

Commonwealth of Virginia
Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission

**FY2026 Southwest Virginia Program
Second Round**

GUIDELINES & REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Application Due Date:
Thursday, February 26, 2026



Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission
FY2025 Southern Virginia Program

GUIDELINES & REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

I.	GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION	3
	A. Purpose & Background	
	B. Investment Categories - Funding Priorities	
	C. Eligibility – Eligible Applicants, Matching Funds, Use of Funding	
	D. Application and Submission Information	
	E. Evaluation	
	F. TRRC Staff Contact Information	
II.	GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC INVESTMENT STRATEGIES	7
	A. Agribusiness	7
	▪ Value-Added Processing, Aggregation, and Marketing Facilities	
	▪ Development of Market Opportunities	
	B. Business Development	10
	▪ Regional Economic Development Marketing Initiatives	
	▪ Business District Redevelopment	
	C. Sites & Infrastructure	13
	▪ Industrial Sites	
	▪ Infrastructure – Off-site Utility Infrastructure	
	D. Tourism	15
	▪ Tourism Destination Infrastructure	
	▪ Regional Marketing Campaigns & Initiatives	
III.	REQUIRED DOCUMENTS	17
IV.	REQUIREMENTS OF FUNDING	20
	A. Grants and Loans	
	B. Award Information	
	C. Payment of Grant Funds	
	D. Reporting	
	E. Assets	
V.	ATTACHMENTS	21
	A. Attachment A – Evaluation Criteria	
	B. Attachment B - Eligible Counties & Cities for Tobacco Commission Funding	

I. GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

A. Purpose & Background

The Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission (“TRRC” or “Commission”) was established by the Virginia General Assembly in 1999, as a political subdivision of the Commonwealth. The Commission makes investments to revitalize and diversify the economy of the region it supports. Projects selected for funding include initiatives that will measurably advance the Commission’s priorities as a direct result of project success.

The Southwest Virginia Program’s Guidelines and Request for Proposals (together, “RFP”) are issued to solicit applications through a competitive process to establish grant and loan agreements for economic development projects in the region. Funding will be considered for projects promoting economic growth and development within the Southwest Virginia area of Virginia’s Tobacco Region. Refer to *Attachment B - Eligible Counties & Cities for Tobacco Commission Funding* on page 23 of this RFP.

Approximately **\$2 million** will be made available for this funding round of the Southwest Virginia Program. The application deadline is **Thursday, February 26, 2026**. Award decisions are expected to be made at the Commission’s meeting in **May 2026**.

No request submitted in response to this RFP, under all investment categories, should exceed **\$500,000**. Requests which exceed this amount must receive approval from Commission staff prior to the submission of the application.

B. Investment Categories – Funding Priorities

The [Commission’s Strategic Plan](#) identifies its current strategic priorities. The Commission aims to focus on transformational goals that address the region’s most significant barriers to regional economic vitality and explore the most promising economic opportunities to establish:

- An economically competitive region – through focused investments in growing economic sectors including agribusiness, advanced manufacturing, and knowledge work*; and related supportive infrastructure.
- An entrepreneurial region – by supporting entities that help startups in selected industries;
- A vibrant, people-attracting region where people want to live, achieved through place-making investments and support of initiatives that attract and retain people.

**Knowledge work* is defined by VEDP to be a key economic sector that includes industries in software and cybersecurity, financial services, business services (including professional services—marketing, design, consulting), and aerospace and defense innovation.

Applications submitted in response to this RFP must fall into one of the following categories:

- A. Agribusiness
- B. Business Development
- C. Sites and Infrastructure
- D. Tourism

Guidelines for Specific Investment Categories of this RFP (Section II) provides details on these investment categories and the specific types of eligible projects. Applications must:

- Articulate how the project relates to the goals of the funding program.
- Define project outputs and deliverables that will occur during the project period and that are directly related to the use of Commission and matching funds.

The Commission, at its discretion, may entertain other types of projects provided they meet all other requirements of this RFP, are in alignment with TRRC's Strategic Plan, and address critical economic development barriers affecting the Tobacco Region. *Applicants who wish to bring a project outside of the scope of this RFP must contact TRRC's grants staff in advance.*

C. Eligibility – Eligible Applicants, Matching Funds, Uses of Funding

Eligible Applicants

- Governmental Entities - Governmental entities within the Tobacco Region, including towns, cities, and counties; local or regional industrial or economic development authorities; regional authorities, and other governmental units.
- Non-Profit Organizations - Incorporated non-profit organizations designated as tax- exempt by the federal Internal Revenue Service, located in and/or providing economic revitalization programs, services, or facilities in the Tobacco Region.

Private, for-profit entities are not eligible applicants. Private, for-profit entities are not eligible applicants. Additional guidelines for projects benefiting for-profit entities, are in Section III of the Commission's [Funding Policies](#).

Ineligible / Eligible Uses of Funding

The Commission's [Funding Policies for Grant Awards: Information for Applicants & Grantees \("Funding Policies"\)](#) contain information on general ineligible uses of funds, specific type of expenses not eligible for reimbursement, acceptable expense documentation for seeking reimbursement, match documentation requirements, and other important details about the Commission's grant administration policies.

