

Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund Planning Grants

Since the creation of the Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund (AFID) program, fifty-two AFID Planning Grants have been awarded totaling \$1,063,232, positively impacting 63 unique localities for local agricultural and economic development enhancements ranging from local food sourcing to poultry industry support to viticulture education.

Below is a list of the projects that have been awarded AFID funds for Planning Grants. Clicking on the title will take you to a summary of the project, or you can browse all of the projects on the pages following.

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- [Fields of Gold - The Next Season of Agritourism in the Shenandoah Valley](#)
- [Fauquier County Impact of Agriculture Study](#)
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- [Meat Processing Facility for Southside Virginia](#)
- [The Highland Center Local Food Incubator](#)
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- [Feasibility Study Identifying Strategies to Recruit Dairy Processing Operations](#)
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- [Produce Auction for Lee County Planning Initiative](#)
- [Brunswick County Produce Processing Facility Study](#)
- [Feasibility Study for an Anaerobic Digester Facility in Rockingham County](#)
- [Feasibility Study for Abattoir at Fauquier Livestock Exchange](#)

Application materials and completed studies are available by contacting the Office of Agriculture and Forestry Development at the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Planning Grant Projects:

New Markets for Agriculture Producers in Southwest VA through Online Marketing & Local Food Campaign

Applicant: Town of Abingdon
Announced: May 2013
Award: \$20,000

Abingdon Convention and Visitors Bureau and Appalachian Sustainable Development will work together to develop new, year-round markets for locally produced agricultural products by creating and marketing an online order system to facilitate the sales of local foods to restaurants and other institutions. The effort will also further develop Rooted in Appalachia website and mobile app to promote local foods and restaurants serving them.

Fields of Gold - The Next Season of Agritourism in the Shenandoah Valley

Applicant: Central Shenandoah PDC (CSPDC)
Announced: May 2013
Award: \$35,000

Fields of Gold is a regional agritourism marketing initiative led by the CSPDC in the Shenandoah Valley. They recently completed a year-long planning process, funded by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and have received significant support and buy-in from their member localities, as well as awards for the effort. This grant is to develop and market a robust website that will include an interactive map of agritourism sites, an events calendar, and farm-to-restaurant guide. The marketing and build-out of the website were identified as key deliverables in their strategic marketing plan.

Fauquier County Impact of Agriculture Study

Applicant: Fauquier County
Announced: May 2013
Award: \$6,000

Funds will be used to conduct a study of the needs of the farming community in Fauquier and to off-set the costs of having UVA's Weldon Cooper Center conduct an "Impact of Agriculture" study to document the overall economic contribution of agriculture to Fauquier. As part of the study, a working group of county farmers, representing all segments of the local farming community, will work with the County's Agricultural Advisory Committee and the Fauquier County Farm Bureau to conduct, review and analyze results of a farmer survey. Studies will help the County determine what changes to the zoning ordinance might be necessary to assist the agricultural community.

Planning for Agritourism and Agribusiness Benefits in Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski Counties

Applicant: Giles County - lead applicant, Montgomery, and Pulaski Counties
Announced: May 2013
Award: \$35,000

Project will develop a strategic plan for agricultural economic development in the tri-county region. It will include interviews/surveys of agritourism operations and agribusinesses, an inventory of these businesses, policy recommendations, and an economic impact study.

Meat Processing Facility for Southside Virginia

Applicant: Halifax County

Announced: May 2013

Award: \$12,500

Grant funds will help pay for a professional, third-party feasibility study of a USDA-inspected meat processing facility in Halifax County to serve Southside Virginia.

The Highland Center Local Food Incubator

Applicant: Highland County

Announced: May 2013

Award: \$20,000

Grant funds will help pay for the renovation and upgrading of a commercial kitchen at the Highland Center in Monterey. Specifically, they will be used to create a temperature-controlled meat processing area in the kitchen that will allow for the production of value-added meat products under USDA inspection. This project is the culmination of years of effort to grow Highland County's economy by building on its agricultural assets, primarily livestock. It will complement the County's recently completed USDA-inspected slaughter facility by giving producers the opportunity to add further value to their meat.

