



## Changes adopted by the CTB to the SMART SCALE program outlined and explained

Earlier this year, the Virginia Secretary of Transportation directed the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI) to conduct a full review of the SMART SCALE process in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT). VACo was invited and has participated on the Technical Advisory Committee as part of the program review, which began in April. [As previously reported](#), all proposed changes to SMART SCALE became available in October with a public comment period following. At the December 4 meeting of the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB), the Board moved to adopt various staff-proposed changes as well as amend some of the proposed changes to the SMART SCALE program. This article will outline what changes were adopted by the CTB to the SMART SCALE program. These adopted changes will be in effect starting next year when SMART SCALE round 6 applications open in the spring.

### Small Project Preference

To address concerns that the High Priority Program (HPP) is being used to implement small projects (< \$10 million) that do not have meaningful impacts on the improvement of

Corridors of Statewide Significance or Regional Networks, the CTB will be changing the process for how HPP funding is allocated as well as redefining what projects are eligible for HPP funding.

The current (Round 5) funding steps are as follows:

- Step 1 allocates each VDOT construction district's grant program funding on a district-wide basis.
- Step 2 allocates HPP funding on a district-wide basis.
- Step 3 allocates HPP funding on a statewide basis.

The CTB voted to approve a change that will eliminate the current Step 2, so that the funding steps would move straight from Step 1 to Step 3 shown above. The new process would distribute all HPP program funds based on statewide rankings of SMART SCALE scores.

Current projects that are eligible for HPP funding include those that address needs on a Corridor of Statewide Significance or a Regional Network. With the adopted changes, starting in Round 6, project types eligible for HPP funds would be limited to:

- New Capacity Highway improvements including adding New Lanes, Roadway on New Alignment, Managed Lanes (HOV/HOT/Shoulder and New Bridge)
- New or Improved Interchanges, including New Interchange-Non-Limited Access Facility, Improve Grade-Separated Interchange, New Interchange-Limited Access Facility and Ramp Improvements
- Transit and Freight improvements including New or Improved Passenger Rail Stations or Corridor Improvements (including New Bridge), Freight Rail Improvements, High-Capacity / Fixed Guideway Transit (including Light Rail Transit or Bus Rapid Transit) and Transit Transfer Stations
- Improvements recommended as the preferred alternative in a STARS, Pipeline Study, Arterial Management Plan, or MPO/Transit/Local studies with equivalent study components; in coordination with the Commonwealth and defined as Regionally significant.

### **Application Quality and Project Readiness**

One of the proposed changes to SMART SCALE was reducing the application caps for all entities; this change responds to a concern regarding application quality. The application cap proposal took multiple forms over the months but was ultimately not approved by the Commonwealth Transportation Board. For Round 6, the current application caps in place for entities across the Commonwealth will stay in effect.

At the meeting, the CTB signaled they will be moving forward with new administrative processes to address project readiness. To address project cost overruns and scheduling delays for locally administered projects that have received funding through SMART SCALE, the CTB will be developing an approach that ties project funding decisions to how well the applying entity performs in project delivery. To address project readiness, the CTB is developing an approach to streamline document approval before final submission. This entails making sure an applicant has approval for high level documents (cost estimates, reports, project schedules, resolutions, other required attachments) before a project is submitted. Lastly, VDOT plans to provide earlier

and more targeted support to applicants to assist with applications. VACo will continue to provide updates as more information becomes available.

### **Forward-Looking Process**

To better align with project design requirements that are based on future growth volumes and consider future economic growth, the CTB approved using 7-year future growth to determine congestion benefit scores instead of current congestion conditions. This is similar to how the congestion factor was calculated in SMART SCALE Rounds 1 & 2 but was modified in Round 3 to prioritize existing conditions. The initial recommendation was to calculate congestion for 10 years into the future but the CTB during December 4<sup>th</sup> meeting amended that to 7 years. The economic development factor measures how each project supports economic development and improves the movement of goods. There are concerns that, as currently constructed, this factor does not account for future economic development. During the SMART SCALE Review, VDOT engaged the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) to develop a more forward-looking methodology. The CTB voted to adopt the staff-recommended changes. This is a high-level overview of the new Economic Development Measure:

According to staff running the review, the current (Round 5) economic scoring methodology does not incorporate key economic priorities.

- The methodology needs to better reflect best-in-class economic impact assessments currently used by VEDP.
- The current process uses manual data entry by applicants and then SMART SCALE staff data validation.
- Current economic development measures rely on the square footage of sites being developed in the area of influence of the SMART SCALE project.

The adopted changes to the economic development factor seek to include:

- Focus on sites that will attract growth industries, with the inventory captured in a statewide real estate database.
- Job creation and capital investments in sites.
- Estimated potential market demand of sites by including site visits.

The new forward-looking economic development measure reflects best in class economic impact assessments currently used by VEDP to incorporate key economic priorities of the Commonwealth. A more in-depth understanding and breakdown of the new economic development factor scoring recommendations can be found from pages 5 to 12 in the CTB Presentation from October which is linked [here](#).

### **Land Use Factor Change**

A key concern raised about the current use of the land use score is that it accounts for where a project is located, not expected project outcomes. There is also concern that the land use score has disproportionately driven the types of projects that are selected for funding. To address these concerns, the CTB considered a change to eliminate land use as a standalone score and instead convert this score to a multiplier that would be used to increase benefit points in other



factor areas, thus enhancing the overall project score. Surprisingly, at the December 4 meeting, the CTB voted to remove land use entirely as a factor to be considered when scoring SMART SCALE applications. VACo is monitoring how this will affect the applicant community as Round 6 SMART SCALE applications open in the coming months.

