

Commonwealth of Virginia
Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission

ENERGY INGENUITY FUND
GUIDELINES & REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Pre-Application Process Opens:
January 17, 2024

Full Applications by Invitation Only



**Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission
FY2024 Energy Ingenuity Fund Program**

GUIDELINES & REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

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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 TRRC Energy Ingenuity Fund’s Guidelines and Request for Proposals (together, “RFP”) are issued to solicit applications through a competitive process to establish grant and loan agreements for high impact economic development projects meeting the following objectives:

- Deployment of resources to amplify and accelerate investment in energy projects.
- Collaboration between key partners in energy and economic development.
- Enhancement and expansion of the region's energy supply chain.
- Development of more energy resiliency in Southern and Southwest Virginia.

Funding will be considered for projects within the Southern and Southwest Virginia areas of Virginia’s Tobacco Region, which is detailed on *Attachment B - Eligible Counties & Cities for Tobacco Commission Funding* on page 17 of this RFP.

Up to \$6 million is available for Energy investments in each region, for a total of \$12 million.

A Pre-Application detailing the proposed project is required and serves as an opportunity for Commission staff to conduct a preliminary assessment of the likelihood of the project’s eligibility for funding, and to provide meaningful feedback to applicants before they prepare a full application package. Candidates will be notified by Commission staff if their pre-application is selected to move on to the full application process.

Full applications are evaluated by Commission staff and funding recommendations are put forward to the full Commission for further discussion and approval at its spring, fall and winter meetings.

B. Funding Priorities

The [Commission’s Current Strategic Plan](#) identifies its current funding priorities. Logic models are included therein for the types of projects that the Commission will consider funding.

Details on priorities and the types of projects to be considered under this RFP are provided in **Section II. Guidelines**. All 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. Outputs are specific to each project.

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

Eligible Applicants

Applications will only be accepted from governmental entities and non-profit organizations located in and/or providing economic revitalization programs, services, or facilities in the Tobacco Region. Eligible applicants including the following:

- 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.

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:

Use of Funds by For-Profit Entities – Applications that will benefit a private entity must have a public purpose and be made by one of the eligible applicants identified in the previous section. The following must be described in the application:

- The public purpose that will be met by assisting the private beneficiary;
- Terms of the agreement that will be executed between the governmental unit or nonprofit administrator and the for-profit entity regarding use of funds, ownership of grant-funded assets, and the private entity’s commitment to create and report documented public benefits such as new jobs or taxable private capital investment within three years;
- The amount of wages and salaries to be paid to employees of the Beneficiary.

Funds may be required to be provided in the form of a loan from the governmental unit or nonprofit administrator to the for-profit entity.

Ineligible / Eligible Uses of Funding

The Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission’s Funding Policies for Grant Awards: Information for Applicants & Grantees (Revised June 2020) (“Funding Policies”) has 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 Tobacco Commission’s grant administration policies.

The following list describes uses of Commission funds that generally do not align with Commission objectives and should be avoided in grant proposals and requests for grant disbursement. Additional detail about specific non-eligible uses of funds is available in Section VIII of the Funding Policies document.

- Commission funds should not be used outside the defined Tobacco Region (unless explicitly approved by the Commission).

- Commission funds should not be used to supplant other state or federal funds for which an applicant is eligible. This includes financing options for off-site utility improvements.
- Commission funds should not be used for regularly recurring local responsibilities (e.g. comprehensive plans, K-12 school funding).
- Commission funds should not be used to finance endowments.
- Commission funds should not be used for debt retirement.
- Commission funds should not be used for ongoing operating support beyond a start-up period that has been explicitly approved by the Commission.
- Commission funds should be invested in projects that generate substantial direct and measurable new economic activity in a region. Commission funds should not be used for projects that indirectly affect economic revitalization (e.g. community centers, childcare centers, 4H centers, YMCA or recreational initiatives, airports, local arts and cultural activities, historic preservation, housing and retail development) unless it is demonstrated that the investment will produce significant economic impacts from outside the Commission service area.
- Commission funds should not be used for project administration, indirect project costs or for activities initiated prior to grant approval.
- Commission funds should not be used to acquire or make improvements to privately owned property or to acquire or improve equipment for/in private ownership unless there are defined and documented public purposes met, to include creation of new jobs and new taxable private capital investment, and such expenditures have been explicitly approved by the Commission. (Refer to the Performance Agreement available on the Commission's webpage for the Tobacco Region Opportunity Fund Program (TROF Program) and to the Use of Funds by For-Profit Entities paragraph under Section III. Requirements for Applicants for additional information).

