

The Roanoke Blacksburg Innovation Alliance (RBIA), which includes the Roanoke Blacksburg Technology Council (RBTC) & the Regional Accelerator and Mentoring Program (RAMP), helps facilitate connections, communication & collaboration on regional and state priorities & funding to advance tech & biotech startups, projects & solutions across the Roanoke & New River Valleys. Serving as the region's front door for innovators, founders, & funders, the Alliance helps connect both startups & established companies with business support & resources to grow & thrive.

## Building Regional Coalitions

**Coalitions:** RBIA advances regional priorities & supports entrepreneurship & innovation initiatives through leading various ecosystem building coalitions like the: Roanoke Biotech Project (\$25M), GO Virginia Project VITAL (\$14.4M statewide), Biotech Lab Equipment Federal Appropriations (\$1M), Regional Talent Coalition, as well as convening state, federal, & venture capital groups.

**Additional Partnership Opportunities:** NRV EDA Tech Hubs Phase I Award; NSF Engines UNC-Greensboro & VT GO Virginia Talent Pathways Initiative.

## Expanding Accelerator Services



**Grant Support:** RBIA received a GO Virginia Strengthening Entrepreneurs' Impact Grant (\$577,800) to expand programming & services for On RAMP (pre-accelerator) & Exit RAMP (alumni programming support) from 12/1/23-11/30/25. RBIA will reap continued financial sustainability for these RAMP programs, thanks to a two-year EDA Economic Adjustment Assistance Grant (\$338,086), awarded in Q3 of 2024. Finally, the VIPC Regional Innovation Fund (RIF) is a \$200k award that supports RBIA/RAMP operations & various ecosystem building activities to help grow the innovation ecosystem.

### 2024 RAMP Highlights To Date:

- Pitch & Polish Clinics Hosted **3**
  - Number of Startups Served **8**
- Fralin Fellow Graduates **3**
- Startups Served with On RAMP **5**
- Entrepreneurs Engaged **62**
- Mentors Engaged **41**
- In Residence Programs **2**
  - Tech Startups Accelerated **3**
  - H&LS Startups Accelerated **4**
- RAMP Non-Equity Cohort Funding, Supported by VIPC **\$140k total (\$20k/each)**
- Exit RAMP Alumni Firms Served **32**
- Alumni Businesses Expanded **21**
- Products Launched **21**
- SBIR/STTR Apps Submitted **23**
- Jobs Created (Full & Part Time) **66**
- Total Capital Raised **\$1.87M**

## Growing the Regional Innovation Ecosystem

## Advancing Biotech

**Roanoke Biotech Project:** Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development awarded \$15.7M to the City of Roanoke (2022), which RBIA received \$2.2M to support an innovation studio & programming, new labs & workspace for biotech companies. Construction & programming efforts are on track for the lab space to open in the fall of 2025! These project funds also awarded 46 WVCC biotechnology student scholarships in 2024.

**Ecosystem Navigator Program (ENP):** A new, no cost, program was launched for early-stage startups & entrepreneurs to reduce their barriers to entry & provide an overview of regional entrepreneur support organizations, ecosystem connections & introductions. In 2024, 20 entrepreneurs were served through it.

## Leading Ecosystem Building Activities



**TechNite:** On May 8, 500 registrants celebrated & honored 12 innovation recipients (out of the 60 nominations submitted), including the Hart of the Entrepreneur Award presented to Tiny Cargo Co. The RBTC has 211 members & hosts 50 events annually.

**Disrupt Up Conference:** RBTC hosted its first annual conference, Nov. 14-15, for 250 attendees at The Hotel Roanoke to share global knowledge & resources with the ecosystem on emerging technologies, trends, social impact, best practices, and more, on AI. Three event tracks were offered in biotechnology, technology & entrepreneurship, with 40+ subject matter expert presenters. Over one-third of conference participants attended as it relates to talent attraction/development, and/or coalition building.

**Tech Talent Initiatives:** RBTC elevated regional tech talent by supporting career fairs, professional networking events & the launch of the inaugural 12-month ChangemakerZ tech talent cohort, with 14 early-stage STEM participants from 11 companies.

**RAMP Demo Days:** RAMP spring & fall 2024 cohorts each included Meet the Cohort & Demo Day events for 7 accelerated companies in 2024 to pitch before a live audience.

## Developing Resources Thanks to Our Sponsors