With the removal of the land use factor the CTB then reapportioned the points from the land use factor to other scoring factors. The Board-approved weighting for Round 6 can be found in the chart below. (Changes in percentage from Round 5 values are in parentheses)

### Round 6 Board Approved Weightings

Factor	Safety	Congestion	Accessibility	Economic Development	Environment
Type A	15% (+10%)	45%	25% (+10%)	5%	10%
Type B	20%	25% (+10%)	25% (+5%)	20%	10%
Type C	30% (+5%)	20% (+5%)	15%	25%	10%
Type D	40% (+10%)	10%	10%	30%	10%

Up to  
-5  
Points

The SMART SCALE Team has made all of their Review resources, such as presentations to the CTB, Virtual Town Hall recordings and letters regarding the proposed changes from various entities, available to the public which can be accessed [here](#). OIPI staff provided VACo with a PDF outlining the adopted changes which can be accessed [here](#).

VACo wants to thank The Office of the Secretary of Transportation for including VACo as part of the Technical Advisory Committee during this Review. VACo wants to further thank OIPI staff for staying in communication with VACo throughout this process and speaking to the Transportation Steering Committee at the VACo County Officials Summit. Lastly, we want to thank VACo member counties for staying involved throughout this process and providing input to VACo staff. This December, the Round 6 Draft SMART SCALE Technical Guide will be posted to the homepage of the [SMART SCALE website](#) with the final version being posted in January. Round 6 pre-applications open on March 1, 2024.

**VACo Contact:** [James Hutzler](#)





## Visit James City County and the James City County Historic Courthouse

**Location:** 101 Duke of Gloucester Street / Palace Green Street

**Built:** 1770 – 1771

**Style:** Georgian

**Architect:** Robert Smith

**Contractor:** Unknown

**Description:** The building faces south and is a one story red colored brick structure. The building is located on landscaped grounds with Market Square on the north side in Colonial Williamsburg in the center of city. The south front has an extended pediment section at the roof line with arched entrance below. The tall windows are ached with white colored shutters. The hipped roof rests on an entablature with dentil moldings. The roof is pierced on both sides by a chimney and a central octagonal drum capped with a dome and a spire. The building was damaged by fire in 1911 and was restored. The architect was Lee & Diehl.

**Note:** The courthouse was the site where Benjamin Waiker read aloud the Declaration of Independence on July 25, 1776, after it arrived from Philadelphia. The building was used as a hospital for the Confederate Army after the Battle of Williamsburg.

**SOURCE:** [courthouses.co](http://courthouses.co)



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## **VACo/VML/VAPDC Local Government Day**

**Thursday, February 1, 2024  
Richmond Marriott**

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## **VACo/VML Legislative Reception**

**Thursday, February 1, 2024  
Richmond Marriott**

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## **VACo Chairpersons' Institute**

**Friday, February 2, 2024 and  
Saturday, February 3, 2024  
VACo Headquarters**

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**EVENT DETAILS****LOCATION** | Richmond Marriott Hotel**TIME AND DATE** | Thursday, February 1**COST - PLEASE CHECK ONE**☐ **\$100** Day Briefing Only (Noon - 2pm)☐ **\$100** Reception Only (530pm)☐ **\$150** Day Briefing and Reception**AGENDA****9am** | VACo Board of Directors Meeting**10am** | Registration**1130am** | Lunch**Noon** | Local Government Day**Afternoon** | Visit the Capitol to speak with legislators**530pm** | Reception

FAX COMPLETED REGISTRATION FORM WITH CREDIT CARD INFORMATION TO 804.788.0083.

OR PLEASE MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO VACo. MAIL CHECK AND REGISTRATION FORM TO 1207 EAST MAIN STREET, RICHMOND, VA 23219.

**Hotel Reservation Details:** Lodging costs are not covered in the registration fee. Local Government Day is held at the Richmond Marriott Hotel, 500 East Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219. Room rates start at \$179 (single room occupancy). To reserve a hotel room, call 800.228.9290 by January 9, 2024, with this code: **Local Government Day** or reserve a room at this [Richmond Marriott Hotel link](#).

THANK YOU FOR REGISTERING!



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**Or please make check payable to VACo. Mail check and completed registration form to 1207 East Main Street, Richmond, VA 23219.**



**Registration Fee: \$350 Attendee | \$175 Guest**

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**Refund Policy:** Requests for registration refunds are honored if received by January 12, 2024. Substitutions are allowed in the event a supervisor is unable to attend. For more information, call VACo at 804.343.2507.

## **Legislators Review Findings of Study on State Psychiatric Hospitals**



Staff to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) presented findings and recommendations to JLARC members on December 11, and provided a follow-up briefing to members of the Behavioral Health Commission two days later. Behavioral Health Commission members reviewed the study's recommendations dealing with legislative or budget actions by the General Assembly and agreed to advance several of these proposals during the 2024 legislative session.

The study outlines serious concerns about the state's psychiatric hospitals, which have been operating with caseloads above safe levels and experiencing high turnover and staff vacancies, with staffing challenges attributable to uncompetitive compensation and safety concerns. JLARC staff reported that in recent years, state hospitals have been operating at more than 85 percent of their staffed bed capacity, a situation that is generally considered unsafe. State hospitals are considered the "bed of last resort" under Virginia law, as they must accept patients under a temporary detention order (TDO) if no other facility will accept them. The report notes that this designation bars state hospitals from refusing to accept patients under TDOs, even if a patient does not need psychiatric treatment, such as patients with neurocognitive or neurodevelopmental disorders, who are not likely to benefit from the treatment offered at state hospitals, but who often stay for relatively long periods of time. Similarly, JLARC staff also expressed alarm about the ongoing practice of law enforcement dropping off patients at state hospitals, some of whom have serious medical conditions that state hospitals are not equipped to treat, requiring them to be transported to other facilities.

Forensic patients are another population that is stressing state hospital capacity; JLARC staff note in the report that in FY 2023, forensic patients (criminal defendants ordered by a court to receive inpatient psychiatric evaluations and treatment) used the majority of all available state psychiatric bed days (forensic patients remain in the hospital an average of three times longer than civil patients).