The Commission's General Non-Eligible Uses of Funds state that funding should not be used to supplant federal or state funding. This includes the use of Commission funds to replace funding lost as a result of federal or state budgeting.

Matching Funds

As required by the Code of Virginia, all requests for grant funds require at least dollar-for-dollar (1:1) matching funds, with no more than 25% of the match requirement from "in-kind" sources.

Loan requests do not have a match requirement. *Expenses already included in an annual budget such as personnel and other continuous operating costs will count toward the 25% In-Kind limit.*

Applicants for grant awards must submit details on the nature, source, and timing of match contributions necessary for meeting the 1:1 match requirement. Once secured, matching funds must be committed to the project and available as needed and must not be conditioned or encumbered in any way that may preclude their use for the project during the grant period. Applicants should provide a commitment letter or equivalent document signed by an authorized representative of the organization providing matching funds to document each source of match.

If the Commission awards a grant to an applicant who has not secured acceptable matching funds at the time of award, the applicant will have up to 12 months from the date of the award to secure matching funds or the Commission may rescind the award and de-obligate its funds.

Administrative Support

When planning district commissions are directly involved in the coordination and administration of a project on behalf of member localities, from which they are not receiving administrative support, the Commission on a case-by-case basis may consider reimbursement of administrative costs. This allowance must not exceed 10% of the grant request and will be limited to a maximum of \$5,000 for an individual project, or \$10,000 for a regional or multi-pronged proposal.

Exceptions to the limitation for administrative support will only be considered for Commission lead projects/ initiatives and must be approved by Commission staff in advance of submittal.

D. Application and Submission Information

Proposals must be submitted by midnight on **Thursday, February 26, 2026** through the Commission's online application portal: https://vtc.smartsimple.com/s_Login.jsp

Applicants will use the **Southwest Virginia** application. In addition to text fields of the application, up to 10 pages of additional project description may be submitted as an attachment.

Applicants must certify they have read this RFP and the Commission's Funding Policies; that the information in their applications is true and correct; and that documentation for any claims and representations made can be made available upon request from Commission staff. The certification must be made by an authorized representative of the applicant organization.

All information required by this RFP must be included. Applications that do not align with this RFP's funding priorities, that cannot show how the applicant will achieve its targeted success metrics, or are otherwise incomplete, will be deemed by staff to be nonresponsive. Such proposals will be declined for review and will not be presented for a funding decision.

E. Evaluation

The Commission's Southwest Virginia Committee will evaluate applications submitted in response to this RFP. Staff recommendations to the Committee will be based upon requirements in this RFP and the Evaluation Scoring Criteria provided in Attachment A. Approval of funding is at the sole discretion of the Commission. The Commission reserves the right to cancel this RFP, to not proceed with any or all applications, to condition its award on additional terms and conditions, or to award a loan to an applicant who sought a grant.

F. TRRC Staff Contact Information

TRRC staff are available to assist with applications. For technical assistance with the Commission's online grants portal, please contact:

- Suzette Patterson, Grants System Manager (Richmond, VA)
(804) 894-9662, spatterson@revitalizeva.org

Eligible organizations are strongly encouraged to complete the pre-application form available on the Commission's website to obtain informal feedback prior to submitting a full application. The pre-application is optional and non-binding. Contact TRRC's grants staff for assistance with project design or to discuss a pre-application:

- Sara Williams, Southwest Regional Director (Abingdon, VA)
(276) 619-4325, swilliams@revitalizeva.org

II. GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC INVESTMENT CATEGORIES

A. Agribusiness

Investment Category: Agribusiness

The Commission will consider awarding grants and loans for agribusiness projects that create or expand market opportunities for regional producers and that are expected to result in quantifiable increases in net farm income. The two primary areas of interest are the establishment of value-added processing, aggregation, and marketing facilities; and development of emerging and new market opportunities to diversify and enhance the region's agricultural economy.

Priority will be given to regional facilities and initiatives serving or benefiting multiple producers in more than one locality. Projects must clearly demonstrate the identified need or opportunity for a new or expanding market that brings economic value to the region.

Support for planning activities such as feasibility studies, master plans, preliminary architectural reports, etc. will be limited to no more than 50% of third-party contractual expenses.

Eligible Investments

A1. Value-Added Processing, Aggregation, and Marketing Facilities

Value-added processing, aggregation, and marketing facilities add value by changing the characteristics of the agricultural commodity to meet market demand.

Producer Collaboration & Cooperatives: The Commission's priority is to invest in value-added projects that support producers working in partnership through a producer-based business, agricultural association, or a member-owned cooperative that benefits multiple producers. Funding limits depend upon whether the facility is publicly or privately owned and operated.

Public or Non-Profit Ownership:

- Grants for Capital Projects - Value-added facilities owned by a government entity or a non-profit organization may apply for grants of up to 50% of total capital costs.
- Grants for Start-Up Operations - Governmental entities and non-profit organizations may request grant support for start-up operating costs associated with new or expanding value-added processing and aggregation facilities. Applicants must provide a sound operating plan that shows decreasing reliance on Commission funds.

