



Vibrant Virginia's mission is to:

- Grow a network of Virginia researchers and practitioners
- Enhance university projects and initiatives related to Virginia and urban-rural regional concerns, and
- Strengthen the long-term vibrancy of Virginia through applied research, policy analysis, and engagement projects.

Final Report 2018-2020

Who we work with...

- Virginia Tech faculty and staff
- Government officials
- Entrepreneurs and small business owners
- Nonprofit professionals
- K-12 educators
- Colleges and universities

Where we collaborate...

- Southwest Virginia
- Hampton Roads
- Southern Virginia
- Northern Virginia

PREPARED BY THE
VIRGINIA TECH
OFFICE OF ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

*With generous support and
special thanks to:
Outreach and International
Affairs
Office of Engagement
Virginia Cooperative Extension
School of Public and International
Affairs
College Access Collaborative
Policy Strategic Growth Area*

Seed Grants

- Grants of **\$5-10K**
- **26** total applications
- Applicants from all of Virginia Tech's **11** colleges, as well as **11** organizations
- **7** total grantees for projects across Virginia

Community Conversations

- **15** Community Conversations in **4** distinct regions
- Topics ranging from Agriculture and Workforce to IT, Entrepreneurship and Community Development
- Attendees: **45** VT/VCE faculty, **61** government officials, **55** nonprofit professionals, **33** businesses

Campus Conversations

- **3** Campus Conversations
- **50+** faculty attended across **14** departments and colleges, and **17** offices and organizations
- **130+** VT faculty showed interest in participating in Vibrant Virginia in one way or another

The Vibrant Virginia Book

- To date, **25+** abstracts have been submitted for chapters in *Vibrant Virginia: Engaging the Commonwealth to Expand Economic Vitality and Inclusivity*
- Submissions from **21** VT faculty from **6** colleges or division (**4** from VCE), **3** submissions from other VA universities, **6** submissions from state-level development practitioners

Spring 2018 Grantees

DELTA Digital Research Lab developed social media campaigns to help small nonprofits in Southwest Virginia raise their voices and profiles online. Small nonprofit organizations often lack the internal staff expertise and capacity to pursue robust digital programs. This limits their ability to engage the public in their mission, raise funds, expand volunteer hours, and positively impact public policy. Vibrant funding allowed DELTA Digital Research Lab to expand their efforts and partner with under-resourced organizations including various United Way chapters, the Virginia Rural Health Association, the Boys and Girls Club of the Blue Ridge, Danville Church Based Tutorial Program, Inc., and the Grace Network of Martinsville-Henry County.

Contact Dr. Katherine Haenschen (kh3@vt.edu) for more information.

Supporting Healthy Families and Communities through Collaborative Strategies to Reduce Opioid SUD supported efforts in Roanoke City and Pulaski County to develop priorities and strategies that address the Opioid epidemic. In Pulaski County, the project team worked with the Pulaski Community Partners Coalition (PCPC) to develop strategic priorities focused on increasing parenting skills and reducing barriers to treatment. In Roanoke, they supported major components of the work done by the Roanoke Valley Collective Response and helped to develop a detailed strategic blueprint for addressing the opioid and addiction crisis from prevention through recovery. The Roanoke-based effort has resulted in a \$300,000 federally-funded grant awarded to Virginia Tech, which supports the Connection to Care project designed to reduce opioid overdose and connect individuals to treatment through proactive engagement and community partnerships.

Contact Dr. Kathy Hosig (khosiq@vt.edu), Dr. Mary Beth Dunkenberger (mdunkenb@vt.edu), or Dr. Sophie Wenzel (swenzel@vt.edu) for more information.

