



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: Tuesday, April 7, 2026.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. Contact [Gage Harter](#) with any questions.

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Category: \_\_\_\_\_

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: Sarah Barnett



# VACO Achievement Award Nomination 2026

Powhatan County, Virginia

Goochland-Powhatan Farmers Market Partnership

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**Program Title:** Goochland-Powhatan Farmers Market Partnership

**Category:** Intergovernmental Cooperation / Community Development / Parks and Recreation Innovation

**Nominating Locality:** Powhatan County, Virginia

**Partner Locality:** Goochland County, Virginia

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## Program Overview

Powhatan County respectfully submits the Goochland–Powhatan Farmers Market Partnership for consideration as a VACO Achievement Award. This initiative is a regional collaboration between Powhatan County and Goochland County to share the promotion and management of their farmers markets while maintaining weekly market operations in each locality. Prior to the 2025 season, the two counties agreed to cooperate through shared financial support for farmers market promotion and management, with Goochland operating its market on Tuesdays and Powhatan operating on Thursdays from May through September 2025.

This partnership was established during a transition in market governance. The farmers markets in both Powhatan and Goochland had previously been operated independently by RVAg, but with the retirement of RVAg’s founder and executive director, the participating counties were asked to assume operational responsibility. Both counties had already identified Parks and Recreation as the most appropriate department for county market oversight, consistent with how many county-operated farmers markets are managed. Rather than create a stand-alone operational model, Powhatan partnered with Goochland to build a more efficient, sustainable, and collaborative approach

## Innovation

The Goochland–Powhatan Farmers Market Partnership is innovative because it applies a shared-services model to a community-based program that is traditionally managed independently by each locality. Instead of duplicating staffing, promotion, and administrative functions, Powhatan and Goochland created a joint arrangement to support both markets through coordinated management and marketing.

This model allowed the counties to respond strategically to a leadership transition while strengthening continuity of service. The counties supported the transition and training of a new market manager for both the Goochland Courthouse and Powhatan Village markets, ensuring professional oversight while reducing duplication of effort. This regional model demonstrates that counties can preserve valued local traditions while modernizing operations and improving efficiency.

## Collaboration

This program is fundamentally a model of intergovernmental collaboration. Goochland County and Powhatan County entered into an ongoing agreement to support the management and promotion of



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their farmers markets through shared financial participation and coordinated operations. The arrangement reflects strong local government partnership, with each county retaining its own market identity while benefiting from regional coordination.

The collaboration also supports a wider network of stakeholders, including farmers, food producers, artisans, visitors, local businesses, and community organizations. Powhatan County's market provides an important venue for local products and community interaction, and the partnership broadens that impact by connecting the Powhatan and Goochland markets through shared leadership and promotion.

### **Results**

The partnership produced measurable and meaningful results during the 2025 season. According to the 2025 season report, the inaugural season of the Powhatan Farmers Market under Powhatan County Parks and Recreation, in partnership with Goochland Parks and Recreation, was a solid success. The market served 60 unique vendors and averaged approximately 300 visitors per week in Powhatan.

In Powhatan, the market operates for 22 weeks from May through September on Thursdays from 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. in the Village of Powhatan Courthouse. The market features locally produced fruits and vegetables, pastured meats, baked goods, fine artisan crafts, and other goods. These weekly events generated recurring public value by supporting local producers, drawing residents and visitors into Powhatan Village, and increasing access to fresh, healthy food.

The 2025 season report found that the market demonstrated strong financial footing and established a solid foundation for scalable growth in future years. In addition to supporting vendors and surrounding businesses, the market advanced public health by expanding access to healthy food through the acceptance of SNAP benefits and participation in Virginia Fresh Match, which helps SNAP shoppers purchase more fresh fruits and vegetables at the market. Beyond its economic and nutritional benefits, the market also strengthens community cohesion and quality of life by serving as a recurring gathering space that fosters social connection and helps reduce isolation among older adults in a rural, aging community.

### **Efficiency**

The market is structured to be financially sustainable, with core operating costs for staffing and materials offset by vendor fees, sponsorships, and other market-generated revenue. The FY26 budget of \$15,000 supported core operational expenses and ended the 2025 season with a net positive position of \$1,375, demonstrating sound fiscal management and the long-term viability of the shared market model.

This initiative demonstrates efficient use of public resources. By sharing promotion and management functions, Powhatan and Goochland reduced the need to duplicate seasonal staffing and



## VACO Achievement Award Nomination 2026

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administrative support. This is especially important for local governments seeking to sustain high-quality community programming while being mindful of budget and personnel constraints.

The partnership also allowed Powhatan to integrate farmers market operations into Parks and Recreation in a way that aligns with established local government practice and creates a stronger long-term foundation for market oversight. The result is a more sustainable operating structure that balances community benefit with fiscal responsibility.

### **Community Impact**

The Powhatan Village Farmers Market is more than a weekly event; it is a community asset that supports local agriculture, rural land use, entrepreneurship, and quality of life. The market is identified as a place to support local farmers and businesses, enjoy fresh healthy food, and strengthen the community food system. The market also helps keep rural land in productive use.

The partnership reinforced these outcomes by ensuring continued market operations and building a framework for future growth. Powhatan County has also identified potential future investments to strengthen market infrastructure, including power, water, lighting, seating, parking, restrooms, storage, landscaping, and eventually a permanent market facility supported through economic development grants. The shared-services model provides the stability needed to support these long-term goals.

### **Transferability**

The Goochland–Powhatan Farmers Market Partnership is highly transferable to other Virginia counties. Many localities face similar challenges: leadership transitions in nonprofit or volunteer-led programs, limited staffing capacity, seasonal program demands, and the need to support local agriculture and placemaking without adding unnecessary overhead.

This partnership offers a replicable model:

- identify a neighboring locality with similar community programming needs,
- establish a shared funding and management framework,
- coordinate staffing and promotional responsibilities,
- preserve each locality's distinct market identity,
- and build long-term sustainability through collaboration.

Because this program is practical, cost-conscious, and community-centered, it can serve as a useful blueprint for other counties across the Commonwealth.

### **Why This Program Deserves Recognition**



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The Goochland–Powhatan Farmers Market Partnership deserves VACO Achievement Award recognition because it exemplifies innovation, collaboration, measurable results, and responsible local government leadership. Powhatan County responded to an operational transition not by scaling back a valued community asset, but by building a new regional model that is more efficient, more sustainable, and more impactful.

Through this partnership, Powhatan County helped preserve and strengthen an important public amenity, supported 60 unique vendors, attracted an average of 300 weekly visitors, expanded healthy food access, and created a scalable framework for continued success in 2026 and beyond. Staff intend to continue the partnership for the 2026 season, reflecting confidence in its value and sustainability.