JLARC staff raised particular concern about the state's facility of last resort for youth in need of inpatient psychiatric care, the Commonwealth Center for Children and Adolescents (CCCA), writing, "persistent

operations and performance problems at CCCA justify reconsidering whether CCCA should continue to operate.” The report recommends that the state develop a plan to close CCCA and develop alternative placements for children and youth who would otherwise be served there.

The report encourages private hospitals to shoulder more of the responsibility of accepting patients in need of inpatient psychiatric treatment, noting that private psychiatric hospitals have unused staffed capacity that would enable both private hospitals and the state hospitals to operate at safe census levels. Key recommendations from the report include:

- Amending Virginia Code to specify that behaviors and symptoms that are manifestations of a neurocognitive or neurodevelopmental disorder are excluded from the definition of mental illness for the purpose of TDOs and civil commitments. A related recommendation would direct the Secretary of Health and Human Resources to evaluate the current availability of placements for individuals with such disorders and develop alternative strategies to support these populations. The Behavioral Health Commission members discussed these recommendations at length, expressing concern about the unintended consequences of directing these admissions away from state hospitals without creating alternative placements. Members ultimately adopted a revised recommendation that would require development of a funding plan for the alternative placements and incorporate a reenactment clause making implementation contingent on the Secretary’s report and funding plan.
- Amending Virginia Code to allow state hospitals to delay admission of an individual under a TDO until the hospital determines that the individual does not have urgent medical needs that the state hospital cannot treat. The Behavioral Health Commission adopted this recommendation.
- Amending Virginia Code to allow state hospitals to decline admission of an individual under a TDO if the admission would result in the hospital operating in excess of 85 percent of its staffed capacity. The Behavioral Health Commission discussed but did not endorse this recommendation.
- Providing funding to enable private hospitals to increase the percentage of involuntary admissions they accept (funding could be used for additional security positions, staff training, or safety improvements). The Behavioral Health Commission approved this recommendation with an amendment to require these hospitals to commit to increasing involuntary admissions. A related recommendation, also approved by the Commission, would allow private hospitals to receive discharge assistance funding (which is currently only provided to assist with discharges from state hospitals).
- A set of recommendations to address staffing concerns, including increasing salaries for staff at state hospitals and requiring annual reporting on average turnover and vacancy rates; directing the Department of Human Resource Management to allow state hospitals to define 36 hours per week as full time for state hospital nursing staff (to align with industry standards); funding scheduling software for state hospital nursing shifts; funding additional nursing positions to a level that would ensure adequate and safe patient care; and contracting for assessments of the adequacy of each hospital’s staffing levels. The Commission adopted these recommendations.

A full list of the report recommendations is available at [this link](#), and the report is available at [this link](#).

**VACo Contact:** [Katie Boyle](#)



## State EMS Advisory Board Workgroup Tasked with Making Recommendations to Release OEMS Funding Convenes



On December 13, the workgroup tasked by the State EMS Advisory Board Chair Kevin Dillard with addressing funding restructuring needs and pending payment issues met for the first time. As previously [reported](#), the need for this workgroup stems from unanticipated budgeting shortfalls at the Office of Emergency Medical Services. The official minutes are pending, but a brief recap of the meeting is detailed below:

1. The workgroup approved the Virtual Meeting Policy unanimously.
2. Chair Dillard reviewed the purpose of our workgroup. To recap, this is an advisory workgroup which was created at the request of the State Health Commissioner. The workgroup is to help flag and prioritize obligations for the EMS system. The workgroup's priority is to ensure that the regional EMS councils receive payment. The workgroup's second priority is the return-to-locality funding. The workgroup's third priority is resolving pending vendor invoices. Future discussions of the workgroup will be about the overall EMS system and the role of the Office of EMS. Any recommendations brought from the workgroup in reference to the first three priorities will go directly to Health Commissioner Dr. Karen Shelton and her team. Any recommendations from the workgroup about system changes will go through the EMS Advisory Board as the next step.
3. A FY24 Projected Revenue Breakdown can be accessed [here](#). This shows the percentages for each fund and the projected revenue based on those percentages.
4. The workgroup discussed the funding of the Regional EMS councils. The workgroup had \$600,000 that became available to disburse to the regional councils. Chair Dillard asked the councils to

decide amongst themselves which councils needed the highest priority of funding and to provide him with a list of the amounts recommended for each regional council. The following [attachment](#) lists how the \$600,000 was to be distributed. The councils received these payments on Thursday, December 14 and Friday, December 15.

5. Discussion was on on the Return to Locality Funding (RTL). The workgroup announced that there is approximately \$3 million available now for RTL funding. After discussing this, the workgroup decided to start with the “oldest” RTL invoices and pay everything through FY22. This would total approximately \$937,854. After discussing the FY23 invoices to workgroup decided to pay the jurisdictions with the lowest amount due (the smaller jurisdictions) with the remaining funding that available.
6. The workgroup also discussed vendor payments. The workgroup were told by Virginia Department of Health’s Chief Operating Officer Christopher Lindsay that this was one of the “buckets” where no funding is currently available. The workgroup discussed the process moving forward for when funding becomes available. The workgroup decided to make recommendations based on clinical impact, statutory requirements, and EMS education.
7. The workgroup also voted to remove language from paragraph G of the budget bill regarding localities being able to submit fingerprint cards and making funds available for Virginia State Police CCR checks for EMS members.

**Members of the Workgroup include:**

- Kevin Dillard, Chair
- Gary Critzer
- Dr. Paula Ferrada
- Dr. Allen Yee
- Brian Frankel
- Beth Adams
- Ed Rhodes
- Tracy McLaurin
- Andrew Slater
- Gary Tanner, VACo Representative
- Wayne Perry, Secretary
- JC Bolling
- Travis Pruitt
- Scott Winston, Staff Support

VACo will continue to report on this issue as the situation develops.

