

Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission

FY2027 Competitive Education Program

GUIDELINES & REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Application Due Date:
August 6, 2026



**Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission
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GUIDELINES & REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

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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 priority for the development of a Talent-Rich region as a direct result of project success.

The Commission views post-secondary education and training as prerequisites for citizen participation in the highly competitive global economy and as essential for advancing productivity, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Knowledge workers are vital to the process of revitalizing the region. The purpose of the Competitive Education Program is to fund initiatives that create or expand educational programs, equipment, and facilities - that will assist residents of the region in obtaining levels and/or types of education and employment previously not available.

The Competitive Education Program Guidelines and Request for Proposals (together, “RFP”) are issued to solicit applications through a competitive process in order to establish grant agreements for education projects in the Tobacco Region. The Education program prioritizes projects that will increase the education and skill levels of the region’s labor pools as a method to attract and retain employers. Refer to Attachment C: Eligible Counties & Cities for Tobacco Commission Funding.

Approximately \$1,945,000 million is available for the FY2027 Competitive Education Program. Applications seeking an award in excess of available funds will be rejected. ***No requests submitted in response to this RFP should exceed \$200,000.*** Requests which exceed this amount must receive approval from Commission staff prior to submission of the application. **The application deadline is August 6, 2026.** Award decisions are expected to be made at the Commission’s meeting in September 2026.

B. Eligible Applicants

Applications will only be accepted from educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and governmental entities that provide workforce development programs, services, or facilities in the Tobacco Region. Eligible applicants including the following:

- **Educational Institutions** - Public or private non-profit institutions of higher education, and other education or training institutions constituted and located in Virginia, or entities not constituted in Virginia but with significant, enduring investments and service delivery in the Tobacco Region.
- **Non-Profit Organizations** - Incorporated non-profit organizations designated as tax-exempt by the federal Internal Revenue Service, such as 501(c)(3) entities.
- **Governmental Entities** - Governmental entities within the Tobacco Region or their duly constituted political subdivisions. This includes the governing body of any city, county, or town (“locality”); governing body of a local or regional industrial or economic development authority; regional authority, and other governmental units.

Guidelines for applications submitted by regional partnerships and for projects benefiting for-profit entities are in Section III of the Commission's Funding Policies discussed below.

C. Ineligible/Eligible Uses of Funding

The [Commission's Funding Policies for Grant Awards: Information for Applicants & Grantees \(Revised January 2026\)](#) ("[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 grants policies. Among other types of ineligible expenses, Commission funds may not be used for indirect expenses. Consult the Funding Policies for additional detail.

D. Matching Funds

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

Expenses already included in the grantee or partner organization's operating budget, such as personnel and other operating costs, presented as being reallocated for the project (i.e., existing staff), will only be considered as an in-kind contribution and will count toward the 25% in-kind limit.

Applicants for grant awards must submit details on the nature, source, and timing of match contributions to the project 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 else the Commission may rescind the award and de-obligate its funds.

E. Application and Submission Information

Proposals must be submitted by midnight on August 6, 2026, through the Commission's online application portal: https://vtc.smartsimple.com/s_Login.jsp.

Applicants will select the Competitive Education Program 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 that they have read this RFP, that they will agree to be bound by the Commission's Funding Policies if an award is made, 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.

F. Evaluation

The Commission's Education Committee will evaluate applications submitted in response to this RFP. Staff recommendations to the Commission's Education 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 its right to cancel this RFP, to not proceed with any or all applications, to condition its award upon additional terms and conditions, or to recommend a loan to an applicant who sought a grant.

G. TRRC Staff Contact Information

TRRC staff are available to assist with applications. For technical assistance with logging in or setting up an account with the Commission's online grants portal, please contact:

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

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

- Sarah Capps, Southern Regional Director (Rocky Mount, VA)
(540) 483-0179 ext. 2168, scapps@revitalizeva.org
- Sara Williams, Southwest Regional Director (Abingdon, VA)
(276) 619-4325, swilliams@revitalizeva.org

I. PROGRAM DETAILS

The Commission's primary focus for the Education program is on development of a Talent-Rich Region through investments that increase the supply and quality of the workforce for targeted industries. Objectives for this program are to enhance workforce readiness through support for proven and/or innovative programs and to focus on gaps between education supply and employer demand. Applications presented in response to this RFP must accomplish one or more of the following:

- Develop or expand regional programs to increase educational achievement as reflected by degree or credential completion in GED attainment, work-readiness certification, or post-secondary higher education;
- Initiate or expand training programs and facilities that result in industry-led national certifications for high demand careers, as defined in partnership with regional businesses and industries, including STEM-H;
- Assist communities and institutions in development of new employment training opportunities including physical improvements, construction, or equipping of education facilities for development of distance learning centers and/or on-site education programs that were previously unavailable to residents of the region;
- Support existing private sector companies through industry-led workforce training or retraining of current and prospective workers for targeted high-demand employment opportunities, including work-based opportunities such as registered apprenticeships and on-the-job training programs.

