



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: Louisa County

Program Title: Louisa County's Enhanced Tourism Program

Program Category: Economic Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Cindy King

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Chris Coon

Title: Deputy County Administrator

Signature: 



Executive Summary

Directions: Include an executive summary of the program (no more than one page double-spaced) that can be used as a quick reference guide for judges and that can be used for press releases, brochures, etc.

What if a locality with no dedicated tourism staff could still build a vibrant, year-round destination brand to drive economic growth, support local attractions, and ultimately welcome thousands of new visitors each year? That's exactly what Louisa County has accomplished through its enhanced Visit Louisa tourism program. With a series of technical integrations, streamlined processes and formalized collaborations, the county turned limited resources into a thriving initiative in 2024 and is continuing to expand the program for lasting area impact in 2025.

Louisa County's new Tourism Advisory Committee – representing non-profit and business leaders from various tourism sectors – meets regularly to discuss initiatives and develop recommendations for the Board of Supervisors. The multiple perspectives this group brings ensure advancement of programs across the county and strengthen newly formed collaborations.

The county's technical strategy and related processes combine a suite of tools to ensure fresh and accessible information for potential visitors on a variety of platforms – including easily managed website content, a weekly e-newsletter, a monthly print guide, real-time digital kiosks at high-traffic areas, and a mobile app. The updated content on these platforms is imperative to complement the county's tourism advertising, as potential visitors will see ads and then turn to these materials to make trip decisions.

For community-driven partnerships, the county offers multiple training methods to encourage all levels of business and non-profit participation in the program. Partnerships with local non-profits were advanced last year through a structured application process for funding where structured Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) for approved projects ensure mutual investment and engagement.



Challenge Faced

Directions: State the problem, challenge or situation faced by the locality and how the program fulfilled the awards criteria (innovation, partnering or collaboration and a model for other localities).

With attractions like Lake Anna, award-winning wineries and premier camping, tourism represents a strong economic driver in Louisa County. Virginia Tourism Corporation's most recent Impact Report (2023) indicating total spending was up \$4.5 million and local taxes were up \$200,000 from the previous year. However, like many other smaller localities, Louisa does not have staff dedicated to solely performing tourism activities. This juxtaposition presented county staff with the challenge of developing a strategy to truly maximize effectiveness of the limited allocation of hours. Staff first mapped out an integrated technical solution to reduce manual time required to update materials, and then refined its related processes to even more fully benefit from the connected systems.

Additionally, in 2024, staff faced a welcomed challenge – an over 800% increase in the tourism budget due to an approved Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) increase. The TOT increase not only increased revenue in the General Fund to benefit the citizens of Louisa County, but as Virginia Code requires the allocation of TOT revenue to support efforts to increase visitation, also tremendously added to the previously shoestring tourism budget. As the TOT revenue will fluctuate year to year, the Board of Supervisors approved a plan to earmark percentages of the revenue for categories including Infrastructure, Community Partnerships (Program Support), Advertising, and Administration. These percentage allocations allow staff, the Tourism Advisory Committee (established in 2024), and the Board of Supervisors to plan for responsible use of tax money collected from visitors staying overnight.

Collaboration

Directions: Programs may be based on programs from another public or private entity but must represent innovative approaches or customization by the local government.

The legislation related to the TOT increase called for the creation of a body to provide guidance on increasing overnight visitation, and this recommending body was put into place in 2024 as the county's



inaugural Tourism Advisory Committee. The committee is comprised of members representing various physical areas of the county as well as various tourism sectors (lodging, restaurants, rentals, etc.). Louisa County's enhanced tourism program encourages sustainable collaboration, particularly through the active involvement of the Louisa County Tourism Advisory Committee who help drive engagement and program refinement.

Partnering

Directions: Promote intergovernmental cooperation and/or cooperation with local, state and federal entities and/or a private enterprise in addressing a problem or situation.

The Visit Louisa tourism program requires cooperation between the parties to remain successful and further develop. As of 2022, minimal participation from a business requires two things: 1.) for the business to manage their Google Maps listing and 2.) for the business to create Facebook events with Visit Louisa as a co-host. The additional participation opportunities in 2024 include the Tourism Support Request application process and the related structured MOUs which require the project owners to provide helpful visitor data and content to be used in the tourism program, including blog posts to drive search engine optimization and images for use on social.

