



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2020.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Wise County

Program Title: Project Intersection-Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Facilities Authority

Program Category: Community and Economic Development/Regional Collaboration

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

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Title: Wise County Administrator

Signature: 

The Lonesome Pine
Regional Industrial Facilities Authority
Virginia Association of Counties
2020 Achievement Award Application



Project Intersection

Submitted by Wise County
July, 2020

The Challenge

The far Southwest region of the Commonwealth has experienced numerous and severe economic challenges due to the decline of what were once two main components of the region's economy, coal mining and the tobacco growing industry. The loss of jobs from these industries has resulted in a significant and ongoing economic and social impact on the region. Historically each locality, and their associated economic development offices, has pursued a variety of resources and initiatives to diversify the economy of their own specific county, city, or town. Quite often this created an environment in which they were in competition with each other. In fact, in the past, the far Southwest portion of the state, located within the 9th congressional district, was called the "Fighting Ninth" as localities competed with each other and with other regions of the state and nation to create new economic activity and job growth. Only recently have four of these counties and a city begun to pool their resources and work collaboratively to bring about positive change for the good of the whole. In 2019, the Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Facilities Authority (LPRIFA) was formed to accomplish just that. Based on legislation enacted by the Virginia General Assembly allowing and incentivizing localities to pool their collective resources, and then share revenue from their collaborative efforts, these localities are making a sustainable difference and turning trends in a positive direction. A variety of projects have been targeted by the LPRIFA to create jobs, diversify the Southwest Virginia Economy, retain local talent, and take advantage of the rural and scenic nature that sets this region of Virginia aside.

The LPRIFA membership consists of representatives from the Counties of Dickenson, Lee, Scott, and Wise, and the City of Norton.

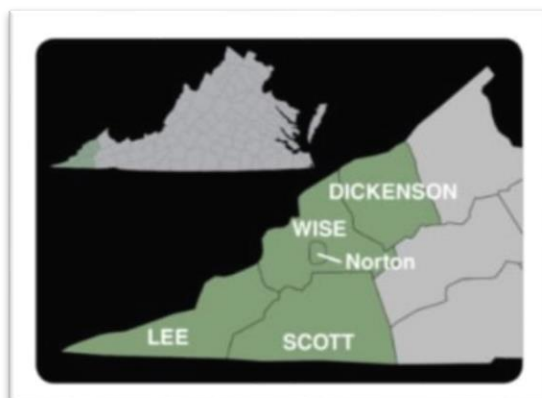


Figure 1 The LPRIFA Region of Southwest Virginia

Collaboration and Resolution

Not a new concept. A Historical Perspective.



Figure 2. Daniel Boone traveling through the Cumberland Gap

Within each of the LPRIFA membership localities, administrators and respective economic development directors serve on the authority board as part of this collaborative effort. RIFAs exist across the Commonwealth, though, not in extreme Southwest Virginia where the pooling of limited resources makes these smaller localities stronger together and more competitive. Although new to 21st Century Southwest Virginia, this concept of working together to reach new horizons and goals, as well as meet challenges head-on, is certainly not a foreign concept to the region. An analogy can easily be fashioned that relates to a period of time early in America's history that signified the region's importance to the Westward expansion of our country. Within the LPRIFA region, and located in far western Lee County, is the Cumberland Gap, a key geographical feature that contributed to many visionaries and pioneers traveling through the region in the late 1700's along Daniel Boone's Wilderness Road to forge and expand our nation. These individuals and families possessed intestinal fortitude, strength,

determination, grit, and reliance on each other to survive the journey and be victorious over obstacles they faced. These same qualities exist today in the LPRIFA region's citizenry and directly contribute to the RIFA concept being a positive and viable solution to the challenges by providing a pathway to working together in the face of difficult obstacles.

Project Intersection

During formation of the LPRIFA over the past two years, five localities have worked to create and identify projects in which they could work through a collaborative approach to specifically provide jobs to the region, diversify the economy, accentuate the beauty and quality of life aspects, improve infrastructure, retain young talent and workforce, and move the region in a forward direction. One such project is entitled Project Intersection.

A Repurposed Land

Project Intersection involves the development and repurposing of a former 188-acre surface coal mine site located at the highly visible intersections of U.S. 23 and U.S. Alt 58 in Norton, Virginia. Through site acquisition, removal of a highwall mining feature, and infrastructure development, a previously unusable property will transition into a desirable business and industrial park campus. This campus will provide four "site-ready" pad locations that will contribute to the creation of new jobs and provision of sustainable and diversified economic opportunities for the entire LPRIFA region. The Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy (DMME) Abandoned Mined Land Pilot Program, in addition to other funding sources such as the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, Appalachian Regional Commission, Norton Industrial Authority, and the LENOWISCO Planning District Commission (PDC) are providing financial resources as partners in this initiative. To date, \$10,867,400 in funding has been secured for Project Intersection. Construction is underway for this site as it transforms into its new

purpose and role. The LPRIFA is also working with two institutes of higher learning located within the LPRIFA region to accomplish its goals of talent development and creating new economic initiatives. The University of Virginia's College at Wise and Mountain Empire Community College are both relevant partners in LPRIFA's initiatives. In addition, the five localities of the LPRIFA are also working with GO Virginia Region One, Invest SWVA, and Virginia Tech.