The Commission at its discretion may entertain other types of projects, provided they meet all other requirements of this RFP. Applicants who wish to bring a project outside of the scope of this RFP must contact and receive the concurrence of TRRC's Deputy Director in advance.

A. Investment Strategies

Applicants will use the Competitive Education Program application and will select from the following investment strategies:

- Advanced Manufacturing Workforce Training
- Post-Secondary Programs with a focus in STEM-H
- Workforce Training Programs
- High School Equivalency Programs

B. Priorities

Priority consideration will be given to proposals that:

- Are focused on Advance STEM-H and/ or Advanced Manufacturing workforce training.
- Provide training in conjunction with a private company's commitment to create new jobs and/or fill existing job openings where there are direct articulated employment linkages between program graduates and employers.
- Support the development or expansion of high demand workforce training programs that offer non-traditionally timed instruction.

Student financial aid is not a priority of the Competitive Education Program and will not receive a positive Staff recommendation. Financial assistance for students is funded through the Commission's Workforce Financial Aid Program.

C. Outputs / Metrics

Applicants must clearly articulate how the project relates to the goals of the program. All projects must clearly define outputs that will occur during the project period and directly relate to the use of Commission funds and matching funds. The following are examples of Competitive Education metrics:

- Number of tobacco region residents receiving a nationally recognized workforce credential or degree
- Number of jobs expected to be created or filled
- Quality of jobs expected to be created or filled (e.g., projected wages or salaries, type of work, skills required, etc.)
- Number of private sector employers assisted

II. REQUIRED INFORMATION

Refer to Attachment B: Competitive Education – On-Line Application Requirements, for an outline and details on information requested in the on-line application.

Specific information required for the Competitive Education RFP is highlighted below.

A. Private employer reviews - Applications are required to include at least two written reviews from private sector employers in the applicable service area that address the value proposition of the project. Employers letters should describe the need for graduates/completers of the proposed program. The preference is for letters that identify specific numbers and types of positions needed currently or expected to be filled in the near future, as opposed to being generic letters of support.

Upload letters in the Project Description section of the application under Private Employer Reviews.

- B. Budget Justification**- Depending on proposed use of TRRC funds the following should be uploaded to the Financial Information section of the application under Budget Justification Attachments.
- **Cost Estimate from Engineer or Construction Contractor** – Requests for construction expenses must provide a current written cost estimate from a licensed architect, engineer, or construction contractor.
 - **Detailed Equipment List and Equipment Quotes** – Requests for the purchase of equipment, must provide a detailed equipment list and quotes from product vendors.
- C. Operating Budget Pro Forma & Sustainability** - All requests, whether for capital assets or operational funds, are expected to demonstrate how operation of the new/expanded program or facility are expected to be sustained beyond a start-up period of no more than three years (the maximum time period typically allowed for support from Commission funds). An operating budget or pro forma (with revenues, including tuition, and expenses) must be provided showing projections for how the program/facilities will be supported over a period of at least five years from grant award.

Upload the operating budget pro forma and/or statement regarding sustainability in the Financial Information section of the application under Additional Budget Documentation.

III. REQUIREMENTS OF FUNDING

A. 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 sought a grant. TRRC loans offer 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 a loan as part of the same award.

The Virginia Small Business Financing Authority administers loans for TRRC, and applicants to whom loans are awarded must provide any additional documentation that VRA, VSBFA or TRRC requests.

B. Award Information

It is anticipated that the Commission will approve multiple awards as a result of this RFP. After the Commission makes award decisions, 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 projects to which grants are awarded. 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.

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 expenditures 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 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 all 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

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.

