

Frequently Asked Questions from govirginia.org website

What is GO Virginia and what is the primary goal of the organization?

GO Virginia is a coalition of business, higher education, and community leaders and interested Virginians who recognize the significant economic headwinds that our state faces because of federal sequestration and other cuts, and who believe that Virginia’s economic future depends on strong *private-sector* growth and job creation in every region of the Commonwealth. To help foster that regional private-sector growth and job creation, the GO Virginia coalition will be working for state-level policies and resources that promote effective collaboration among business, education, and government in each region. The strategies and solutions must come from the bottom up—from collaborative innovation in each region among employers, entrepreneurs, investors, researchers, educators, governments, and other leaders. But the state government has a vital role to play in promoting this collaboration through financial incentives and technical assistance. The GO Virginia coalition will be working on a bipartisan basis to develop these incentives and secure initial funding in the next state budget.

What kind of state-funded incentives do you have in mind?

We have identified five policy priorities that will encourage and assist regional collaboration focused on private-sector growth. They correspond to our five headings—**Innovation, Investment, Improvement, Invention, and Infrastructure**—and the policy concept corresponding to each is summarized in the “GO Virginia at a Glance” document in your packet. We will be working with business, education, and community leaders around the state on these and other ideas in the coming months.

How will this be funded? Is this new money, and how much is it going to cost taxpayers?

Our goal is for the state government to provide financial and other incentives that promote sustained, voluntary collaboration on private-sector growth among business, education, and government in each region. We will be fleshing out specific proposals and initial funding requests this fall, working on a bipartisan basis with the Governor and his team, the General Assembly leadership and staff, and others. **Funding for the GO Virginia initiatives will come from growth revenues, re-purposed dollars, and efficiency savings. In addition, state-funded incentives will leverage private, local, and other investment within each region.** We propose NO new taxes, layers of government, local mandates, or structural changes in Virginia’s government.

Who is the driving force behind GO Virginia, and who are the members of the coalition?

GO Virginia is being launched by the Virginia Business Higher Education Council and the Council on Virginia's Future. It will be a broad, bipartisan, grassroots coalition that includes business, higher education, and community leaders and interested Virginians from every part of the Commonwealth. We invite interested individuals and group representatives to visit our website, which is www.GOVirginia.org, to learn more. Members of the coalition will be listed on our website.

Will this plan need legislative approval?

Yes. A combination of budgetary and statutory provisions will be needed to implement our proposals, and we will be working with the Governor and his team and with General Assembly leaders and staff to refine the proposals for action in the 2016 legislative session. We are very encouraged by the bipartisan expressions of support that the GO Virginia initiative is already receiving, as the participation in our launch events reflect. Our GO Virginia coalition will be very important in this process. Many business and community leaders and interested Virginians will be communicating with state and local elected officials about the importance of promoting strong private-sector growth and job creation in each region and about the need for state policies and investments that will help spur that growth.

How is this different from existing economic development or regional cooperation efforts?

We applaud and value the vigorous economic development efforts currently occurring at the state, regional, and local levels. **The GO Virginia initiative will give a strong boost to those efforts by engaging business, education, and community leaders collaboratively in each region, and by encouraging the Commonwealth to become a strong catalyst and full partner in those efforts through financial and technical assistance that supports voluntary regional collaboration on private-sector growth and job creation.**

How does this compare with other economic development plans and strategies, such as the Governor's "New Virginia Economy" plan or the Virginia Chamber of Commerce's "Blueprint Virginia" strategic plan?

It fits well with them. It will help provide a collaborative regional framework for implementing those plans and for implementing legislative initiatives on workforce and economic development, including the General Assembly's "Top Jobs" act. Many sound strategies and well-conceived ideas for spurring Virginia's economic growth and diversification have been advanced, and some are already being implemented. **To succeed, virtually all of those strategies and ideas require effective implementation at the regional level, and collaboration among business, education, and government in each region is what GO Virginia will be working to promote.**

Why should government help businesses grow? Shouldn't that be left to the free marketplace?

As the economy in each region thrives, all Virginians benefit. GO Virginia seeks to create the conditions in which private-sector enterprises, small and large, can grow, prosper, and provide more and better job opportunities to Virginians. State government aids this growth by keeping taxes and regulatory burdens low, supporting education and training, and addressing critical infrastructure needs, among other functions. **We believe state policies and expenditures can more effectively encourage private-sector, job-focused collaboration in each region.**

Significant state funds currently flow to localities, schools, and higher education institutions, and the Commonwealth should use such resources to encourage and support job-creating joint effort between and among these key players. State-funded initiatives should promote greater economic output and job creation in each region rather than reallocating market share or picking winners and losers.

Do you have specific regional projects in mind, like convention centers, entertainment venues, or sports arenas?

We do not. Our objective is to promote collaboration on *private-sector* economic growth and job creation in each region. We believe state investments and policies can help leverage private, local, and other investment to grow key industry sectors, encourage localities to cooperate rather than compete for new business investment, eliminate wasteful duplication and free up more funds for priorities like education and training, help align those education and training programs with marketplace demand, leverage job-creating investments in research, develop needed infrastructure to support economic growth, and create more opportunities in other ways. **We believe specific strategies and projects to achieve these goals can and should come from the community and regional levels up, rather than from the state down.**

How does GO Virginia relate to the other major initiative of the Virginia Business Higher Education Council's (VBHEC), known as "Grow By Degrees."

A: VBHEC's "Grow By Degrees" campaign was launched in 2009, and it continues to highlight the vital connection between Virginia's higher education system and the Commonwealth's economic progress, including the need for 100,000 more college degrees by 2025 with a concentration in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and healthcare. Important progress has been made toward that goal, including initial state reinvestment in our higher education system and a significant increase in degree output. It is important that this progress continue, and a growing economy will make that possible. Since its beginning six years ago, "Grow By Degrees" has advocated regional collaboration on economic development, with our colleges, universities, and community colleges playing an active role. The need is even greater today as Virginia copes with steep reductions in federal spending and our economy's growth rate falls behind the rate of growth in most other states.

How can I find out more about GO Virginia or support the organization?

The campaign is just beginning and will engage thousands of business and community leaders across Virginia! To join the coalition, offer suggestions, or learn more, interested Virginians should visit our website, www.GOVirginia.org.