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 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 else the Commission may rescind the award and de-obligate its funds.

D. Application and Submission Information

Pre-application proposals for consideration in May 2024 must be submitted by midnight on February 15 through the Commission's online application portal:

https://vtc.smartsimple.com/s_Login.jsp.

A completed pre-application is REQUIRED for all Energy funding requests and is in the grant portal as "Energy/Pre-Application – Southern Region" or "Energy/Pre-Application – Southwest Region," depending on the location of the project. In addition to text fields of the application, up to 10 pages of additional project description may be submitted as an attachment.

Based on the information provided in the Energy/Pre-Application, applicants will be invited to submit a full funding request. Pre-applications invited to move forward to full application will **submit by March 15, 2024.**

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 expressly required by this RFP must be included. Proposals which are substantially incomplete or lack key information will be considered nonresponsive. These proposals will be declined for review and will not be presented to the committee.

E. Evaluation

The Commission's Southern or Southwest Virginia Committees will evaluate applications submitted in response to this RFP, depending on the location of the project. 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 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

For technical assistance in development of Energy Ingenuity applications please contact:

- Jerry Silva, *Regional Energy Development and Innovation Director* (Richmond, VA)
(804) 325-4363, jsilva@revitalizeva.org
- Vicki Humphreys, Grant Programs Director (Richmond, VA)
(804) 894-9658, vhumphreys@revitalizeva.org

II. GUIDELINES FOR ENERGY INGENUITY FUND PROJECT PROPOSALS

Background:

TRRC has established a \$12 million dollar fund for rural, disadvantaged, or Native American communities with \$6 million designated for energy-related projects in each of its service regions, Southern and Southwest Virginia. This program is designed as an umbrella that can review various types of proposals for energy projects. With a focus on establishing a ‘best in class’ energy economy, this fund is expected to capitalize on a skilled workforce and promote an energy focused economy for the Tobacco Region.

This intention recognizes that economies with a stronger focus on energy can facilitate bringing energy jobs, energy manufacturing supply chain companies, energy production, grid resiliency, energy storage, microgrids, hydrogen generation, smart cities, wind, small scale modular reactors, conversion of coal mines, etc.

Objectives:

- Boost energy supply chains for economic development in the Tobacco Region
- Increase energy resiliency in Southern and Southwest Virginia
- Enable *scalable* innovations in the energy entrepreneurial ecosystem
- Develop and implement impactful energy projects in the Tobacco Region
- Leverage federal, state, local and private funding resources for energy development through collaboration among key partners such as VEDP, US Department of Energy, and Virginia Department of Energy, that maximizes each partners’ assistance available to quality projects.

Major Funding and Technical Assistance Partners:

- Virginia Department of Energy
- United States Department of Energy – Rural Development / Innovation / Grid Reliability
- United States Department of Commerce – Rural Development / Innovation / Tech Hub
- Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP)
- Virginia Resource Authority (VRA)
- Virginia Small Business Financing Authority (VSBFA)
- Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
- Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development – GO Virginia Program

Eligible Investments:

A. Energy Ingenuity – Catalyst Grants

Planning and capacity building —Funding may be requested for up to 50% of third-party professional services to support critical planning activities focused on major energy projects.

Awards of up to \$50,000 will support project development for major energy projects in their pursuit of federal, and other funding resources needed for successful implementation. Grant funds are expected to be used primarily for capacity development expenditures such as administrative, profession and technical services, grant writing and management, project development and management, legal and engineering expenses, and capacity building expenses directly related to projects with an Energy development or innovation focus.

Grant funds will also be eligible to support road mapping/plans of action for enhancing energy manufacturing supply chains at major economic development sites in the region.

B. Energy Ingenuity – Execution Grants

Grant and loan incentive awards, within the limits of available funding, will be considered to aid in the implementation of staff recommended energy projects. Funds can be used for reasonable costs allowed by Code that are necessary for successful project implementation. A minimum of 1:1 match of funds is required, with higher levels of match expected for larger grant requests.

For projects with an identified revenue stream, the Commission will consider assistance through project financing with low-interest loans, creation of loan-loss reserve funds, incentive to private business for project outcome performance, and other mechanisms needed to best move a project forward, as long as total liability for the Commission is clear and capped.

