



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your 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: Loudoun

Program Title: Loudoun Farm Tour

Program Category: Community Development, Economic Development, & Land Use

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Mark Armentrout

Title: Marketing and Communications Manager

Department: Economic Development

Telephone: 571-233-1827 Website: LoudounPossible.com

Email: mark.armentrout@loudoun.gov

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: [Signature]

Title: Executive Director

Signature: Buddy Rizer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Loudoun Farm Tour Program

Loudoun County Department of Economic Development

Twice a year, on the third weekends of May and October, Loudoun County celebrates its agricultural heritage and thriving rural economy with the Loudoun Farm Tour, a self-guided, family-friendly experience that connects thousands of visitors with working farms across the county. At a time when farms are disappearing nationwide, this longstanding program is a proactive, community-centered approach to preserving local agriculture, driving economic impact, and deepening public understanding of Loudoun's diverse agribusiness community.

Organized by Loudoun Economic Development, the Farm Tour features 35–40 working farms each season, spanning operations from equine and cattle to specialty crops like tea, mushrooms, garlic, citrus, and alpacas. Participating farms report significant visitor counts and revenue increasing by 50% to 100% over a typical weekend. During the Spring 2025 Farm Tour, one farm reported a record \$12,000 in sales across the two-day event. Total estimated attendance reaches between 4,000 and 6,000 people per tour.

Loudoun's strategic support includes farmer recruitment and onboarding, educational webinars, map and brand development, and a robust multi-channel marketing campaign. The result is a replicable model for other localities seeking to protect farmland, bolster tourism, and enhance quality of life by showcasing agriculture as a vital and vibrant part of the local economy.

Loudoun County VACo Achievement Awards Entry Program Title: Loudoun Farm Tour

Locality: Loudoun County, Virginia

Department: Loudoun County Department of Economic Development

I. Defining the Challenge: Preserving Farmland and Rural Identity Amid Economic Growth

Loudoun County, located in the fast-growing Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, is nationally recognized for its economic vitality, high quality of life, and robust data center industry. Yet as development pressures mount, Loudoun, like much of the nation, faces a critical challenge: preserving its agricultural land and heritage in the face of suburban sprawl. According to national trends, farmland is being lost at an alarming rate. In contrast, Loudoun County added farms in the most recent USDA Census of Agriculture, including specialty farms such as tea, garlic, citrus, mushrooms, and alpaca.

This success is not accidental. Loudoun Economic Development has long recognized that a healthy and visible agribusiness sector supports more than just crop yields, it preserves rural character, supports environmental sustainability, drives tourism, and fosters a sense of community and place. The Loudoun Farm Tour is a cornerstone of that effort.

II. Program Overview: The Loudoun Farm Tour

The Loudoun Farm Tour is a twice-yearly, self-guided driving tour held the third weekends in May (Spring) and October (Fall). It invites residents and tourists to explore working farms across the county, offering an immersive experience in local agriculture. The program typically features 35–40 farms per tour and showcases a wide variety of operations, from livestock and equine farms to apiaries, vineyards, produce farms, and unique specialty farms.

By connecting the public to farms through firsthand experiences such as Pick-Your-Own events, hayrides, barn tours, and animal meet-and-greets, the program aims to:

- Increase the visibility and viability of Loudoun’s farms.
- Encourage farm revenue and agritourism.
- Promote agricultural education.
- Foster appreciation for Loudoun’s rural economy.

III. Innovation: Branding, Technology, and Modern Storytelling

While farm tours are not a new concept, Loudoun’s program is distinguished by its strategic use of branding, digital tools, and comprehensive support services:

- **Collectible Farm Tour Map:** Each season, Loudoun Economic Development produces a professionally designed, full-color map that doubles as both a navigational aid and a collector’s item. It includes descriptions, hours, icons for farm amenities, and local photography to showcase the anticipated weekend experience. The map is distributed digitally and in print throughout the region.
- **Digital Check-In System:** To measure impact, the department utilizes QR codes at participating farms to track visitor engagement and collect data, while also monitoring online traffic and engagement metrics.
- **Integrated Marketing Campaigns:** Farm Tours are supported by digital advertising, social media campaigns, regional press, printed signage, and community partnerships. Creative messaging spotlights unique farm stories, themes (e.g., “Meet the Animals,” “Taste the Harvest”), and cross-promotion with local restaurants, breweries, and retailers.

- **Educational Webinars and Onboarding:** Participating farmers receive access to live and recorded training sessions that guide them through safety preparation, marketing tips, and customer service best practices.

