

Virginia Counties Recognized for Model Programs



RICHMOND (August 29, 2024)—The Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) is pleased to announce the 45 recipients of the 2024 Achievement Awards, which recognize excellence in local government programs. VACo received 145 submissions.

Winning entries focused on addressing issues of housing, recreation, and communications, as well as finding solutions to other challenges that counties face daily.

[Winning Achievement Award Submissions](#)

[Winning Program Descriptions](#)

[2024 Achievement Awards Entries](#)

“Thank you to all who participated in the 22nd year of the Achievement Awards,” VACo Executive Director **Dean Lynch** said. “Last year we received 135 submissions, which was then our highest total ever. [This year 145 entries were submitted.](#) The program continues to grow because our member counties continue to do innovative work and find solutions to problems. The VACo Achievement Awards is a celebration of the hard work, good decision making, and problem-solving skills of county staffs and leadership.”

This year's judges were **Charles Hartgrove, ICMA-CM**, Managing Director of the Virginia Institute of Government; **Dr. Sheryl Bailey**, Visiting Professor of Practice at Virginia Tech, and former Chesterfield County Deputy County Administrator; and **Canova Peterson**, former Hanover County Supervisor.

Smyth County and its **Smyth Grow** program won this year's **Best Achievement Award**.

"Housing is currently a big issue in counties, and Smyth County has found a way to build 100 new homes for its workforce," Dr. Bailey said. "Beyond the revenues and social impact of 100 new homes, the program promises to stimulate economic growth by attracting new residents, bolstering local tax revenues, and supporting long-term community stability. The program also hopes to create a ripple effect of positive socioeconomic impacts, including enhanced educational opportunities, increased business retention, and improved quality of life for residents."

The judges also selected a Best Small County Achievement Award (50,000 or less population) and a Best Large County Achievement Award. **Floyd County** and its **Floyd County Scattered Site Housing Rehab** program captured the **Best Small County Achievement Award** while **Montgomery County** and its **Sensory Museum** program earned the **Best Large County Achievement Award**.

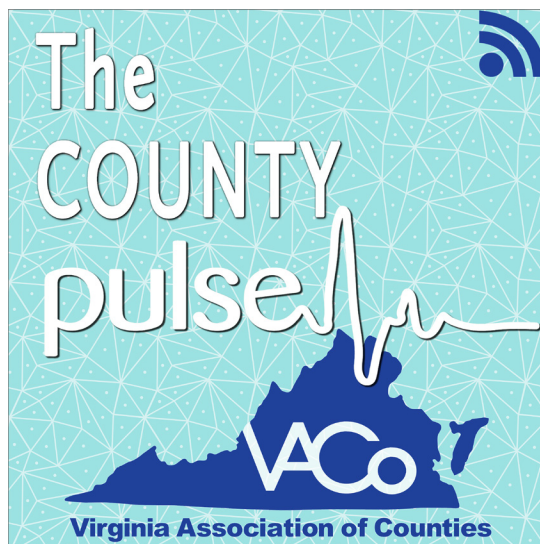
Hartgrove said Floyd County's winning program reflects an important criterion for the VACo Achievement Awards – collaboration. "Floyd County also tackled its housing challenge with an innovative program to rehab houses through broad collaboration," Hartgrove said. "What started as volunteers doing urgent repairs on the weekend for neighbors has grown into 10 organizations coordinating and contributing to home improvements around Floyd County. This is a replicable path in any rural county that is dedicated to improving housing."

Peterson praised Montgomery County for its unique program to help teens and adults with disabilities. "One positive takeaway from this program is that parents and caregivers often inquire about the materials used in the museum so they can replicate some of the tools in their homes after learning about the benefits of sensory play," Peterson said. "Montgomery County was able to make a direct and positive impact on an often-overlooked group of people."

Chesterfield County tops the all-time Achievement Awards list with 54. Chesterfield County has won an award in each year of the 22-year history of the program. **Henrico County** is second on the list with 46 Achievement Awards while **Loudoun County** is third with 31.

The VACo Achievement Awards is a competitive program open to local government members of the association.

[Winning Achievement Award Submissions](#) | [Winning Program Descriptions](#)
[Achievement Awards Website](#) | [2024 Achievement Awards Entries](#)
[Past Winners](#) | [Past Judges](#)



Season 4 | 2024 | Utility-Scale Solar Energy Landscape of Virginia Series with Joe Lerch

Energy Landscape of Virginia Episode 2 | Utility-Scale Solar | Part 1 [Listen to the Podcast](#)

Part 1. Utility-Scale Solar – Legislative Outlook with Dean Lynch

In the first of a 2-part episode, Joe Lerch sits down with VACo Executive Director Dean Lynch to discuss the big picture on state energy policy related to solar and recent attempts to preempt local authority on siting of facilities. Central to this discussion is the passage in 2020 of the [Virginia Clean Economy Act](#), which sets certain targets for deployment of utility-scale solar facilities.

Energy Landscape of Virginia Episode 2 | Utility-Scale Solar | Part 2 [Listen to the Podcast](#)

Part 2. Utility-Scale Solar – Erosion Control and Stormwater with Mike Rolband

In Part 2 of our episode on Utility-Scale Solar, Joe Lerch sits down with Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Director Mike Rolband to focus on issues related to erosion control and stormwater management. We learn about widespread and significant impacts due to developers not adhering to minimum requirements to prevent soil loss and runoff pollution. Director Rolband explains what DEQ has been doing to correct the situation through enforcement, education, and incentives. Counties are part of solving this problem and we'll learn the role they can play in avoiding and mitigating impacts to soils and waterways.

Additional Resources

- [Mike Rolband Slides](#) (specifically for the podcast).
- [Virginia Tech White Paper – Soil-Site Management Protocols & Best Management Practices \(BMPs\) for Utility Scale Solar Site \(USS\) Development and Management in Virginia](#)

VACo Submits Comments on OSHA's Proposed New Emergency Response Standard for Fire Brigades - Formal Hearing Set for November



VACo recently submitted [comments](#) to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regarding its proposed [rule](#) to modernize protections for emergency response workers, who often face substantial occupational hazards. While VACo understands the need to update the standards, we are concerned that the proposed changes, in their current form, could have a substantial impact and impose significant unfunded mandates on local fire organizations and governments. VACo has also informed the Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VD FP) of our concerns as they are coordinating state responses with the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI).

