



Technology Working Group

Minutes of June 25, 2018

The Go Virginia Region One Working Group met on June 25, 2018, at 2:00 PM at the Crutchfield in Norton, Virginia.

2018 SWVA Economic Forum – Technology Breakout Session

The group discussed the technology breakout session and the ideas that were generated from the participants. Karen Jackson did a good job of sharing information and gathering ideas. The session was full and questions were focused on what companies have to do be equipped for cybersecurity needs.

HUBLink Enhanced Capacity Building Grant Application

Esther Bolling, chair of the group called the meeting to order and introductions of those participating were as follows: Esther Bolling, Dan Minahan, Jeff Rowlett, Sam Wolford, Jonathan Belcher, Becki Joyce, Ashvin Raj, and by telephone Vicky Ratliff, Craig Belcher and Bob Stollings

Esther reviewed the HUBlink GO Virginia enhanced capacity building grant application and indicated that the grant is now at DHCD waiting for approval. The regional council approved the grant on June 5, and it is now at DHCD for review. Esther indicated she thought an SME was currently reviewing the grant. Dan Minahan asked how DHCD chose their SME's and Jonathan Belcher inquired about raising the match. Part of the match was committed through the Southwest Virginia Technology Council's Gala profits. Esther and Dan indicated match would not be an issue.

Ash indicated he has been working on identifying some small businesses that might benefit from being in the Hubzone and Jonathan stated VCEDA has been having one-on-one discussions with companies. Ash and Jonathan discussed methods to single out companies to target. Jonathan advised the group there is a National HUBZone meeting in Chantilly in October and the group agreed that it would be beneficial for some of the Technology Council or Working Group members to attend and to develop marketing materials to have present at the event.

Ash suggested a HUBzone map showing the strong concentration of HUBzones in this region be created. The group reviewed the SBA HUBzone website and compared the concentration of sites to the rest of the U.S. The group felt the region has a strong competitive edge to attracting small technology businesses.

Dan expressed the need to have some more information on the database creation and how it will be developed and requested someone with knowledge to creating this type of platform be at the next meeting to provide the group a deeper understanding. The group felt the next meeting should focus on the strategies for the capacity grant.

New Members & Ideas

New members. The group evaluated its current members and assessed any gaps in membership through the region and also by industry. A discussion took place to additional member invitations and the group members were assigned individuals to reach out to and invite. Esther also indicated this would be an ongoing analysis and we would routinely review group members and consider needs.

Ideas **Remote Worker Pilot** Dan suggested we find a way to work with some Northern Virginia companies to do a “work experience” tour and invite employees to come stay here for 3-5 days and work remotely. The group discussed how costs would be covered and additional elements of the visit, such as hiking, ATV rides, and the tourism/quality of life experience. Questions arose as to whether the Tourism grant available would qualify for assisting with funding of the visit. The pilot tour included the objectives of bringing people here to experience SWVA and work, and also to introduce remote working opportunities to outside businesses.

Agriculture and Technology

Becki gave a high level overview of the agriculture working group discussions and posed the question as to how technology and agriculture could work together on a project. Ash informed the group the drone program at MECC could contribute to this and that drones are becoming quite popular in agriculture. The group discussed how technology in apps, drones and farm equipment with computerization could fit within this region. Jeff Rowlett mentioned bringing together farmers and asking what their needs are, and creating apps around those needs. Becki will keep the technology working group updated on any agriculture / tech initiatives and the group agreed to continue the discussion at the next meeting and to work with the agriculture group should a project idea come to fruition.

Next meeting date and location

Dan Minahan provided an impressive overview of Crutchfield and discussed its upcoming 20th anniversary at the Norton location, and public event at the Glades on July 20th. Dan indicated the workforce is wonderful and receive consistent high customer satisfaction ratings.

Action items for the next meeting are:

1. Communicating with prospective new members and inviting to join the meeting on July 30th.
2. Ash will share SBDC site link for HUBzones.
3. Jonathan will check on open registrations available for the National HUBzone conference.
4. Becki will add Robyn to the July agenda to update on GO Virginia.
5. Becki will work with Shannon to provide a discussion on how the HUBlink would work at the next meeting.
6. Becki will discuss the tourism grant and its application to the pilot program and report back to the group.

The next meeting will be held on July 30, at 2:00 PM at Mountain Empire Community College, Phillips-Taylor Hall, Room 232.

Esther adjourned the meeting.