

Virginia COVID-19 Recovery Issues and Opportunities

Summary Document as of November 30, 2020

INTRODUCTION

The FEMA Region 3 COVID Interagency Recovery Coordination Taskforce met partners in Virginia, including 18 of the 21 Virginia Planning District Commissions (PDC) in fall 2020 to learn about issues, opportunities, projects and planning efforts that relate to COVID recovery. Eleven of the 21 PDCs are also U.S. Economic Development Administration designated Economic Development Districts (EDD). See a list of Virginia EDDs [here](#). EDD [designation](#) comes with additional funding, in some instances, and support for the development and update of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development. The taskforce met with ten of the 11 EDDs.

These conversations were held in an informal manner. The questions, listed below, were provided before the call, but not addressed in a structured manner. PDC staff were asked to address the questions that seemed important or relevant to them.

Questions shared with PDCs before the phone conversation:

- What are the top recovery challenges or issues you are **currently** hearing about?
- What are the top recovery challenges or issues that you **anticipate**?
- Planning District Commission future plans/efforts for COVID recovery
- Other state or regional recovery efforts that the Planning District is aware of
- Any local recovery efforts underway?
- COVID recovery planning or management support needs from the local or regional level
- Any relevant surveys or data on community impacts and recovery topics
- Are you aware of networking, or coordination efforts, between local or regional government? (if so, who is involved, how is this being organized?)
- Next steps / opportunities for collaboration

This document provides a snapshot in time of the issues and opportunities identified by PDCs and other partners. The information has been verified and approved by most of the PDC directors, however, not all responded to approve the content. The issues and opportunities identified here will continuously evolve. This document could be considered an operational draft, or it can stand as a moment in time. It may be useful in future work to define recovery strategies.

The information is organized into the following categories:

- Issues & impacts
- Upcoming recovery planning & coordination
- Current collaborative or networking efforts, upcoming activities and reports
- Response, recovery & resilience projects and innovations
- Technical assistance, capacity building, and other support needs
- State programs & resource allocations

Issues & Impacts

The issues and impacts identified in PDC meetings are grouped by topic area, displayed below in table format. The tables include a column which identifies whether the issue is COVID specific or systemic/exacerbated by the pandemic. Issues that are COVID specific may need a different approach to coordinating long-term recovery. The systemic issues likely already have programs, plans or coordination efforts that could be built upon.

This section provides a broad overview of the important issues across PDCs but should not be read as quantitative survey results. For instance, five of the PDCs made note of the challenges for small businesses. It is quite likely that small business challenges exist in more of the districts, but it came up in conversation five times. This does show trends in what the districts found important enough to make note of in our calls and is a good starting point to see which issues have significance across the state.

The issues that were identified multiple times are bolded. Some of the issues are cross-cutting, meaning they affect multiple topics. The cross-cutting issues are noted after each table.

Workforce and Economic Development	# of times mentioned	COVID Specific	Systemic / exacerbated
Challenges for small and micro businesses.	5	X	
Large business closures contribute to job loss.	1	X	
Supply chain disruption is stressing the manufacturing industry.	1	X	
Need assistance for businesses transitioning to telework.	1	X	
Potential for population growth as people leave urban areas – and other changes related to remote workers.	3	X	
Need to better understand how the retail sector will evolve and the role of the cyber economy.	1		X
Tools/strategies/assistance with diversifying the economy.	3		X
Identify/predict new economy or workforce shifts.	3		X
Support the transition of downtown economies.	1	X	
Impacts to hospitality industry.	1	X	
How to keep businesses operational when COVID cases are detected.	1	X	
Impacts to tourism-based economy.	1	X	
CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population growth as people leave urban areas is cross-cutting with Local/Regional Govt. Operations. It will affect government services, staffing and planning. If these trends hold, infrastructure capacity and housing supply will need to be considered. It may affect the communities' vision for the future. 			