As previously [reported](#), this long-developed proposal, officially published in the Federal Register on February 5, 2024, though laudable in its intent, poses potential challenges for local fire organizations and local governments if implemented in its current form. Local governments across Virginia are struggling to maintain necessary fire services in a time of increased call volume, level state funding, and declining volunteerism. More than 70 percent of fire departments in Virginia are volunteer organizations. If the proposed rule goes through in its current form, it will pose yet one more challenge to local governments in the form of an unfunded mandate.

In terms of next steps, OSHA published a [notice](#) in July announcing a formal hearing on the proposed emergency standard that will be held on Tuesday, November 12 at 9:30 a.m. Additional information if you are interested in testifying and/or submitting questions can be found [here](#). VACo has registered and encourages interested members and/or their fire services organizations to register and also submit testimony.

VACo joins the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National League of Cities (NCL) who also submitted comments. NACo is also part of a workgroup with the Small Business Administration's (SBA) office of advocacy that will have a call on September 20th in which more information on the hearing and other potential updates around the proposed rule will be discussed. More information and NACo's comments can be found [here](#).

According to VD FP, a final standard from OSHA could take several years to be published. VACo will continue to engage and provide updates on this issue as they develop.

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

PHOTO SOURCE:
[Virginia Department of
Historic Resources](#)



Visit Nottoway County and the Nottoway County Historic Courthouse

Location: 328 West Courthouse Road / Old Nottoway Road

Built: 1839 – 1843

Style: Greek Revival / Roman Revival

Architect: Branch H Ellington

Contractor: Branch H Ellington

Description: The building faces east and is a one story red colored brick structure. The building is located on spacious grounds in the center of Nottoway. The east front of the “H” shaped building has a large portico with four white colored columns rising to a pediment at the roof line. The roof is hipped. In the interior, the courtroom occupies the center of the building. The building houses the County Circuit Court, County General District Court and Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court of the 11th Judicial District. The County Clerk’s Office is a separate building on the north side of the courthouse. The General District Court is attached to the rear of County Clerk’s Office.

Note: Because of its wide lawn it was often the site of “settling disputes.” In 1818 Dr. Jack Hardaway and Dr. George Bacon fought it out with dirks. After both men collapsed, George Bacon was carried to the jury room. He died there. When Jack Hardaway recovered from eleven stab wounds he was brought to trial. He was acquitted.

SOURCE: courthouses.co

VACo 2024 REGIONAL MEETINGS

IN-PERSON MEETINGS

REGIONS 1&4 - MAY 1 | PRINCE GEORGE

REGION 2 - MAY 22 | JAMES CITY

REGION 13 - JUNE 11 | SCOTT

REGIONS 10&12 - JULY 10 | FLOYD

REGION 3 - JULY 25 | HANOVER

VIRTUAL MEETINGS

REGIONS 5&9&11 - AUGUST 19

REGIONS 6&7 - SEPTEMBER 23

REGION 8 - SEPTEMBER 26



Join us for an upcoming lunch and learn opportunity that may be beneficial for your county. VACo members are invited to a Lunch and Learn to hear about the current trends OneDigital is seeing in employee benefits, wellness management, and AI for employers and individuals in Virginia Counties, and some solutions they can bring to the table.

The Lunch and Learn is on September 25, 2024 from 11AM-1PM at the VACo Training Center, 1207 E. Main St., First Floor, Richmond, VA 23219.

Complimentary lunch will be provided by [Café Rustika](#). Please RSVP to Sarah Struckmann at sarah.struckmann@onedigital.com by September 18.

Please share this opportunity with your Board of Supervisors members and County staff.



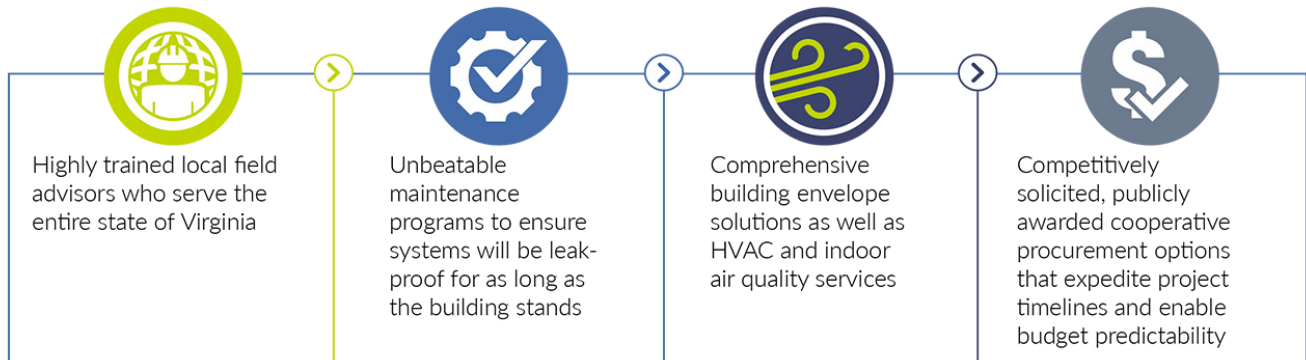
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LISTEN

- prioritize facility needs
- identify goals and objectives
 - establish energy baseline
 - identify savings opportunities
 - determine project costs and guarantees
 - create construction schedule
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 - secure financing incentives, grants, rebates



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For Immediate Release

1 September 2024

Contact: Nelson County, 434-263-7000



Grace Mawyer Named Nelson County Director of Finance and Human Resources

County Administrator Candice McGarry announced today the appointment of Grace Mawyer as Director of Finance and Human Resources for Nelson County. Mawyer officially began her new role on August 26th.