Infrastructure – Utility Infrastructure (On-Site and Off-Site)

The Commission will consider funding requests to support projects that develop and expand energy infrastructure offering long-term benefits to the region. This may include grants for engineering and design associated with on-site and/or off-site energy infrastructure necessary to serve megasites, and priority regional industrial site properties. The Commission will consider grant and loan funding assistance for pilot energy deployment projects with measurable outcomes.

Scalable Energy Deployments

The Commission will consider funding for cost-effective, scalable energy deployment projects for proven technologies and offer opportunities for scalability. Priority of grant investments will be for capital costs and capitalizable expenses that can be awarded under the Commission's Restricted Funds. "Scalable" for the purposes of this RFP is defined as not in funding or R&D phase.

****Research & Development projects are ineligible for funding at this time.****

Energy Manufacturing Incentives

The Commission will consider TROF-like incentives for energy manufacturing and supply chain companies that commit to job creation and private capital investment in the Tobacco Region.

Energy Workforce Initiatives

The Commission will consider funding workforce related projects that do not otherwise meet the guidelines for TRRC's Competitive Education program (example: energy workforce needs assessments).

Requirements

Depending on the nature of the project, Energy Ingenuity Fund 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*)
- 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*)

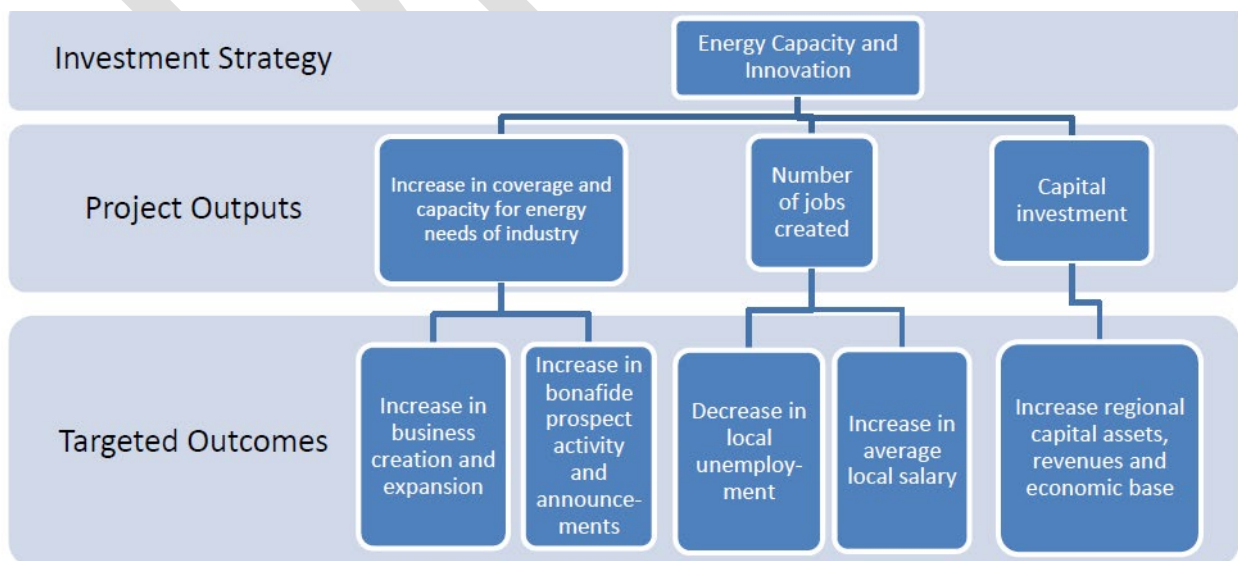
Outputs/Deliverables

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. Examples of project deliverables for Energy include:

- Change in industrial site's energy readiness to improve marketability to targeted sectors
- Feasibility Study or Implementation Plan
- Workforce Needs Assessment Report
- Number of Jobs Created
- Amount of Capital Investment
- Product or Service Deployment (please give a specific/detailed response based on type and function of product/service)

Outcomes

Applicants for Energy Ingenuity - Execution grants must estimate aggregate energy related economic development outcomes that are projected result 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. Please see the following logic model for examples of outcomes. Note that outcomes are not limited to those in this model (additional example: output – scalable energy product installed; outcome – grid resiliency improvement).