Private Ownership:

- The Commission offers the [Tobacco Region Incentive for Agribusiness Development \(TRIAD\) Grant Program](#) as a tool for local governments in the Tobacco Region to attract new or expanding agriculture- and forestry-based businesses to their communities. **TRIAD is a separate application from the Southwest Virginia program.** Please visit the [TRIAD section](#) of the Commission website for more information.

Loans

- Applicants may apply for low-interest financing assistance to support capital costs for start-up or expansion of a value-added processing facilities benefiting Tobacco Region producers regardless of public or private ownership. Loans will be recommended for projects where there is an identifiable revenue stream sufficient to repay the loan.

A2. Development of Market Opportunities

Projects that diversify and enhance the region's agribusiness economy with a focus on new or expanded market opportunities are eligible for funding.

Wholesale and Retail Cooperative Marketing < \$20,000 grants - Small matching grants of up to \$20,000 to support marketing initiatives focused on obtaining access to new or expanding markets to increase agricultural product sales revenues will be considered. Projects must benefit multiple producers. Eligible projects include those that focus on:

- Development of institutional or commercial market opportunities;
- Creation of on-line sales systems connecting buyers to sellers;
- Targeted marketing strategies for specialty crops; and
- Creation of broker or expeditor services where a third party connects quality agriculture products from several farms to new market opportunities.

Crop Demonstration Projects - Projects that assist producers in the development and demonstration of high-value, low acreage crops (defined as those that have a higher net return per acre compared to conventional commodity crops) will be considered. Projects seeking funds for basic research activities will not be considered.

Cost Share Programs - Cost-share programs that focus on transitioning producers into alternative agriculture enterprises or for implementing new best practices, directly resulting in an increase to farmer income, will be considered. Projects must be regional and benefit a multi-county area. Cost share incentive payments will be limited to no more than 33% of capital costs or the costs of contracted services. *Projects seeking funds for recurring farm expenses are not eligible.*

All cost share program proposals must include the following:

- Education component with requirements for participation,
- Proposed cost-share program guidelines with eligible costs and evaluation criteria,
- Cost estimates from vendors or contractors for proposed purchases and/or eligible activities to demonstrate the basis for cost-share consideration must be included.
- Analysis of the return on investment to producers for implementing the practice(s),
- Demonstration of need and/or evidence of producer interest, and
- A defined plan for monitoring and measuring outcomes.

All Agribusiness applications are subject to the following:

Requirements

In addition to any required information specified above, all proposals for Agribusiness investments must demonstrate the following:

- Benefit multiple agriculture producers from Tobacco Region localities,
- Have a clearly identified market opportunity,
- Encourage private capital investment in farm operations or agribusiness facilities, and
- Will result in measurable increases to net farm income.

Depending on the nature of the project, applications for Agribusiness funding will require the following information (refer to Section **III. Required Documents** of this RFP):

- Service Area and Project Location Map (*required for all*)
- Feasibility Study or similar analysis (*required for publicly owned value-added facilities*)
- Business Plan or Operating Plan (*required for value-added facilities*)
- Operating Budget and Pro Forma (*required with Business Plan or Operating Plan*)
- Cost Estimate from Engineer or Construction Contractor (*required for construction*)
- Cost Estimate from Consultant (*required for all contracts for professional services*)
- Detailed Equipment List and Equipment Quote (*required for equipment purchases*)
- Marketing Plan (*required for wholesale and retail cooperative marketing projects*)
- Operating Agreements (*required for public-private partnerships*)
- Program Guidelines & Sub-Awards (*required for cost-share programs*)

Deliverables – Agribusiness

Applicants must identify the deliverables expected to result from the direct use of TRRC grant and matching funds. Deliverables are accomplished during the grant period and directly related to the use of grant funds. Typical project deliverables for Agribusiness include:

- Square footage of value-added processing facility expanded or newly constructed.
- Purchase of equipment for benefit/use by agriculture producers in region.
- Creation of marketing materials and implementation of regional marketing strategy.
- Implementation of a regional cost-share program with estimated number of producers that may benefit with increased farm income, and number of counties in targeted area.

Outcomes -- Agribusiness

Applicants must identify the projected outcomes that are expected to result annually from the project. Outcomes should be projected for a THREE (3) year start-up or expansion period following the end date on the TRRC grant. Applicants will choose relevant outcome measures based on the project. *Planning grants, such as feasibility studies, do not require declared outcomes.*

- Annual number of producers or agriculture businesses benefiting from the facility.
- Annual Average (per farm) direct sales revenue as a result of the facility.
- Annual direct sales revenue for facility operator.

B. Business Development

Investment Category: Business Development

The Commission's Business Development investments priorities are designed to foster and strengthen economic growth through strategies that address the needs of rural economies and improve the economic base. Funding will be considered for projects that demonstrate the ability to enhance the economy and that provide for business development outcomes for new business creation or expansion, job creation, increased revenues, and private capital investment.

Funding priorities include projects that:

- Support redevelopment of downtown commercial districts
- Invest in creating vibrant entrepreneurial communities focused on key industrial sectors including agribusiness, knowledge work, and small-scale manufacturing/production.
- Implement strategies to create higher paying jobs and attract skilled workers
- Address leakages of spending outside of the region, supporting the benefits of the multiplier effect of increased local spending for strengthening the economy.