**VACo Contact:** [Jeremy R. Bennett](#)

## **Behavioral Health Commission Discusses Criminal Justice Diversion, Recommendations for 2024**

The Behavioral Health Commission met on December 5 to receive a briefing from its staff on a study of a potential new process to divert certain individuals from the criminal justice system into court-ordered mental health treatment, and to finalize legislative and budgetary proposals for the upcoming session resulting from studies considered during earlier meetings.

Commission staff presented [an overview](#) of the potential new civil commitment process, Expedited Diversion to Court-Ordered Treatment (EDCOT), a version of which was considered in legislation during the 2023 session, but not adopted. EDCOT would divert individuals with serious mental illness from the criminal justice system into civil court if the court finds that an individual's conduct was related to his or her serious mental illness, that there is a significant likelihood that the individual will reoffend in the future, absent treatment, and that there is a reasonable likelihood that treatment will reduce the risk of reoffending. Under EDCOT, proceedings move to the civil court, with a court-approved mental health treatment plan involving ongoing monitoring and court oversight, allowing the criminal charges to be dismissed.

Staff discussed implementation challenges associated with EDCOT, including the need to expand existing outpatient services to accommodate individuals diverted away from criminal justice involvement and the need to establish new services to meet the needs of EDCOT participants, both of which would require additional funding and would be affected by workforce shortages. Community Services Boards would be required to conduct evaluations and monitor compliance with treatment plans, which would also require funding and staffing; additional court hearings would require resources for the court system as well. Staff also pointed out potential disincentives to participation; for example, some defendants would be faced with a choice between a potentially lengthy period of involuntary treatment under EDCOT or a criminal sentence, which may be shorter. Lastly, the report documents concerns expressed by stakeholders as to whether EDCOT, as an involuntary treatment with intense monitoring and oversight, is the most appropriate approach for defendants with mental health needs.

Commission members approved the staff proposal to direct the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court to collaborate with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and the National Center for State Courts on a study assessing existing statewide diversion programs and to what extent EDCOT could divert individuals not currently served; examine the operational, legal, and funding changes required to address EDCOT implementation issues; and determine the feasibility of implementing EDCOT or a similar diversion program.

Commission members also reviewed recommendations from earlier staff studies and reports on STEP-VA monitoring, the Community Services Board system, and the pandemic's effect on public education and approved a series of proposed bills and budget amendments; a chart detailing recommendations from these studies, as well as other studies, approved by the Commission this year may be found at this [link](#).

**VACo Contact:** [Katie Boyle](#)



## VACo Supports Early Childhood Care and Education Effort



On Monday, December 4, VACo staff participated in the formal kick off of the “[Gotta Have Childcare](#)” campaign, which is aimed at preventing the loss of childcare options for families that were significantly expanded through federal funding as well as improving the overall health of Virginia’s early childhood system. This was shortly followed by an [announcement](#) from Governor Youngkin of a proposal to make significant state investments in the childcare system. VACo is a member of the Virginia Promise Partnership, which supports these efforts.

The need for additional state funding draws from data outlined in the October 2023 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) [Study on Virginia’s Self-Sufficiency Programs and the Availability and Affordability of Child Care](#) and October 2023 VDOE findings requested by the Early Childhood Care and Education Commission (ECCE) outlined in this [funding landscape and impact chart](#).

Without further action, from FY 2024 to FY 2025, childcare funding in Virginia will drop by nearly \$300 million. Over 35,600 children could lose access to childcare and early education services. Over 37,300 parents could experience childcare related job disruption impacting employer productivity and bottom line.

The estimated need for the 2024 General Assembly Session includes:

- Investing \$275 million in FY25 and \$325 million in FY26 to maintain and support parent demand for childcare services.
- Enact legislation to ensure and maximize sustainable, stable funding that is responsive to parent choice, including:
  - A predictable cost-of-quality funding formula that responds to growing parent demand.
  - A non-reverting fund to safeguard and maximize childcare funds for distribution.

VACo supports the work of and local government representation on the Commission on Early Childhood Care and Education to provide recommendations for and tracking progress on the financing of Virginia’s comprehensive birth-to-five early childhood care and education system.

More information on this issue including a two-pager and slides from the Virginia Promise Partnership can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

**VACo Contact:** [Jeremy R. Bennett](#)

## Joint Commission on Health Care Adopts Study Recommendations, Study Plan for 2024



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
Joint Commission on Health Care

The Joint Commission on Health Care held its final meeting of the year on December 6, taking action on recommendations from its two major staff studies of 2023 and approving study resolutions for 2024. As reported in *County Connections*, at meetings earlier this year the Commission considered recommendations from [a study of team-based care](#) and [a study of obesity and eating disorders](#), soliciting public comments after staff's initial briefing on each topic.

Members approved the following recommendations from the team-based care study:

- Direct the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) to establish a reimbursement rate for Collaborative Care Model Services, which embed behavioral health providers into primary care.
- Direct DMAS to establish a reimbursement rate for medication therapy management provided by pharmacists through telehealth.
- Request the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) to evaluate the value and impact of state-funded health care workforce scholarship and loan repayment programs.
- Provide funding for the Virginia Center for Health Innovation's Virginia Task Force on Primary Care to expand programs that work to develop the core criteria and performance measures of a team-based approach for payment purposes by health plans.
- Provide support to primary care practices transitioning to team-based care through the Area Health Education Centers, which are managed by the Virginia Health Workforce Development Authority.
- Direct DMAS to develop a plan to participate in the Medicaid health home program, which provides an enhanced federal match for team-based care for Medicaid beneficiaries with chronic conditions.

Members approved the following recommendations from the study of obesity and eating disorders:

- Direct DMAS to develop a plan to incorporate the National Diabetes Prevention Program as a covered service within the Medicaid State Plan. This program, which was previously piloted in Virginia and demonstrated success, focuses on people who are at risk for type 2 diabetes and promotes lifestyle changes to delay or prevent disease.