The Community Change Collaborative (CCC) is an interdisciplinary group of graduate students and faculty. Operating out of the VT Institute for Policy and Governance, the CCC examines the methods, frameworks, and forces shaping community development, approaches to community engagement, and how to build sustainable, cross-sectoral partnerships. With the support of Vibrant Virginia, the CCC partnered with regional community stakeholders in Southside and Southwest Virginia to develop and conduct community-based strategic positioning efforts that enhanced local citizen's capacity to explore opportunities and challenges for sustainable community change. The CCC held community workshops on topics such as business incubators, social entrepreneurship, development of innovative lodging options, and improving nonprofit governance and leadership capacity. Since VV funding, the Collaborative continues to work with communities in Montgomery WV, Lee County VA and Patrick County VA. It provides opportunities for its members to engage in applied community-based research, while connecting community partners with the knowledge, technical capacity and support that only a major research university can provide. The CCC also hosts featured speaker and podcast series highlighting the community change work of scholars and practitioners multiple perspectives.

Contact Dr. Max Stephenson (mstephen@vt.edu) or Andrew Morikawa (andrjm7@vt.edu) for more information.

Connecting Schools and Businesses/Promoting Workforce Development through Teacher Internships promoted education and workforce development in Southwest Virginia by connecting teachers with area businesses. They co-created internship opportunities for students while fostering classroom environments that better prepared students to enter the workforce. The project team researched the potential for developing more effective student internships in local businesses, which resulted in the creation of a curriculum and evaluation plan that helps educators measure the effectiveness of internships with local businesses in Southwest Virginia. Their partnership with the United Way of SWVA has been the most successful component of this project and has laid the groundwork for an on-going partnership through Project Ignite and GO Virginia grant activities.

Contact Dr. Lisa McNair (lmcnair@vt.edu) or Dr. Sue Magliaro (sumags@vt.edu) for more information.

The Arlington Legacy Business Initiative worked to expand and synthesize its collection of oral histories of long-standing, character-defining commercial establishments with the goal of increasing public awareness of these vibrant community assets. The project team worked to: create an enhanced and more publicly-accessible website; devise innovative strategies to recognize the heritage of under-represented groups; initiate partnerships with local business districts and county agencies; and develop a general guide relevant to a broad range of communities throughout Virginia. Final outcomes included a successful proposal for a session at the 2020 National Planning Conference and an anticipated Planning Advisory Services Memo (to be published in 2021 by the American Planning Association).

Contact Dr. Elizabeth Morton (morton05@vt.edu) for more information.

The Chickahominy Tribe of Virginia project continues its Vibrant Virginia work to preserve the Chickahominy tribal history and culture in a way that preserves the past and envisions the future. The final product will be a useful mechanism that will allow the tribe to share their story with neighbors outside their borders including K-12 schools, nonprofit organizations, federal agencies, and prospective business partners.

