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Hampton Roads Executive Roundtable
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GO Virginia Region 5 Planning Grant Powers Inclusive Workforce Innovation through the VersAbility TECH Center

Norfolk, Virginia — GO Virginia Region 5 has awarded a planning grant to VersAbility Resources to advance the VersAbility TECH (Train, Educate, Certify, Hire) Center, a 75,000-square-foot workforce training hub designed to meet the region's growing demand for skilled labor in shipbuilding, logistics, and advanced manufacturing.

With only **41% of Virginians with disabilities employed**, VersAbility TECH aims to close the gap by removing training barriers and connecting inclusive talent to high-paying jobs. The planning grant will produce an implementation-ready blueprint to launch this transformative workforce hub for Region 5.

VersAbility TECH will equip individuals of all abilities with the certifications, hands-on training and support systems required to thrive in high demand industries in the maritime trades, advanced manufacturing and logistics, while supporting Region 5's Economic Growth and Diversification Plan.

Tom Frantz, Chair of GO Virginia Region 5 stated, "For a region to be competitive and grow, it must train and retain talent, particularly in its core industries. The VersAbility TECH Center and this program should play an important role in strengthening Hampton Roads, its work force and its core industries."

"This project is an investment in people," said **Kasia Grzelkowski, President and CEO of VersAbility Resources**. "VersAbility TECH will prepare a broader, more inclusive workforce to fill vital roles across our region's core industries—helping employers meet talent needs while opening doors for individuals of all abilities."

"We want employers to see earned credentials as indicators of workforce readiness—not individual disability. VersAbility TECH taps into the largest untapped talent pool to meet the workforce needs of Hampton Roads and beyond," said **Casey Roberts, Executive Vice President of Strategy and Development of VersAbility Resources and GO Virginia Region 5 Council Member**.

Planning deliverables include:

- **Architectural site plan** for the 75,000-square-foot facility with universal design for accessibility.
- **Employer-aligned curriculum pathways** in welding, logistics, marine coatings, and related trades.
- **Advisory group formation** includes industry, education, and inclusion partners.
- **Industry-vetted implementation roadmap** guided by the Hampton Roads Workforce Council's Talent Pathways Initiative (TPI) reports.

Regional employers such as **Huntington Ingalls Industries, Liebherr**, and the **Port of Virginia** have identified persistent skilled trades shortages and are partnering in curriculum and advisory roles.

VersAbility has already **graduated 24 welders** and offers **weekly forklift training**, demonstrating readiness for expansion. A regional advisory "think tank" convened in March 2025 confirmed broad support for the initiative.

Upon completion, the planning effort can position VersAbility for a GO Virginia Per Capita Implementation grant—providing the framework to launch a scalable, inclusive workforce hub that strengthens the region’s competitiveness and advances economic opportunity for all.

About VersAbility Resources

VersAbility Resources is a nonprofit organization creating opportunities for people of all abilities to live, work, and thrive in their communities. Through training, employment, and advocacy, VersAbility supports individuals with disabilities in achieving independence and inclusion across Southeast Virginia.

www.versability.org

About GO Virginia

Growth and Opportunity (GO) Virginia is a statewide initiative that supports regional collaboration among business, education, and government to foster private-sector growth and create higher-paying jobs. GO Virginia Region 5 is comprised of 16 cities and counties located in Hampton Roads and Virginia’s Eastern Shore. www.govirginia.org

About Hampton Roads Executive Roundtable

The Hampton Roads Executive Roundtable’s mission is to improve the trajectory of the region’s economic growth and competitiveness, incorporate innovation and entrepreneurship into the economic base, and provide strategic leadership through collaboration for the region’s economic future. The Roundtable also serves as the support organization for Region 5 of Virginia’s innovative GO (Growth & Opportunity) Virginia program. [Visit our website here.](#)