The irony is certainly not lost on the fact that a piece of property that once provided jobs as a result of the value of its previous resource, is now being transformed into a site that will produce a new type of valuable resource, new and relevant jobs vital to the citizens of the region.

The Site



Figure 3 Project Intersection Site Norton Virginia

The Project Intersection site has been identified by two independent studies-the LENOWISCO PDC Site Selection Study (2011) and the Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority Regional Site Selection Study (2016). Both studies concluded that the Project Intersection site is one of the best sites for development of regional economic development in the entire Coalfield Region. The Project Intersection site is immediately adjacent to the heaviest traveled, highest cumulative non-interstate

traffic volume in far southwestern Virginia, with Virginia Department of Transportation traffic data indicating more than 23,000 vehicles traversing the junction of U.S. Routes 23 and 58A on a daily basis. No comparable combination of available land and transportation infrastructure exists in the region.

Stronger Together

Project Intersection is a model for utilization of the collaborative efforts and collective strengths of numerous federal and state agencies, as well as localities for the improvement of the region. Working together on this project is not without challenges, but “together” is the key ingredient within this recipe.

The Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Facilities Authority (LPRIFA) is working with the Norton Industrial Development Authority (Norton IDA) and the LENOWISCO (PD1) Planning District Commission on management of this project. The LPRIFA continues to work with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) on updating the Project Intersection site as part of the Site Selection Characterization and Community Competitiveness initiative for inclusion in the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program.

Using this business and industry recognized certification and vetting for the Project Intersection Business and Industry Park campus represents a unified approach and additional opportunity to market the region.

As of this writing, the site has been shown to numerous prospects and negotiations with prospects are taking place for locating within the campus of Project Intersection. Potential prospects satisfy targeted industries of the 2019 GO Virginia Region One Growth and Diversification Plan that lists key industry targets for the region as: agriculture and food/beverage manufacturing, information and emerging technologies, advanced manufacturing, and energy and minerals.

Summary

This project certainly captures the essence of the VACo Achievement Awards in that it is innovative, can be replicated in other localities, and promotes partnerships and collaboration of local, state, and federal governments as well as private citizens to make their region a better place to work, live, and play. The numerous localities of the Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Facilities Authority are accomplishing just that through their efforts with Project Intersection. The project involves numerous agencies, institutions, and individuals from across the region. It is a model for localities with a vast array of different strengths and diverse people working together for the good of the whole instead of working against and competing with each other. As stated earlier in regards to the tenacity of the early settlers headed west through the Cumberland Gap, it takes us all working in unison to propagate and cultivate success, success that *will* take place and provide tangible results for the improvement of the region and its citizens.

Executive Summary

The far Southwest region of the Commonwealth has experienced numerous and severe economic challenges due to the decline of what were once two main components of the region's economy, coal mining and the tobacco growing industry. The loss of jobs from these industries has resulted in a significant and ongoing economic and social impact on the region. Historically each locality, and their associated economic development offices, has pursued a variety of resources to diversify the economy of their own specific county, city, or town. Quite often this wound up being in competition with each other. Only recently have these counties and a city begun to pool their resources and work collaboratively to bring about positive change for the good of the whole. In 2019, the Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Facilities Authority (LPRIFA) was formed to accomplish just that. Based on legislation enacted by the Virginia General Assembly allowing and incentivizing localities to pool their collective resources, and then share revenue from their collaborative efforts, these localities are making a sustainable difference and turning trends in a positive direction. The LPRIFA membership consists of representatives from the counties of Dickenson, Lee, Scott, and Wise and the City of Norton. A variety of projects have been targeted by the LPRIFA to create jobs, diversify the Southwest Virginia Economy, retain local talent, and take advantage of the rural and scenic nature that sets this region of Virginia apart.

Through an initial project entitled "Project Intersection", the region has rallied together under the LPRIFA organization to work towards a common goal of creating jobs and diversifying its economy. Together with numerous funding and supporting partners, a former coal surface mine site is being transformed into a second purpose, one that will provide an environment for the creation of jobs and diversification of the region's economy. The strength of 5 localities working together to mutually benefit each other is a model for collaboration that did not exist in this format for the region.

Brief Overview of the Program Paragraphs for Use

Within the recent past, traditional coal and tobacco industry related jobs have disappeared from the economic landscape of far Southwest Virginia. Efforts to diversify the economy and create new jobs for the region are a top priority. The model for accomplishing this comes from within the strength of 5 localities that are working together across physical boundaries and under the umbrella of the Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Authority (LPRIFA). Historically these localities have competed not only against other areas of the state, but often against each other for those coveted new jobs for its citizens. Capitalizing on the strength and resources found by working together through the RIFA model, each locality can choose to contribute to the “good of the whole” and realizing the benefits through a revenue sharing program.

Project Intersection, located at the crossroads of U.S. 23 and Alt U.S. 58 in Norton, Virginia, is the inaugural project of the LPRIFA that is designed to accomplish these goals of job creation and diversification. Collaborating with numerous partners, the LPRIFA has obtained more than \$10.8 million to date in order to repurpose a former coal surface mine site that provided natural resources and provided jobs, into a second life of producing jobs through the creation of a new business and industry campus. The diversification of these jobs will provide opportunities in new areas of business focusing on information and emerging technologies, advanced manufacturing, and energy.