[More on Next Page](#)

- Request the Health Insurance Reform Commission and Bureau of Insurance to define nutritional counseling in the essential health benefits benchmark plan (a set of benefits that comprehensive individual and small group health insurance coverage must provide), to ensure consistency across plans.
- Request the Health Insurance Reform Commission and Bureau of Insurance to conduct assessments to include medical nutrition therapy, when medically necessary, in the essential health benefits benchmark plan (this benefit is currently required only for people with diabetes).
- Direct DMAS to remove service limits for medical nutrition therapy when treating qualifying or eligible medical conditions. Medicaid managed care organizations cover these services but impose annual limits.
- Request the Health Insurance Reform Commission and Bureau of Insurance to conduct assessments to include weight loss medication, when medically necessary, as determined by a healthcare provider, in the Essential Health Benefits benchmark plan.
- Request the Health Insurance Reform Commission and Bureau of Insurance to conduct assessments to include bariatric surgery, when medically necessary, as determined by a healthcare provider, in the Essential Health Benefits benchmark plan.
- Direct DMAS to conduct a rate study to develop reimbursement rates for residential, partial hospitalization, and intensive outpatient services for eating disorder treatment for adults over 21.
- Require all Medicaid managed care organizations and state-regulated health insurers to remove prior authorization requirements for coverage of eating disorder services in order to reduce administrative burdens and expand access to treatment.

Commission members also approved two studies for 2024: [a review of the performance and impact of health care workforce programs](#), and [a study of the impact of various models to extend health care to vulnerable populations](#), including community paramedicine, home visiting, mobile health clinics, telehealth, and the services of community health workers.

**VACo Contact:** [Katie Boyle](#)



# Opioid Abatement Authority Announces more than \$470,000 in Awards Grants



On December 4, 2023, a committee of the Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority (OAA) voted to award more than \$470,000 in grants to ten Virginia cities and counties for opioid abatement and remediation efforts.

Nine of the ten awards will support planning efforts for the recipient localities to identify community-specific needs, gaps, and possible solutions to the opioid crisis.

Senator Todd Pillion, Chairman of the OAA, said, “we encourage localities to carefully evaluate how to best use their opioid settlement funds at the local level, and the OAA’s planning grants are an important tool to help them do exactly that.” Recipients are required as a condition of the grant to publish the resulting plan, and to use that plan to explain and justify future OAA grant applications. “We are talking about opioid settlements coming to Virginia every year for 18 years, and so we recommend communities have a road map in place for how it will use those funds to save lives,” said Pillion.

Five localities were provided planning grants of \$50,000 each: Botetourt, Patrick, and Warren Counties, and the cities of Colonial Heights and Salem. The counties of Prince Edward, Buckingham, and Cumberland were jointly provided a planning grant for \$50,000 that will be administered by Prince Edward. In each case the recipient localities committed to provide a ten percent match (see attached table for more details).

Loudoun County received a planning grant in the amount of \$200,000, to which it will add \$160,000 in its own funding for a total program valued at \$360,000. The Loudoun County effort includes not only a planning component but will also establish a countywide opioid response program with a newly created administrator overseeing a County opioid task force.

In addition to the planning grants, the OAA announced an individual grant award to the City of Manassas to hire a harm reduction specialist within the local Department of Social Services. Under this program the City will provide outreach and support to individuals affected by opioid misuse, their families, community members, local agencies, healthcare providers, and stakeholders. Through community engagement and educational programs, the project aims to reach a significant portion of the City’s population. The OAA also approved a request from Manassas for renewal of this project for next fiscal year.

The OAA began accepting Fiscal Year 2024-2025 grant applications in October, and all applications must be submitted by April 1, 2024. During this timeframe certain types of grants can be awarded on a rolling basis, but most of the grants will be awarded after application cycle has ended.

[Click Here to See Approved Grants](#)



## VIRGINIA OPIOID ABATEMENT AUTHORITY NEWS UPDATE

701 East Franklin Street, Suite 803, Richmond, Virginia 23219 | 804-500-1810 | [info@voaa.us](mailto:info@voaa.us) | [www.voaa.us](http://www.voaa.us)