James City County Rural Economic Development Strategic Plan

Applicant: James City County

Announced: May 2013

Award: \$20,000

The County boasts many agricultural and forestry assets and has undertaken a number of individual efforts to promote them, but never has the County taken a comprehensive look at how to protect, support, and leverage these assets. The need is particularly important for the County, with development pressures coming from its east (Williamsburg/Hampton Roads) and west (exurban Richmond). The effort is being led by their Rural Economic Development Committee, which includes key local government personnel, local business leaders, and agricultural producers. This project is just the type of project the AFID Planning Grants program was designed to engender, and it could be used as a model for other jurisdictions experiencing development pressure.

Feasibility Study for Barging Logs across the Chesapeake Bay

Applicant: Northern Neck Planning District

Announced: May 2013

Award: \$35,000

Funds are part of a proposed \$100,000 feasibility study to determine the economic efficiency of utilizing barge transport to bring logs timbered on the Eastern Shore for milling in Kinsale. The study will be conducted in two phases with Phase I determining the basic economic feasibility of the project, especially as compared to extending their current wood basket by truck. Phase II will develop a detailed proposal for moving forward with the project. The study seeks to address the timber availability problem faced by sawmills on the Northern Neck and the lack of a robust transportation infrastructure to otherwise transport timber into the area.

Vision for Agriculture and Forestry in Region 2000, 2013-14 Strategic Plan

Applicant: Virginia's Region 2000 Local Government Council; includes Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, and Campbell Counties and Lynchburg City

Announced: May 2013

Award: \$35,000

Funds will be used to bring in a consultant to work with the organization and local partners to develop a regional strategic plan for the agriculture and forestry components of the region's economy. The study will include an inventory of regional agriculture and silviculture assets and a SWOT analysis, and it will seek to develop a plan endorsed by member jurisdictions.

Staunton Feasibility Study of a Commercial and Shared-Use Kitchen

Applicant: City of Staunton

Announced: May 2013

Award: \$10,500

Funds will be used to help analyze the feasibility of a certified, commercial, shared-use kitchen and to research and create a replicable business model. The development of a commercial kitchen was a recommendation from a recent Community Foods Planning Project. The Project's key partners, the City of Staunton and the Staunton Creative Community Fund, have successfully undertaken other local food development projects and are developing a suite of services to assist area food entrepreneurs from start-up through launch. This study will be useful to other communities considering a commercial kitchen.

Feasibility Study to Establish Virginia Wine Heritage Center in Albemarle County

Applicant: Albemarle County

Announced: October 2013

Award: \$20,000

Albemarle County is partnering with the Charlottesville/Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau, Thomas Jefferson Foundation/Monticello, and Piedmont Virginia Community College to bring in an expert consultant to examine the feasibility of establishing a Virginia Wine Heritage Center in Albemarle County. The study will look at critical partnerships, facility attributes and location, funding needs, and the appropriate business model.

Building Agricultural and Forestry-based Businesses in The Foothills

Applicant: Rappahannock-Rapidan Region-Planning District (RRPDC); includes Culpepper, Orange, Madison, Fauquier, and Rappahannock Counties

Announced: October 2013

Award: \$33,000

The project is an effort to increase support and preservation of the region's agricultural and forestry-based industries by implementing specific strategies designed to raise awareness of these industries, to increase the purchases of regional ag and forestry products, and to sustain the future of agriculture and forestry in the region. Deliverables include a regional agro-artisan trail, directory, brand, annual conference, marketing effort, and completion of regional green infrastructure maps and data with agricultural soils and water quality.

Linking the Virginia Tech Catawba Sustainability Center to the Local Food System

Applicant: Roanoke County

Announced: October 2013

Award: \$7,500

The Virginia Tech Catawba Sustainability Center is a 377-acre historic dairy farm located in Roanoke County that was donated by the former Catawba Sanitarium to Virginia Tech. In recent years, Roanoke County has helped fund the activities of the Center and sought ways to help the Center contribute to region's economy. Roanoke County and staff at the Sustainability Center will work with Virginia Tech's Office of Economic Development to explore strategies for increasing the connectivity of the Catawba Sustainability Center to the regional food system.

Loudoun County Viticulture and Enology Education Center

Applicant: Town of Purcellville

Announced: January 2014

Award: \$17,500

The Town of Purcellville, with the support of Loudoun County and in conjunction with Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC), will conduct a feasibility study for the development of a viticultural and enology education center, using as a model the Shelton-Badgett North Carolina Center for Viticulture & Enology. It would serve Virginia's wine industry by training the next generation of wine makers and vineyard managers through certificate and degree programs.

