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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****JUST ANNOUNCED:****Jim Garcia Leading Efforts for The Advancement Foundation to Identify, Support, and Scale Value Added Products in the Alleghany Highlands**

The Advancement Foundation, with funding from the Alleghany Foundation, has launched The Product Discovery, Development & Scale Initiative (Initiative). The initiative will spur the evolution of value-added product development, manufacturing and commercialization for Alleghany Highlands.

Leveraging a 5-year investment in Gauntlet participants from the area and new innovation resources, this initiative focuses on the identification of new and existing businesses in Alleghany Highlands that have potential to scale their business or to commercialize one or more value added products, e.g. a BBQ company with notable sauces, a brewer considering regional distribution, or a coffee shop interested in expanding to main street manufacturing site by roasting on site with regional/national distribution objectives.

Innovation Teams to test scaling and commercialization opportunities will be developed to include faculty from Mountain Gateway Community College, Virginia Military Institute, Southern Virginia University, and James Madison University and local workforce and economic development leaders.

This initiative complements existing marketing efforts to promote shopping local for quality local products and the impact of increasing manufacturing to expand distribution and sales revenues. The program is non-duplicative and serves as a single source to convene knowledgeable partners to build scaling and commercialization capacity. The Initiative is designed to provide education and wrap around services that address the potential to scale up production/manufacturing of the most promising products in the local marketplace. These wrap around services include exploration of new strategies for main street manufacturing which foster economic opportunities by creating regional destinations for experience seeking shoppers and assistance for value added product producers to explore the real potential to scale/commercialize product production.

To assist with the execution of this initiative, TAF has contracted with Jim Garcia. Jim is a lifelong resident of Alleghany Highlands and has been an integral part of the business community there for over 38 years. Jim is a licensed Realtor in the state of Virginia and continues to work with Fresh Estates & Country Properties. Jim also co-owned Standard Printing & Office Supply, Inc. and the U S Cellular Agency and had an ownership in a local home health company, known as Highlands Home Health. Jim said, "The Alleghany Highlands have been good to us and I am committed to giving back to the community and assisting aspiring entrepreneurs! I am thrilled to be a part of this initiative and to have the opportunity to assist The Advancement Foundation and their amazing network of folks who are helping to build the entrepreneurial ecosystem here in Virginia. The Advancement Foundation's resources are incredible and I have said many times, and truly mean, I wish we had these resources 38 years ago when I first got into business."

For more information on this initiative please contact Kathy Deacon, VP Business & Resource Development, TAF via email at [Kathy@theadvancementfoundation.org](mailto:Kathy@theadvancementfoundation.org) or Jim Garcia via email at [jimgarcia1219@gmail.com](mailto:jimgarcia1219@gmail.com).

[The Advancement Foundation](#) creates bold opportunities that accelerate economic prosperity and equality, serving over 35 cities, towns and counties throughout the Roanoke, Shenandoah and New River Valleys, Allegheny Highlands, and Southside regions. Over 1000 entrepreneurs, economic developers, industry experts, and mentors have worked collaboratively to ignite and grow businesses, empowered by this strong ecosystem model and the resources leveraged by The Advancement Foundation. We welcome the opportunity to build and expand new entrepreneurial ecosystems, connect innovators, and create opportunities.