Eligible Investments

B1. Regional Economic Development Marketing Initiatives

This investment strategy can support new regional initiatives that increase economic development capacity. Regional initiatives must serve a minimum of three TRRC region localities. Priority consideration will be given to broader initiatives benefiting larger areas of the region.

The Commission can consider funding support for up to 50% of capacity building initiatives with clearly defined benefits. This can include marketing programs that support small businesses and attract new jobs and investment to communities and downtowns; or that assist with marketing of available sites and buildings.

The Commission will also consider funding for new marketing initiative targeted to the recruitment of traditional industries and knowledge works industries; that promote the location of satellite business operations and back offices; and other strategies that address the needs of rural economics. *Expenses related to lead generation travel including trade show attendance or conference expenses are not a funding priority. The Commission's Funding Policies require pre-approval for all out-of-state and international travel.*

B2. Business District Redevelopment

The Commission will make grants and loans to support capital investments in properties, and in entrepreneurial and business support strategies. A primary objective of this funding is to encourage the redevelopment and adaptive reuse of vacant and underutilized properties. Eligible projects will support the creation and expansion of high-potential businesses and entrepreneurs; provide for the creation or expansion of technology businesses, high wage and high demand service sector jobs; and/or support the expansion of agribusiness, tourism and outdoor recreation opportunities centered around business district redevelopment.

Projects, and sub-projects, in a Business Development application can include:

- ***Planning and capacity building***

Funding may be requested for up to 50% of third-party professional services to support critical planning activities focused on the redevelopment of commercial business districts. This may include feasibility studies and market assessments, architectural and engineering/design services, and professional project development support.

- ***Business development facilities -- Publicly or nonprofit owned***

Funding may be used for up to 50% of the costs for renovations/upfit of buildings owned by public or nonprofit organizations for use as a professional office space for individuals and small businesses, for technology or business services sector satellite offices, or for small scale production/manufacturing businesses. Funding consideration for property intended as a mixed-use development will be given for the portion of the property that is targeted for the Commission's priority interests.

Applicants are required to submit a feasibility study, or similar analysis, that demonstrates market demand and feasibility of the facility operations to be sustainable. A business plan and operating pro-forma must be provided showing how the facility will become revenue positive within a reasonable period after construction is complete.

- ***Small business development incentive – catalyst business***

The Commission will consider awarding a private business incentive for a project which demonstrates the potential to catalyze additional business development for an underdeveloped and underutilized downtown commercial business district.

Type of businesses considered for incentives could include:

- Small scale production businesses
- Satellite offices or back offices, for technology or other higher-paying jobs
- Privately owned co-working and shared office spaces

The application must describe how the proposed project for incentive aligns with the community's comprehensive business district planning efforts. Grant awards will require a performance agreement and will be limited to up to \$30,000 and no more than 25% of the capital costs for construction or equipping costs for the new business enterprise.

All Business Development applications are subject to the following:

Requirements

Depending on the nature of the project, Business Development projects require the following information (refer to **Section III. Required Documents** of this RFP):

- Service Area and Project Location Map (*required for all*)
- Feasibility Study or similar analysis (*required for business development facilities*)
- Cost Estimate from Engineer or Construction Contractor (*required for construction*)
- Cost Estimate from Consultant (*required for all contracts for professional services*)
- Detailed Equipment List and Equipment Quotes (*required for equipment purchases*)
- Business Plan or Operating Plan (*required for business development facilities*)
- Operating Budget and Pro Forma (*required with Business Plan or Operating Plan*)
- Operating Agreement (*required for public-private partnerships*)
- Marketing Plan (*required for regional marketing initiatives*)

Deliverables – Business Development

Applicants must identify the deliverables expected to result from the direct use of TRRC grant and matching funds. Deliverables are accomplished during the grant period and are directly related to use of grant funds. Typical project deliverables for Business Development include:

- Number of prospects who will visit the region to look at sites.
- Market assessment and feasibility study
- Preliminary architectural report or preliminary engineering report
- Square footage of property renovated, or new construction
- New business put into operation creating new jobs and private capital investment

Business Development Outcomes

Applicants must project aggregate economic development outcomes to result within THREE years following the grant end date. Applicants will choose the relevant outcome measures based on the project and include a narrative to explain how the projections were reached. *Planning grants, such as feasibility studies, do not require declared outcomes.*

- Number of businesses recruited to or expanding in the region as a result of a regional marketing initiative
- Number of businesses directly benefiting
- Number of new jobs created
- Average salary or wage for new jobs (*do not include fringe benefits*)
- Total private capital investments

C. Sites and Infrastructure

Investment Category: Sites and Infrastructure

The Commission will consider awarding grants and loans to support the development of critical infrastructure necessary to provide a competitive environment for the recruitment of new jobs and investment to the Tobacco Region. Projects that will enhance the marketability and site readiness of existing publicly owned economic development sites are of particular interest to the Commission.

Priority will be given to projects that bring existing properties to a higher level of business ready site certification rather than acquiring and developing new sites.

Support for planning activities such as feasibility studies, master plans, preliminary engineering/architectural reports, etc. will be limited to no more than 50% of third-party contractual expenses.

