



VIRGINIA INITIATIVE FOR
**GROWTH &
OPPORTUNITY**
IN EACH REGION
REGIONAL COUNCIL 9

**REGIONAL COUNCIL 9
JOINT TASK FORCE MEETING
GROW EXISTING BUSINESS (GEB) TASK FORCE &
ENTREPRENEURSHIP (ESHIP) TASK FORCE**

AUGUST 7, 2025

10 am to 11 am

IN-PERSON

1001 Research Park Blvd., Suite 301, Charlottesville

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81441976801>

Call 434-979-5610 x. 106 with connectivity issues.

MINUTES

Grow Existing Business Task Force Members Present: Ray Knott, Leslie Kidd, Jennifer Schmack, Francoise Seillier-Moiseiwitsch

Grow Existing Business Task Force Members Absent: Paige Read, Gary Wood

Entrepreneurship Task Force Members Present: Rahul Keshap, Rob Archer, Christine Clough, Ethan Dunstan

Entrepreneurship Task Force Members Absent: Pace Lochte

Staff Present: Shannon Holland, Christie Taylor

1. Call to Order.

Ray Knott called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

- **Welcome**

Ray Knott, GEB Task Force Chair, and Rahul Keshap, E-ship Task Force Chair, welcomed new committee members. Attendees introduced themselves.

- **Roll Call**

A roll call was performed. **Quorum for both task forces was established, as noted above.**

- **Public Comment**

No public comments were received prior to or during the call for public comments.

2. Action Items:

- **Consent Agenda**

- Grow Existing Business Meeting Minutes

Francoise Seillier-Moiseiwitsch made a motion to accept the Minutes of the April 4, 2025, Grow Existing Business Task Force Meeting. Leslie Kidd seconded. The motion carried.

- Entrepreneurship Meeting Minutes, January 7, 2025

Ethan Dunstan made a motion to accept the minutes of the January 7, 2025, Entrepreneurship Task Force Meeting. Rob Archer seconded. The motion carried.

3. Updates:

Shannon Holland gave the following update:

- Region 9 Growing Existing Businesses Projects Dashboards

Page 9 includes the dashboard for Growing Existing Business projects since 2016, with a summary table of outcomes. The green column shows committed outcomes; the purple column shows actual reported outcomes, either year-to-date or at project close. A

stoplight report on page 9 highlights common committed outcomes across project types.

- **Region 9 Entrepreneurship Task Force Dashboards**
The above description applies to the reports for Entrepreneurship on pages 10-11, as well.
- **Region 9 Project Pipeline**
Page 12 outlines projects expected to be proposed within the next year. A recent addition is a Talent Development grant for a GO TEC initiative led by Albemarle and Charlottesville. Region 9 is approaching a point where projects may need to compete for the \$1 million annual per capita funds. Transformational projects may still be considered even when funds are limited.
It was clarified that the Rivanna Futures project was awarded in 2025 but funded from FY24 allocations.

4. Task Forces DRAFT Goal and Objectives for Feedback

Ray Knott reviewed the draft charter with objective for each task force noting that staff welcome feedback. The draft, inclusive of shared feedback, will be included in August Council packet.

5. Proposal Review

- **FUEL Project Updates**
Shannon Holland gave the following updates:
The executive summary begins on page 15, followed by the rubric for scoring projects. It was clarified that the rubric will now be offered as a guide for reviewing projects and preparing for discussion. Scores will no longer be tallied since reviews will be discussed at appropriate task force meetings. Shannon Holland noted that outstanding match and a letter of support had been received. Background was offered on how the REI planning grant originated, the formation of the report and action plan, partners to the projects, and the iterations of proposals leading to the one presented. DHCD has reviewed and given some feedback. There is not another regional entity expressing desire to do the work. Venture Central is positioning itself to be the leader in the innovation space serving businesses in the spaces that GO Virginia would consider not only Entrepreneurship but also Growing Existing Business. Some concerns for discussion is that the main expense is salary for multiple people over two years of about \$500,000.
It was restated that the role of the task force is to make a recommendation for the Council meeting. Recommendations could be: recommend for approval, recommend declining, recommend with conditions, delay for a future deadline.

Project Discussion

The project discussion highlights included:

- Rahul Keshap disclosed that he was involved with Venture Central as interim executive director, in the early stages of the REI with no continuing connection.
- Concerns raised that some project team members have not met targets on

existing GO Virginia Region 9 projects based on the project dashboards included in the meeting packet. Solid deliverables should be completed on prior projects before awarding future grants to ensure accountability.

- Need to pause, show they can actually deliver committed outcomes.
- External feedback indicates other funders have expressed similar concerns on delivering outcomes, vagueness in reporting, lack transparency when requested, and challenges with compliance and impact within geographic footprint.
- There are activities in this proposal worthy of support, it is something the region needs. However, concerns on sustainability override that merit at this time.
- Needs more transparency on salary breakdown – who is paid what and what proportion of time, how is that credentialed and monitored. Salaries and fringe are 65% of funds, which is high.
- Proposal presents as operational funds for the entities involved. Are the SBDC funds federally or locally sourced?
- Business support lacks geographic diversity. Those presenting letters are from Charlottesville/Albemarle and are already on the existing advisory council. Food and Beverage Manufacturing was underrepresented.
- Plan is unclear, half-baked. Scope lacks local relevance.
- Strategy to go to wealthy neighborhoods to find private investors indicates misunderstanding of addressing capital gaps.
- Seems to be looking for GO Virginia funds to overcome federal funding concerns.
- Convening C-Suite leaders seems like good idea but representation should be more regionally diverse and twice a year is not adequate. Not showing the same benefit regionally even if Charlottesville based.
- Approving with contingencies is not an option as the proposal has too many gaps.

Francoise Seillier-Moiseiwitsch made the motion that the GEB Task Force to recommend that the Council decline this proposal. Leslie Kidd seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Ethan Dunstan made the motion that the Entrepreneurship Task Force recommend that the Council decline this proposal. Christine Clough seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

6. 2025 Growth Plan Grant Opportunities

Shannon Holland reviewed the initial draft of possible future grant opportunities for the next Region 9 Growth Plan. The plan draft is due to DHCD in mid-September. Feedback is welcome at any time and a draft will be presented at the August 28 Council meeting.

7. Other Business

The following business was presented:

- Ethan Dunstan encouraged Task Force members to keep an eye out for proposal opportunities with regional impact.
- Helen Cauthen commented that the Innovation Corridor Strategic Roadmap Planning Grant is off to a great start with stakeholder engagement already commencing with three meetings. Every county is represented.

- Ray Knott shared that at a meeting in Tysons Corner, it came up that the Region 9 Commonwealth Bio Accelerator/Project VITAL was noted as an investment impacting the entire state implying that some projects are not only a regional win, but also a win for the state.
- Francoise Seillier-Moiseiwitsch shared that the Wine Industry Implementation Grant is off to a great start with coalition-based work bringing people together. That coalition has also potentially identified a partner to sell Virginia wine in Washington, DC.

8. Adjourn

Ray Knott and Rahul Keshap adjourned the meetings of both task forces at 11:19 a.m.