



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](#).

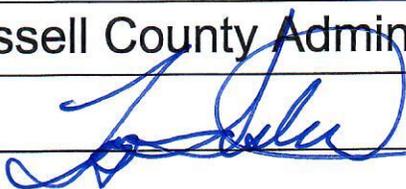
PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Russell County
Program Title: Russell County Community Work Program
Program Category: Community Development; Public Safety

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Missy R. Carter
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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Lonzo Lester
Title: Russell County Administrator
Signature: 



Program Category:

Community Development

Public Safety

Background of Identified Problem:

County governments, like Russell County, face a growing financial burden due to payments made to regional jails for housing inmates. These payments are typically calculated based on the average daily population (ADP), which includes expenses for food, medical care, staffing and facility maintenance. As jail populations increase- often driven by substance use and mental health issues, so do the associated costs.

A large portion of local funds are directed toward jail costs, leaving fewer resources for public services like education, infrastructure and health care. Because regional jails are shared by multiple localities, counties have limited influence over operational decisions or cost saving measures. Without access to alternative sentencing programs, such as

the Russell County Community Work Program, Russell County must continue to pay for individuals who cycle in and out of jail, many of whom have not been convicted but are awaiting trial.

Ultimately, the jail system places a heavy and often unsustainable financial load on Russell County, driving the need for reform and cost-reduction strategies. During the 2015 fiscal year, Russell County spent approximately \$1.8 million on jail costs to the regional jail.

Another obstacle facing Russell County was the fact that most of the inmates being incarcerated at the regional jail, were suffering from substance use disorder that was not addressed while they are in jail. The jail had become a revolving door, with inmates returning over and over again- due to the drug driven crimes that were being committed. Overdose rates were also continuing to soar as Methamphetamine, Heroin and Fentanyl poisoned the entire region.

It was imperative that Russell County needed options to alleviate the burden of the rising jail costs, while also, trying to address the substance use issue we were dealing with.

Award Criteria:

On June 1, 2016, the Russell County Community Work Program opened its doors to begin the process of designing an alternative sentencing program that would strategically address the two major challenges for Russell County: rising jail costs and the ongoing crisis of drug addiction. We selected an advisory board that would oversee the structuring of the program. This board consisted of Russell County Circuit Court Judges, the Russell County Commonwealth's Attorney, Russell County Board of Supervisors, District 17 Probation and Parole, law enforcement representatives and the program director. The program director worked with community members to establish community service sites throughout the county that participants would be assigned to work. Our hope was that the program would be able to reduce the jail costs by sentencing offenders to CWP instead of incarceration.

During the referral process, participants are evaluated to ensure that they do not have a violent criminal history, including sex crimes and/or gang activity- as these are disqualifying factors.

On July 1, 2016, the first participants entered into the program. All intake documents are explained to each participant, as well as the program rules and expectations and participants are provided with a handbook they can look back on for guidance. The participants are expected to follow stringent requirements the duration of the court ordered sentence to the program, which can be tailored to the individual, ranging from 30 days to 365 days.

CWP utilizes mental health services, substance use treatment and case management services offered by Cumberland Mountain Community Service Board. In 2023, CWP also has treatment services for participants that include Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) and Untangling Relationships curriculums, by having a certified facilitator of Correctional Counseling, Inc. on staff.

CWP offers GED classes, food safety certification, welding classes, computer skills, surface mining certification, driver's safety/improvement and a variety of other certifications that participants may need. These programs are offered by programs through the District 17 Probation Office and police departments.

CWP will have a new life skills curriculum that will begin this fall, Foundations for Success. This curriculum is a monthly class that will assist participants with things like budgeting, cleaning, self-care/hygiene, interviewing skills and communication skills.

In addition to participants doing community service work, learning life skills and receiving treatment services- they are required to have a daily curfew, frequent drug testing, be monitored by GPS services and follow all the conditions of their probation. Any program infractions are reported to their probation officer.

The Russell County Board of Supervisors funded the CWP in 2016. During the first year of operation, the Russell County CWP saved the county \$186,117. In addition to the jail cost savings that year, participants provided \$401,592 of community service work to Russell County.

Several neighboring counties have contacted Russell County CWP and have used our program concept to model their own work programs in their jurisdictions. Wise County, Scott County, Buchanan County, Dickenson County, Washington County, Tazewell County and the City of Bristol have each come to Russell County and met with our team, and used our program documents/structure to design a program in their locality that meets the needs of that jurisdiction. We have provided shadowing when requested and are always available to our neighbors to answer any questions or offer assistance if needed.

The Russell County Community Work Program has saved \$3,183,090 in jail costs from July 2016 – October 2024. Additionally, in the same time period, \$5,587,084 of community service work was provided to the citizens of Russell County for a total of \$8,770,174 costs/benefits to Russell County.



Overview:

The Russell County Community Work Program is an alternative sentencing program that the Circuit Court uses to as an alternative to incarceration. CWP works closely with the Russell County Sheriff's Office and District 17 Probation and Parole to ensure that we are always having public safety first for the citizens of Russell County. Participants must maintain their sobriety, comply with the conditions of probation and meet the rigorous structure of CWP. CWP has been in operation since 2016 and continues to be successful year after year, saving the taxpayers of Russell County millions of dollars that would otherwise be sent to the regional jail to pay for housing the inmates. CWP offers treatment referrals, life skills classes and other classes while providing community service to the communities of Russell County by completing numerous projects year round. The participants are closing monitored by CWP staff and the Russell County Sheriff's Office assists with curfew checks to ensure the safety of the public. Participants are provided with life-changing tools, sober living skillsets and confidence that they will be able to use to maintain their sobriety upon completion of the program. The program has proven to be extremely effective on a financial level and very rewarding in observing participants make positive changes in their lives and not reoffend.

Summary:

The Russell County Community Work Program was established in 2016, in hopes of saving Russell County on the rising cost of housing inmates at the regional jail. CWP provides structure, accountability and daily responsibilities. Program participants pay a monthly fee, agree to home checks, drug testing and GPS monitoring while enrolled. The program director schedules projects for non-profit organizations in Russell County, as well as projects for the county. CWP provides litter pick up, painting for county offices and schools and mowing throughout the county, as well as many other projects. CWP has saved jail costs of over three million dollars and at a minimum wage rate, CWP has performed close to six million dollars of community service work for the county. This alternative sentencing program has been very successful and has helped participants struggling with addiction to remain sober and a productive member of society. As the Russell County Community Work Program continues to grow and prove it's success, for the past nine years, we hope to continue to help other localities learn what we do and start programs in their jurisdictions.