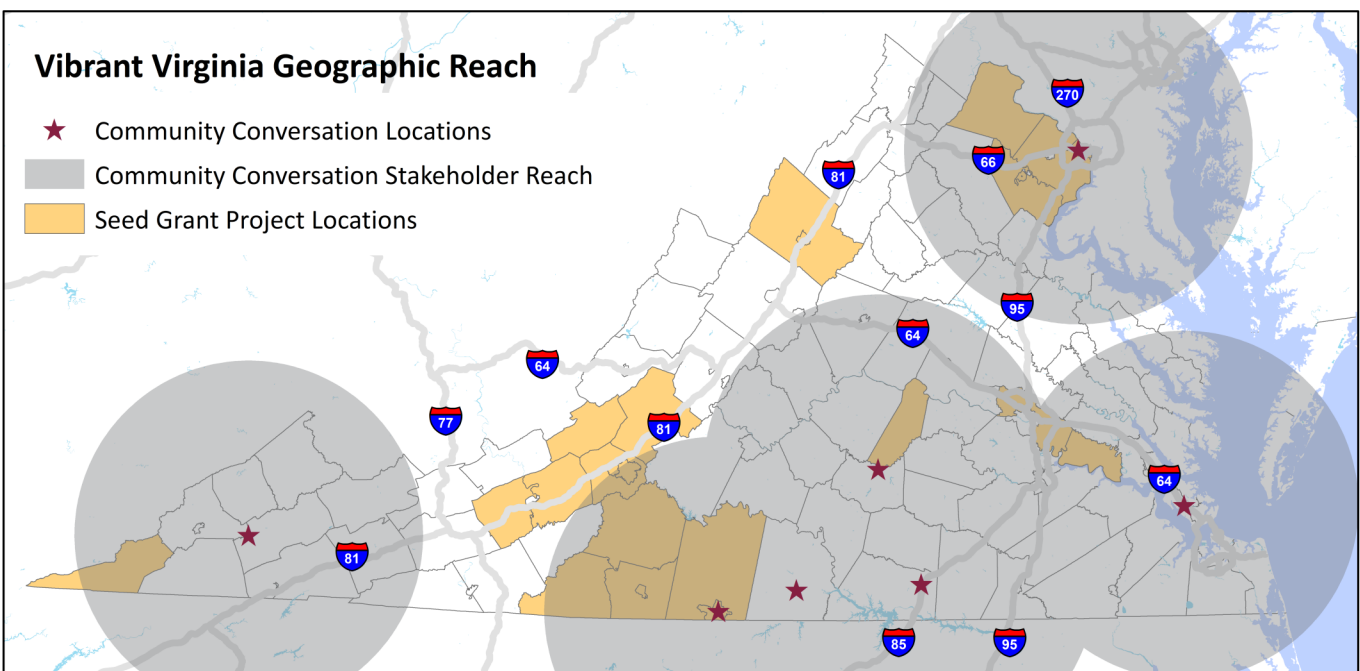
Contact Dr. Barbara Lockee (lockeebb@vt.edu) for more information.

“With this seed funding, we have been able to propel our project forward. We have leveraged this funding with several other smaller grants to make connections with service provider and volunteers groups. The resources for travel, meeting spaces, and research assistance has made a critical difference in our work, as we continue to plan for the second annual consortium meeting next fall and to submit an external grant.”

Dr. Katrina Powell, Seed Grantee

The Refugee and Migrant Partnerships project sought to understand how rural communities accommodate refugees who must comply with policies that assume refugees live in and have access to resources available in urban areas. Faculty convened a state-wide consortium of higher education institutions involved and interested in research with and for refugees. The coinvestigators individually and collectively continue to focus their outreach and research efforts on displaced populations and bridging academic and public resources to benefit these communities.

Contact Dr. Katrina Powell (kmpowell@vt.edu) for more information.



Community Conversations

An essential element to the Vibrant Virginia initiative, the community conversation series brought together a diverse group of local stakeholders to discuss pertinent issues facing the Commonwealth's regions. From K-12 educators to entrepreneurs, manufacturers to university faculty, farmers to nonprofits, these conversations connected community members to Virginia Tech faculty and resources. Over the past two years, 15 conversations were held in places such as Saint Paul, Newport News, Farmville, South Boston, South Hill, Danville and Arlington. The map on Page 3 shows the geographic scale of these conversations.

"I enjoyed the opportunity to meet new stakeholders to form connections for future collaboration."

"I thought it was a good conversation with a lot of different viewpoints presented. I thought the dialogue between the private sector employers and the educators/workforce development representatives was very interesting."

CONNECTIONS MADE!

- Carl Zipper (VT Powell River Project) and Dr. Peter Sforza (VT CGIT) are exploring a joint project related to land cover/land use
- OED is working with Mike Quillen (EX VT BOV, GOVA R1 chair) to encourage VT's participation in the Appalachian Homestead Initiative. Already Jonathan Everett, in VT's Real Estate program, has a class project underway to support this initiative.
- Sandy Ratliff (VA Community Capital) has connected Reed Kennedy (VT Pamplin) with SWVA businesses that offer projects for Pamplin's introductory consulting class.
- OED and Dr. Mike Schwarz (VT Seafood AREC) successfully collaborated on a \$3 million US EDA grant for the construction of a new AREC facility in Hampton.
- Eva Doss (Launch Place) has since served as a judge for several VT Apex events.
- Dr. Karen Ely Sanders (VT College Access Collaborative) and several school superintendents (Cumberland, others) have explored VT participation in regional events for high school students.
- OED, VT-CENI, VT Seafood AREC and the Chesapeake Bay Governor's School (Matthews VA) are working on a GOVA application to serve the aquaculture industry.
- VT ICTAS and MAAP raised awareness about their work in Hampton Roads, finding collaborators for VRIF and GOVA proposals.
- Stakeholders in NOVA learned about workforce development programs already going on in Blacksburg, which could easily be transferred to assist NOVA residents.



