



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2022.** Please include this submission form with the 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: Prince William County

Program Title: Northern Virginia Bioscience Center

Program Category: Community & Economic Development

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Elijah T. Johnson

Title: Acting County Executive

Signature: 

Executive Summary

With more than 100 companies, more than 1,600 employees and a 31 percent growth rate since 2014, the life science and biotechnology community in Prince William County has increased exponentially over the last decade—as has the need for affordable wet lab space.

The new 30,000 square foot Northern Virginia (NOVA) Bioscience Center provides a unique opportunity for the mid-size companies who need accessible wet lab space. It also helps smaller life science companies enter and stay in the Northern Virginia economy. Specifically, it provides an expansion space for life science companies graduating from the successful Prince William Science Accelerator across the street.

The center sprang from a public-private partnership, which began in 2019, between Holladay Properties and Prince William County Department of Economic Development (PWCDDED). In addition, the partners worked in concert with anchor university George Mason University's Science & Technology Campus for input and connection with the overall biotech ecosystem throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

After a successful land sale in May 2020, the partnership was tested by the COVID-19 pandemic, when financing on pre-leased space became a risky investment. Prince William County signed a master lease for 8,000 square feet of the facility to help meet the bank's lending criteria for pre-leased space. This master lease burns off as life science companies lease space.

Although not without risk, PWCDDED learned that the innovative master lease was crucial to securing not only financing, but also a committed public-private partnership. The financial pledge solidified expectations and assurances from all sides and made it easier to move forward with the same goals.

The partnership's goal has always been to foster the life science industry and bring more high-growth job opportunities to the region. In the works for several years, the delivery of the NOVA Bioscience Center took clear vision and constant collaboration to bring to fruition.

Northern Virginia (NOVA) Bioscience Center

Background

Since 1994, George Mason University (Mason) Science and Technology Campus has anchored the 1500-acre Innovation Park in Manassas, Virginia, which is Northern Virginia's only university-centered research corporate park. With nearly 350 acres of land fully serviced with utilities and ready for development, Innovation Park is strategically located for convenient research communication with easy access to Washington, D.C., and the Maryland I-270 Biotech Corridor.

As a driver of the life science community in Innovation Park, Mason has a positive and collaborative culture where year-round programming provides ongoing opportunities to connect, collaborate, and network. With regular get-togethers, the Innovation Park life science community takes advantage of nearby recreational activities including breweries, event venues, restaurants, and scenic walking trails.

The Mason campus houses multiple facilities and institutions that foster the life sciences in Prince William County, including NIH/Mason Biomedical Research Labs (BSL-2 & BSL-3); Center for Applied Proteomics and Molecular Medicine; and the Institute for Biomedical Innovation with CAP/CLIA Compliant Clinical Proteomics Laboratory.

“With the FDA, NIH, DOD and other federal agencies in our backyard, Prince William County is a great the place to be. There are jobs, there is space and a critical mass of people that want to work together.”

— Amy Adams, Executive Director, GMU's Institute for Biohealth Innovation

Mason also provides easy access to highly skilled talent, including graduate students and interns. With more than 1600 biotech employees in the park, the community is attractive for professional development opportunities, including specialized on-the-job programs in life sciences, medical education, and applied information technology.

Innovation Park's corporate and governmental tenants span biosciences and development verticals, including the headquarters of ATCC, Corning Life Sciences, the FBI's Northern Virginia Resident Agency, Virginia's State Forensics Lab, and the Prince William Science Accelerator.

The Challenge of Affordable Wet Lab Space

Designed to support high-growth life science companies from the heart of Innovation Park, the Prince William Science Accelerator opened in 2014 and offers access to infrastructure, equipment, expertise, workforce, and startup support services. Geared towards early-stage companies, the 10,000 square foot facility offers eight private suites that range from 435 to 1,100 SF as well as six shared wet lab benches.

With more than 100 companies, more than 1,600 employees and a 31 percent growth rate since 2014, the life science and biotechnology community in Prince William County has increased exponentially over the last decade—as has the need for affordable wet lab space.

By 2019, five of the current accelerator tenants had grown to mid-size and were ready to expand. Of the 18 total companies that have been accepted to the accelerator, two companies have graduated into their own lab space inside Innovation Park. Yet separate laboratory space was too expensive and the cost per square foot for BSL-2 space was out of scope for many of these companies to build and maintain.