Eligible Investments

C1. Industrial Sites -- Includes On-Site Utility Infrastructure & Buildings

Applicants seeking funding for development of industrial sites (including requests for on-site infrastructure and buildings) must provide:

- Details on the scope of work and associated development costs for the whole site
- A discussion of any funding necessary to complete the project.

Applications for on-site utility infrastructure will only be considered to bring targeted properties to a higher level of business ready site certification or as part of a broader site development initiative with a scope beyond utility construction.

The application should provide:

- Documentation of a master plan to reflect intended industrial or commercial uses and verify that the appropriate zoning for these uses is in place.
- Targeted sectors, including NAICS codes.
- Documentation that the building and site specifications will satisfy the requirements of the targeted sector(s).

Priority will be given to projects that improve the readiness of sites already under development within the region as opposed to the acquisition and development of new sites. Development of new sites will only be considered when the applicant provides compelling evidence of a deficit of competitive sites in the locality *and* surrounding region.

The redevelopment of brownfield sites is a funding interest for the Commission. A Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment must be provided for brownfield site applications.

C2. Infrastructure -- Off-Site Utility Infrastructure

The Commission will only consider requests for off-site utility infrastructure that will predominantly serve existing, clearly defined economic development sites. The Commission will only consider awarding grants for **planning, engineering, and design** associated with necessary off-site utility infrastructure to serve the site.

The Commission will only consider awarding loans for **construction** of off-site utility infrastructure.

All Sites and Infrastructure applications are subject to the following:

Requirements - Sites and Infrastructure

Depending on the nature of the project, Sites and Infrastructure proposals require one or more of the following documents (refer to **Section III. Required Documents** of this RFP):

- Service Area and Project Location Map (*required for all*)
- Master Plan with Targeted Sectors (*required for all*)
- Fee Estimate or Proposal from Engineer (*required for A&E and/or construction*)
- Construction Cost Estimate from A&E or Contractor (*required for construction*)
- Cost Estimate from Consultant (*required for all contracts for professional services*)
- Phase 1 Environmental Assessment Report (*required for brownfield sites*)
- Virginia Business Ready Site Assessment Report (*required for sites assessed by VEDP*)
- Cash Flow Analysis with Rate Structure (*required for utility infrastructure*)
- Inventory of available sites in surrounding region (*required for new industrial sites*)

Deliverables – Sites and Infrastructure

Applicants must identify the deliverables expected to result from the direct use of TRRC grant and matching funds. Deliverables are accomplished during the grant period and are directly related to use of grant funds. Typical project deliverables for Sites and Infrastructure include:

- Change in the site's business ready tier characterization to improve marketability to specific targeted sectors
- Acres (and available lots) of graded or improved sites
- Square footage of building constructed or renovated for new economic activity
- Linear feet of access road constructed
- Capacity increase and/or linear feet of water or sewer infrastructure improvements

Sites and Infrastructure Outcomes

Applicants must project aggregate economic development outcomes to result within FIVE years following the grant end date. Applicants will choose the relevant outcome measures based on the project and include an outcomes narrative to explain the figures provided.

- Number of new businesses locating to industrial site
- Number of new jobs created
- Average salary or wages of new jobs created (do not include fringe benefits)
- Total private capital investment at industrial site (only include estimates for taxable assets – real and personal property)

D. Tourism

Investment Category: Tourism

The Commission will consider awarding grants and loans for tourism destination infrastructure projects and for regional tourism marketing initiatives. The Commission prioritizes **regional** projects of interest to **national or international markets**. Applicants must demonstrate the ability of the project to attract measurable visitor revenues from outside the Tobacco Region.

Support for planning activities such as feasibility studies, master plans, preliminary architectural reports, etc. will be limited to no more than 50% of third-party contractual expenses.

Eligible Investments

D1. Tourism Destination Infrastructure

(Heritage Tourism Sites and Outdoor Recreation Tourism)

Infrastructure investments in tourism destinations will only be considered for sites of documented **national or international interest**. Heritage tourism sites or outdoor recreation tourism destinations must demonstrate the ability to attract a measurable increase in visitors and visitor spending from outside the Tobacco Region. The significance and connection of these sites to larger regional, state, or national tourism initiatives must be documented.

The Commission will **not** consider funding proposals for:

- Recreational and cultural amenities of limited interest such as local trails, theaters, and historic sites
- Projects that primarily serve a local market and are not expected to generate significant new visitation from national or international markets.
- Projects related to single or limited events, such as festivals, which do not occur on a regular or ongoing basis throughout the year, and for which the economic impact is limited.

Applications for project types which are related to regional initiatives, or those with a documented potential to have a significant regional impact, may be considered at Staff's discretion. A pre-application should be submitted for Staff's review and approval.

D2. Regional Tourism Marketing Campaigns and Initiatives

Projects under this investment strategy should be focused on specific campaigns that will lead to the attraction of new visitors to an area (e.g., Southwest Virginia, or a multi-county tourism areas) of the Tobacco Region from national or international markets.

Priority will be given to marketing projects that seek to market the larger region rather than those that focus on an individual site or an initiative-specific campaign.

D3. Placemaking Mini-Grants

Recognizing that community development proceeds economic development, the Commission will consider funding support for “Placemaking” mini-grants for tourism and outdoor recreation projects centered around business district revitalization. Projects in this category will need to demonstrate that the project is a result of a community visioning process. The Commission intends to work with DHCD’s Main Street Program for funding consideration. Eligible grants are limited to up to \$25,000.