IV. ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A – Evaluation Criteria
- Attachment B – Competitive Education – On-Line Application Requirements
- Attachment C – Tobacco Region Map of Eligible Localities

**TRRC Competitive Education Program
Evaluation Criteria**

Technical Merit (40 points)

- The significance and strategic fit of the project to the community, demonstrated by assessment of needs or opportunities; evidence of community support; through approach and planning of the proposal, readiness for immediate implementation, qualified and committed leadership (10)
- How effectively the proposed budget leverages the Commission's funds with other appropriate sources of funds (10)
- Sustainability of the program beyond the term of the grant funding (10)
- The ability to clearly demonstrate or evaluate the proposal's effectiveness (10)

Education Potential (40 points)

- Number of students/residents receiving a nationally recognized academic/workforce credential (certificate/degree) (10)
- Quality of jobs expected to be created or filled based on projected wages/salaries, type of work, skills required, etc. (10)
- Targets educational and career pathways that support tobacco region employers for which there is documented demand (e.g., existing, or projected job openings). (10)
- Provides access to program or facilities not previously available in tobacco region service area (10)

Significance to Commission's Mission (20 points)

- Strategic fit with the Commission's Strategic Plan and Competitive Education Program Guidelines (10)
- Regional or multi-organizational cooperation and/or financial collaboration for this project (multiple localities or institutions) (10)

**Competitive Education – On-Line Application Requirements
Tobacco Regional Revitalization Commission**

This attachment provides an outline and details for the content required in the online application for the TRRC's Competitive Education Program. Login to the Grants Portal at https://vtc.smartsimple.com/s_Login.jsp

A. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- **Executive Summary** - In a single paragraph provide a clear and concise description of the application's scope. Clearly describe the purposes for which Commission funds will be used. The summary should be suitable for public distribution. (Please do not include proprietary information).
- **Does a similar program exist within an hour's drive?** – If yes, list the location(s)/distance and describe how your program is different. If no, why doesn't the program exist nearby and why will yours succeed?
- **What are the prerequisite requirements for entry into the program?** – What skills, etc. will candidates for your program need to demonstrate, who is providing that pre-requisite training, and how will your work with those providers to identify candidates for recruitment?
- **What resources are required to make the proposed program successful?** (Site, equipment, manpower, operating funds, etc.) Be specific and make sure that the resources described align with the proposed budget for both TRRC and matching funds.
- **What academic or workforce credentials will students work towards achieving in the program? How many students do you expect to enroll and receive credentials annually?** Please provide a BRIEF summary- you will be asked for specific numbers in the results and accountability section.
- **What is the need in your regional area for graduates of the proposed program?** – Be specific and include names of local employers when possible. Include starting wages and number of positions currently open.
- **Private Employer Reviews** – Attach at least two written reviews from private employers in your service area. Employers should describe the need for graduates/completers of the proposed program. The number and types of positions needed currently or in the near future should be specified.

Required Attachments

- **Project Narrative/Proposal** – Please provide a project narrative of approximately 3-5 pages.
- **Biographical Sketches** – Attach brief bios and summaries of qualifications for staff in key leadership roles. These should be a maximum of 1-page in length per staff member.
- **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 for the project. *Redundant form letters of support are discouraged.*

Additional attachments may be necessary, depending on the specific project. The nature of the project may require applicants to submit other documents to adequately inform the Commission and its staff about all pertinent aspects of the project. As these will vary by project type, this list is not exhaustive, and applicants should submit any other documents they believe will assist during the review process.

Other Supporting Documents – Attach other supporting documents such as:

- **Service Area and Project Location Map**
- **Needs Assessment / Feasibility Analysis** - A needs assessment or feasibility analysis that evaluates the demand, and future sustainability, for the proposed project.
- **Operating Agreements** - Agreements (Memoranda of Understanding or similar documents) between project partners or beneficiaries should be submitted, if applicable. If such agreements are not yet finalized, proposed term sheets will suffice.
- **Sub-Awards** - When the project will result in sub-awarding of TRRC funding to other recipients, the details of any sub-award arrangements must be provided, including a draft of any proposed agreements.

B. RESULTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY MATRIX

- **Milestones** –Please list the primary project milestones associated with the scope of this application and use of project funds. Milestones are key checkpoints or significant achievements that mark progress towards completing a project, often tied to timelines or phases of work. Select (Add Milestone).
- **Deliverables** – Please list the primary project deliverables associated with the scope of the application and use of project funds. Deliverables are the tangible outputs or products that result from the use of the funding. Select (Add Deliverables).
- **Data Management and Projection Methodology** – Please provide information pertaining to the collection of actual outcomes data and who will be responsible for data management.
- **Programs and Credentials Worksheet** - Please refer to online application for specific instructions. Select (Open Program and Credentials Worksheet)

C. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- **Proposed Budget (and Sources of Funds)** - All requests must enter a line-item detailed budget. Follow the instructions within the application to begin the process of completing the line item detail budget. After entering the budget line items, then applications will need to complete the Sources of Funds for all matching funds.
- **Budget Narrative:** – Submit a brief budget narrative outlining the rationale for all proposed project expenditures. Each cost should be directly tied to project objectives and supported with a clear explanation of how the amount was determined. Explain the funding gap and need for Commission Funds.
 - **Operating Funds** – The budget narrative for funding requests to support operating costs should show how funding from the Commission and other sources will be used during the start-up period of the request. The proposal should explain why proposed costs are essential for implementing the project as well as details for the basis of the requested amounts. Applicants are encouraged to show declining support from the Commission, with the applicant assuming more responsibility for expenses over the course of the grant (e.g. TRRC at 75% Year 1, 50% Year 2, 25% Year 3.)
- **Budget Justification Attachments**
Upload all quotes, bids, invoices, or cost estimates used to develop the project budget. Documentation should identify the vendor, item or service quoted, and the associated cost. Include only materials that directly support expenses listed in the budget.
- **Additional Budget Documentation** – Provide supplemental budget materials that offer further details on project costs and financial planning. Examples include operating budgets, detailed construction budgets and schedules, architectural or building plans, and any additional justification for project expenses. Ensure all documents are organized and easy to interpret.

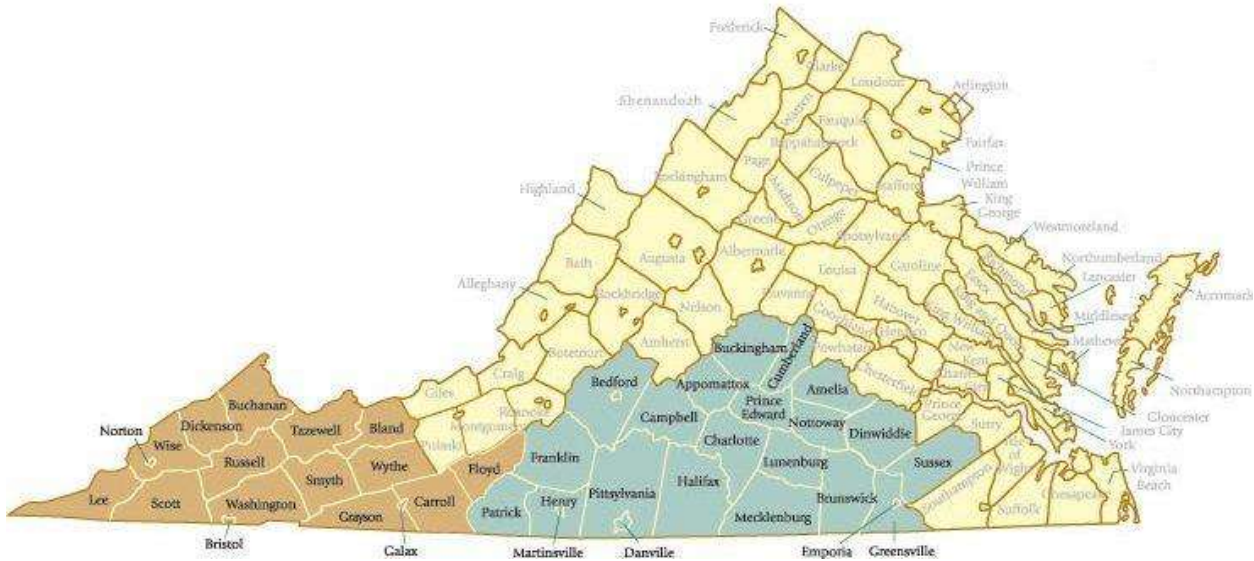
D. CERTIFICATION

All applicants must certify that they have reviewed the applicable RFP and Funding Policies prior to submitting the application. They must certify that the application is in full compliance with the stated guidelines and policies. This certification affirms that if funding is awarded, the organization agrees to adhere to all applicable policies and guidelines.

The certification must be made by an authorized representative of the applicant organization.

Counties & Cities Eligible for Tobacco Commission Funding

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
- Greenville
- Halifax
- Henry
- Lunenburg
- Mecklenburg
- Nottoway
- Patrick
- Pittsylvania
- Prince Edward
- Sussex

Cities:

- Danville
- Emporia
- Martinsville