Entering a Public-Private Partnership with Holladay Properties

Starting in 2019 with just an idea, the **Northern Virginia (NOVA) Bioscience Center** has taken a clear vision and constant collaboration between Prince William County Department of Economic Development (PWCDDED) and their partner, commercial real estate developer and property management company Holladay Properties.



By providing a unique opportunity for the mid-size companies who need accessible wet lab space, the center would also help smaller life science companies enter and stay in the Northern Virginia economy. Specifically, the NOVA Bioscience Center provides an expansion space for life science companies graduating from the successful Prince William Science Accelerator across the street.

The public-private partnership officially launched in May 2020, when Holladay Properties purchased a four-acre parcel of County-owned land located in Innovation Park at 9370 Discovery Boulevard in Manassas, VA.

The partnership was tested by the COVID-19 pandemic, when financing on pre-leased space became a risky investment. Prince William County signed a master lease for 8,000 square feet of the facility to help meet the bank lending criteria for pre-leased space. This master lease burns off as life science companies lease space.

Although not without risk, PWCDDED learned that the innovative master lease was crucial to securing not only financing, but also a committed public-private partnership. The financial pledge solidified expectations and assurances from all sides and made it easier to move forward with the same goals.

After hurdling the financing obstacles to ensure the project moved forward, construction ground to a halt in the fall of 2020 due to poor soil quality. PWCDDED went back to the Board of County Supervisors to request \$155,000 in Innovation Enterprise funds to address soil remediation, which was granted.

In spring of 2021, Holliday Properties wanted to ensure the lab space would be attractively equipped for prospective tenants, yet when they submitted a grant from GO Virginia, the organization requested that Prince William County apply for the grant instead.

PWCDED did apply and was awarded a \$500,000 GO Virginia grant with matching Prince William County funds, which was passed to Holladay Properties through the Industrial Development Authority. This was a groundbreaking moment as the first time a GO Virginia site infrastructure grant was awarded to a privately owned building. This additional workload was necessary to take on to ensure outfitting the lab with state-of-the-art equipment.

In addition to applying targeted industry status, Prince William County invested a total of \$755,000 in the project, including \$250,000 in Water and Sewer Credits, \$350,000 in Economic Development Opportunity Fund, and the previously mentioned \$155,000 Innovation Enterprise soil remediation funds.



The Results

By showing persistence in our partnership, the project was delivered only a few months after the initial deadline and represents more than \$17.3 million in capital investment. This partnership showcases the importance of building spaces that can launch mid-size biotech businesses into their own spaces. The goal has always been to foster the life science industry and bring more high-growth job opportunities to the region.

By January 1, 2022 the NOVA Bioscience Center was more than half leased, with five of the lab spaces coming from tenants expanding Prince William Science Accelerator tenants, ensuring growing companies did not leave Prince William County and existing accelerator tenants have actionable opportunities to scale in place.