Developing a Roadmap for Agriculture and Forestry Industries in Essex County

Applicant: Essex County Industrial Development Authority

Announced: January 2014

Award: \$17,000

Through a competitive bidding process, the Essex County Industrial Development Authority (IDA) is proposing to hire a contractor to work with an appointed Essex County Agriculture and Forestry Advisory Board to develop a strategic plan for agriculture and forestry industries within Essex County. The effort will help the County promote and enhance the competitiveness of its agriculture and forestry industry.

Virginia Produced: A Light Processing and Flash Freezing Hub for Virginia-Grown Produce

Applicant: City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County

Announced: May 2014

Award: \$35,000

This project will yield an actionable business plan for a flash freezing and light food processing hub, building on a feasibility study already completed by the Jefferson Area Board for Aging. The resulting business entity would source Albemarle County and Virginia-grown produce supplied by the Local Food Hub and distribute flash frozen bulk and retail packs and prepared meals to institutional customers such as the University of Virginia, Virginia Area Agencies on Aging, and specialty grocery retailers such as Whole Foods. Growers stand to benefit through greater demand for their crops and exposure to new purchasers. Local, wholesome food could be available year round for consumption by the local community.

Integrated Poultry Industry Feasibility Study

Applicant: Pittsylvania County

Announced: May 2014

Award: \$10,000

This project aims to conduct an in-depth and independent feasibility study focused on attracting integrated poultry companies to Pittsylvania County. The study will inventory which companies are considering expanding, how and where a poultry complex could be located, which attributes of an area are attractive to poultry companies, and how the County can enhance its profile and marketing strategies to lobby these poultry companies. This feasibility study and the data it produces will be utilized to develop promotional pieces and to assist the county in the manner best suited to invite an integrator to Southern Virginia.

Fauquier County Cost of Community Services Study

Applicant: Fauquier County

Announced: December 2014

Award: \$6,190

Fauquier County is seeking funding to complete a cost of community services study to obtain a better understanding of the fiscal impacts of various land use categories. This study will be completed by UVA's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service and overseen by the County Agricultural Committee. The study will document, among other things, the fiscal impact that working agricultural lands offer the County.

Feasibility of Alternative Energy Production Options using Local Agriculture and Forestry Feedstock

Applicant: Buckingham County

Announced: December 2014

Award: \$10,000

Buckingham County is seeking funding to have an outside consultant conduct a feasibility analysis and planning proposal for alternative energy options for public buildings using local agriculture and forestry feedstock in the County. The study will include an economic feasibility analysis of local government and school buildings for conversion to biomass heating systems, feedstock availability, and a review of policies and ordinances that might assist or impede possible conversion. This effort will develop a template for other communities to follow for evaluating possible conversion of their public buildings to biomass heat.

Buckingham Agricultural Resource Network (BARN)

Applicant: Commonwealth Regional Council in partnership with Appomattox, Buckingham, and Cumberland Counties

Announced: December 2014

Award: \$35,000

The Buckingham Cattlemen's Association, representing 235 producers over 20 counties in Central Virginia, is seeking funding to partner with local government, VDACS, and the Tobacco Commission to construct a large, new multi-use facility and outside sales arena that will allow for on-site sale of cattle and hay and will offer substantial cost savings, as well as provide a viable venue for other activities to benefit the broader community. Grant funds will be used for the completion of interior finishes, including the installation of kitchen equipment donated by Buckingham County Schools.

Charles City County Agriculture and Forestry Economic Development Plan

Applicant: Charles City County

Announced: December 2014

Award: \$10,000

Charles City County is seeking funding to add a robust agriculture and forestry component to their newly launched Economic Development Strategic Plan. Specific issues to be addressed include improving land-use and zoning policies, developing eco- and agri-tourism attractions, expanding its timber industry, and supporting a new wine industry.

Assessing Opportunities for Agriculture and Agritourism at Montpelier

Applicant: Orange County

Announced: February 2015

Award: \$20,000

The overall project purpose is to explore sustainable agriculture and agritourism opportunities that fit Montpelier's mission and the rural character of its Orange County surroundings, while also offering the potential to generate jobs, spur enterprise development, increase visitation, and enhance income in the region. Virginia Tech's Office of Economic Development, in coordination with the Orange County Ag-Ventures Working Group, will conduct the study.