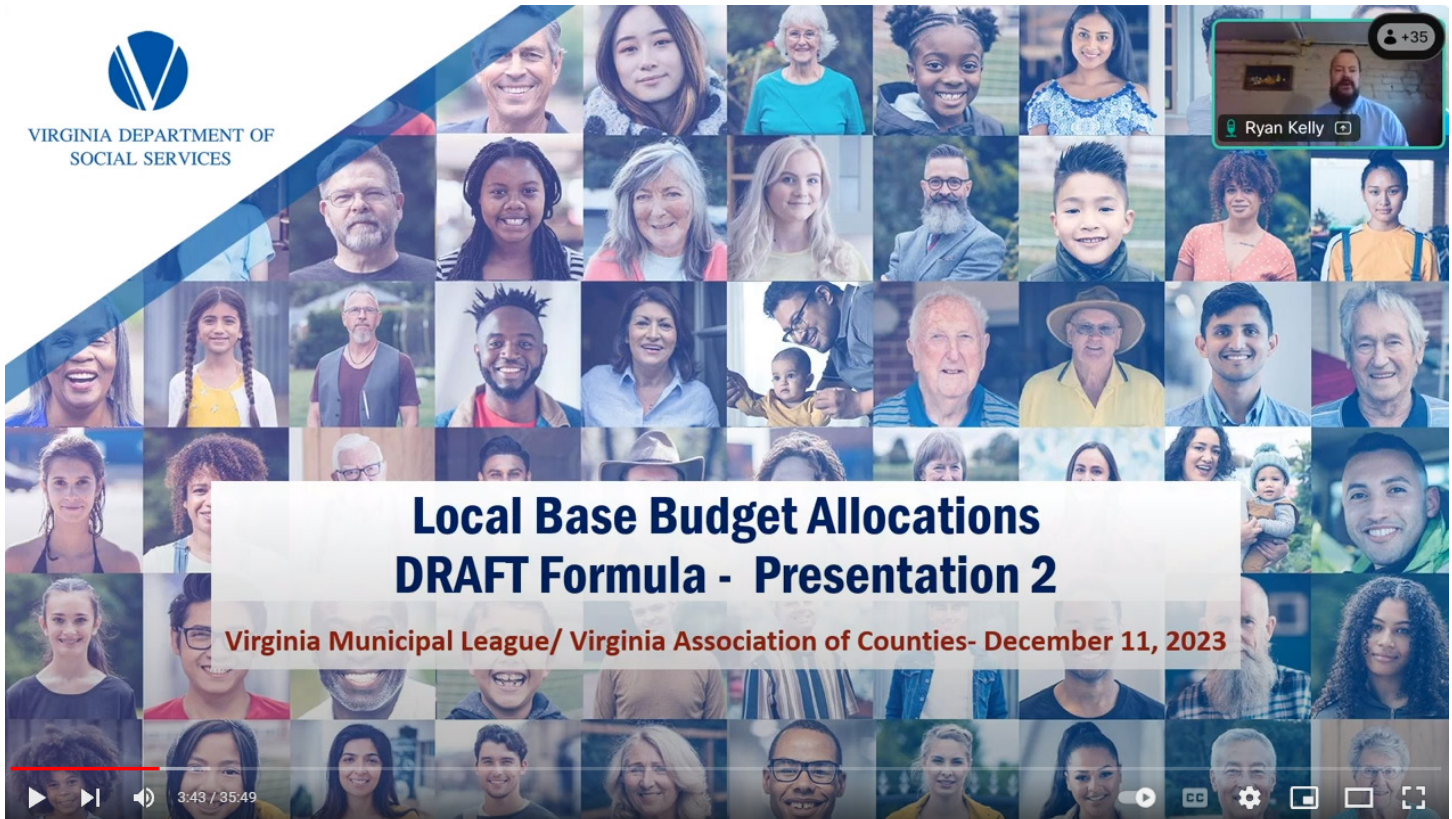
### City and County Estimated Settlement Payments Look-up Tool Updated

A few updates have been made to the City and County Estimated Settlement Payments Look-up Tool published at the beginning of October.

1. An error that was showing incorrect amounts for some cities and counties has been corrected. Please review to ensure you are working with the correct amounts.
  - If you think you are still getting an older version, please clear the "Cached Images and Files" from your browsing history and then refresh the webpage to access the current version.
  - If you are using Microsoft Edge, choose the blue "Download file" button at the top of the screen when the file loads.
2. The final Mallinckrodt payment has been issued. It is reflected in Direct Distributions, Individual Distribution, and Gold Standard amounts available.
3. Two cells have been highlighted in the FY2024 line to note those amounts shown are the total of FY23 and FY24 funds available to be applied for.
4. Any shortcuts, bookmarks, or links in older documents should route to the most updated file.

When viewing the file, please be sure to click refresh on your browser to ensure you have the most up to date version. If you have any questions on the Look-up Tool or any other OAA forms, please email us at [info@voaa.us](mailto:info@voaa.us) and we will be happy to assist.

**[City and County Estimated Settlement Payments Look-up Tool](#)**  
**[FY2022 through FY2039](#)**



## VDSS Webinar on Proposed Alternative Allocation for State Administrative Funding (Part Two)

At the direction of the State Board of Social Services, the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) has been developing a proposed alternative allocation method for state administrative funding to local departments of social services for staff and operations costs that would reflect local department caseloads, poverty, and local ability to pay. Ryan Kelly, Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Policy and Administration at VDSS, joined VACo and VML on December 11 for the second part of a two-part series of webinars to discuss the proposal and solicit initial feedback on the Department's recommendations.

### [VDSS PRESENTATION PART 2.](#)

[Click here to watch the Part 1](#) of the VDSS Webinar on Proposed Alternative Allocation for State Administrative Funding





## Join Us for the 2024 Winter Series *First Fridays (Almost)*

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

### JANUARY 5, 2024

#### *Ready, Set, Go: It's Time for the 2024 General Assembly*

A new-look General Assembly will convene in early January with a new legislative building, many new lawmakers and new issues for 2024. This session will dig into the legislative session's nuts and bolts, highlight the governor's budget proposal and anticipated legislative issues, and take a look at the politics of it all.

Presenter: **David Blount**

**Executive Director** | Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions  
**Director of Legislative Services** | Thomas Jefferson PDC



### FEBRUARY 9, 2024

#### *Housing as an Economic Development Strategy*

Virginia Housing recently released a study that explores linkages between housing and economic development. It identifies housing as an increasingly central factor in decisions that businesses make about relocation, expansion, and formation. Join us for an overview of the findings and recommendations for integrating housing and economic development strategies.

Presenter: **Fabrizio Fasulo**

**Director of Policy and Planning** | Virginia Housing





# **PUBLIC HEARINGS NOTICE**

## **GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED 2024-2026 BIENNIAL STATE BUDGET**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS AND SENATE FINANCE AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEES OF THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY WILL HOLD **VIRTUAL** REGIONAL PUBLIC HEARINGS ON THE GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED 2024-2026 BIENNIAL STATE BUDGET, AS FOLLOWS:

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3, 2024**

(Hearings begin at 10 a.m.)