Grace Mawyer brings with her 10 years of experience in governmental finance and accounting, with the majority of that time spent in local government finance. County Administrator Candy McGarry expressed excitement about welcoming back a competent and strong leader who is well-versed in the County's budget, finance, and human resources processes within the department. McGarry noted that Grace stood out from a list of qualified applicants and emphasized the organization's fortune in having her extensive institutional knowledge of Nelson County Finance and HR carry forward into a greater role within the organization. Mawyer is currently also a candidate of the Uniform CPA exam. McGarry added, "The County takes pride in acquiring top talent, particularly individuals who will further enhance its reputation as a well-managed and fiscally responsible locality."

"It is a great honor to have been chosen as the next Director of Finance and Human Resources for Nelson County," Mawyer stated. "Being selected as the next leader of this exceptional team of professionals is a truly meaningful moment. I am excited to carry on the exemplary financial management of County resources, and I am extremely thankful for the chance to keep serving the citizens of Nelson County in my new position," she added.

####



Please take a moment to watch [this video of Dan's transplant journey](#).

Dinwiddie County Supervisor Dan Lee's Heart and Liver Transplant Journey

It's been this way for years at VACo events. Members of the Dinwiddie County Board of Supervisors walking together, eating together, and supporting each other. But at last year's VACo Annual Conference, there was one member noticeably absent – Supervisor Dan Lee.

Dan was at VCU Medical Center waiting for a heart and a liver transplant. The long idle days were made a little easier as family and friends visited. His wife Alicia rarely left his side. Fellow Dinwiddie County Supervisor Bill Chavis cut Dan's hair. Dan was re-elected and sworn in for his fourth term on the Board of Supervisors while in the Intensive Care Unit. His stay in the ICU would last through Thanksgiving, then the first week of December, then the second week.

But then... just before Virginia Tech's Military Bowl Game, and just before Santa delivered his gifts, Dan got the call he knew would come. There was a heart and a liver available. And they were a perfect match.

On December 17, after 44 days in ICU, doctors prepped Dan for his new heart and liver. His faith never wavered because so many times before God had carried him through the tough times. Dan also felt the prayers, from family and friends and even strangers far away, giving him strength to endure the long days as life's uncertain direction teetered back and forth.

When Dan woke from his transplant – his first question was whether he had a new heart or an artificial heart. There are times when the body rejects the new heart, and an artificial heart is transplanted. Everything was fine, he was told. He could feel his new heart, beating, thumping,

[More on Next Page](#)



making the sounds of life. The road to recovery held many challenges. It required faith, strength, courage, and patience.

On January 9, after 67 days at VCU Medical Center, Dan Lee transferred to Sheltering Arms to begin his rehab. Nine days later, Dan played six holes of Putt-Putt Golf, and word is that he destroyed the competition. On January 23, after 81 days, Dan was able to return to his home in DeWitt.

The milestones kept coming. He returned to Board meetings. He celebrated his 43rd wedding anniversary with Alicia. He threw out the first pitch at a Dinwiddie Dixie Softball Game. He attended his granddaughter's first communion. He went to his granddaughters' softball games, to a dance recital, to a piano recital. He held his 9th grandchild the day after he was born. He was spoiled on Father's Day. He swung his driver on a golf course. He celebrated a birthday. Dan lived and continues to live life. Sweet life.

Dan – your strength and resilience through this journey are inspirations to many of us. May God continue to bless you and your family and friends.

Workgroup Discusses Alternatives to State Hospitalization



A workgroup convened to evaluate and recommend alternative options for individuals with neurocognitive disorders and neurodevelopmental disabilities who may otherwise be admitted to state psychiatric hospitals continued its discussions last week.

Legislation considered by the 2024 General Assembly directed the establishment of this workgroup; these companion bills ([HB 888 \(Watts\)](#) and [SB 176 \(Favola\)](#)) stemmed from a [2023 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission \(JLARC\) study of the state hospital system](#), which found that individuals with neurocognitive disorders (such as dementia or traumatic brain injuries) or neurodevelopmental disorders (such as autism) were not well served by state hospitals. JLARC's report recommended that behaviors and symptoms that are solely the result of these disorders be excluded from the definition of "mental illness" for the purposes of temporary detention orders (TDOs) and civil commitments, and that state hospitals be allowed to deny admission to an individual under a TDO or civil commitment whose behaviors resulted solely from these disorders. However, JLARC staff suggested that such a policy change be enacted with a delayed effective date, due to concerns about the lack of alternative placements for individuals with neurocognitive or neurodevelopmental disorders who are in crisis. In keeping with this recommended delay in implementation, HB 888 and SB 176 would stipulate that behaviors or symptoms that manifest from a neurocognitive disorder or a neurodevelopmental disability are not sufficient, in themselves, to constitute mental illness, but the bills must be passed again in 2025 in order to take effect; the bills also contained language directing the convening of the workgroup.

As directed by the legislative language, the workgroup is required to:

- (i) evaluate the current availability of placements for individuals with neurocognitive disorders and neurodevelopmental disabilities who would otherwise be placed in state psychiatric hospitals;
- (ii) identify and develop placements and services other than state psychiatric hospitals that would better support such individuals, especially individuals whose behaviors or symptoms are solely a manifestation of such disorders and disabilities, including through enhanced Medicaid reimbursements and a Medicaid waiver for individuals with neurocognitive disorders;

[More on Next Page](#)

- (iii) specify any additional funding or statutory changes needed to prevent inappropriate placements of such individuals in state psychiatric hospitals; and
- (iv) provide recommendations for training of magistrates and community services boards.

A report is due by November 1, 2024.

The August 29 meeting featured perspectives from various stakeholder groups. Rebecca Morgan, President of the League of Social Services Executives, noted that social services directors were considering the workgroup's charges as they related to adult protective services cases as well as to the challenges experienced by local departments of social services in finding placements for children in foster care with intense needs, many of whom have co-occurring mental health and other diagnoses, including autism, and many of whom also have experienced trauma from past abuse and neglect. She encouraged the workgroup to look at ways to build provider and community capacity to meet these children's needs.