Building a Sustainable Food System Plan in Richmond

Applicant: City of Richmond

Announced: February 2015

Award: \$20,000

The City of Richmond's Food Access and Equity Task Force, with assistance from the Institute for Public Health Innovation, will conduct a local food access and equity policy assessment. They will also develop a new Food System Plan to promote urban agriculture, nutrition education, community engagement, and policy changes that will improve overall access to healthy food for low-income, low-access communities in Richmond. Key components of the plan include identifying parcels of land near food deserts which are appropriate for urban agricultural development, conducting focus groups and surveys within target neighborhoods, and developing policy recommendations that will reduce barriers to food access citywide.

A Strategic Plan for Agriculture in Halifax County

Applicant: Halifax County

Announced: June 2015

Award: \$20,000

Halifax County is seeking funding to develop a strategic plan for agriculture to better understand the current and future capacity for agriculture and forestry operations in the County while building on its rich agricultural heritage. The project will begin with the hiring of an experienced consultant, who will assess the local agricultural community through public meetings and will work closely with the AFID Grant Committee to develop a strategic plan. The plan will contain a detailed assessment of the agriculture and forestry industries in Halifax, and will use the results of the assessment to develop a comprehensive long-term prioritized strategic plan, along with a corresponding implementation plan to be presented to the Agriculture Development Advisory Committee.

Agriculture Planning Study

Applicant: Botetourt County

Announced: June 2015

Award: \$10,000

Botetourt County is seeking funding for an agricultural study and strategic plan, carried out in part by UVA's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, to examine the current economic characteristics of the County's and region's agricultural industry and identify industry trends. The study will examine the County's future economic potential of agriculture and agriculture-related business, gathering information from focus groups that will include representatives from the local agricultural community, businesses, and the general public. The information will be used to develop strategic priorities and policy recommendations that will dovetail with the existing overall economic strategic plan and the existing tourism strategic plan.

Market Analysis for Northern Piedmont Biofuels

Applicant: Rappahannock County

Announced: June 2015

Award: \$20,000

Rappahannock County is seeking \$20,000 to develop a business plan for a woody biomass aggregation facility at the closed Rappahannock County Landfill. The aggregation facility would provide a guaranteed supply of high-quality wood fuels to Northern Piedmont public facilities. Specific activities to be funded by this grant include the market analysis for potential wood energy facilities near the site of the aggregation facility, the determination of value-added products that could be produced at the facility, and identification of the specific woody biomass resources that could be aggregated at the proposed location.

Fields of Gold: Mooving Ahead

Applicant: Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (PDC)

Announced: June 2015

Award: \$35,000

The Central Shenandoah PDC is seeking \$35,000 to continue the results and momentum that the "Fields of Gold" program began after its inception using an initial AFID grant. The second grant is intended to further three distinct goals: creating and developing organizational funding that boosts rural economic development through regional collaboration; introducing business support services that assist agritourism businesses; and implement marketing practices that help the Shenandoah Valley attain recognition as the #1 agritourism destination in the nation. These goals reflect the larger initiative that aims to increase the number of visitors to the region and continue to enhance its reputation as a premier agritourism destination not only in the Commonwealth, but in the whole of the United States.

Regional Agricultural Development Strategic Plan

Applicant: LENOWISCO Planning District Commission (Counties of Lee, Scott, and Wise and the City of Norton)

Announced: November 2015

Award: \$20,000

The localities of the LENOWISCO PDC wish to develop a strategic plan to fully analyze and incorporate agricultural development into the region's overall economic development efforts. The plan will enable the region's agriculture and economic development stakeholders to identify priorities, strategies, and implementation projects, and it will also serve to further raise the profile of the local agricultural community, both locally and in the region. The project will be overseen by a work group and steering committee representing a broad and diverse range of agricultural interests.

LEAP Community Kitchen Grant

Applicant: City of Roanoke Economic Development Authority (EDA)

Announced: November 2015

Award: \$20,000

This project strengthens the local food system in the Roanoke Valley by funding additional food infrastructure, directly supporting local producers and food entrepreneurs, and increasing access to local food. It consists of three components: a shared commercial kitchen space that will serve as a small business incubator; a small-scale local food hub; and the LEAP Mobile Market that will operate from the food hub. Its goals are to: (1) support an increase in production of local foods; (2) incubate food-based businesses; (3) expand access to healthy local foods in low-income, low-access neighborhoods; and (4) provide space for food, cooking, and health education and programming.