Equity & Health	# of times mentioned	COVID Specific	Systemic / exacerbated
Seniors and people with disabilities are not able to receive services and socialization at congregate sites. There could be long-term mental health effects.	1	X	
Disproportionate impacts to low-wage earners and vulnerable populations.	3		X
Evidence of the essential nature of low-wage jobs is at odds with our tendency to focus economic development on creating high wage jobs.	1		X
Childcare – Access and Affordability.	7		X
Food insecurity.	3		X
Housing insecurity – housing crisis and homelessness.	5		X
The nonprofit sector is facing revenue loss amid increased demand for services.	4	X	
Increased domestic violence rates.	1	X	
Long-term mental health impacts.	1	X	
CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disproportionate impacts to low-wage earners and vulnerable populations is an issue that affects the ability for the economy to thrive and has implications for education needs. • Childcare access and affordability is also an economic development issue. Parents (and evidence is pointing to the disproportionate impact on women) are not able to get back to work without childcare. It also affects education because some older children are responsible for caring for younger siblings instead of participating in remote learning. • Revenue loss in the nonprofit sector affects government operations: many essential services are provided by the nonprofit sector. The sector accounts for 14% of the labor force in Virginia, and so this issue has significant impact on economic development. 			

Infrastructure	# of times mentioned	COVID Specific	Systemic / exacerbated
Broadband expansion and affordability.	12		X
Long-term public transportation impacts, and the impact on people who depend on transit.	2	X	
Utility bill moratoriums & impacts to finances and maintenance.	1	X	
CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadband availability and affordability affect economic development because of the need to work remotely and participate in the cyber economy. It also impacts the ability for children to participate in remote education. • Impacts to public transportation affect economic development, education, equity and government operations. • Utility bill moratoriums impact government operations and the overall budget analysis/strategy for local governments. While the moratorium on customer bills is COVID specific, it is exacerbating a long-standing issue with aging infrastructure and lack of funding for maintenance. 			

Vaccine	# of times mentioned	COVID Specific	Systemic / exacerbated
Capacity to administer a vaccine once it is developed (likely through the Health Districts?).	1	X	
Challenges with communicating effectiveness and safety of the vaccine.	1	X	
Need guidance on the potential timeline(s) for vaccine deployment and COVID response activities.	3	X	
CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vaccine deployment affects all aspects of COVID recovery. Understanding and communicating the timeline of vaccine deployment and effectiveness is critical for government operations as local governments will have an important role. This ultimately affects economic development, education, and all COVID recovery issues. 			

Education	# of times mentioned	COVID Specific	Systemic / exacerbated
College closures due to surge in COVID cases.	2	X	
School reopening, safety, equipment and remote learning.	5	X	
Schools that have reopened are not able to bus at capacity – causing traffic issues.	1	X	
CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College closures also have an impact on the economy and revenue for local governments. School reopening, along with child care, affect economic development and the ability to return to work. Remote learning is cross-cutting with broadband access and affordability. 			

Local/Regional Govt. Operations & Communications	# of times mentioned	COVID Specific	Systemic / exacerbated
Sales tax and other local government revenue loss.	2	X	
CRF funds are hard for local governments to access and use by the deadline.	2	X	
What will local governments do when CARES act funding ends in December? Deadline extension would be helpful.	2	X	
PDC staff, and most local governments, do not currently have the capacity to focus on the long-term trends and opportunities.	1	X	
Need more real-time data to identify trends and make data-based decisions.	1		X
Challenge to understand and quantify the economic and other impacts.		X	

Local/Regional Govt. Operations & Communications (CONTINUED)	# of times mentioned	COVID Specific	Systemic / exacerbated
Challenges with hurricane preparation in the COVID environment. What to do when it is not safe for people to stay home. Preparedness for hospitals and other essential services.	3	X	
How to overcome the mentality that normalcy will return quickly when a vaccine is available.	1	X	
Challenges with providing good information and continuity of messaging.	2	X	
Rural local governments are stretched very thin, lack capacity.	1		X
Volunteer fire departments and other emergency services are struggling to maintain volunteer base with COVID threat.	2	X	
Many volunteers are elderly and unable to participate in this environment.	1	X	
CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The challenges for the elderly to volunteer, due to health risks, is cross-cutting with Equity & Health. There is a risk of social isolation and mental health impacts. • Many of the issues in this section are cross-cutting with economic development, such as revenue loss, staff capacity to focus on long-term trends and quantify impacts and access to data. • Hurricane preparedness in the COVID environment crosscuts with Health & Equity, as does staffing for volunteer emergency services. 			