III. REQUIRED DOCUMENTS FOR FULL PROPOSAL

Depending on the nature of the project, applicants may be required to submit several other documents, so the Commission and its staff are fully informed 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.

MAIN PROPOSAL ATTACHMENTS

- A. Project Description**
- B. Service Area and Project Location Map**
- C. Biographical Sketches for lead personnel on project**
- 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. Line-Item Detailed Budget** - All requests must include a line-item detailed budget with details on how Commission resources and matching funds will be used. A template 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.
- 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. Detailed Equipment List and Equipment Quotes** – Requests for the purchase of equipment, must provide a detailed equipment list and quotes from product vendors.

ADDITIONAL ATTACHMENTS – BASED ON TYPE OF PROJECT

- H. 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”.
- I. 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.

- J. 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.
- K. 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.
- L. 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.
- M. 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.
- N. 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.
- O. 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.
- P. Operating Budget and Pro Forma** – *Required for utilities infrastructure applications.* 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.
- Q. 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.
- R. Program Guidelines & Sub-Awards** – 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.
- S. 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.

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

U. Cash Flow Analysis with Rate Structure – *Required for utility infrastructure construction.* For projects that will generate revenues, applicants must provide (i) a detailed cash flow analysis that shows a baseline of current operations and expected changes to revenues and expenditures if an award is approved, and (ii) 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 sought 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.

TRRC loans are administered by either the Virginia Resources Authority (VRA) or the Virginia Small Business Finance Authority (VSBFA), and prospective loan recipients must provide any additional documentation that VRA, VSBFA 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.

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.

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)

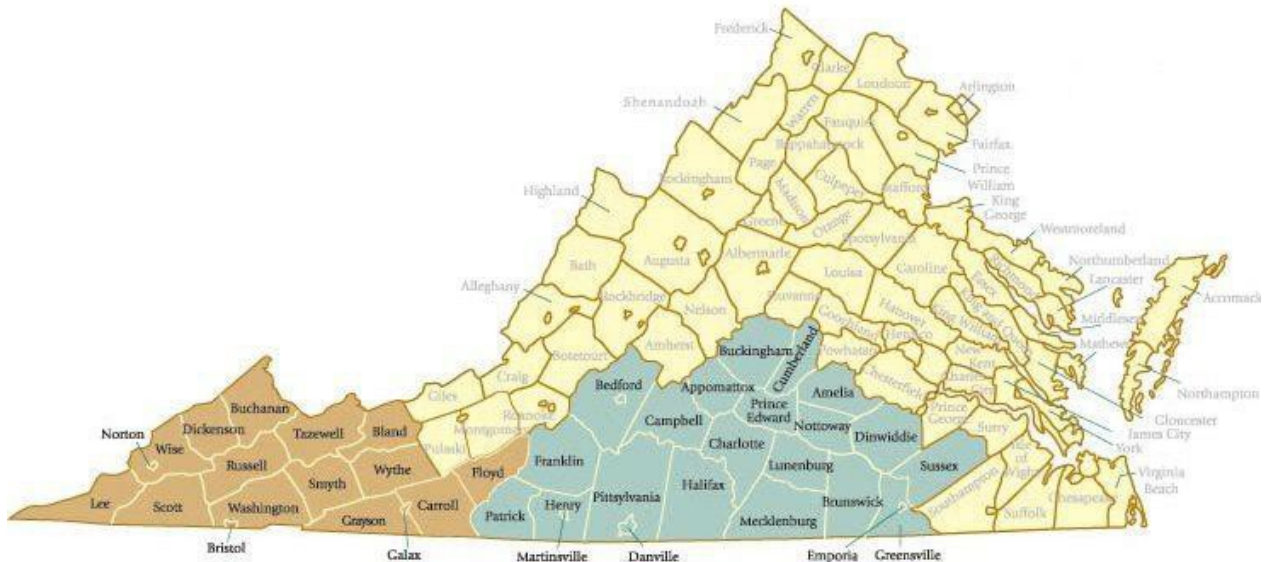
Each project will be scored up to 30 points, under the relevant Investment Category below:

E. ENERGY

Depending on the nature of the project, outcomes will be based on the expected impact on Energy development and Energy Innovation in the Tobacco Region. This may include potential for a strong return on investment for the TRRC, support and involvement of private sector Energy deployment and Energy innovation in the project, likelihood of success in achieving targeted milestones and deliverables, and ability to be scalable within 2 years of deployment will be considered.

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

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