



**REGIONAL COUNCIL 9
ENTREPRENEURSHIP TASK FORCE MEETING
OCTOBER 18, 2024
10:00 am to 10:45 AM
1001 Research Park Blvd., Suite 301, Charlottesville VA 22901
In-Person Meeting**

MINUTES

Attending: Ethan Dunstan, Tom Click, Rob Archer

Absent: Pace Lochte, Paige Read

Staff: Shannon Holland, Christie Taylor

Guests: Cody Anderson, DHCD; Joseph Dennie, DHCD

1. Welcome

Ethan Dunstan called the meeting to order at 10:10 AM.

2. Roll Call

A roll call was performed, as noted above.

3. Public Comment

No public comment was made or submitted at the meeting.

4. Approve Meeting Minutes

Tom Click made a motion to accept the Meeting Minutes of the November 15, 2022 Entrepreneurship Task Force, as presented. Rob Archer seconded the motion. Motion carried.

5. Grant Proposal Discussion: Food and Beverage Business Accelerator

Four people scored the proposal, with an average of 85. By the time of the Council meeting there will be a few updates to the budget and in-kind forms. This proposal team will likely be at the meeting as they are presenting on the Rural Entrepreneurship Ecosystem project and REI project. Six letters of support were presented, and Shannon asked the project team to clarify the size of those companies, as they are used to validate the project need. She has also asked for the source of data to be shared.

Ethan Dunstan said the proposal needs more clarity, and to elaborate on statements like “challenges unique to the food industry” and explain how this grant will mitigate those concerns. Match forms should also be more transparent, with hourly rates showed for calculations.

Tom Click critiqued the ambiguity of scaling, which the project team needs to clarify. The project also needs to explain why the chosen staff is the best path forward rather than a consultant. The project should also assert that this will allow businesses to stay and grow in Region 9, or at least Virginia.

Rob Archer asked the project to consider scaling, so this effort can be replicated in other regions. It should generate a model that other projects can follow.

6. REI Plan – DRAFT

The draft REI report was received on October 15th. There is also an action plan that is in draft form – to be delivered. It may take a few months to complete.

Shannon cited potential issues with the report:

- Reads like an ESO strategic plan vs an entrepreneur focused plan
- Recommendations (such as 1,2) add more infrastructure when resources are tight for ESOs
- Many of the recommendations have GO Virginia as a possible funder but are not in alignment with funding abilities
- Lacks strong connection to our target traded sectors or even high growth sectors
- First two recommendations seem redundant with the Rural Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Building activities

Members agreed the report lacks focus and seems to lack validation from entrepreneurs. Tom Click added that it does not address the unique challenges of rural ecosystems. The Task Force recommended that any action be deferred to the January Council meeting.

7. Other Business

No other business was presented.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:59 AM.

DRAFT