



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2021.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).


PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Botetourt County
Program Title: Aiding Our Farmers During a Global Pandemic
Program Category: Customer Service

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Gary Larrowe
Title: County Administrator
Signature: 



Virginia Association of Counties Achievement Awards Application 2021 Botetourt County – Aiding Our Farmers During a Global Pandemic

Executive Summary:

Botetourt County is a rural county located in southwestern Virginia. The county is 548 square miles and is home to approximately 33,500 residents. Agriculture and farming are big business in the county with approximately 551 farms set on 88,842 acres with an average size farm of 161 acres. 98% of the farms in our region are family owned and are the heartbeat of our community.

To help our farmers during COVID-19, the Botetourt County Board of Supervisors approved the "Botetourt County COVID-19 Farm Operation Grant Program". This program was used to assist the County's farm operations with COVID-19 pandemic related losses. Grants were made available up to \$5,000 per farm operation and was intended to cover farm losses through September 2020 that were not covered by other grant sources. It is important to note that Botetourt County was one of the few counties that provided grant dollars to local farmers.

The County was allowed to use funds from the Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act to provide grants to small businesses affected by decreased customer demand as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency. The grant was administered by the Botetourt County Economic Development Authority (EDA) and assisted 50 farmers with approximately \$157,672 in aid.

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Background and Program:

Botetourt County is a rural county located in southwestern Virginia. It is home to approximately 551 farms set on 88,842 acres with an average size farm of 161 acres. The market value of products sold from farms in Botetourt County is approximately \$14,055,000. 98% of the farms in our region are family owned and are the heartbeat of our community. Farming is essential to our community's success.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, County Administrators and County leaders realized that every part of our society was reeling from the impact the virus had caused and our farmers were not immune. To help aid farmers in our area, on August 25, 2020, the Botetourt County Board of Supervisors approved the "Botetourt County COVID-19 Farm Operation Grant Program" to assist the County's farm operations with COVID-19 pandemic related losses. Grants were available for up to \$5,000 per farm operation. Funding totaling \$157,672 was given to 50 farmers in our County.

"The COVID-19 pandemic impacted nearly every part of our society, and our local farms have felt that impact, too," said Board of Supervisors Member Dr. Richard Bailey. "As a County with a strong agricultural heritage, I am proud that the Board is able to support our farmers in this time of need."

"With an agricultural background, I support the efforts of providing some relief to the farming community who provides backbone services to the world," said Botetourt County Administrator Gary Larrowe.



The County was allowed to use funds from the Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act to provide grants to small businesses "affected by decreased customer demand as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency," according to the U.S. Treasury's guidance memo to the County.

Director of Economic Development Ken McFadyen said, "Botetourt County's farm operations are also small businesses and have experienced the effects of decreased customer demand as a result of the pandemic."

Many Botetourt County-based farm operations sought federal assistance through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA). The local office of the FSA has processed approximately 150 Botetourt County grant applications for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP).

The Botetourt County COVID-19 Farm Operation Grant Program assisted the County's farm operations with losses not covered by the FSA's grant program. The Farm Operation Grant applications were accepted during the month of September 2020.

Botetourt County-based farm operations qualified for the County's grant program by first qualifying for the FSA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP). Applicants were then asked to submit a copy of their FSA grant "deposit confirmation" or, secondly, a copy of their approved FSA grant application.

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The Botetourt County Economic Development Authority (EDA) was tasked with administering the grant program.

Persons and Organizations Involved:

The project was a collaboration between Botetourt County, the Botetourt County Economic Development Authority (EDA), Botetourt County Farm Bureau, Botetourt/Craig/Roanoke FSA County Office, USDA Farm Service Agency, the Virginia Cooperative Extension, Botetourt County Economic Development, Federal agencies and local farmers.

Expected Outcomes and Results:

Funding through the Botetourt County COVID-19 Farm Operation Grant program was provided to 50 farmers totaling \$157,672. This funding allowed farmers to keep producing during the economic downturn our country was experiencing during the pandemic. The funding allowed farmers to adapt to the ever-changing economic climate. The grant monies became necessary to ensure that farmers could continue producing to get food on the tables of our residents and for farmers to continue operating.

Beneficiaries of the Program:

Fifty farmers benefitted from the Botetourt County COVID-19 Farm Operation Grant Program. Video testimonials were produced with two farmers in our region. "Funding from the county helped to pay on bills and other commodities so we could keep producing," said Courtney

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Henderson from Cave Hill Dairy Farm. "Funding really helped us to adapt, get our website up and rolling as well as give additional packaging materials we were needing and it became absolutely necessary or we wouldn't have been able to get food to people," said farmer Thomas Williamson from Williamson Farms. (To take a look at the Williamson Farm website, visit:

<https://www.williamsonfarmsva.com/>)

To view the videos, follow these links:

[Cave Hill Farm](#)

[Williamson Farms](#)

Preston Wickline, president of the Botetourt County Farm Bureau

(<https://www.vafb.com/offices/daleville>) agreed with the funding opportunity and was very pleased that Botetourt decided to divert CARES Act funds to local farmers. He said, "We have a broad range of agriculture in the county. We could all use a little assistance to help with the bills. We are grateful for [the county] having the foresight to go through with it."

Replication:

In order to replicate this collaborative effort, it is important to partner with local farmers and local agencies serving agriculture in the community. It is also important to make sure to work with federal entities to ensure that all agreements are met regarding use of federal funding.

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Conclusion:

COVID-19 was a game changer for our County, region, country and world. It made many of us realize what is most important and that is our friends, family and loved ones. Taking care of small business became paramount and our local farms ARE our County's small businesses. They are the ones that work from sunup to sundown to provide resources for our community, County and state. Without our local farmers, as a community we would suffer, so it was only natural during their time of need that the County partner with them to help ease their burden. Botetourt County was one of the only counties to offer CARES Act funding to farmers and we are so happy that we were able to assist our neighbors so that they can keep working the land and providing for their families and for our citizens and region.

To read more about the Botetourt County COVID-19 Farm Operations Grant Program, visit the news articles below:

- <https://botetourtva.gov/news/board-approves-covid-19-grant-program-for-county-farmers/>
- https://roanoke.com/video/news/watch-now-botetourt-county-farmer-jay-etzler-discusses-cares-act-grant/video_bb8d8438-4679-5865-84ca-74aedb04b654.html
- <https://www.wfxrtv.com/news/health/coronavirus/botetourt-county-supervisors-approve-covid-19-grant-program-for-local-farmers/>
- <https://articles.vafb.com/botetourt-county-provides-extra-aid-for-area-farmers>

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Brief Overview:

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To help our farmers during COVID-19, the Botetourt County Board of Supervisors approved the "Botetourt County COVID-19 Farm Operation Grant Program". This program was used to assist the County's farm operations with COVID-19 pandemic related losses. Grants were made available up to \$5,000 per farm operation. It is important to note that Botetourt County was one of the few counties that provided grant dollars to local farmers. 50 farmers applied for grant funding and \$157,672 in aid was distributed.

"The COVID-19 pandemic impacted nearly every part of our community and our local farms felt the impact too," said Botetourt County Board of Supervisor Dr. Richard Bailey who proposed the farm grant idea. "As a county with a strong agricultural heritage, I am proud that the board is able to support our farmers in this time of need."