Rockfish Valley Area Plan

Applicant: Nelson County

Announced: November 2015

Award: \$16,000

Nelson County's Rockfish Valley, home to popular agritourism venues and craft beverage producers along Route 151, is experiencing significant increases in commercial development. To ensure these changes do not negatively impact the special qualities that are the foundation of the area's sense of place, quality of life, and economic vitality, the County is undertaking a comprehensive public planning process to guide future development. This plan will allow the County to: proactively attract desired types of growth; direct development to appropriate areas; maximize Nelson County's agritourism "brand"; support its thriving agritourism and agribusiness operations; and preserve the prime agricultural soils and landscapes that are the basis of the success of those operations.

Site Readiness Topographical Survey (Industrial Park)

Applicant: Bath County Economic Development Authority

Announced: November 2015

Award: \$9,460

The Bath County Economic Development Authority (EDA) is working closely with the Office of Tourism and Economic Development to ensure the County's only Industrial Park, located in the eastern portion of the County (Millboro), is ready to be used in bringing new agribusiness to the County. The project, prompted by interest for a promising forestry industry prospect, is to complete a new boundary survey showing all visible infrastructure, as well as to provide an aerial survey utilizing digital triangulation and photogrammetric compilation.

Clarke County Cost of Community Services Study

Applicant: Clarke County

Announced: November 2017

Award: \$5,947

Clarke County will undertake an effort to study the cost of community services of differing land uses in the County. The project will compute the ration of expenditures-to-revenues for the different land use categories (i.e. agriculture, residential, commercial, industrial, etc.), study the county's conservation easements, and show how existing land uses affect the county budget. Results can be used to support continued investment in agricultural and forest land conservation as a benefit to taxpayers, the environment, and the community.

Regional Food Port Feasibility Study

Applicant: Fauquier County (in cooperation with Loudoun County)

Announced: November 2017

Award: \$35,000

Fauquier and Loudoun Counties will evaluate the feasibility of a regional food port. The port could act as a commercial-scale food distribution center where individual farms, cooperatives, and local food hubs aggregate product supply for efficient storage, processing, and preparation for urban markets. With this study, the Counties will be able to identify opportunities for increased agricultural production and to target infrastructure investments for economic growth. In addition, results of the study will be shared statewide to encourage more farms and local food hubs to participate as suppliers of the food port.

Feasibility Study Identifying Strategies to Recruit Dairy Processing Operations

Applicant: Franklin County (in cooperation with Botetourt, Amelia, Pulaski, Washington, Augusta, and Rockbridge Counties)

Announced: March 2018

Award: \$35,000

Franklin, Botetourt, Amelia, Pulaski, Washington, Rockbridge, and Augusta Counties propose a feasibility study of dairy processing based on Virginia's agricultural and economic assets. The study would evaluate factors that affect the establishment of and/or investment in dairy processing across the Commonwealth. Further, the study would identify in each partner community dairy processing site selection attributes, including dairy production, transportation, logistics, workforce, and marketing opportunities.

Shenandoah County Agriculture and Forestry Economic Development Plan

Applicant: Shenandoah County

Announced: December 2018

Award: \$10,000

Shenandoah County's Office of Tourism and Economic Development is developing a strategic plan in an effort to strengthen the County's economy and build on its agricultural-based assets. Grant funding will be used to add a robust agriculture component to this plan. Specific issues to be addressed related to agriculture include: land-use policies and zoning; market analysis; small business planning; expansion of eco- and agritourism opportunities, including viticulture expansion; and the expansion of the craft beer industry and local distilleries. Shenandoah County has budgeted \$25,000 for this project.

Vendor Training and Local Foods Tradeshow Toolkit

Applicant: Shenandoah County (in cooperation with Augusta and Rockingham Counties)

Announced: February 2019

Award: \$11,885

Agriculture is a key industry in Virginia, and the Shenandoah Valley is a key area for agricultural production. Many of the farms producing in the Valley are small and medium sized, meaning they often lack the resources to compete with larger farms in getting their products to market, and they are not equipped to market directly to consumers. To address this need, fourteen localities in the Shenandoah Valley have developed a regional agriculture-based networking and tradeshow event known as the

Shenandoah Valley Farm2Fork Affair to increase agricultural sales and build the capacity of the region's farms and food producers. This year's event will take place on March 5, 2019, with future plans to be held biennially to complement the Virginia's Finest Food & Beverage Expo. The applicants are seeking funding to capitalize on an existing event to further help farmers and localities throughout the Commonwealth. The AFID award will be used to fund regional trainings designed to prepare producers for marketing directly to wholesale buyers, with a focus on how best to take advantage of this networking opportunity; the funds will also be used to develop a toolkit on conducting these events and pre-event trainings that can be used by other localities wishing to host their own trade events.