Staff from the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) presented information on current efforts to enhance community options for individuals leaving state hospitals and being served by assisted living facilities or nursing facilities, as well as an overview of the variety of services licensed by DBHDS that are intended to provide alternatives to inpatient hospitalization. A representative of the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association addressed the specialized treatment needs of individuals with neurocognitive or neurodevelopmental disabilities and the challenges experienced by hospitals in serving these individuals. He encouraged additional support for specialty hospital units, as well as support for specialized community providers, nursing facilities, and group homes to reduce the need for hospitalization.

The Virginia Health Care Association, which represents assisted living facilities and nursing facilities, discussed pilot projects in two localities that assist nursing facility staff in serving individuals with neurocognitive and neurodevelopmental disorders, and encouraged workgroup members to consider enhancements to reimbursement rates to reflect the costs to serve residents with behavioral health needs.

Jonathan Green, who coordinates magistrate services through the Office of the Executive Secretary, explained the process by which a magistrate issues a temporary detention order. Mr. Green explained that if the changes to the definition of mental illness included in HB 188/SB 176 were to be enacted, it may be challenging for magistrates to make a determination that actions and behaviors are the result of a neurocognitive or neurodevelopmental disorder, rather than a co-occurring mental illness, since magistrates are not clinicians and are generally relying on information from the Community Services Board and the treating physician in a fluid, time-constrained process in determining whether Code criteria have been met.

Jennifer Faison, Executive Director of the Virginia Association of Community Services Boards, echoed the diagnostic challenges articulated by Mr. Green, noting that CSB staff are often evaluating individuals they have only just met, and expressing concern about the lack of alternative options for individuals who would be barred from state hospitals under the legislation. She encouraged the workgroup to support recommendations that would assist caregivers, both paid and unpaid, in crisis situations; build out levels of care associated with crisis receiving centers; support workforce development; and ensure that funding levels keep pace with increases in caseloads.

At its next meeting, the workgroup will hear presentations from the Department of Medical Assistance Services, as well as from family members of individuals with neurocognitive or neurodevelopmental disorders. Preliminary themes discussed for potential recommendations included the importance of diversion and evidence-based models of care; the need to enhance supports for caregivers; the importance of improving workforce training; the importance of improving communication among service providers; and the need to build a continuum of services.

VACo Contact: [Katie Boyle](#)

Public Body Procurement Workgroup Considers Draft Recommendations to Information Technology Access Act (ITAA) Bill



The [Public Body Procurement Workgroup](#) met on Wednesday, September 4 to finalize recommendations to [HB 1355 \(Tran\)](#). The workgroup's recommendations significantly reduce the potential impact to local governments compared to the bill in its original form. VACo testified to concerns over the bill at a previous meeting of the workgroup and appreciates the work of the patron and the workgroup to make recommendations with fewer unintended consequences to public bodies.

As previously [reported](#), the bill in its original form would expand the Information Technology Access Act (ITAA) to include information and communication and information technology access for individuals with disabilities at the state and local level, including K-12 school divisions. The bill sought to bring the ITAA into compliance with the overlapping protections for Virginians with disabilities from federal and state laws and regulations. The Senate General Laws and Technology Committee voted unanimously to carry the bill over to 2025 and to send the bill to the Department of General Services Procurement workgroup to study how to modernize the ITAA and to address information technology using the bill as a starting point.

The bill in its original form would likely have imposed significant fiscal impacts to local governments. Though not opposed to the intent of the bill to expand digital access, testimony from VACo and VAcorp estimated that this could have been in the realm of more than tens of millions of dollars statewide, well beyond current provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The workgroup's draft [recommendations](#) instead mainly seek to conform Virginia Code with provisions of the ADA, while also increasing transparency by requiring covered public entities to publish on their websites who should be contacted when an accessibility barrier is identified. The workgroup also suggested several other minor changes to the draft recommendations, which will be drafted and then presented to the workgroup at a subsequent meeting, mostly September 17.

VACo will continue to engage and provide updates as needed on the progress of the workgroup and if these recommendations are turned into legislation for the 2025 General Assembly session.

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

VACo Writes Letter to DEA, FDA, and Virginia Congressional Delegation on Federal Regulatory Changes to Prescription Drug Box Program

VACo recently sent a [letter](#) to Administrator Anne Milgram of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Commissioner Robert M. Califf of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and members of the Virginia Congressional Delegation expressing concerns over federal regulatory changes associated with the Drug Supply Chain Security Act, 21 U.S.C. § 351 et seq. (DSCSA), and the Protecting Patient Access to Emergency Medications Act, 21 U.S.C. § 823, which will cause major changes to the Virginia's Prescription Drug Program. VACo urges the FDA and DEA to consider the unique circumstances of Virginia's EMS providers and work collaboratively with state and local agencies to develop a regulatory framework that ensures compliance without imposing undue burdens on local governments. Specifically, we request that federal agencies explore options for maintaining the viability of the Prescription Drug Box Program while aligning with federal law.

As previously [reported](#), hospitals have indicated that they will no longer provide and exchange drug kits with Emergency Medical Service (EMS) providers as of November 27, 2024, the date the FDA has indicated that it will begin enforcing additional requirements of the DSCSA impacting hospital pharmacies. This unique program to Virginia, also known colloquially as prescription drug boxes, has, for years, performed an important part of emergency service provision in Virginia, which is also uniquely reliant upon volunteer EMS providers, as it allows EMS vehicles to ensure they are fully stocked to provide needed drugs to patients in transport or at accident sites. While seemingly condoned by the DEA, the [Virginia Board of Pharmacy](#) (BOP) has opined that the kit exchange process is not fully compliant with DEA requirements as drugs are not exclusively transferred between DEA registrants or provided to an EMS agency working as an extension of a specific hospital DEA registration. This could upend existing local EMS practices and impose significant financial and/or staffing burdens upon local governments.