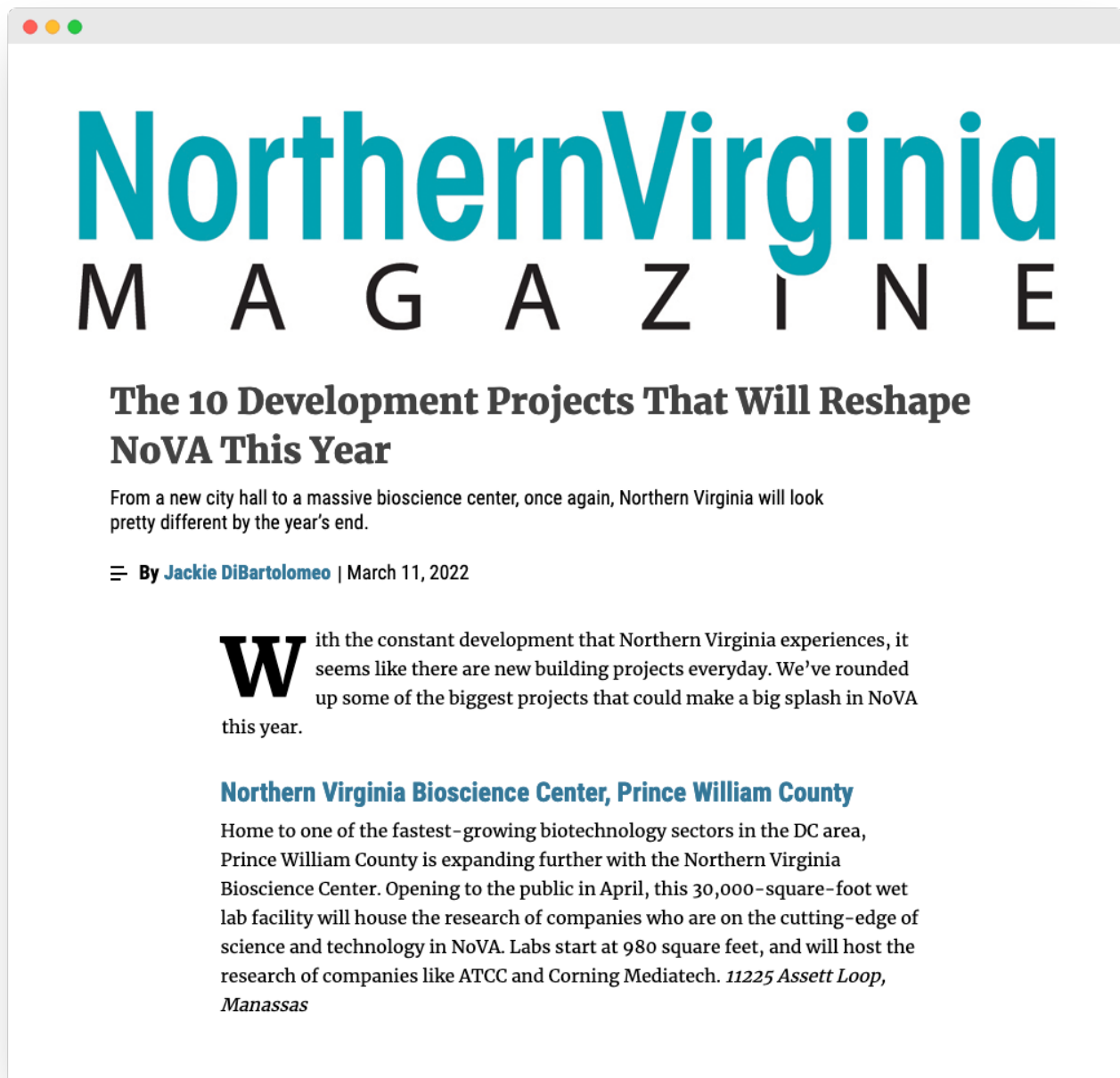
While promoting life science infrastructure and the larger biotech industry, the NOVA Bioscience Center supports collaboration and cooperation in research between universities, companies, and government facilities.

Dedicated to a high-quality experience for fostering discoveries and growth, the center offers companies BSL-2 laboratories, designed to handle research in pharmaceutical deliveries, immunotherapy, cancer-causing agents and more. The Class A facility features 15 labs, currently half leased, all furnished with cutting-edge equipment and collaborative workspace.

The suite sizes are flexible. The smallest suites start at 980 square feet and each one includes an office space. The suites will also have access to critical shared equipment, including an autoclave, ice machine, and glass wash. In addition to lab space for rent, the center offers shared equipment, conference rooms, free business growth support, and a collaborative life science community.

