternating Full Reviews and Interim Reviews. The overall goal of a Full Review is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of all aspects of the Plan with an eye toward near-term economic acceleration opportunities as well as investments in longer-term economic growth strategies. The Plan shall demonstrate an understanding of the economic challenges and opportunities associated with localities encompassed in the Region as well as their population demographics.



The Economic Growth and Diversification Plan is intended to describe specific goals and actionable strategies that will produce measurable results over a two-year period. Additionally, the plan should consider how these efforts can be coordinated and sustained over a 5 to 10-year horizon, and the broad steps to be taken in four GO Virginia investment strategies: workforce development, start-up ecosystems, site development and infrastructure, and cluster scale-up.

Councils must engage a broad range of stakeholders in the Full Review process. Councils should demonstrate stakeholder participation in the plan review process from local and regional economic development organizations, education and workforce training partners, planning district commissions, nonprofits, community groups, workforce boards, as well as coordinators of regional entrepreneurial activities.

Councils are encouraged to approach their reviews with consideration for other regional economic development and workforce development plans, including those developed by regional economic development organizations and planning district commissions.

Section II: Full Review Plan Elements

At a minimum, an Economic Growth and Diversification Plan Full Review should include the following activities and plan activities/elements:

1. EVALUATE THE PERFORMANCE OF YOUR REGIONAL ECONOMY: Regional Councils must evaluate the performance of their regional economy, with a focus on the performance of their previously identified targeted industry clusters. This review shall consider at least the past five years' economic performance and generally result in a comprehensive assessment of the region's economic conditions,.

DHCD will provide a JobsEQ data package to support this effort and allow for analysis of the items noted below; however, Regional Councils may elect to use additional data sources, as well as quantitative and qualitative analysis, or prepare their own data for review. Throughout **October and November 2024**, DHCD staff will hold meeting(s) with the Regional Council's supporting organization to discuss and determine the specific data needs for the Full Review cycle. DHCD staff will provide these data packages no later than **January 31, 2025**.

Such evaluation shall reflect on the following:

- a. Employment growth across all sectors
- b. Wage growth across all sectors
- c. Employment growth in targeted traded industry sectors
- d. Wage growth in targeted traded industry sectors
- e. New business formation activity (source will be provided by DHCD)
- f. New business formation in targeted traded sector industries (source will be provided by DHCD)



- g. Economic development announcements (new and expanding businesses) (source: VEDP website/announcements)
- h. VEDP Site Inventory Data (source: VEDP)

2. A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS FOR EACH TARGETED INDUSTRY SECTOR: The identification of targeted sectors or clusters must be centered on empirical data, and aligned with realistic results based on the region’s economic drivers.. Each Regional Council should assess its current targeted sectors, as well as any potential new targeted sectors identified in the data analysis.

Regions are encouraged to conduct a situational analysis that identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the future economic performance of each sector. Regional Councils should approach this activity with consideration for GO Virginia’s four priority investment strategies. Regions should also review their current inventory of sites relative to their targeted traded industry sectors to inform and prioritize future site investments.

This analysis must be informed and validated by business leaders and other stakeholders.

3. SKILLS GAP ANALYSIS FOR YOUR TARGETED INDUSTRY SECTORS: Evaluate labor requirements and regional capacity to train workers, with a particular focus on reaching historically underserved populations. Update the previously identified workforce gaps in the availability of immediately employable talent in the targeted sectors or clusters. The prioritization of workforce gaps to be addressed will serve as guidance to the Regional Council and Board in the evaluation of future funding decisions. If a gap exists in a newly identified target sector, identify current efforts to address this gap, being specific as to the skills/credentialing/experience/education required, and whether these efforts are adequate to address the shortage and to support long-term growth. Councils are encouraged to collaborate with workforce development boards and other workforce/education system stakeholders.

4. IDENTIFICATION OF PLAN GOALS AND ACTIONABLE STRATEGIES: Review the priority goals and strategies in your plan and refine them using the information and data gathered previously. Map your active project portfolio against these strategies, including those in your project pipeline.

Use the GO Virginia program’s four priority investment strategies as a framework to describe the newly prioritized and proposed activities and longer-term efforts that will advance the goals of the GO Virginia Program and the Regional Economic Growth and Diversification Plan.

Councils should identify a framework for the evaluation of efforts and the progress made toward the implementation of the Economic Growth and Diversification Plan. For example, each strategy shall identify one or more measures of performance that will indicate progress towards achieving the Plan goals.



5. IDENTIFY STRATEGIC PARTNERS FOR COLLABORATION: The plan review shall identify opportunities for collaboration or complementary efforts for each of the strategies outlined in the Plan. Councils must identify organizations and other non-GO Virginia activities that could/should collaborate to support the goals of the Plan.