All Tourism applications are subject to the following:

Requirements

Depending on the nature of the project, applications for Tourism funding will require the following information (refer to **Section III. Required Documents** section of this RFP):

- Service Area and Project Location Map (*required for all*)
- Feasibility Study or similar analysis (*required for new tourism infrastructure and initiatives*)
- Economic Impact Study (*required for new or expanded tourism infrastructure*)
- Master Plan (*required for multi-stage regional tourism investments, such as the development of a regional trail system*)
- Cost Estimate from Engineer or Contractor (*required for A&E and construction*)
- Cost Estimate from Consultant (*required for all contracts for professional services*)
- Business Plan or Operating Plan (*required for tourism infrastructure and initiatives*)
- Marketing Plan (*required for marketing requests*)

Deliverables - Tourism

Applicants must identify the deliverables expected to result from the direct use of TRRC grant and matching funds. Deliverables are accomplished during the grant period and are directly related to use of grant funds. Typical project deliverables for Tourism include:

- Regional marketing strategy developed and implemented, targeted to specific audiences
- Square footage of museum or exhibit space expanded
- Renovations of building to serve as trail head facility for long-distance trail users

Tourism Outcomes

Applications must include economic impact projections to result within THREE years following the grant end date. Applicants must provide a narrative to explain how the projections were reached, to include a description of the data collection or visitor tracking mechanism that will be used to document the number of new visitors to the region. Applicants may choose outcome measures relevant to the specific project, such as:

- Increase in unduplicated # of visitors to site(s) in the region
- Increase in annual revenue from ticket sales; or tourism business sales revenue
- Estimated increase in annual visitor spending in the region
- Number of direct jobs created at tourism destination
- Private capital investment at tourism business(es) (only include taxable assets – real and personal property)
- Number of tourism businesses benefiting from regional marketing initiative

Planning grants, such as feasibility studies, do not require declared outcomes.

III. REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Applicants may be required to submit other documents in order to fully inform the Commission and its staff about all pertinent aspects of the project. These required documents will vary by project type and are specified for each investment category in Section II. of this RFP. This list is not exhaustive, and applicants should submit any other documents they believe will assist during the review process.

MAIN PROPOSAL ATTACHMENTS (*required for all proposals*)

- A. Project Description**
- B. Service Area and Project Location Map**
- C. Biographical Sketches**
- D. Letters of Support** - Applicants are encouraged to provide letters from project partners, beneficiaries and others that demonstrate the commitment of resources to the project or document demand. ***Redundant form letters of support are discouraged.***

FINANCIAL ATTACHMENTS

- E. Budget Information** - All proposals must include a [line-item detailed budget](#) with details on how Commission resources and matching funds will be used, as well as a [budget summary worksheet](#). Templates available in the online application may be used to provide this information. Other line-item detail formats will be accepted provided they contain all pertinent information requested in the template documents.
- F. Cost Estimate from Engineer or Construction Contractor** – *Required for all A&E and construction projects.* A current written cost estimate from a licensed architect, engineer or construction contractor must be provided.
- G. Cost Estimate from Consultants and other Service Providers** – *Required for all professional services contracts.* A current written cost estimate from a qualified consultant or contractor to establish the basis for the funding request.
- H. Detailed Equipment List and Equipment Quotes** – Requests for the purchase of equipment must include a detailed equipment list and current quotes from product vendors.

ADDITIONAL ATTACHMENTS – BASED ON TYPE OF PROJECT

(refer to your project's investment category in Section II. of this RFP for more information)

- I. Feasibility Study** - A feasibility study or similar analysis that demonstrates that the proposed business concept is technically and economically feasible should be submitted, if applicable. This analysis evaluates the practicality and viability of an idea and should answer the question "should we proceed with the proposed project idea."
- J. Economic Impact Study** - The potential economic impact of the project to the region must be documented. While the Commission is primarily interested in the direct impact, estimates of the indirect and induced impacts may be provided.
- K. Master Plan** – A master plan or similar information which describes the project's total development strategy is required for certain projects. The requirement for a master plan typically applies to applications requesting construction funding for industrial development projects, regional tourism investments such as the development of a regional trail system, or other projects with multiple stages of implementation.
- L. Inventory of Available Sites** – *Required for investments in new industrial sites.* A complete listing of all publicly owned sites located in the applicant locality and the surrounding region *must* be provided for new industrial site funding requests.
- M. Virginia Business Ready Sites Program Assessment Report** – *Required for industrial sites assessed by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership.* A copy of the Virginia Business Ready Site Assessment for industrial site properties; with the most recent Tier characterization certification letter, if Tier level has been updated since the assessment.
- N. Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment** – *Required for brownfield site applications.* The Phase 1 ESA will assess if current or historic property use have impacted the soil or groundwater and to identify threats to the environment and/or human health.
- O. Preliminary Engineering Report or Preliminary Architectural Report** -- Applicants are requested to provide preliminary engineering reports, preliminary architectural reports, building plans, or other relevant A&E documents with for property or buildings.
- P. Business Plan or Operating Plan** - *A Business Plan is required for applications with a private beneficiary. An Operating Plan is required for proposed new facilities.* The required Business Plan or Operating Plan must describe the operational requirements for the new business or facility, and how those requirements will be met.