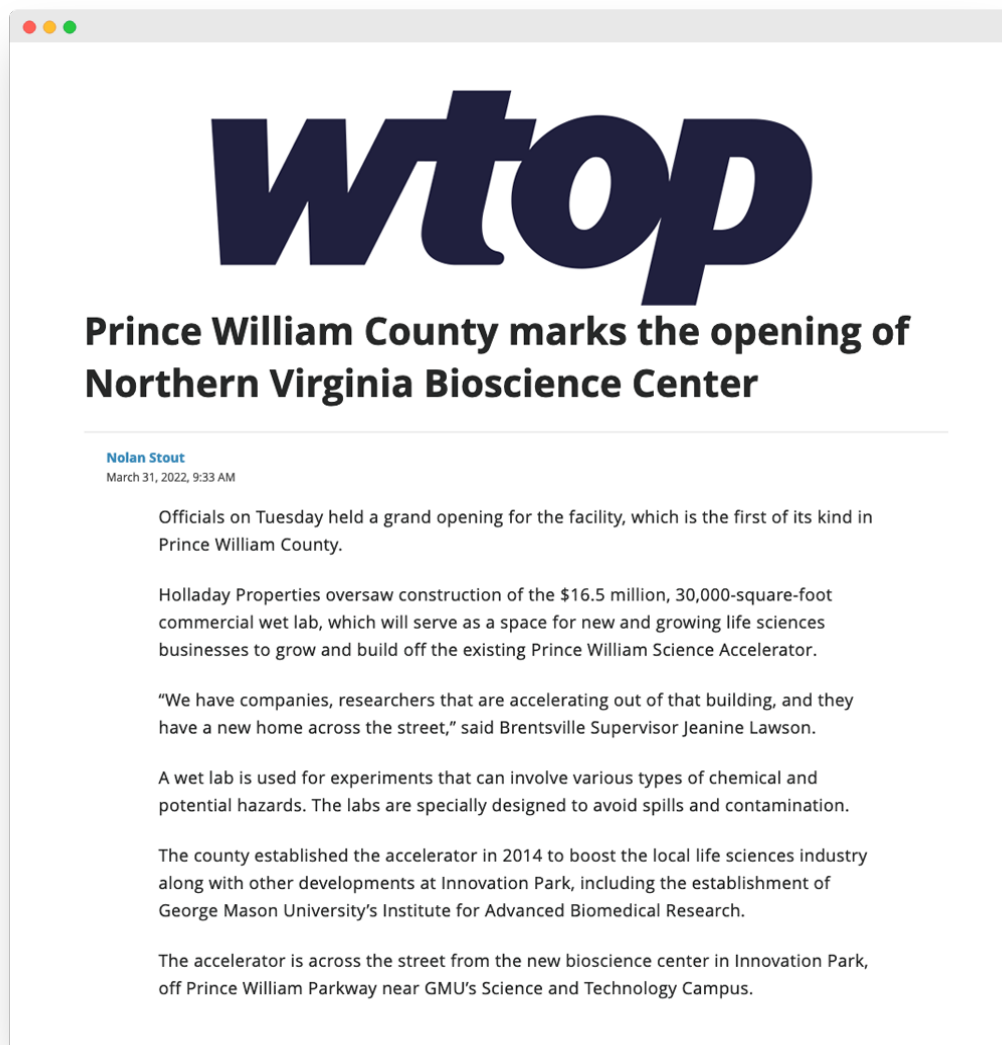
Lessons Learned and Transferability

Throughout the public-private partnership, Holladay Properties and PWCED worked with anchor university George Mason University's Science & Technology Campus for input and connection with the overall biotech ecosystem throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.



In addition, this partnership created an opportunity for new connections in the regional Innovation Park with other businesses, such as entertainment venues and breweries at Farm Brew LIVE, who benefit from the additional tenants and employees coming to the center.

Beyond a doubt, the innovative solution of backing the bank lending criteria for pre-leased space with a Prince William County signed master lease for 8,000 square feet helped move this project forward. The timing and the tenacity of the partnership was tested by the pandemic, and the County officials did not waver in the support for growing our biotech industry by signing our government's name on the line.



Brief Overview

With easy access to Washington, D.C., and the Maryland I-270 Biotech Corridor, the new 30,000 square foot Northern Virginia (NOVA) Bioscience Center commercial wet lab space reflects more than \$17.3 million in capital investment and opened in early 2022 in Prince William County, one the fastest-growing biotechnology clusters in the Greater Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area.

Laboratory space is often too expensive for companies that are just starting up or are mid-size, and the cost per square foot for BSL-2 space can be difficult for smaller companies to build and maintain.

The timing and the tenacity of the partnership between Prince William County Department of Economic Development (PWCDED) and commercial real estate developer and property management company Holladay Properties was tested by the pandemic multiple times. Prince William County officials did not waver in the support, including signing our government's name on an 8,000 square foot master lease to secure the financing for the entire project.

