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**GO Virginia R8 Executive Meeting (03/04/2025) Summary:**

In attendance: Dr. Yolanda Shields, Janet Clarke, Kim Blosser, Mike Stolarz, Conrad Hensley, and Brandon Davis

Absent: Lai Lei

The meeting revolved around discussions on various grant proposals, including a potential focus on hands-on career exploration programs and a program aimed at connecting employers with skilled interns. There were also discussions about the budget for Laurel Ridge and updates on various initiatives, including the Grant Pipeline Initiative and the Talent Pathways Initiative. The conversation ended with the scheduling of future meetings and the agreement to review a pipeline spreadsheet at the next meeting.

Next steps

• Alison to send resumes and bios of new Regional Council candidates to Executive Committee members for review.

• Alison to include only bios (not resumes) of new candidates in the Regional Council meeting materials for approval.

• Alison to follow up with Dominic regarding his acceptance of the Regional Council position.

• Alison to reach out to potential manufacturing candidates in Augusta County area as replacements for Sean Pellington’s Invitation.

• Alison to explore increasing the scope of the Laurel Ridge grant proposal.

• Alison to defer the Northern Shenandoah Valley Talent Solutions initiative and conduct further research on potential duplication with existing programs.

• Alison to create a form for Regional Council members to update their contact information at the April meeting.

• Alison to include the grant pipeline spreadsheet in all future Executive and Regional Council meetings.

• Dr. Yolanda to participate in a call with the internship program team if they are open to it.

Summary

Northern Shenandoah Valley Talent Solutions Strategy

Alison discussed the Northern Shenandoah Valley Talent Solutions Strategy. She noted that two aspects of the initial proposal did not fit within Go Virginia's frameworks, but the third, hands-on career exploration programs, was considered a positive area for further exploration. Alison agreed to focus on developing a standalone grant proposal for this aspect, aiming to present it to the Executive Committee in April and the Grants Review Committee the following week. However, the valuation of the grant amount and the extent of the proposal's scope are still to be determined. Janet raised the question of a timeline for the standalone grant application, and Yolanda inquired about its similarity to an internship program. Alison clarified that integration with VIEW/VTOP initiatives might be necessary, although these initiatives would likely be partners rather than providers.

Revised Internship Program Grant Proposal

The meeting involved discussions about a program that aims to connect employers with skilled interns and encourage workforce development. Alison proposed requiring a partner like VIEW/VTOP, which works with businesses less than 100 employees, to be included in the program. There was an idea to avoid duplicating efforts with other organizations already working on similar initiatives. Janet pointed out potential overlaps with other programs and expressed concerns about forcing partnerships that might not be a good fit. The conversation ended with the need for a refined grant application, focusing on the viable aspects of the proposal.

Grant Proposal Review Process Discussed

Alison discussed the need to review two aspects of grant proposals before proceeding. She sought the committee's input on the proposals, considering their feedback and timeline constraints. Brandon explained that the current process was an addition to prevent previous mistakes in grant approval, emphasizing the need for a review before proceeding. The committee agreed to review the proposals, with Alison planning to update the executive summary based on the committee's feedback. They also agreed to consider a special meeting to review the updated executive summary and proceed with the application process.

The team discussed their concerns about a proposed initiative that seemed to duplicate efforts already funded by Go Virginia. Kim brought attention to a significant grant for internships that could be relevant to their work. The team agreed that more work was needed to make the initiative viable, and Janet and Kim raised concerns about the difficulty of tracking metrics for the proposed coordinator role. Alison deferred the decision on the Northern Shenandoah Valley initiative, noting the need for further details on sustainability and partnerships. The team concluded that the Laurel Ridge initiative was a good candidate for review on April first.

Project Updates and Challenges Discussed

Alison provides an update on the status of previously proposed projects from the spreadsheet. Many projects are not ready or have been put on hold due to various reasons. The Go Virginia program is shifting focus, and some projects like cyber training and EV maintenance have been removed. Three aviation-related projects remain, but face approval challenges. The commercial kitchen project for Clarke County lacks follow-up, and the Live Love Shen phase upgrade has been deferred. Bath and Highland counties' manufacturing education project is on hold due to leadership turnover. Brandon clarifies that the $400,000 fund doesn't have to be spent entirely, but it's best to use it for good projects if possible.

Laurel Ridge Project Budget Discussion

Mike, Alison, and Janet discussed the budget for Laurel Ridge, which was initially set at 100k, but considering other components, the total could be higher. Alison proposed working with Laurel Ridge to increase the scope of the project, considering their timeline for purchasing equipment. Kim clarified that the building construction for the project was dependent on rezoning and a land lease agreement, and the climbing part of the program would start after the facility was ready.

Regional Council Approvals and Initiatives Update

The Executive Committee discusses updates on various initiatives and upcoming Regional Council approvals. Alison reports on the Grant Pipeline Initiative, mentioning four sessions planned for the last week of March with high anticipated attendance. For the Talent Pathways Initiative, Alison shares progress on updated PowerPoint slides and additional demographics being considered. Regarding the Growth and Diversification Plan, a survey is ready for distribution to the Regional Council and stakeholders. The committee also discusses recruitment and retention strategies for board members, including the possibility of creating an alumni group and hosting social events. Lastly, they review the status of new candidate approvals for the Regional Council, with three candidates ready for approval in April.

Finding New Representative for Augusta County

In the meeting, Alison discussed the need for a new candidate to fill the manufacturing role in Augusta County, as the current candidate Sean Pellington was not responsive. She identified a need for a representative from the agriculture industry to join the Regional Council. The team agreed to explore other potential candidates, especially from the agriculture industry, to balance the regional representation.