Q. Operating Budget and/or Pro Forma – All requests for projects that will have ongoing operating costs must demonstrate how operation of the new or expanded program or facility is expected to be sustained beyond a start-up period of no more than three years. An operating budget or pro forma with revenues and expenses must be provided showing projections for how the program/facilities will be supported.

R. Marketing Plan - A marketing plan to describe the project's target market and the plan to capture that market must be described in the application, if applicable.

S. Program Guidelines & Sub-Awards – *Program Guidelines are required for cost-share programs and other requests to support Transfer Payments.* When the project will result in sub-awarding of TRRC funding to other recipients, the details of the sub-award arrangements including a draft of the proposed contract agreement must be provided.

Applications requesting support for incentive programs (e.g., agriculture cost share or business development) must provide a copy of their proposed Program Guidelines. The program guidelines will describe the governance of the program including its eligibility criteria, funding limitations, and program requirements.

T. Operating Agreements – Agreements, memoranda of understanding, contracts, or similar documents between project partners are required whenever there are multiple beneficiaries of the project. The agreement must detail each entity's responsibilities.

U. Performance Agreements – Provide terms for private sector performance agreements.

V. Cash Flow Analysis with Rate Structure – *Required for utility infrastructure construction.*

For projects that will generate revenues, applicants must provide:

1. A detailed cash flow analysis that shows a baseline of current operations and expected changes to revenues and expenditures if an award is approved;
2. A proposed or currently adopted rate structure for new and/or existing customers.

Proposed or planned changes to the rate structure that will result from and/or is necessary to support the project requested for support from the Commission must be identified.

IV. REQUIREMENTS OF FUNDING

A. Grants and Loans

This RFP seeks applications for both grants and loans. Staff will typically recommend that loans be awarded to projects that are expected to generate sufficient revenues to service debt even when the application is seeking a grant. TRRC offers competitive interest rates and will entertain flexible loan terms, such as forbearance periods during construction or startup periods and interest only payments. In addition, the Commission will also entertain applications for a combination of a grant and loan as part of the same award.

The Commission has established lending partnerships with the [Virginia Small Business Financing Authority \(VSBFA\)](#) and the Virginia Resources Authority (VRA). Applicants to which loans are recommended must provide any additional documentation that VSBFA/VRA or TRRC requests.

B. Award Information

It is anticipated that the Commission will approve multiple awards—including grants and loans—as a result of this RFP. After the Commission makes award decisions, grant agreements will be issued for the amounts and with any conditions as approved by the Commission.

The Commission will typically use its standard restricted or unrestricted grant agreements for selected projects. All grantees are required to follow the Commission's Funding Policies as a condition of the award. The standard grant agreement and the Funding Policies are available on the Commission's webpage. The Commission reserves the right to update its standard grant agreement and Funding Policies at any time.

Funding Policies are available on the TRRC website [here](#).

C. Payment of Grant Funds

Payment of grant funds will be subject to the terms of the grant agreement and will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis. Expenses incurred prior to the award date are not eligible for reimbursement. The standard reimbursement period is quarterly, unless otherwise agreed to by Commission staff. The grantee is required to provide appropriate documentation of the expenditure and use of required matching funds for the project. The Commission's [Funding Policies](#) contain additional information that applicants should review closely.

D. Reporting

Grantees must provide annual reports on the financial and quantitative progress made toward completion of the project's milestones and outputs/deliverables and provide a narrative discussion of progress. A final report including a narrative on the success of the project, attainment of proposed outputs, and a description of the long-term expectations and achievements for the project is required at the close of the project. The Commission will not process the final payment request until the grantee has satisfied all reporting requirements.

Additionally, grantees must provide any additional or interim reporting information the

Commission may request to ensure the provisions of the grant agreement are properly carried out, administered, and enforced.

E. Assets and Security Interest

As a condition of awarding a grant, the Commission will have a claim to all property and assets in which Commission grant funds were invested and the Commission must approve any conveyances of such property and assets. This applies to investments in real property, intellectual property, and equipment purchases greater than \$5,000.

The details of these requirements are included in the grant agreement and the Commission's Funding Policies.

V. ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A – Evaluation Criteria
- Attachment B – Tobacco Region Map of Eligible Localities

**TRRC's Southwest and Southern Virginia
Regional Economic Development Program - Evaluation Criteria**

OVERALL PROJECT EVALUATION (70 POINTS)

Projects will be evaluated in each area listed below for a total of 70 points for overall evaluation.

