

Summary of BOS/EDA Feedback and Revisions

General feedback:

It is important that our economic development policies be specific enough to establish clear guidelines, provide transparency for the public, and provide certainty to the business community, while also remaining flexible enough to allow for prudent decision-making consistent with other County policies.

ENABLE Grant Policy:

Areas of consensus:

- The acronym for the capital investment grant (CIG) could cause confusion. *This grant has been renamed the "ENABLE Grant."*
- The County should only provide this grant for companies providing "career ladder" jobs. *Language has been added to page 2 and page 5 of the policy.*
- A provision for environmental stewardship should be added. *Projects that support the Climate Action Plan are considered Pinnacle Projects.*
- A provision for projects that decrease County expenditures should be added. *Language has been added to include these types of projects in subsection (a) of Pinnacle Projects on page 1 of the policy.*
- To provide additional flexibility, the potential grant amount should be changed from 75% of the increased property tax revenue to 100% of the increased property tax revenue. *This change is found on page 2 of the policy.*

Topics for further discussion:

- There is agreement that County participation in a project with a jobs-producing component should only apply to companies providing "quality job creation / career employment opportunities as determined by wages and benefits." However, there is not consensus on whether the policy should include a minimum wage level and, if so, the appropriate minimum wage level (such as \$15.00/hour).
- Additionally, there was not agreement regarding the method for calculating the minimum wage level. Questions that were asked include:
 - Does the minimum wage level apply to just the new jobs be created/retained or to the company's wages overall?
 - Does the minimum wage level apply to the average (or median) wage or is it a "floor" (where no jobs pay less than the established minimum wage level)?

Virginia Jobs Investment Program (VJIP) Policy:

Areas of consensus:

- The County should only match this grant for companies providing "career ladder" jobs. *The County's evaluation criterion has been revised to expand the definition of "career ladder" jobs to: "Quality job creation / career employment opportunities as determined by wages and benefits, and a progression from entry level positions to higher levels of pay, skill, responsibility, or authority."*

Topics for further discussion:

- There was not consensus that the County should automatically match a VJIP award without a commitment to a minimum wage level for the jobs created or retained.

Commonwealth Development Opportunity Fund (COF) Policy:

Areas of consensus:

- The County should only match this grant for companies providing “career ladder” jobs. *The County’s evaluation criterion has been revised to expand the definition of “career ladder” jobs to: “Quality job creation / career employment opportunities as determined by wages and benefits, and a progression from entry level positions to higher levels of pay, skill, responsibility, or authority;”*

Topics for further discussion:

- Although this grant requires the average annual wage of the new jobs to be at least the locality’s “prevailing wage” (as determined annually by the Virginia Employment Commission and was \$54,183 for Albemarle County in 2019), there was discussion about whether or not there should be a “floor” (where no jobs pay less than an established minimum wage level).

Agriculture Forestry Industries Development Fund (AFID) Policy:

Areas of consensus:

- The County should only match this grant for companies providing “career ladder” jobs. *The County’s evaluation criterion has been revised to expand the definition of “career ladder” jobs to: “Quality job creation / career employment opportunities as determined by wages and benefits, and a progression from entry level positions to higher levels of pay, skill, responsibility, or authority;”*

Topics for further discussion:

- There was discussion regarding how to ensure this policy applies only to “agricultural operations” as defined in the County Code.
- There was discussion about adding an evaluation criterion that considers the impact of the prospective grantee on existing competition in the area (which is a criterion considered by VDACS).