Additionally, emergency [regulations](#) from the Virginia Department of Health Professions completed their regulatory review process and were published on Virginia Regulatory Town Hall on August 16th. These changes do much to address fundamental challenges EMS providers and local governments face in trying to comply with the federal regulations. However, many localities and EMS providers may still struggle to implement changes.

VACo will provide updates on this issue as they become available. If your county or EMS providers are still struggling to implement changes to the prescription drug box program as a result of the new regulations or are facing delays in the approval of waivers submitted to the FDA, VACo encourages you to contact members of your congressional delegation for assistance. A useful compilation of additional information and resources provided by the Peninsulas EMS Councils can be found [here](#).

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

VRS Reports Return of 9.9% and Hits Record High for the Fund



According to the [Virginia Retirement System](#) (VRS), the Fund reported a 9.9% return, net of fees, on its investment portfolio for fiscal year 2024, ending the year with a market value of approximately \$113.9 billion, a record high.

“VRS executes its investment strategy and decisions keeping the best interests of VRS members, retirees and beneficiaries as a foundational tenet,” said VRS Board of Trustees Chair A. Scott Andrews. “The fund has exceeded the 6.75% assumed rate of return and its custom benchmark for the five-, 10-, 15- and 20-year periods. As a long-term investor, VRS has positioned the fund to meet its obligations to our teachers, first responders and other public servants now and well into the future.”

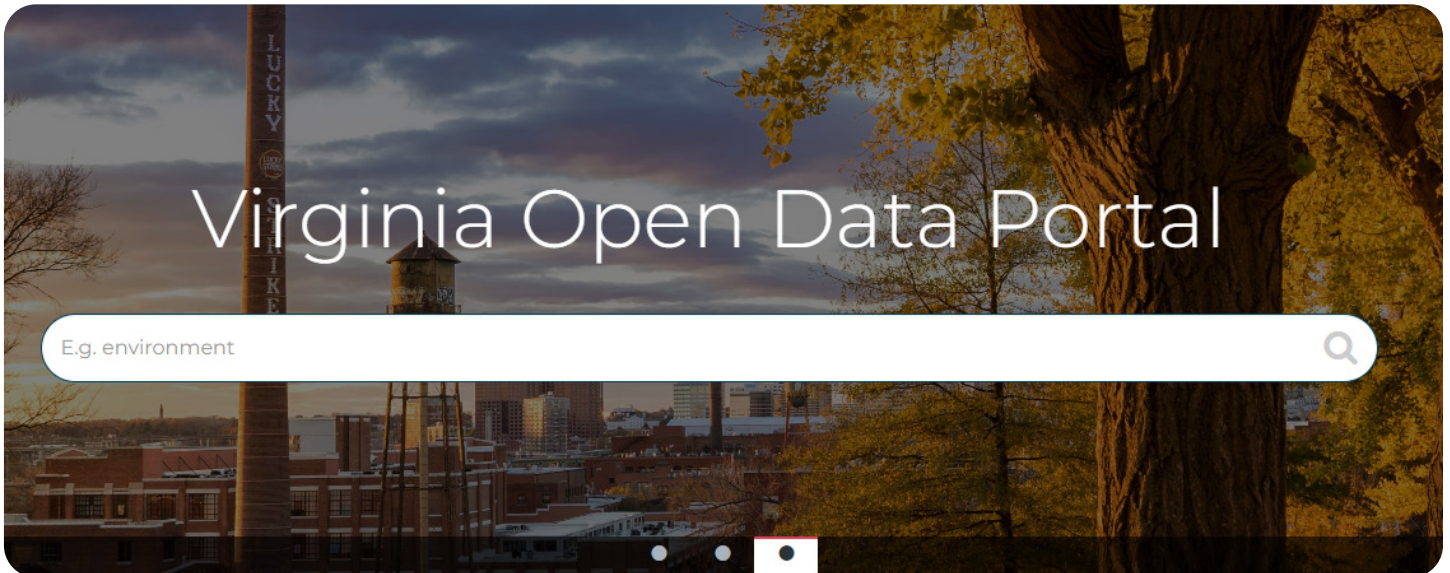
“Our work is focused on generating long-term returns while managing risks,” added Chief Investment Officer Andrew Junkin. “A highly diversified portfolio is central to our strategy. Through active management, our investment team has added approximately \$7.2 billion to the portfolio over the past decade. That’s especially important because investment earnings fund about two-thirds of benefit payments to VRS retirees and beneficiaries.”

The major asset classes performed as follows for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024:

- Public equity program returned 20.1%
- Private equity program returned 5.8%
- Real assets program returned -3.2%
- Credit strategies program returned 11.7%
- Diversifying strategies returned 9.7%
- Private investment partnerships returned 8.2%
- Fixed income program returned 3.8%

A short video of Chief Investment Officer Andrew Junkin further explaining the significance of this milestone can be viewed [here](#).

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



DISCOVER THE VIRGINIA OPEN DATA PORTAL



VACo Members - Check out the [Virginia Open Data Portal](#), which is managed by the Virginia Office of Data Governance and Analytics.

The Open Data Portal serves to provide access to Commonwealth of Virginia State datasets to constituents of Virginia. Capabilities of the portal include viewing and exporting data, viewing APIs, and exploring visualizations.

Overall, the portal promotes government transparency by working to provide access to data in one centralized location. The portal now hosts over 2,000 state datasets, and the ODGA team works to add new datasets from state agencies daily.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: odga@odga.virginia.gov

[VISIT THE VIRGINIA OPEN DATA PORTAL](#)



Greetings from the Opioid Abatement Authority!

The financial management of your opioid settlement funds can be confusing! There are various different national settlements, specific state law requirements, different kinds of reporting requirements, and OAA terms and conditions that all must be understood by local government finance officials. In addition, because the payments will occur over a nearly twenty-year period, long-term planning for these revenues (and associated expenses) can be a budgeting challenge.