Upcoming Recovery Planning & Coordination

The following table (page 6) shows planning and staff resources, funded through an EDA noncompetitive grant, with no match, for the Economic Development Districts. The 10 Planning District Commissions that are not EDDs are conducting many COVID recovery activities, but, in general, do not have the resources to conduct a regional planning process or hire staff. One exception is the Hampton Roads PDC who, in partnership with the Hampton Roads Alliance, is developing a COVID recovery framework. More information can be found at 757recovery.com. The Thomas Jefferson PDC and Rappahannock-Rapidan RC applied jointly for EDA competitive funding to for a super-regional CEDS with a pandemic resilience and recovery component. Other PDCs are also considering EDA disaster supplemental funding or have already submitted applications.

	Will develop a recovery plan/strategy	Hiring(ed) New Recovery Coordination Staff	Primary issues or focus
Accomack-Northampton PDC	Yes, with contracted support	No	Economic Development & Resilience; Support business community
Central Shenandoah PDC	Yes, with contracted support	No	
Crater PDC	Yes	No	Workforce Readiness & Economic Transitions/ New Economy; Tourism; Industry supply chain
Cumberland Plateau PDC	Yes, as part of a CEDS update	Yes	Economic Diversification & Small Business Recovery
Hampton Roads PDC	Yes	No	Economic Recovery; Business Resilience
Mount Rogers PDC	Yes, contracting with partner agencies for technical assistance	Yes	Workforce trends and strategies for local governments; Data analysis
New River Valley RC	Yes	Yes	Industry & Workforce Development; Public-Private Partnerships
Northern Neck PDC	Yes, as part of a CEDS update	No	Broadband Expansion; Workforce training/development
Southside PDC	Yes, as an addition to the CEDS	Yes	Small Business Recovery; Broadband; Food Security
West Piedmont PDC	Yes, with contracted support	Yes Focus: Grant writing & coordination	Economic Resilience; Workforce Development

Current Collaborative/Networking Efforts, Upcoming Activities, and Reports

Planning District Commissions have served an important convening role during COVID response and as the transition toward recovery begins. Many statewide convening and coordination efforts are also in process and overlap with some of the most often identified issues. At the same time, meeting fatigue was a frequently mentioned challenge. Long-term recovery efforts will need to balance the need for collaboration and coordination with meeting fatigue.

The following list is most likely not comprehensive. It identifies current efforts, that the task force is aware of, that could be built upon to most efficiently collaborate on COVID recovery projects and programs.

- Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) holds weekly zoom sessions with members and are making connections to State Agencies and funding sources.
- Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions (VAPDC) holds meeting with District Directors
- The US Economic Development Administration EDA has facilitated connections between EDDs and has begun a national coordination call for Economic Recovery Coordinators.
- The Virginia Economic Crisis Strike Force has been activated and has established working groups that could serve as a convening body for a COVID Recovery Strategy.
- The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation is coordinating response to childcare issues.
- The Commonwealth Connect is convening more than 100 broadband stakeholders and supporting local governments in broadband expansion.
- The Virginia Dept. of Housing and Community Development has a program for rent and mortgage relief and plans to fund long-term.
- VDEM and the Health Equity Working Group created a Health Equity Pilot Program, which is a state-local partnership helping increase access to PPE and public health information to underserved and historically disadvantaged communities impacted by COVID-19.
- Coastal Resilience Master Planning Framework has been finalized. The next step is a Coastal Resilience Master Plan. The Commonwealth is creating a technical assistance committee composed of state agency representatives, scientists and engineers, and regional leaders.
- The Virginia Council on Environmental Justice released its [2020 annual report](#). The report outlines a recommendation to develop communication between communities of color and state officials.

The following table identifies collaborative efforts that were mentioned during conversations with PDCs. This list, also, should not be considered comprehensive.

Accomack-Northampton PDC	PDC facilitating conversations with towns to determine needs, gaps, and priorities.
Central Virginia PDC	Finalizing regional Hazard Mitigation Plan – stakeholders will continue to meet and collaborate.
Commonwealth RC	Workgroup to identify a strategy to build transitional housing PDC facilitate monthly meetings with local governments
Hampton Roads PDC	The PDC Executive Director facilitated three meetings per week of the Chief Administrative Officers Committee since the beginning of March to coordinate COVID-19 response efforts. Coordination included continuity of operations for local governments, coordinated communication strategies, sharing of best practices, codes/local policies/guidelines related to business operations, coordinated reopenings, and responses to Governor Executive Orders related to the pandemic. Recent efforts have included the release of a Regional COVID-19 messaging campaign.
Middle Peninsula PDC	Chief Administrative Officers (CAO) Committee meets monthly – increased with COVID and coordinated reopening and sharing of resources, including staff.
New River Valley RC	Public Health Task Force