Assessment of Need & Eligibility (15 points)

Problem / Need - Clearly Identified problem or need to be addressed. (5)

Assessment of Need & Planning - Significance and strategic fit of project to the community, as demonstrated by assessment of need or opportunity, and evidence of stakeholder input and support in project design. (5)

TRRC Priority - Fit with the Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission's mission, Strategic Plan, investment categories and funding priorities. (5)

Methodology & Project Feasibility (25 points)

Methodology - Logical and feasible approach to addressing objective and meeting investment metrics/output deliverable objectives that will benefit economic revitalization in the region. (10)

Timeline & Milestones - Project describes how objectives will be achieved under a realistic work plan. Progress steps and estimated dates for completion provided. (5)

Project Team - Experience and demonstrated expertise of project team for accomplishing objectives. (5)

Feasibility - Focus of project planning, and feasibility to accomplish direct outcomes benefiting economic revitalization in the Tobacco Region. (5)

Project Budget and Match (15 points)

Budget Detail - Budget is reasonable, realistic, and cost-effective. Planned use of funds supported by a budget narrative, and with quotes and estimates. (5)

Match - Leveraging of non-TRRC resources is evident with appropriate sources and amounts of cash commitments and other funding, and in-kind match contributions identified. (5)

Additional Match - Leveraging of non-TRRC resources exceeds minimum 1:1 requirement. (5)

Sustainability for Long-Term Success (15 points)

Sustainability - Demonstrated financial plans with cash-flow analysis and pro-forma budgets. Clear plan for financial sustainability and ability to maintain effort beyond the term of grant funding. (10)

Long Term Impact on Region & Communities - Regional cooperation and financial collaboration. Likelihood for benefits of the project to accrue regionally and/or serve as a model for other communities. (5)

INVESTMENT OUTCOMES RESULTING FROM OUTPUT METRICS & DELIVERABLES (30 POINTS)

Each project will be scored up to 30 points, under the relevant Investment Category below:

A. AGRIBUSINESS

Ability to create agribusiness opportunities and to increase net farm income, with an emphasis on systemic or collective benefit. Evidence of producer interest and market opportunity.

B. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Ability to recruit or expand business development opportunities, thereby leading to an increase in jobs, incomes, and revenues in the region.

C. INDUSTRIAL SITES & INFRASTRUCTURE

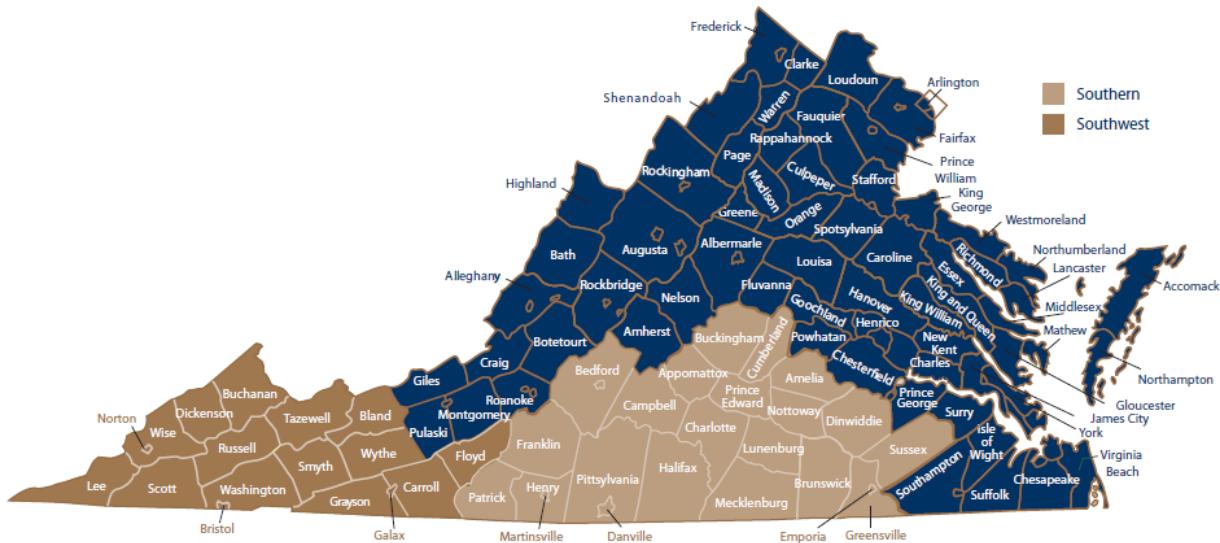
Addresses critical needs to improve economic competitiveness of the region and to result in long-term job creation and private capital investment.

D. TOURISM

Ability to significantly and directly, increase number of visitors from outside the region and beyond the Commonwealth; and with the increase in tourist and visitors to increase visitor spending in the region.

Total Score = Overall Project Evaluation plus Investment Outcomes = < 100 Points

Tobacco Commission Localities Southern and Southwest



The service area for the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission includes 40- tobacco-dependent localities in the Southern and Southwest areas of Virginia. Eligible applicants serving these localities are eligible to apply to the Commission's grant programs for projects that will enhance the economic growth and development of the region.

SOUTHWEST AREA

Counties:

Bland
Buchanan
Carroll
Dickenson
Floyd
Grayson
Lee
Russell
Scott
Smyth
Tazewell
Washington
Wise
Wythe

Cities:

Bristol
Galax
Norton

SOUTHERN AREA

Counties:

Amelia
Appomattox
Bedford
Brunswick
Buckingham
Campbell
Charlotte
Cumberland
Dinwiddie
Franklin
Greensville
Halifax
Henry
Lunenburg
Mecklenburg
Nottoway
Patrick
Pittsylvania
Prince Edward
Sussex

Cities:

Danville
Emporia
Martinsville