



Virginia Rural Competitiveness Project University Center

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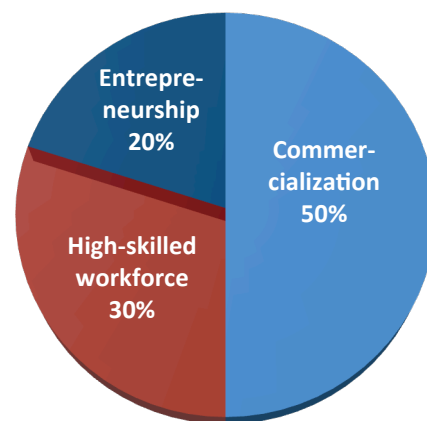
The Virginia Rural Competitiveness Project University Center, funded by the EDA University Center program and matching university funds, is focused on the “technology pull” model and works primarily with existing industry in a “cluster-network-capacity” effort designed to maximize the benefit of university capabilities and resources to the regional economy. The work of the Center includes technical assistance to promote commercialization, cultivate a high-skilled workforce, and support entrepreneurship.

Activities

The Virginia Rural Competitiveness Project was designed to develop innovation assets around regional anchor institutions in order to promote commercialization, workforce talent, and entrepreneurship. The Center has set the ambitious target of creating/retaining 900 jobs and generating \$20 million in investment during the 5-year tenure of the EDA grant. In order to achieve this goal, the Center provides an array of

technical assistance services to different partners and initiatives, as well as playing an important role in networking and partnership building.

The Center provides businesses with linkages to university resources and faculty to aid businesses in assessing private sector demand for technology and services. The Center supports entrepreneurship by facilitating projects that contribute to the regional



innovation ecosystem, such as the development of business accelerators modeled after the existing campus-adjacent accelerator, the first of which will be in Danville, VA.

The Center is also a collaborator in cultivating a high-skilled workforce,

University

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Center Director

John A. Provo

Center Location

Outreach unit

Center since 1980

Center Activities

- Technical assistance
- Early-stage/entrepreneurship support
- Information dissemination

Clients

- Existing businesses
- New ventures
- University faculty and stakeholders

Assessment Techniques

- Feedback from staff
- Client interviews
- Case studies
- Impact assessments

Contact Information

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facilitating dialogue and collaborations amongst companies, faculty and communities.

Information dissemination of best practices related to the Center's work is also a priority for Center staff.

Leveraging

While the Center's director and staff of analysts allow the Center to provide many technical services internally, many projects leverage university faculty and resources outside of the Center. The Center

provides assistance in facilitating collaborative projects between companies, faculty, and communities, such as with the National Tire Research Center. Other collaborative projects include convening the Virginia Tech Economic Development Leadership Team, promoting research commercialization at the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research, university-industry collaboration with the Center of Advanced Engineering and Research, and a Regional Innovation Blueprint project.

"The UC has 'a highly skilled staff that is willing to collaborate in creative ways.'"

--Center client

Success

University networks for economic development

To ensure the systematic interaction necessary to guide projects and generate new ideas, the Center convenes a policy group of senior university leaders, the Virginia Tech Economic Development Leadership Team, and a parallel technical group, the Virginia Tech Economic Development Allies network. Positioned in the cross-cutting Office of the Vice Provost for Outreach and International Affairs, the Center has

been able to regularly convene meetings between high-level university leadership and stakeholders from organizations including the National Tire Research Center and the U.S. Council of Competitiveness, and to hold targeted working sessions to strengthen the University's industrial affiliate programs and discuss the new Virginia Tech Arlington Research Center.

The ability to play a role as broker and convener, made possible in part

through its institutional location, allows the team to help initiate and support successful regional projects.

Many of the Virginia Rural Competitiveness Project's successful initiatives rely on the Center's ability to access and connect university leadership and resources.