Looking forward

The Vibrant Virginia initiative has examined an array of issues impacting the quality of life across the urban and rural regions of the Commonwealth. It has tackled cross-cutting topics such as expanding K-12 education reform, supporting entrepreneurial ecosystems and growing advanced manufacturing to context-specific concerns such as coastal resilience, unmanned systems and mine-land reclamation. The VV team is dedicated to elevating the voices of community leaders, local governments, small businesses, nonprofits, K-12 and university educators.

To refine and elevate program evaluation capacity in the Virginia Tech community, the Vibrant Virginia management team brought together VV seed grantees, faculty who attended multiple campus and community conversations, and other VT stakeholders for a series of meetings. These evaluation meetings helped to illuminate how the individual components of the program connected to achieve the broader goals, ascertain how helpful the program was to participants, and explore how Vibrant Virginia can make continuous improvements as it progresses. This resulted in the development of a program logic model (shown on page 6) that maps out clear next steps for moving forward.

On the horizon:

- Launch the Vibrant Virginia book project by creating an online interface for chapter authors and readers to interact, react, and learn from one another. This website will host all VV book chapters, readers reactions to those chapters, and additional data and literature related to the exploration of Virginia's urban-rural spectrum.
- Continue connecting individuals, government, businesses, nonprofits and education stakeholders across Virginia to discuss key issues and connect them with the resources of Virginia Tech. Building on this effort, we will create new and improved ways to monitor the activities, outcomes and impact we make as a result of these interactions.
- Highlight existing Virginia Tech engagement and extension activities to increase awareness of, and connections among, the highly active faculty and students who reflect Virginia Tech's tripartite land-grant mission.
- Cultivate and define the narrative of Vibrant Virginia incorporating related work from internal and external efforts including the Rural Virginia Initiative, GO Virginia, VA SmartFarm Innovation Network, etc.

Vibrant Virginia Logic Model

New Mission: To promote and enhance engaged scholarship across Virginia's urban-rural spectrum for a more Vibrant Virginia

Inputs	Activities	Short-term Outcomes	Medium-term Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes/ Impacts
OIA VCE CAC SPIA PSGA Other VT faculty Community members Industry professionals	Seed funded projects (applied research, policy analysis, engagement projects) Community Conversations Campus conversations Book project	Community knowledge Community motivation for action Faculty knowledge Faculty motivation for community engagement Collaborative attitude Identification of collaboration opportunities Seed-fund specific outputs and outcomes	A more pronounced and complex network of researchers and development practitioners interested in VA regions Sustained partnerships between faculty and community Increased number and quality of University projects and initiatives related to Virginia regions and urban-rural concerns	Increased connectedness and understanding between communities and VT Connectedness between urban and rural regions of Virginia A more vibrant Virginia!

To evaluate this program moving forward, the VV steering committee will continue and grow our capacity to:

- **Encourage follow-up conversations:** Create a follow-up worksheet or checklist after each community and campus conversation for each attendee to identify who, what and why they need to follow-up
- **Sustain relationships:** The Vibrant Virginia steering committee will identify 2-3 follow-up conversations to pursue after each conversation. One or two Vibrant Virginia teammates will volunteer to oversee each follow-up conversation
- **Identify and promote impacts:** Create and distribute follow-up surveys with one week after the campus or community conversation, three months after the conversation, and six months after the conversation. Post survey responses on the Vibrant Virginia website, twitter and other social media.
- **Organize and archive outcomes and impacts:** Take all feedback from different activities and organize into a database for follow-up.