As part of the OAA's award-winning "Abatement Academy" series, **the OAA is hosting a free webinar on Thursday September 12 from 10-11am entitled, "Financial management of opioid settlement funds (including grants) for Virginia cities and counties."**

The presentation will feature Ms. Virginia Lovell, Director of Finance for the City of Newport News, and Mr. Adam Rosatelli, Director of Finance for the Opioid Abatement Authority. The presentation will provide an overview of the various types of settlements and grants that are available, and a case study of how Newport News created a long-term balanced budget that plans for the use of these funds over a period of multiple years.

Register now to join this free webinar by clicking [this link](#).



Welcome to

The Opioid Abatement Authority

New funding/ grant opportunity for cities and counties

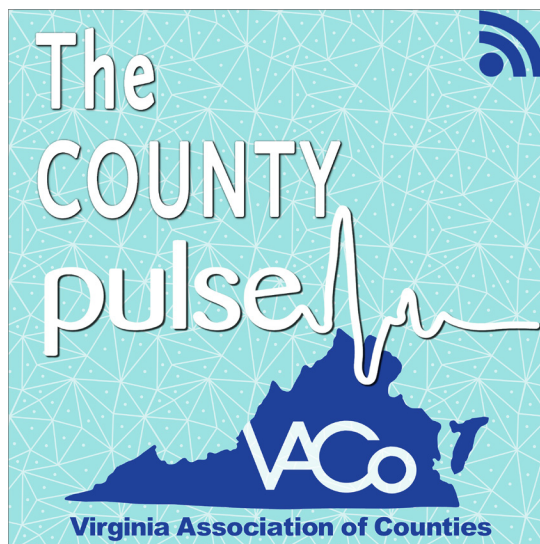
Here is a [link](#) to a new grant opportunity for cities and counties in Virginia. This is a \$2 million item in the state budget, using opioid settlement funds, to pay for jail-based substance use treatment and transition. The grant is administered by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS).

VACo encourages you to consider [this funding source](#) to help meet challenging jail expenses directly related to substance use treatment and transition.



Navigating the Future of Public Finance: 2024 Top 10 Economic Outlook Mid-Year Update

This session will provide a comprehensive review of key economic developments and trends of 2024, including interest rates, inflation, and the evolving role of cash. Joe Rulison, CEO of three+one, shares valuable insights into how these factors will impact county governments for the remainder of the year.



Season 4 | 2024 | Data Centers Energy Landscape of Virginia Series with Joe Lerch

Energy Landscape of Virginia Episode 1 | Data Centers | Part 1

[Listen to the Podcast](#)

Part 1. Listen in as Joe Lerch interviews Chris Kimm, Senior Vice President of Global Customer Care and Experience at Equinix, an American multi-national corporation that builds and operates data centers. Learn about the data center business, and how they provide a seamless and instantaneous experience for commerce, industry, education, and social interactions. In so doing we touch on a range of topics including energy consumption, water use and how advances in artificial intelligence (AI) programs are driving demand for more computing power.

Energy Landscape of Virginia Episode 1 | Data Centers | Part 2

[Listen to the Podcast](#)

Part 2. Listen in as Joe Lerch takes a tour of the Equinix facility in Loudoun County. Before hitting the floor to see where all the processing and storage takes place, Chris Kimm with Equinix guides us through the various components of the power to run the data center.

Energy Landscape of Virginia Episode 1 | Data Centers | Part 3

[Listen to the Podcast](#)

Part 3. Listen in as Joe Lerch interviews Loudoun County Vice Chair and VACo Board Member Juli Briskman. We learn how the industry has transformed their community, what steps they've taken in terms of planning for its growth and impacts, and what other counties should consider when the industry comes knocking on the door.

Additional Resources

- [Loudoun County Specific Design Standards for Data Centers](#) – see page 55
- [Loudoun County Project Plan for Data Center Standards and Locations](#)

VACo Invites Leaders to Run for Second Vice President



Virginia Association of Counties (VACo)
1207 East Main Street
Richmond, VA 23219

August 19, 2024

Dear County Official,

As the Chairperson of the VACo Nominations Committee, I am reaching out to invite dedicated and passionate individuals to consider running for the position of VACo Second Vice President. This role is crucial in shaping the future direction and success of our association.

If you are interested in serving in this leadership capacity, please submit your resume or biography along with a statement of interest to Dean Lynch, VACo Executive Director. Your submission should reflect your qualifications, experiences, and vision for VACo.

We are grateful for your willingness to contribute your time and expertise to our association. Your participation in this process is invaluable and greatly appreciated.

Please send your materials to Dean Lynch at the following address or email:

Dean Lynch, Executive Director
Virginia Association of Counties (VACo)
1207 East Main Street
Richmond, VA 23219
Email: dlynch@vaco.org

Thank you for your commitment to VACo and your interest in serving in a leadership role.

Sincerely,



Mary W. Biggs
Chairperson, VACo Nominations Committee

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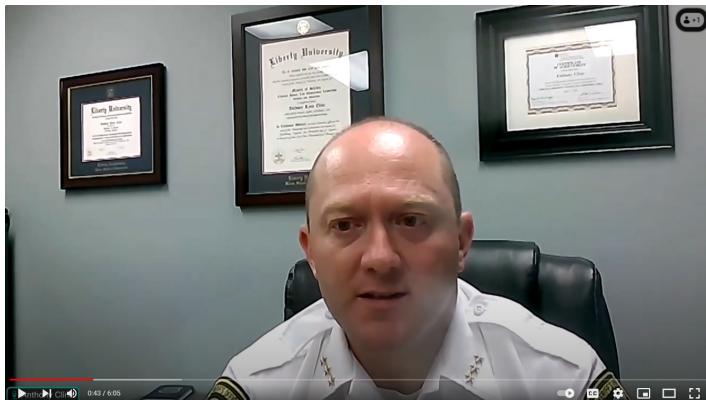
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Thank you Wythe County Chief Deputy [Anthony Cline](#) for sharing your experience with Blue Line Solutions!



Thank you Sussex County Sheriff [Ernest Giles](#) for sharing your experience with Blue Line Solutions!