Northern Neck PDC	PDC facilitating communications with local governments and Health District
PlanRVA	Potential business sentiment survey; Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan, potential for including social vulnerability;
Rappahannock-Rapidan RC	Health District and VDEM R 2 monthly check-ins with Counties – beginning to morph into recovery;
Roanoke Valley-Alleghany RC	Regional Economic Coalition; Coalition of Health Care Providers (formed pre-COVID) pivoted to focus on COVID needs.
Southside PDC	DHCD-CDBG Small Business Recovery Assistance Funding Program (SBRAF) weekly Project Management Team meetings; Quarterly COVID newsletter
Thomas Jefferson PDC	Beginning Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan update

Response, Recovery & Resilience Projects and Innovations

One of the most important findings from partner conversations was that innovations are happening, amid extraordinary challenges, at all levels including local and regional governments, businesses and nonprofit organizations. This section provides a very high-level account of some of those innovations. These items could be used to develop best practices and case studies. More detailed notes can be referenced for each PDC. Please contact Wynne Kwan, FEMA Region 3 Community Planning and Capacity Building (CPCB) Coordinator, at Wynne.Kwan@fema.dhs.gov for more information.

- Creative use of hot spots and boosters for internet access. This is often targeted for remote learning and is considered an interim measure to broadband deployment.
- Community Foundation and other philanthropic partners are expanding their normal services and fundraising to handle new focus areas and distribute funding to address critical needs. Creative partnerships are emerging.
- Small business innovation – i.e. adapting to virtual environment, expanding delivery services, identifying new niches.
- Government partnerships and programs to support business recovery (local and regional level). Most programs are using CARES act funding to provide funding for COVID related expenses. Some are developing programs to connect businesses that need a service with one that can deliver and subsidizing costs.
- Food security and resilience projects, for example; purchasing food from farmers that have lost primary markets and distributing to families in need; developing a mobile marketplace to connect sea food producers with consumers.
- Public/Private partnerships to expand broadband. Many PDC are working with private sector providers to apply for funding to expand capacity. Others are asking private sector partners to partner and invest in expansion projects that have mutual benefits.
- Business impact survey.
- Internet needs survey.
- COVID information hotline for individuals.

- Regional marketing campaign to combat COVID fatigue.
- Regional communications campaign to address mental health and anxiety.

Technical Assistance, Capacity Building, and Other Support Needs

Needs and opportunities for planning support were noted more often from Planning District Commissions that are not an Economic Development District. This could be in part due to the EDA funding that is helping EDDs with capacity for planning in this key moment. The opportunities identified below could be worked into a statewide COVID recovery planning effort and/or could be supported in a steady-state environment by state and federal partners.

- Expanding Hazard Mitigation Plans to better include resilience.
- Disaster preparedness in the COVID environment, with a focus on sheltering and evacuations.
- Local government staffing analysis – identify gaps and opportunities.
- Plan integration – coordination of sector specific plans and stakeholders.
- Guidance for local governments in supporting business/economic recovery.
- Share information about best practices, see what has worked and not worked in other, similar places.
- Tribes may need support with understanding the designation process and building capacity.

It was commonly identified that regional governments are key partners in recovery and resilience planning and would be interested in engaging. However, many do not have flexible funding in their budgets to cover these types of activities. The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) program for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan was identified as a good model to provide funding for this type of work.

There are several organizations that provide technical assistance to local and regional governments with a focus on resilience. Two organizations that the task force spoke with that are interested in supporting resilience and recovery activities are Resilient Virginia and Virginia Tech. Resilient Virginia has a mission to accelerate resiliency planning in communities across Virginia. Virginia Tech has expertise from diverse department to support local governments.

State Programs & Resource Allocations

The list below is grouped into the same topic area categories as the issues/impacts section. It is meant to identify programs and resources that relate to the COVID recovery issues raised by Planning District Commissions. This list is not holistic. It includes only what FEMA Region 3 IRC taskforce is aware of, and is primarily from News Releases on the Commonwealth of Virginia website.

An overview of a revised state budget, including CARES act funding is included at the end.

