

**Access to Capital Committee
Organizational Meeting, Notes/ Recap
August 8, 2019, 10:00 AM RAMP Roanoke**

Attendance: Hal Irvin, Mike Miller, James Ramey, Mary Miller, Keith Hartman, Kevin Carlson, Greg Feldmann, Sam English.

Phoned In: Rick Sorenson, Adam Donato, Stephen Turner.

Staff: Meredith Hundley, Ellen Plowman

Each participant introduced themselves and provided brief professional backgrounds.

Greg Feldmann reviewed findings from the capital landscape study. In general, the region fares well-concerning companies receiving acceleration funding and SBIR/STTR grants but does not compare favorably with comparable regions, as identified by GOVA, with respect to an angel, seed or venture capital investment. There was a discussion around the data sources and whether the region's numbers might be understated.

Sam English provided further background on the capital landscape study and the motivation behind the behind, forming the A2C Committee and its current composition. VIC staff will support the Committee's work, and co-chairs will be named at our next meeting. One co-chair will be appointed by VIC and the second will be elected from the group. There is a desire for the membership of the committee to be diverse and represent the various constituents of the regional capital ecosystem. In the discussion that followed suggestions were made to add representatives to the committee representing angels and women entrepreneurs.

A discussion followed about what the appropriate work should be of the A2C committee. There was a general consensus around picking issues to work on that this committee could directly impact. There were a variety of options discussed as to where the committee should focus its attention. Points raised in this discussion follow:

Need clarity around who exactly is our customer; then we can determine the best use of resources to assist them. The suggestion was made by Adam Donato to conduct customer discovery with founders and entrepreneurs.

Keith Hartman stated that there is a need for the development of a flow chart to map capital access and ecosystem resources to make it easier for founders to connect with the right people and programs.

Stephen Turner commented that in order to improve the quantity and velocity of very early-stage company formation, thought should be given to processes that accelerate the time and effort from ideation (or IP identification in a university) to licensing to company formation to MVP, etc. Compressing this time would help to reduce the risk of others emerging to compete in the same field.

Mike Miller suggested an area explore would be whether the VA universities are investing enough in IP versus peer state systems? Inadequate investment is limiting throughput, and the state's universities may be lagging their peers in other states.

Mary Miller shared that the region would benefit from having an identified program/place that could better assess the needs of a given company and then direct the company to the most appropriate resources. This stimulated a discussion about the need to better connect entrepreneurs to resources.

Greg Feldmann suggested that another role the Committee could play was to advocate for improvement in the state's tax credit program for making qualifying investments in small businesses. The tax credit is a proven inducement to attract angel investment. The example of Shenandoah Valley Angels was shared. So if Virginia wants to attract more investment using this tool as an incentive, consideration should be given to raising the dollar cap on the program. A better understanding of how tax credits are being used in competing states like Maryland and North Carolina may be helpful for building a case.

Kevin Carlson stated that consideration should be given to defining the capital ecosystem and better understanding its strengths and weaknesses, as well as identifying what we don't know. Creating more sustainable networks would be useful in this area.

Both Mary Miller and James Ramey supported creating more casual events between students, founders, and mentors (e.g., Million Cups program). Having additional casual events would help form relationships and networks.

Keith Hartman asked how we can address patents that are being generated by established regional businesses and help them drive commercial success? Keith, Greg Feldmann, and Mike Miller supported the idea of seeking to help established companies looking to bring innovations to market. Companies that have received grant funding like MicroHarmonics were cited as possible examples.

All parties were asked to consider their "homework assignment":

Confirm their interest in serving on the A2C Committee

Suggest additional individual members or types of members (e.g., female entrepreneurs)

Give further thought to what the work priorities should be

The strawman list of possible activities/objectives for the committee to consider will be circulated, and individuals will be asked to identify which items they are interested in. Staff will gather additional information on those topics for the next meeting.

A doodle poll will be sent to schedule the next meeting in late September or early October.

The meeting ended at noon.