



**REGIONAL COUNCIL 9  
GROW EXISTING BUSINESS (GEB) TASK FORCE  
MARCH 31, 2026**

**11:30 am to 12:30 pm**

**IN-PERSON**

**1001 Research Park Blvd, Suite 301, Charlottesville, VA 22901**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81858287543>

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

**MINUTES**

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

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

**Staff:** Shannon Holland, Christie Taylor, Helen Cauthen

**Guests:** Rebecca Haydock, Venture Central; Hope Lawrence, Venture Central

**1. Call to Order**

• **Roll Call**

A roll call was performed. Quorum was established, as noted above.

• **Public Comment**

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

**2. ACTION ITEM: Consent Agenda**

- GEB Meeting Minutes, January 6, 2026

***Francoise Seillier-Moiseiwitsch made the motion to accept the minutes of the January 6, 2026 meeting. Leslie Kidd seconded the motion. The motion carried.***

**3. Updates**

• **Region 9 Growing Existing Businesses Projects Dashboard**

All projects were rated as green on the dashboard. There was no discussion.

• **Region 9 Project Pipeline**

Shannon Holland shared that the Wine Coalition grant team is considering a grant for larger statewide implementation.

• **Innovation Corridor Strategic Roadmap**

Helen Cauthen reported that TEconomy presented general suggestions for the Innovation Corridor Strategic Roadmap. The draft plan is due to the project team in April, with a final draft for task force review in mid-May. The final report will be presented at the Region 9 Annual Meeting.

**4. ACTION ITEM: Project Review**

• **Venture Central Food & Beverage Accelerator**

- Executive Summary

- Scoring Rubric – Blank

Ray Knott cited the executive summary and rubric, noting proposals need at least a score of 75 to move forward at the state board. The Task Force's role is to assess if the proposal will likely exceed this threshold and recommend whether it should advance, advance with concerns, or not advance. He also reminded members that last meeting they requested the grant team add a geographically suitable advisory group and peer-to-peer networking model.

Shannon Holland stated the project budget should reflect Virginia Specialty Foods Association's match as \$50 per business for 20 businesses (\$1,000), with an additional \$1,000 match from the VSFA director's salary. The total match remains \$2,000 but is allocated differently.

Ray Knott asked if anyone anticipated a score below 75 in the state review; everyone confirmed scores would be at least 75. He then reviewed the proposal, with each scoring section summarized below.

### **Section 1: Economic Impact**

The proposal evidences the need for the project. There were concerns about how transformative it is, since it scales existing businesses that are already on a growth trajectory. There may also be some redundancies in the curriculum for businesses that have gone through an incubator. Metrics are clear. The ROI modeling assumptions are realistic with a negative ROI in year 3 and a positive ROI in year 5.

### **Section 2: Collaboration**

Providing cash match through six localities is strong. Also, the project notes which localities it will serve and shares why others were unable to participate. There is strong alignment with the Growth Plan. The project avoids duplication and has well-defined roles. Concern was expressed about how the Letters of Support were primarily Charlottesville and Albemarle centric. The project team was asked to expand the number of letters to represent the localities served ahead of the April Council meeting. The project team indicated that there will be many businesses served outside of the cohort model. The project team confirmed they are willing to parse the reporting to report which localities businesses served are located if the project gets under contract.

### **Section 3: Project Readiness**

The budget and timeline were remarked as accurate. Barriers to implementation were named and addressed. There was concern that if the project lead left then the project could stall. The project team said they would provide a contingency staffing plan before the April Council Meeting.

### **Section 4: Sustainability**

The project has garnered solid local support, and PATH Foundation has aligned to support this as local food production is viewed as part of the answer to food scarcity. The project team anticipates future grant options through PATH and loans through Atlantic Union. They were advised by the Task Force to not over-estimate future cash contribution by CRA, as it is more likely to be in-kind. There were questions on retention of participants.

The project team answered that when participants leave, it's typically for personal reasons, and rare. The application process vets commitment to the program, and access to capital is an incentive to remain. This iteration of the accelerator does not tie enrollment to equity share, but in the future that may occur and would also incentivize retention.

### **Recommendation & Close**

The following is a summary of what the project team was asked to deliver or said they could deliver before the April Council Meeting:

- New Letters of Support from potential cohort members from localities served other than Albemarle, Fauquier and the City of Charlottesville.
- Add geographical representation as part of the consideration for the cohort criteria.
- Provide a contingency plan to ensure continuity of program if something happens with staffing.

Task Force members concurred the proposal would receive a minimum score of 75 and recommended the project advance.

***Francoise Seillier-Moiseiwitsch made the motion to recommend the proposal for advancement to the GO Virginia Council with the contingency a staff contingency plan is delivered before the April Council Meeting. Leslie Kidd seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.***

### **5. Other Business**

No other business was presented.

### **6. Adjourn**

***Leslie Kidd made the motion to adjourn. Francoise Seillier-Moiseiwitsch seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 12:14 PM.***