**All public hearings will be held virtually. There will be four separate virtual hearings with legislators from each region participating as follows:**

Northern Virginia | Western Virginia | Hampton Roads

Central Virginia (Richmond)

**Public registration to speak at one of the public hearings will occur on Tuesday, January 2, 2024. Please check either of the following websites for more information:**

Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee Website ([sfac.virginia.gov/](https://sfac.virginia.gov/))

House Appropriations Committee Website ([hac.virginia.gov/](https://hac.virginia.gov/))

**Public Hearings will be livestreamed on the Virginia General Assembly [Website](#)**

**<https://virginiageneralassembly.gov/membersAndSession.php?secid=1&activesec=0#!hb=1&mainContentTabs=0>**

The purpose of the hearings is to receive comments on the Governor's proposed 2024-26 biennial state budget. Those persons wishing to speak may register to speak the **day before** each virtual hearing.

Speakers will be taken in the order of registration. Each person may register only one speaker at a time and only sign-up to speak at one of the hearings. Speakers are asked to limit their comments to three minutes or less. Speakers representing groups and organizations should consolidate remarks to reduce duplication. Persons unable to attend may submit their comments electronically at [https://hodspeak.house.virginia.gov/upcoming\\_meetings](https://hodspeak.house.virginia.gov/upcoming_meetings)

***People with disabilities may request reasonable accommodations by calling (804) 698-7480. All requests for reasonable accommodations must be received by 5 p.m., Tuesday December 26, 2023. Requested arrangements for sign language interpreters, received by December 26, will be provided via video format.***

# 2024 VIRGINIA WOMEN'S MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH VIRGINIA TECH ROANOKE CENTER  
AND VIRGINIA WOMEN LEADING GOVERNMENT

## About the Institute

This Institute provides women in local government with the connections and tools to further develop their skills, strengthening the pipeline for women to lead communities in Virginia and beyond. The Institute is designed to:

- ★ Teach tangible and transformational leadership skills to increase self-confidence, knowledge, and ability.
- ★ Provide connection and content to strengthen leadership skills.
- ★ Create an everlasting support network among participants, past and present.
- ★ Build the pipeline of women leading government in Virginia.



## Program Details

**Who:** The Institute will be limited to 25 women aspiring to fill leadership positions in local government. *Participants should be committed to be actively engaged and attend every session to learn from one another and from content leaders.* Participants may miss one in-person session and one virtual session, if necessary. Missing more than these two sessions will disqualify a participant from receiving the Certificate of Completion.

**What:** The delivery format is hybrid including six two-day in-person sessions and two virtual half-day sessions. Tuition of \$1,800 includes the opening dinner on March 20, breakfast and lunch for all in-person sessions, as well as hotel accommodations for Wednesday, March 20 and Thursday, March 21 at the Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center. All other accommodations, meals, and travel expenses are at the participant's expense. Participants are responsible for purchasing the book needed for the July virtual session.

**When:** The Institute will launch Wednesday evening, March 20, 2024, with a "Connections before Content" dinner in Roanoke. The Institute will conclude at the Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center on Friday, Oct. 18, 2024. Institute schedule is attached.

**Where:** Participants will be asked to meet regionally at a common venue with fellow participants for the virtual half-day sessions. Locations for the April, June, August, and September sessions are noted on the attached schedule. *Note: These locations are subject to change pending availability.*

## Institute Curriculum

Every session will begin with an optional “pay on your own” dinner on Wednesday evenings prior to the content rich sessions on Thursdays and Fridays. This “Connection (or Reconnection) before Content” will be an opportunity to get to know one another on a more personal level and to build everlasting relationships. Following is a sampling of topics included in the curriculum:

- ★ Imagining Your Leadership Future
- ★ Know Thyself (and One Another): Personality Assessments and How to Use Your Personality Type as a Leader
- ★ Essential Skills: Budget, Finance, Strategic Planning, Council/Manager Relations
- ★ Negotiating Strategies for Women
- ★ The Leap to Leadership/Formal and Informal Leadership
- ★ Mastermind Problem-Solving



## Application Process

Email a cover letter expressing why you are interested in participating in the Institute at this stage in your career as well as your current resume to Bonnie Svrcek, Institute coordinator at [bsvrcek@gmail.com](mailto:bsvrcek@gmail.com) no later than midnight Wednesday, Jan. 3, 2024. Explain in your cover letter your career goals and how you believe the Institute will help you achieve such goals. Explain how you will use your experience to “pay it forward.” Please email Bonnie with any questions you may have prior to application.

Participants will be notified of their acceptance in the 2024 Institute no later than Monday, Jan. 15, 2024. Depending on demand, the number of participants per locality may be limited. Virginia Tech will award up to 7.2 Continuing Education Units / 72 contact hours to participants upon successful completion of the Institute requirements.

Scholarships are available to locality members of the Virginia Risk Sharing Association (VRSA) through their Risk Management Grant Funds. Contact Peter Stephenson at [pstephenson@vrsa.us](mailto:pstephenson@vrsa.us) for details.

## Our Amazing Sponsors (as of 11/01/2023)

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Virginia Risk Sharing Association

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Virginia Institute of Government  
Virginia Local Government Management Association

### Silver (\$1500-\$2,499)

League of Women in Government

### Bronze (\$500-\$1,499)

Bonnie Svrcek  
2023 VWMLI Graduates



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

# VACo 2024 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

*For the 2024 General Assembly Session*



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ADOPTED BY VACo  
MEMBERSHIP ON  
NOVEMBER 14, 2023

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**VACo  
Membership  
Adopts  
Legislative  
Program**

Thank you for your participation in the development and adoption of the [VACo 2024 Legislative Program](#).

Please take a moment to review the adopted program.

**[VACo 2024 Legislative Program](#)**

# Virginia Water and Wastewater Rate 2023 Report is Now Available



## Virginia Water and Wastewater Rate Report

Since 1989, TRC Companies has prepared and distributed an annual Virginia Water and Wastewater Rate Report. This report asks municipalities to provide information concerning monthly residential water bills as well as all wastewater-related charges included on their customers' bills. Experts at TRC analyze the data and compare it to former years in order to track fluctuations in water and wastewater use and rates in Virginia.