Workforce and Economic Development

- Governor Ralph Northam today announced **Industrial Revitalization Fund (IRF)** awards for the towns of Vinton, Warsaw, and Wytheville, totaling more than \$1.4 million. The IRF provides gap financing to leverage local and private resources to achieve market-driven redevelopment of deteriorated structures, creating a catalyst for long-term employment opportunities and ongoing physical and economic revitalization. ([Press Release](#) 11/20/2020)
- Governor Ralph Northam announced \$10 million in new funding to support **future oyster restoration in the Chesapeake Bay**. This spending commitment marks the first time that capital funds, which are typically reserved for infrastructure projects, have been explicitly used to restore Virginia's natural resources. ([Press Release](#) 11/19/2020)
- Governor Ralph Northam today announced that Virginia will receive six grants totaling more than \$3.9 million from the Appalachian Regional Commission's (ARC) **Partnership for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) Initiative**. The funding will support recovery health programs, broadband infrastructure expansion, workforce development, natural gas line improvements, and rural tourism and job growth efforts. ([Press Release](#) 11/2/2020)
- Governor Ralph Northam today announced two allocations of Growth and Opportunity for Virginia (GO Virginia) grants, totaling more than \$9 million. The first allocation of more than \$7.8 million will support 11 regional projects and two statewide projects. The funding will help **advance innovative workforce development initiatives** designed to expand employment in the technology and maritime sectors and grow Virginia's portfolio of business-ready sites. The grant awards will leverage an additional \$15 million in non-state resources to support ongoing **recovery and economic diversification efforts** throughout Virginia. ([Press Release](#) 11/2/2020)
- Governor Ralph Northam today announced that Virginia is allocating \$30 million dollars to help Virginians whose employment has been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis **pursue workforce training in a high-demand field**. The new Re-Employing Virginians (REV) initiative will provide scholarships to eligible individuals to enroll in a workforce or community college program in five essential industries, including health care, information technology, skilled trades, public safety, and early childhood education. ([Press Release](#) 10/30)
- Governor Ralph Northam announced that Rebuild VA, **a grant program to help small businesses and nonprofit organizations affected by the COVID-19 pandemic**, will expand eligibility criteria and increase the amount of grant money businesses receive. Rebuild VA launched in August with \$70 million from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Governor Northam is directing an additional \$30 million to support the expansion of the program. ([Press Release](#) 10/28/2020 and [9/21/2020](#))
- Governor Ralph Northam today announced the formation of Virginia's first **offshore and onshore wind workforce training collaborative**, the Mid-Atlantic Wind Training Alliance. The program will offer industry required certifications that are critical to the operations and long-term maintenance of wind projects. ([Press Release](#) 10/14/2020)
- The governors of Maryland, North Carolina, and Virginia today announced a three-state collaboration to **advance offshore wind projects** in the region and promote the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic United States as a hub for offshore wind energy and industry. ([Press Release](#) 10/29/2020)

- Governor Ralph Northam today announced that Virginia will invest \$1.7 million over the next two years to **expand the innovative Network2Work program, a unique workforce development initiative** established by Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC) that connects job seekers with local job networks and support services. The Commonwealth will work in partnership with the Virginia Community College System to scale up the Network2Work model in the Shenandoah Valley, Hampton Roads, and Greater Richmond regions. ([Press Release 10/6/2020](#))
- Governor Ralph Northam today announced that the Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) awarded Virginia a \$775,000 grant to support **the siting of wind energy projects** across the Commonwealth. ([Press Release 9/30/2020](#))
- Governor Ralph Northam, First Lady Pamela Northam, and Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Director and CEO Alex Nyerges today announced 40 Virginia artists who will receive \$5,000 grants through a special program to **help visual artists impacted by COVID-19**. The Virginia Artist Relief Fellowship Program, which [launched in June](#), will distribute a total of \$200,000 in funding. ([Press Release 8/25/2020](#))
- Governor Ralph Northam announced four new towns to the **Virginia Main Street Program**. The newly designated communities completed a competitive application process and will receive intensive services to help strengthen their downtowns, administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development. These include market analysis, marketplace development, capacity building, design assistance, organization development, economic strategies, and façade renderings for redevelopment projects. ([Press Release 9/16/2020](#))