Premier Partner Spotlight

Blue Line Solutions Testimonials

Blue Line Solutions is making a positive impact on communities all over Virginia. In Smyth County - **Blue Line Solutions** recorded during a five-day period that there were 3,530 vehicles traveling through school speed zones at 10mph or higher above the speed limit. That's over 12,000 speeding vehicles a month during school days.

Blue Line Solutions uses information and communications rather than focus on enforcement to reduce speeds in school zones.

During **Blue Line Solutions** Public Information Phase of its program in Smyth County - the number dropped to 213 over a five-day period. That's without writing one ticket. The community heard the problem and reacted to it. During the warning phase - the number dropped to 175. Then during the enforcement phase - it dropped to 72. That's a 98 percent reduction of speeders compared to before the **Blue Line Solutions** program.

"That's absolutely fantastic that we can make a difference in a community," Blue Line Solutions CEO/Founder Mark Hutchinson said.

VACo 90th Annual Conference

November 10 – 12, 2024

The Omni Homestead | Bath County



This year's Annual Conference theme - **“Energizing County Governments”** - was selected because of VACo's collective energy and momentum that has jolted counties to many successes. We are proud of our accomplishments and service to our communities.

Join county and state leaders from all over the Commonwealth on November 10-12 at the Omni Homestead for [VACo's 90th Annual Conference](#).

Aetna® Statewide Wellness Campaign Brings Comprehensive Master Planning and Wellness Programming to Your County

VACo Premier Partner Aetna believes healthier happens together. That's why Aetna has teamed up with [National Fitness Campaign](#) to address health disparities by increasing access to health and wellness solutions for Virginia Counties.

In Part 1 of this video series, you'll hear from **Dean Lynch**, VACo Executive Director, **Trent Matthias**, National Fitness Campaign Director, **Bill Deal**, Head of Sales, Public Sector and Labor, Keystone and Capital Markets of Aetna on the exciting new statewide sponsorship and what it can deliver for your county.

In Part 2, learn more about the feasibility study process available for your county and hear from leaders in Virginia like [Pulaski County](#) and the [Town of Dumfries](#) who have successfully launched and integrated the comprehensive wellness campaign in their communities.

Additional Resources

- [Virginia Campaign](#) – Funding Outdoor Fitness Courts across the state
- [Campaign Video](#) – How the fitness court campaign got started, how it works, and how it involves and impacts communities.
- [Outdoor Fitness Court in Pulaski County](#)
- [Outdoor Fitness Court in the Town of Dumfries](#)
- Please click [here](#) to learn more about getting started!

Aetna Contact

Marcus Duckworth, VP, Client Management | DuckworthM@aetna.com



Part 1

[Discover how Aetna's exciting new statewide wellness program can help your county](#)



Part 2

[Hear from Pulaski County and the Town of Dumfries, which have successfully launched and integrated Aetna's comprehensive wellness campaign](#)



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Questions?

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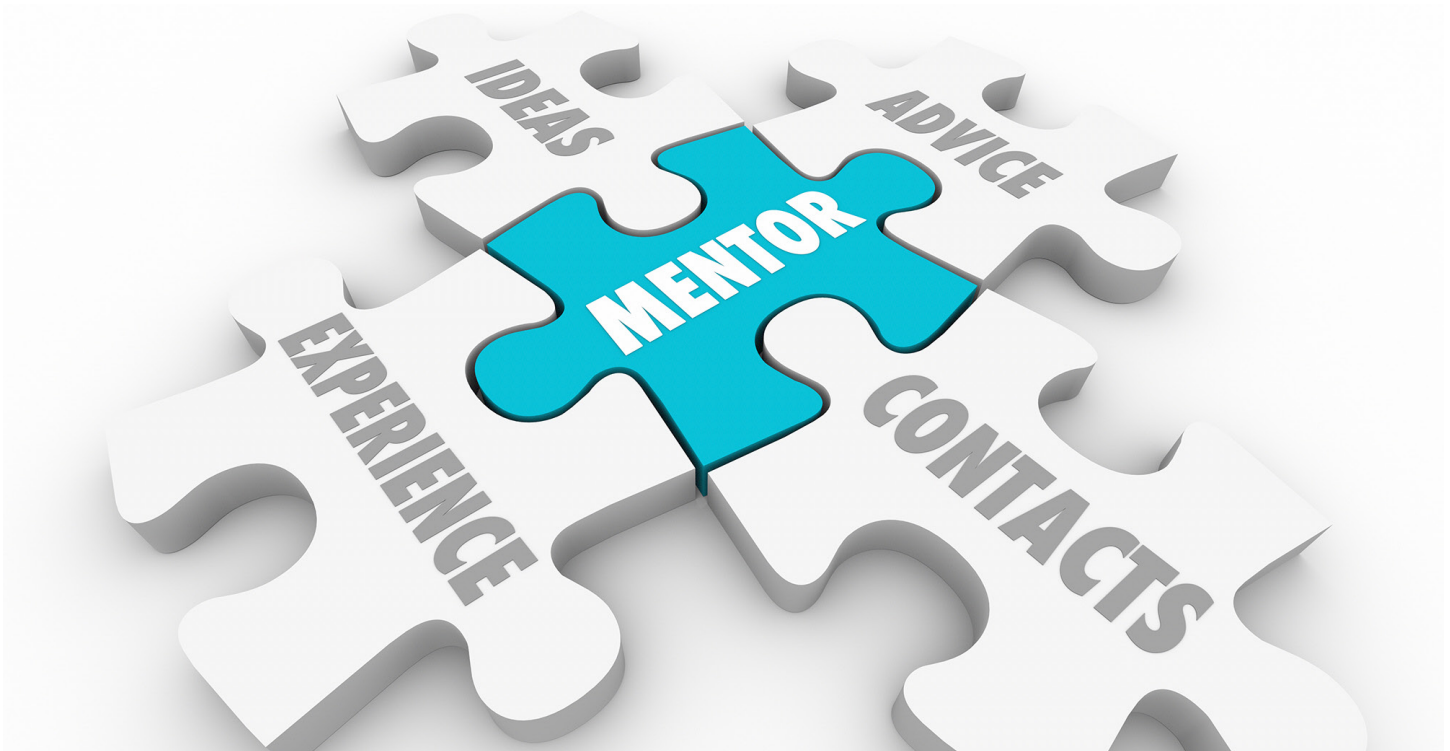
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VACo Seeks to Create Mentorship Program for Supervisors



Dear Members/County Administrators...

