

Central Virginia Innovation Corridor Strategic Roadmap

A big, bold vision for a high-impact, future-ready regional economy

OVERVIEW

Central Virginia is poised to become a nationally recognized Innovation Corridor for biotech, digital technologies, and national security. Momentum is growing to build upon recent innovation-driven, technology-based public and private sector investments in these industry sectors. A shared vision – outlined in a Strategic Roadmap - is needed to fully realize the economic potential of powerful assets in research, workforce, sites, and infrastructure.

GOALS

The Innovation Corridor Strategic Roadmap seeks to:

- Identify our region's competitive advantages in life sciences/biotech and digital/IT (data science, AI, autonomy, advanced materials, cybersecurity, etc.) with commercial and national security applications.
- Gain a line-of-sight to economic growth opportunities; and
- Create a strategic roadmap with actionable steps for international economic growth.

REGIONAL IMPACT & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

Region 9 has seen historic investments in life sciences and digital/IT sectors, creating a unique opportunity to drive long-term economic growth. Key regional assets include:

- The University of Virginia's \$259M in life sciences research funding and the new \$350M Paul & Diane Manning Institute for Biotechnology.
- The expansion of Piedmont Virginia Community College's Bolick Center and Germanna Community College's fiber optics and cybersecurity training.
- Significant private-sector investments, including Afton Scientific's \$200M facility expansion, AgroSpheres' \$37M Series B funding, and L3Harris Aerojet Rocketdyne's \$41M expansion.
- The launch of the Commonwealth BioAccelerator (Region 9 VITAL Project) with \$7.5M in funding, supporting life sciences startups with potential for further expansion.
- Large land parcels are available for development within 100 miles of the National Capitol Region.

The project will help us catalyze these independent wins into a cohesive regional mission with a strategic roadmap.

SCOPE OF WORK & DELIVERABLES

The project will deliver a Strategic Roadmap outlining actionable growth strategies based on comprehensive research, industry engagement, and competitive analysis. Key activities include:

1. Assessment of Regional Industry Strengths – Identifying market-facing core competencies in life sciences/biotech and digital/IT (data science, AI, autonomy, advanced materials, cybersecurity, etc.) with commercial and national security applications.
2. Industry Cluster Analysis – Conducting a quantitative assessment of the current and emerging industry landscape.
3. High-Growth Opportunity Mapping – Identifying 6-8 high-growth innovation opportunities with the strongest economic and workforce potential.
4. Situational Assessment – Evaluating challenges, barriers, and gaps to inform targeted strategic interventions.
5. Development of a Strategic Roadmap– Providing a clear implementation framework with specific recommendations, resource requirements, and performance metrics.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & REGIONAL COLLABORATION

The project will be led by a Steering Committee with Co-Leads Helen Cauthen, president of CVPED, and Pace Lochte, Assistant Vice President, UVA Economic Development. The project is supported by a broad coalition of stakeholders, including:

- Local Government & Economic Development: The Steering Committee includes the City of Charlottesville and Counties of Albemarle, Fauquier, Greene, and Orange. The grant includes all eleven localities in GO Virginia Region 9.
- Higher Education & Research Institutions: The University of Virginia, UVA Foundation, Piedmont Virginia Community College, Germanna Community College, and Laurel Ridge Community College
- Industry & Private Sector Partners: Afton Scientific, BCubed Engineering, Breakthrough to Solutions, CvilleBioHub, EURO-COMPOSITES, Hourigan, Luna Labs, MITRE, Perrone Robotics, and WillowTree.

Stakeholder engagement will be ongoing. A Steering Committee will provide oversight, and an Advisory Group will provide input and industry expertise throughout the study period.

FUNDING & BUDGET

The project is funded by \$100,000 in GO Virginia funds, with additional cash and in-kind matching contributions totaling \$95,000 from local governments, private sector partners, the University of Virginia, and regional organizations.

CONCLUSION

The Innovation Corridor Strategic Roadmap is a critical next step in advancing GO Virginia Region 9's economic competitiveness. By leveraging regional strengths, aligning industry priorities, and developing a clear implementation strategy, this project will position the region as a national leader in life sciences/biotech and digital/IT innovation. The project will provide a blueprint for sustainable growth, ensuring that Region 9 continues to attract investment, create high-paying jobs, and foster industry-leading innovation.

CONTACT

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