IV. Collaboration and Community Partnerships

The success of the Loudoun Farm Tour is made possible through strong collaborations:

- **Farmers:** Loudoun's farmers are at the heart of the program. Each season, they apply to participate and commit to offering interactive and educational experiences to the public.
- **Public Schools and Libraries:** The department distributes maps through school systems and libraries, offering family-friendly learning opportunities.
- **Local Businesses:** Breweries, farm-to-table restaurants, and retailers often build their own promotions around the Farm Tour, increasing countywide economic impact. A select number of businesses donate gift certificates for a Western Loudoun VIP Getaway package that is awarded at random to a visitor who checks in to Farm Tour using the provided QR codes.
- **Local and Regional Media:** Newspapers, magazines, and radio and tv stations help raise awareness and profile farm participants.

V. Implementation: From Application to Activation

Each Loudoun Farm Tour begins months in advance with farmer recruitment. Loudoun Economic Development reaches out to past participants and new prospects through email, social media, and word-of-mouth referrals. Interested farms submit an online application, which is reviewed for eligibility, safety, and visitor readiness.

Once accepted, farms receive a comprehensive onboarding experience that includes access to pre-recorded webinars. These sessions cover a variety of topics, from farm safety and ADA accessibility to visitor flow and on-site sales best practices. The goal is to empower every participant, regardless of size or experience, with the tools to deliver a safe, enjoyable, and profitable visitor experience.

Simultaneously, the department's marketing team begins producing the centerpiece of the Farm Tour: a beautifully illustrated map that showcases all participating farms and their offerings. This map is both a practical tool for navigating the event and a keepsake that reinforces Loudoun's rural brand. In tandem, a multi-platform marketing campaign is launched, including paid digital and print ads, blog posts, influencer features, and countdown content across social media. Marketing also leverages tourism and community calendars to maximize reach.

On Farm Tour weekend, staff from Loudoun Economic Development fan out across the county to visit participating farms, provide support, and gather real-time feedback. Check-in stations with QR codes enable the collection of visitor data, while photos and videos are captured to tell the story of the event.

After the weekend concludes, the department follows up with participating farmers to gather survey responses, visitor counts, and revenue data. This information not only informs future planning but also provides important proof points about the program's economic impact.

VI. Financing and Staffing

The Loudoun Farm Tour is managed in-house by Loudoun Economic Development, utilizing existing staff across marketing, small business support, and rural development teams. Farm Tour weekends are favorites of Loudoun Economic Development staff. The weekend has an "all-hands-on-deck"

feel as all staff sign up to visit farms to enjoy the tour with friends and family while showing support for our farms by being present and wearing branded clothing.

Estimated Seasonal Costs:

- Map Design and Printing: ~\$6,000
- Advertising (print + digital): ~\$5,000
- Staff Time: Covered within department responsibilities

The program does not require outside grants or dedicated funding but benefits from strong internal coordination and volunteer support.

VII. Results and Impact

Each season, the Loudoun Farm Tour draws an estimated 4,000 to 6,000 attendees. This attendance is based on QR check-ins at the farms and complementary online metrics, capturing not only foot traffic but also digital engagement leading up to and during the event. These visitors spend their weekends exploring a variety of farm properties, sampling local products, and participating in farm-based activities. Beyond the participating farms, the Farm Tour generates spillover benefits for nearby small businesses, including farm-to-table restaurants, local wineries and breweries, and artisan retailers.

Farmers consistently report significant boosts in revenue, with many experiencing between a 50% and 100% increase compared to a typical weekend. During the Spring Farm Tour, one farm reported \$12,000 in revenue over the two-day event: a personal record and an illustration of the Farm Tour's direct economic effect.

Community feedback reflects the program's wide appeal, with strong turnout from families, school-age children, seniors, and newcomers alike. The accessibility and hands-on nature of the Farm Tour fosters public understanding of Loudoun's agricultural roots while strengthening the rural-urban connection within a rapidly evolving county.

While the addition of new farms reported in the latest USDA Census cannot be attributed solely to the Farm Tour, it does reflect Loudoun's broader commitment to supporting agriculture through sustained programming, visibility, and investment in farm viability. The Farm Tour complements this ecosystem by driving awareness, appreciation, and income for working farms.

VIII. Model for Other Localities

Loudoun's model is fully replicable and scalable. Any locality with an agricultural sector can adopt the following approach:

- Establish a seasonal event with a predictable calendar.
- Offer onboarding and training for participating farms.
- Create high-quality print and digital collateral.
- Track attendance via QR codes and simple surveys.
- Support with consistent, professional marketing.

Additionally, localities can strengthen the program by aligning it with tourism, economic development, and school outreach efforts.

IX. Conclusion

The Loudoun Farm Tour is more than a weekend event. It is a celebration of Loudoun's rural economy, a driver of revenue for local farms, and a connector between residents and their land. As

development continues across Northern Virginia, programs like this ensure that agriculture remains a visible, valuable, and viable part of Loudoun's future.

Through thoughtful planning, strategic outreach, and deep respect for its farming community, Loudoun County has created a model worth emulating. This program advances innovation, fosters collaboration, and promotes long-term community resilience.