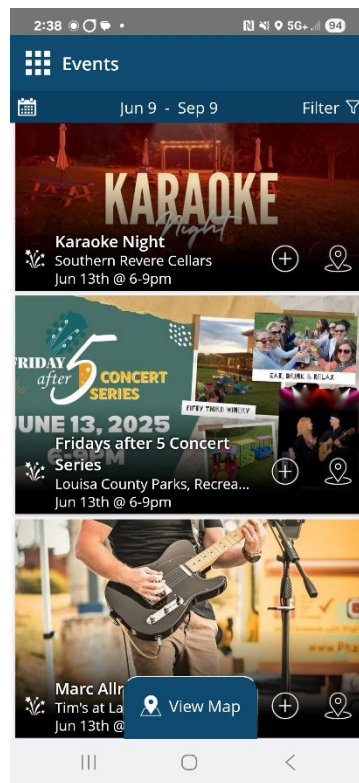
Through the "[Tourism Support Request](#)" process, the county (with recommendations of the Tourism Advisory Committee and the approval of the Board of Supervisors) is investing a portion of its TOT revenue into programs with potential to increase overnight stays and in doing so, the bulk of content creation, data collection, and on-the-ground efforts are driven by private partners. This process allows for directly supporting the growth of programs like the Louisa County Fair and the development of a certified visitor information center, while requiring comparatively minimal county staff time.



Innovation

Directions: Offer an innovative solution to a problem, situation or delivery of services.

The integrated technical solution allows staff to leverage limited hours to keep digital content up-to-date easily. The integrated system also requires very little of business owners to have visibility on the Visit Louisa platforms, allowing businesses to focus on operations. Louisa County is not the first locality to use vendors like ITI Digital, Visit Widget, and MetroClick, but staff is ensuring these tools are integrated and working to meet the county's needs. This system requires minimal staff hours to maintain but provides high-value exposure for local businesses. The image to the right shows events as displayed in the Visit Louisa mobile app. These events show automatically in a similar fashion on VisitLouisa.com and on the digital kiosks.



Visit Louisa App

The county has an active Visit Louisa advertising program, and it's important for potential visitors that see an ad to be able to find information for the locality so they can begin making plans for a trip. The integrated system supports the county's advertising efforts by offering



Visit Louisa Kiosk

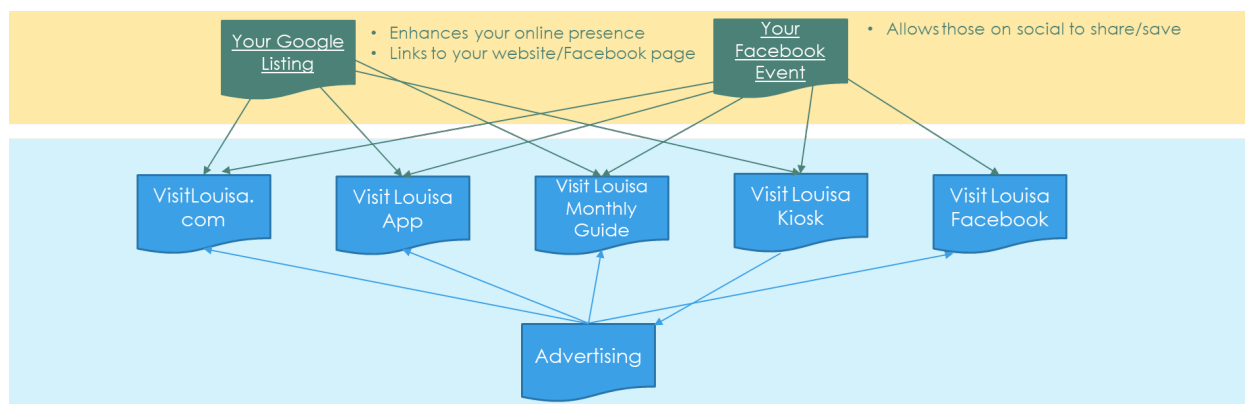
fresh, current content through a number of platforms (the [VisitLouisa.com website](#), digital kiosks updated in real-time at high foot traffic locations [shown to the left at Shenandoah Crossing™ Resort], and the [Visit Louisa mobile app](#)) to those interested in visiting Louisa County. Further, staff has developed streamlined processes in 2024 to export data for use in non-integrated systems to include a [monthly print guide](#) with events and a [weekly email](#). In 2024, the county also



experimented with video creation leveraging text to speech using the exported information ([example](#)).

How the Program Was Carried Out

The image below represents in yellow the responsibilities of businesses to ensure their visibility in Visit Louisa materials. As seen in the image, a Google (Maps) listing and Facebook events allow our system to ingest details to share on VisitLouisa.com, in the Visit Louisa app, and more. The image also shows that county advertising pushes potential visitors to the Visit Louisa platforms – meaning businesses on the Visit Louisa platforms will benefit from the tourism advertising.