Market Analysis, Feasibility Study, and Business Plan for Meat Processing Facility in Russell County

Applicant: Russell County
Announced: August 2019
Award: \$8,750

Southwest Virginia has been working to diversify its economy in response to the decline of the coal industry. A regional Agricultural Strategic Plan was conducted in October 2017 to identify strategies for broadening the region's economic base, one of which was to expand meat processing. Russell County has identified a location for a Regional Agricultural Industrial Park and is looking for funding to identify strategies for including a meat processing facility within the park. By demonstrating the viability of a meat processing facility, Russell County will be able to leverage funds from the Virginia Department of Transportation and other economic allies to develop the park.

Floyd Grown 2: Supporting our Ag and Forestry-related Businesses

Applicant: Floyd County
Announced: August 2020
Award: \$20,000

Floyd County successfully executed a previous AFID Planning Grant-funded initiative called Floyd Grown, on which the activities of this project will build. This project is focused on both the short-term and long-term needs of county producers with the goal of making them more adaptable and resilient. The project has three major components: 1) helping the Floyd Farmers Market (FFM) with adding a new e-commerce platform, cold storage equipment, and staff support; 2) conducting a feasibility study on new, larger scale cold storage facilities; and 3) providing a toolkit for local agribusinesses.

Loudoun Made, Loudoun Grown Marketplace

Applicant: Loudoun County
Announced: August 2020
Award: \$20,000

This grant supports the "Loudoun Made, Loudoun Grown Marketplace" (Marketplace), an e-commerce platform designed for a direct farmer-to-consumer experience. Through the program, farmers are able to directly interact with consumers on the digital platform and set easy and accessible pick-up and delivery locations.

Fauquier County Farmers Market Feasibility Study

Applicant: Fauquier County
Announced: December 2020
Award: \$20,000

Fauquier County currently has two farmers markets: one sponsored and managed by the Town of Warrenton and the other a privately run market near The Plains. Both markets have seen considerable increases in customers. Fauquier County seeks to determine if there is sufficient farmer interest and commitment, as well as support from citizens, to develop new farmers markets in the County. In addition, the project will examine possible enhancements to existing markets and explore the possibility of a year-round market.

Lena Huckstep Community Kitchen Planning

Applicant: Pulaski County
Announced: December 2020
Award: \$20,000

The Lena Huckstep Community Kitchen will be a local, community-based food business enterprise that: (1) increases local consumption of and access to locally and regionally produced agricultural products in Pulaski County and the surrounding New River Valley; (2) develops new market opportunities for farm and ranch operations servicing local markets; and (3) prepares Pulaski County to be more resilient in the face of future emergency situations like the COVID19 pandemic through a healthy food distribution program that will be made possible through a stronger local food economy. Funding is requested to identify the Community Kitchen's target markets and their product/service needs in order to develop a sustainable business model and the appropriate kitchen design.

Supporting Forest Farmers and Meeting COVID-related Medicinal Plant Demand in Western Virginia

Applicant: Roanoke County
Announced: December 2020
Award: \$20,000

Roanoke County is interested in promoting the farming of native medicinal and edible plants under a forest canopy. In partnership with Virginia Tech's Catawba Sustainability Center, this project will provide free site assessment, help create management plans, and cover certification costs for the first two years of production under the Forest Grown Verified Label. The project will collaborate with the USDA-funded Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmers Coalition to identify and help establish 15 producers in the region, including five producers who can grow and share planting stock. Regional markets for forest-grown medicinal plants would also be identified in an effort to keep as much value as possible in the state.