[Download our FREE Rate Reports →](#)

## 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Water & Wastewater Rate Report Highlights Key Industry Trends for Virginia Utilities

With over 250 water and wastewater providers in Virginia dedicated to serving diverse communities, navigating the benchmarking process is critical but complex. Leveraging a deep understanding of the industry and the challenges public utilities face, [TRC Companies](#) continues to spearhead the production the Virginia Water & Wastewater Rate Report to shed light on crucial industry trends and provide utilities with indispensable insights for effective decision-making.

In 2023, the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Report found significant impacts for utilities related to rate changes. The average water rate across the Commonwealth increased by 7.2 percent in 2023 and the average sewer rate increased by 6.5 percent. Both increases were significantly higher than the previous year. Since 2012, the average water rate has increased by 3.4 percent per year and the average wastewater rate has risen by 3.6 percent per year. These increases occurred across a control group of representative utilities that allows the report to extrapolate trends across the state.

Amidst these insights, the 2023 Virginia Water & Wastewater Rate Report also provides an in-depth analysis of connection fees and capital recovery charges, giving utilities a comprehensive understanding of the broader financial landscape in which they operate.

For those seeking to delve into the comprehensive details of the 2023 Virginia Water and Wastewater Rate Report or to access previous editions, the complete reports are readily [available for download online](#). For any inquiries or further information, please reach out to us at [water@trccompanies.com](mailto:water@trccompanies.com).





## Get to know one of VACo's Premier Partners – Aetna

VACo Premier Partner Aetna believes healthier happens together. Aetna is a leading health care company that takes a holistic approach in partnering with public sector employees and their families to achieve their best health.

Dean Lynch, VACo Executive Director, and Marcus Duckworth, VP, Client Management of Aetna, explore key health benefits in areas important to the public sector.

Part 1 | [Retiree Savings Through Medicare Advantage](#)

Part 2 | [Mental Health Support](#)

Part 3 | [Custom Benefits Solutions for Government Employers](#)

Part 4 | [Community Health](#)

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**5 THINGS**

YOU SHOULD KNOW



04:14



# True Blue Photo Speed Enforcement – 5 Things You Should Know

Answers to Frequent Questions About Blue Line Solutions' Photo Speed Enforcement Program

<https://vimeo.com/860454886>

For more information, contact Greg Hogston | Sales Manager – Virginia  
[ghogston@bluelinesolutions.org](mailto:ghogston@bluelinesolutions.org) | 276-759-8064

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## 2023 Catalog of State and Federal Mandates on Local Governments Now Available



The Commission on Local Government has officially approved and published the much-anticipated 2023 edition of the Catalog of State and Federal Mandates on Local Governments. This resource is a result of collaborative efforts among various agencies.

The Commission's approval of the 2023 version took place on September 8, 2023, in accordance with the Code of Virginia, §15.2-2903(7), which mandates the Commission to prepare and regularly update this comprehensive catalog.

The catalog is readily accessible online, and you can explore it by visiting the following link: <https://dmz1.dhcd.virginia.gov/MandatesSearch/MandatesSearch.aspx>

The Commission values local government input and encourages you to share your comments, suggestions, and questions with the dedicated staff of the Commission on Local Government. Your feedback is crucial in ensuring that this resource remains relevant and useful for all stakeholders.

Should you have any questions or require further information about this document or any related matters, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Commission or VACo.





## HIGH PERFORMANCE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY



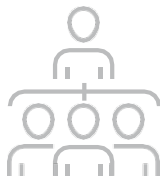
Counties affect the lives of residents every day. When our frontline staff are empowered as leaders, we deliver services more effectively. **The NACo High Performance Leadership Academy is a resource that connects your staff with practical leadership training.** HPLA uses an innovative, interactive online learning platform that combines real-time webinars, recorded sessions and small group discussions to deliver effective training without traveling away from the county – saving money and maximizing time.

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Engage teams and stakeholders to foster positive climates and exceed common expectations



#### ORGANIZE:

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#### COLLABORATE:

Establish alignment and strong partnerships through building stronger relationships



#### DELIVER:

Measure projects and processes to deliver results aligned with county and community priorities



#### COMMUNICATE:

Create clarity, confidence, and community

**The NACo High Performance Leadership Academy empowers frontline county government professionals with fundamental, practical leadership skills to deliver results for counties and residents.**

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**Find out more at [NACo.org/Skills](https://www.naco.org/skills)**





## OneDigital is thrilled to be one of VACo's newest Premier Partners.

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OneDigital has a track record of providing cost-saving solutions to counties. This has been achieved through creative funding strategies, rate holds, and exclusive partnerships with various carriers. One of these exclusive partnerships is through VACORP and Anthem Life. OneDigital is responsible for the inception of the Virginia Local Disability Program (VLDP) which is through the Virginia Retirement System (VRS). Our team of fierce advocates negotiated a 5-year locked rate, including short-term and long-term disability benefits. Your division may already work with us in this capacity, as we currently serve over 270 public sector entities in the VLDP program.



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**Sarah Anne Struckmann**  
**Business Development Executive**  
sarah.struckmann@onedigital.com  
434-987-2240



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The Virginia Association of Counties accepts employment ads in a PDF file or a link to a job site. Please include information for applying, and a link to other important information. Please do not fax your employment ad. VACo members are not charged for placing an employment ad. **The cost is \$100 per ad for non-VACo members.** VACo publishes the ad on its website and mobile app as well as the upcoming County Connections issue. If you have any questions or concerns, please email [Valerie Russell](#).

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Campbell County | Posted December 7

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7

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City County | Posted December 7

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County | Posted December 7

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III \(ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES\)](#) |  
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VACo exists to support county officials and to effectively represent, promote and protect the interests of counties to better serve the people of Virginia.

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