Equity & Health

- Gov. Ralph Northam announced Wednesday that he has signed a revised biennial budget for the Commonwealth that includes an **eviction moratorium and allows for support to utility customers and providers**. ([WFXN 11/19/2020](#))
- Governor Ralph Northam today announced that Virginia will allocate \$7 million to **Virginia food banks** to help Virginians who rely on food assistance. ([Press Release 11/9/2020](#))
- Governor announced \$3 Million to reimburse members of the Virginia Association of **Free and Charitable Clinics (VAFCC) for clinics' COVID-19 expenses**, including personal protective equipment, sanitation measures, telehealth, and hiring new staff. ([Press Release 10/23/2020](#))
- Governor announced \$65.8 Million to **increase access to child care and support child care providers** amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This funding will continue the [incentive grant program for child care providers announced in April](#) through the end of 2020. This program provides flexible cash assistance to child care providers to help offset operating costs and expenses associated with meeting health and safety guidelines. The Virginia Department of Social Services, in partnership with the Virginia Department of Education, has distributed more than \$46 million in direct assistance to child care programs to date. ([Press release 10/21/2020](#))
- [House Bill 5115](#) (Delegate Price) **expands eviction protections** for Virginians who experienced a loss of wages due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Governor Northam added an emergency clause to make this legislation effective immediately upon passage.
- Governor Ralph Northam today released the inaugural [Virginia Roadmap to End Hunger](#), which establishes a **unified set of goals and strategies to prioritize food security** during the current public

health emergency and beyond. The Roadmap was produced by Governor Northam's [Children's Cabinet](#). The **Virginia Roadmap to End Hunger** lays out opportunities to reduce food insecurity in the Commonwealth, and critical next steps to develop policies, programs, and partnerships to benefit Virginia's children and communities. ([Press release](#) 10/20/2020)

- Governor Ralph Northam today announced he is directing \$12 million in additional funding to Virginia's Rent and Mortgage Relief Program (RMRP), which first [launched at the end of June](#), due to high demand for financial assistance. The program **assists households and landlords with rent and mortgage payments to avoid eviction or foreclosure** due to COVID-19. ([Press Release](#) 10/7/2020 and [9/24/2020](#))
- Governor Ralph Northam today announced that Virginia has been approved to proceed with a **state-based health insurance exchange**. Approval from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services allows Virginia to take over some functions of its current federal exchange beginning with open enrollment this November, and puts the Commonwealth on a path to full control by 2023. ([Press Release](#) 8/21/2020)

Infrastructure

- Governor Ralph Northam today announced a new allocation of \$60 million in funding to support **municipal utility relief** efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Combined with the Governor's proposed budget amendment to provide \$60 million for jurisdictional utilities, the Commonwealth is directing a total of \$120 million for residential and non-residential utility customers impacted by the ongoing public health crisis. ([Press Release](#) 11/9/2020)
- Commonwealth Connect is the Commonwealth of Virginia's **comprehensive effort to achieve universal broadband access**, a goal set by Governor Ralph Northam in July 2018. The full plan can be found [here](#). Commonwealth Connect provides information on funding, a broadband toolkit, and opportunities for collaboration.
- Governor Ralph Northam today announced that Virginia is allocating \$30 million in funding from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Recovery, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to **improve broadband access** in underserved localities. ([Press Release](#) 10/7/2020)

Education

- Governor Ralph Northam today announced a new allocation of \$22 million to **support Virginia's private institutions of higher education**. This funding is proportionate to recently announced [CARES Act funding for public institutions](#), and will be used to support COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts at Virginia's private non-profit colleges and universities. ([Press Release](#) 11/2/2020)
- Governor Ralph Northam today announced that the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) has been awarded more than \$3.5 million in competitive federal funding to **help vulnerable youth in Virginia**. The STOP School Violence grant will fund a 36-month Virginia C.A.R.E.S. project to build Caring, Awareness, Recognition, Engagement, and Support in schools. The initiative works to increase mental health awareness and enhance the safety and well-being of educational settings by helping to create positive school climates, awareness of resources, recognition of at-risk behaviors, and engagement with the community. ([Press Release](#) 11/2/2020)