VACo is blessed to have many smart and experienced Supervisors. This year we welcomed a slew of newly elected Supervisors, some of whom have expressed interest in being mentored. VACo thrives when Supervisors connect and share experiences and challenges. Therefore, we would like to establish an informal, voluntary mentoring program to offer opportunities for personalized connections among Supervisors.

If you are interested in being a mentor or being connected with a mentor, please contact Karie Walker, kwalker@vaco.org or 804-343-2504.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Karie Walker
Director of Programs and Development
Virginia Association of Counties



You are VAcorp

You are not merely a customer of VAcorp; you **are** VAcorp! We are both owned and governed by you – our members! VAcorp is created under 15.2-2700 of the local government code where all assets and surplus belong to the members. In addition, VAcorp is controlled by a Supervisory Board that is elected from and by our members. The Board determines and approves all major risk pool decisions, and as a voting member, you have a voice in the decisions that matter most.

Know Who You Are

Because you are VAcorp itself, we think it is critical that you understand exactly what VAcorp is and why it exists. Many simply think of us as their “insurance carrier” – writing customized coverages and handling claims when they occur – but we are so much more!

Our History

The Birth of Risk Pools

VAcorp is not an insurance company, but rather a Risk Pool.

Unstable economic conditions in the mid-1980s led to a commercial insurance crisis with ballooning premiums and widespread policy cancellations. As a result, Risk Pools began to form as an alternative to volatile traditional carriers, allowing Pool members to exert more control over their coverages and costs. Today, almost all public sector entities throughout the country get their coverage from Risk Pools rather than from commercial insurance companies.

VAcorp’s Origin

VAcorp was founded by a handful of Virginia counties in 1993. The ultimate goals of the program were to provide **cost stability**, the most **comprehensive coverages** possible, and **custom services** tailored specifically to the unique needs of our members. While we are pleased by how well our prices compare against the competition, our goal was never to guarantee the lowest cost. Instead, we promised to avoid the wild price swings that we’ve seen in other providers and provide stable pricing year after year, and that is exactly what we have delivered. VAcorp rates are actually **lower today in 2024 than they were in 1993!**

VAcorp’s Growth

Today, VAcorp is the **largest self-insurance risk pool** for public sector entities in the Commonwealth with a membership retention rate of better than 98%. Over the years, we have expanded beyond counties to include municipalities, school divisions, authorities, volunteer fire & rescue companies, state agencies, and non-profits funded by taxpayer dollars. **Over 560 members** have joined VAcorp, including 8 of the 10 largest counties, 8 of the 10 largest cities, and 8 of the 10 largest school divisions. We believe that the extraordinary success of the program can be attributed to our unwavering commitment to our founding principles.

VAcorp Exists to Serve You

VAcorp was created solely to serve Virginia's public sector entities, and from day one until now, we have never lost sight of that purpose. Because we answer only to our members, every decision is designed to benefit the group over the long haul.

VAcorp advocates for local government through a myriad of partnerships with affiliated associations including: VACo, VSBA, VLGMA, VASS, VFGOA, VASBO, LGA, Regional Jail Association, PDC, etc. While there is a cost associated with these partnerships, they add value to the group by aiding in our ability to lobby the General Assembly on behalf of our members.

You may not always see the immediate payoff, but every VAcorp decision is made in alignment with our vision to serve our members and promote the health and longevity of your program.

Take a look at a few of VAcorp's milestones over the years:

- **1993** - VAcorp is established with 12 founding members and less than \$700,000 in annual contribution.
- **1998** - VAcorp terminates service contract with claims administration vendor and hires staff to promote more control and efficiency.
- **1999** - VAcorp offers coverage to K-12 Public Schools across the Commonwealth.
- **2001** - VAcorp begins offering Public Officials Liability coverage in response to VARisk offering limited coverage.
- **2004** - VAcorp begins providing Environmental Liability coverage to all members at no additional cost. Even in 2024, VAcorp is the only provider offering this coverage with a low \$25,000 deductible. Other providers offer this coverage with a \$250,000 deductible.
- **2008** - VAcorp responded to the great recession by freezing rates and providing financial relief with over \$8,000,000 in dividends to members.
- **2011** - VAcorp introduces Line of Duty Act (LODA) coverage, creates the only LODA trust in the state, and absorbs existing LODA losses in response to the state pushing this cost to the local level. VAcorp paid all of its members' 2010 past liability for over \$1,000,000.
- **2013** - VAcorp merges with the VSBA Self-Insurance Group and assumes their liabilities to prevent School Boards from being assessed. This action saves Local Governments in excess of \$5,000,000.
- **2013** - VAcorp becomes the first to offer Cyber Risk coverage in Virginia offering the broadest coverage available to local governments anywhere in the US.
- **2016** - VAcorp offers Student Accident and Catastrophic Accident coverage in order to fill VHSL coverage gaps.
- **2020** - VAcorp provides over \$5,000,000 in rate credits during the COVID pandemic to assist members.
- **2023** - VAcorp includes security risk management coverage (active shooter) for all members (coverage has been included for Schools since 2013).





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

What truly distinguishes OneDigital as a leading **insurance, financial services, and HR consulting advisory firm** is our holistic approach to creating environments that enable people to do their best work and live their best lives. OneDigital understands that counties face rising insurance costs while still struggling to attract/retain talent. This is why we use proprietary software to provide accurate and predictable insurance consulting projections for those core benefits that impact your bottom line and incorporate solutions to improve retention. While voluntary benefits may be the focus of other providers, OneDigital has the expertise in alternative funding strategies, best-in-class analytics, and an in-house actuarial team.

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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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](mailto:Valerie.Russell@vacounty.org).

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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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