Specific Pathogen Free Sheep Production

Applicant: Grayson County
Announced: February 2021
Award: \$20,000

Grayson County is requesting AFID Planning Grant funds for the development of an investor prospectus, outreach, and other work to bring major investment to the County for specialized livestock production. The effort, led by local non-profit Blue Ridge Plateau Initiative (BRPI), has been years in the making and has been jump-started by a \$46,000 grant from Opportunity Appalachia, a federally funded non-profit helping to bring new private business investment to Federal Opportunity Zones in Appalachia. The AFID

Funds will go to Opportunity Virginia, a division of the statewide CDFI Virginia Community Capital, to provide the professional investor recruitment services needed to make this project a reality. This project has the potential to lead to the development of a new industry in the region for the production of high-value sheep for biomedical research and associated applications, creating a high-value market opportunity for area producers.

Southside Virginia Fruit and Vegetable Producers Association

Applicant: Charlotte County
Announced: February 2021
Award: \$20,000

This project seeks to support the county's diversifying agricultural sector through meeting the staffing and equipment needs required to continue the growth of the Southside Virginia Fruit and Vegetable Producers Association, which will strengthen agriculture in Charlotte County and the Southside Virginia region. More specifically, this project seeks funding for salary expenses to the Association of a part-time (0.5 FTE) inventory and accounting controller and funding to partially address the expense of purchasing a forklift for use by the Association.

Fresh Food Project

Applicant: Page County
Announced: February 2021
Award: \$12,000

AFID planning funds will be used to identify opportunities for mid-size producers and promote high quality local food to consumers. This will involve exploring options to connect producers and consumers in ways that create a locally grown food supply chain that benefits the farmers and community.

Produce Auction for Lee County Planning Initiative

Applicant: Lee County
Announced: June 2021
Award: \$20,000

Lee County is interested in exploring the viability of a produce auction in the county. Produce auctions are designed for wholesale and require buyers to buy a minimum to ensure that farmers markets and farm stands are not harmed. Most require that the produce be grown within a 100-mile radius with some making exceptions at different times of the year. Most buyers are from independent grocery stores, small community stores, restaurants, and those wishing to preserve local produce for their home consumption. With the geographical location of Lee County, there is significant evidence that a produce auction will be successful in the area, giving farmers the opportunity to increase their profitability. Lee County has several former burley tobacco farmers who have converted to vegetable production. Also, the County has an established Mennonite community and a new Amish community who farm in the County. The planning grant would be used to develop a business plan, marketing plan, and determine a suitable location.

Brunswick County Produce Processing Facility Study

Applicant: Brunswick County (in cooperation with Lunenburg County)
Announced: June 2021
Award: \$35,000

The project's purpose is the development of architectural and engineering plans for a 45,000 square-foot produce processing facility, a critical first step in the potential development of such a facility. The

ultimate focus of this project is to create new market opportunities for farmers growing organic and conventional produce. These opportunities are needed as farmers have seen a multi-decade decline of both tobacco contract volumes and prices. The proposed facility will be in Alberta, a small town in Brunswick County, an excellent geographical location that provides access to markets serving 180 million customers within a one-day drive. The importance of this strategic location is emphasized by the fact that the transportation of produce from the West Coast and Mexico continues to become more expensive, and therefore less appealing, to buyers each year. If constructed, this facility will directly assist producers in accessing these new markets.

Feasibility Study for an Anaerobic Digester Facility in Rockingham County

Applicant: Rockingham County

Announced: June 2021

Award: \$20,000

Rockingham is the number one agricultural county in Virginia and is home to a large number of food and beverage manufacturing companies. Both of these industries generate large quantities of waste, which is to be expected. To support long term viability, the County wishes to explore an alternative and sustainable organic waste disposal solution. The goal is to investigate the various waste sources in our local agricultural community to determine if there is potential to convert this waste into an energy source and to analyze the feasibility of an anaerobic digester in Rockingham County that will harvest methane from these waste sources and convert the raw gas into pipeline-quality natural gas.

Feasibility Study for Abattoir at Fauquier Livestock Exchange

Applicant: Fauquier County

Announced: October 2022

Award: \$20,000

This project will help fund a consultant to conduct a feasibility study to determine if the Fauquier Livestock Exchange's location would be suitable for an abattoir. The Fauquier Livestock Exchange is located centrally within the county and is in close proximity to the Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C. markets, meaning there is potential to both increase capacity and reduce travel costs for producers accessing those markets. Grant funds will be used to analyze both: the feasibility of a meat processing facility at the Fauquier Livestock Exchange location; and, how to best implement the design and marketing of said facility if it is feasible. The consultant will also report on USDA inspection requirements and recommendations for becoming a USDA-inspected facility.