- Governor Ralph Northam today announced a new allocation of more than \$220 million to help K-12 public schools in Virginia. The funding will **support COVID-19 preparedness and response measures for the 2020–2021 school year**, including testing supplies, personal protective equipment, sanitization, and technology for distance learning. Funding will be distributed to all 132 public school districts using an allocation formula of \$175 per pupil based on fall enrollment, with a minimum of \$100,000 for each school division. ([Press Release](#) 10/8/2020)
- Governor Ralph Northam today announced a higher education refinancing plan that **will save Virginia’s public colleges and universities more than \$300 million** over the next two years. The Commonwealth of Virginia will take advantage of low interest rates by refinancing bonds issued by the Treasury Board of Virginia (TBV) and the Virginia College Building Authority (VCBA), which institutions of higher education use for capital projects. ([Press Release](#) 9/22/2020)
- The Virginia Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education Commission today presented Governor Ralph Northam its recommendations for creating a statewide vision and a dynamic set of shared goals to inform how the Commonwealth **prepares students for STEM jobs of the future**. The Commission’s [final report](#) outlines a path forward for ensuring equitable opportunities and access to STEM education and aligning Virginia’s efforts to the rapidly evolving needs of employers. ([Press Release](#) 9/14/2020)

Vaccine

- Governor announced \$22 Million in CARES Act funding for statewide program to **distribute COVID-19 vaccines** including purchases of equipment, support for local health districts, staff to manage the program, warehousing medical supplies, and communicating with the public – through 2020. VDH developed a plan for vaccine distribution with an estimated cost of \$120 million and will be seeking funding for the remainder in 2021. ([Press Release](#) 10/23/2020)

Local/Regional Govt. Operations & Communications

- Governor Ralph Northam today announced that the **Virginia Open Data Portal now includes more than a dozen new COVID-19 datasets** from the Virginia Department of Health. The launch of the new Virginia Open Data Portal, which is a collaboration between the Office of the Chief Data Officer and the Library of Virginia, was accelerated amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to provide greater access to the data informing public health officials and allow Virginians to interact with it. ([Press Release](#) 10/1/2020)
- Governor Ralph Northam today announced that more than \$6 million was approved by the Executive Committee of the Criminal Justice Services Board of the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). The Committee awarded 171 grants to localities, nonprofit organizations, and state agencies throughout Virginia. ([Press Release](#) 8/31/2020)

State Budget and CARES Act funding

Governor Ralph Northam signed House Bill 5005, Virginia’s revised biennial budget. The Governor called the General Assembly into [special session](#) on August 18 and has worked with legislative leaders to enact a spending plan that protects key priorities, preserves the Commonwealth’s financial options, and addresses

critical challenges that Virginians are facing amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. ([Press Release 11/18/2020](#))

The signed budget finalizes previously announced funding allocations that Virginia received under the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, including:

- **[Vaccination Program](#)**: \$22 million for the Virginia Department of Health’s vaccination preparation and planning through the end of 2020
- **[K-12 Schools](#)**: \$220 million for COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts in K-12 public schools, with all 132 school districts receiving at least \$100,000
- **[Higher Education](#)**: \$116 million to support ongoing COVID-19 response at public colleges, universities, and medical schools and \$22 million for the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to provide payments to [private institutions](#) of higher education
- **[Child Care](#)**: \$65.8 million to increase access to child care and continue child care incentive grant program established in April
- **[Small Business Assistance](#)**: \$70 million to establish the Rebuild VA economic recovery fund providing grants to small businesses and nonprofit organizations impacted by the pandemic and \$30 million in [additional funds](#) to continue the program
- **[Broadband Accessibility](#)**: \$30 million to fast-track broadband projects in underserved localities
- **[Home Health Workers](#)**: \$73 million to provide hazard pay to home health personal attendants who served high-risk populations during the early months of the pandemic
- **[Workforce Training for Unemployed Virginians](#)**: \$30 million to established the Re-Employing Virginians initiative providing scholarships to individuals who enroll in programs in high-demand fields
- **[Rent and Mortgage Relief](#)**: \$12 million to expand the Virginia Rent and Mortgage Relief Program launched in June
- **[Food Banks](#)**: \$7 million to help Virginia food banks meet increased demand for food assistance
- **[Medicaid Day Support Providers](#)**: \$25 million to fund monthly retainer payments for day support programs that provide services for Virginians with developmental disabilities.
- **[Free Clinics](#)**: \$3 million to reimburse members of the Virginia Association of Free and Charitable Clinics for COVID-19 expenses

Conclusion

This document provides a snapshot in time of the issues and opportunities identified by PDCs. As a transition toward long-term recovery progresses, this information may be useful to identify some of the issues for consideration and opportunities for collaboration. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Wynne Kwan, FEMA Region 3 Community Planning and Capacity Building (CPCB) Coordinator, at Wynne.Kwan@fema.dhs.gov