Visit Louisa Flowchart



Visit Louisa Video Ad

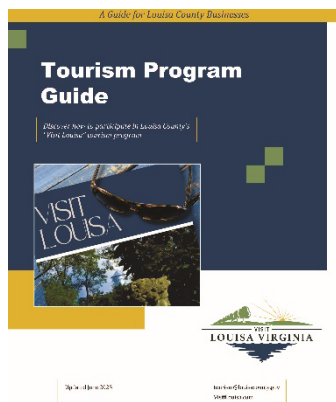
The screenshot show to the left is the imagery typically used at the end of Visit Louisa video ads. Note the promotion of the Visit Louisa brand, the URL and the mobile app.



Louisa County's Enhanced Tourism Program

Virginia Association of Counties Achievement Awards 2025 Application

Having an easy-to-use system for the businesses is only valuable if the businesses know about it. In 2024, the county released a "[Tourism Program Guide](#)" to explain how the business can participate, how the county advertises, economic impact numbers, visitor information, and more. County staff would



Tourism Program Guide

periodically present at business partnership and chamber events prior to the creation of the guide, and while these presentations will continue, staff now utilize the guide as a robust leave-behind. Print copies of the guide are available in the County Office Building and at the Louisa County Chamber of Commerce. A link to the guide was sent to businesses via email and the guide is periodically promoted through the county's digital signage system and newsletter.

With a large Tourism Advisory Committee (10+ members), this program is collaborative in nature and will always be evolving. In the spring of 2024, the Board of Supervisors adopted bylaws for the committee and appointed members.

In the summer of 2024, the Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution that assigned percentage allocations for TOT revenues in Louisa County budget. These allocations guide initiatives to include the budget for infrastructure improvements related to tourism and funds to support community partners.

In the fall of 2024, the Tourism Advisory Committee made its first recommendations regarding programs to receive "Tourism Support Request" funding with a related MOU.

Finance and Staffing

Staffing for the Visit Louisa program equals roughly 30% of a full-time position, or 12 hours a week. Six digital kiosks were purchased for just around \$3,000 each in hardware using grant funds. Applicable software is approximately \$16,000 annually. The automation these integrations provide equal to an estimated \$35,600, and the speed in which updates may occur has an additional recognized value.



Model

Directions: Provide a model that other local governments may learn from or implement in their own localities.

The Visit Louisa tourism initiatives offer a blueprint for small localities seeking to boost economic development through tourism with minimal staffing resources. Its combination of low-lift participation for businesses, effective use of third-party platforms, and commitment to integration and community partnership exemplifies innovation in public service delivery. The Louisa County Tourism Program Guide is readily available educational material that not only is helpful to Louisa County businesses but may also be used by local governments interested in our approach.

Results & Current Status

This program not only delivers consistent, high-quality visitor engagement but also fosters strong public-



Local Tourism Business Owner with Tourism Ambassador Program Certificate

private collaboration and serves as a replicable model for other local governments. Educational tools like the Tourism Program Guide and the new Louisa County Ambassador Program (launched in 2025) further ensure transparency, replicability, and ongoing business participation. Additional 2025

enhancements include a website chatbot to reduce the need for staff or businesses to answer questions with readily available information, and a website to be launched this fall. The Board of Supervisors also adopted a standard MOU for county staff to execute with businesses (expanding from non-profits) that will allow staff to work with businesses for the creation of new content for the Visit Louisa platforms.

In terms of the "bottom line," Meals Tax revenue was up nearly \$60,000 in 2024 (2023 - \$2, 012,006.80, 2024 - \$2,071,506.82) and including the TOT rate increase, Transient Occupancy Tax revenue was up over \$1.2 million in 2024 (2023 - \$478,162.77, 2024 - \$1,683,161.20). Total trips were up by nearly 32,000 in



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2024. Daytrip numbers were strong in 2024 with increases over 2023 (2024 saw 70,000 more daytrips than 2023). Previous advertising targeted the Northern Virginia, District of Columbia, Baltimore and Richmond feeder markets. The 2025 advertising has shifted to Pennsylvania and North Carolina to encourage more overnight stays.

Louisa County's enhanced tourism program was not developed simply as a response to limited resources, rather, it was shaped with strategic community-driven collaboration. Innovative technical solutions coupled with new processes have turned what was once a challenge into a competitive approach to the market.



Increased Event Attendance at Festivals



Area Partner Incorporating Visit Louisa Logo on Materials Per Tourism Support Program MOU