

AGRICULTURAL COMMODITY BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT

for the Virginia Wine Board

Fiscal Year 2024-2025

Date Due: November 1, 2025

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I. INTRODUCTION

Created by the Virginia General Assembly in 1984 as part of Virginia's Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Virginia Wine Board promotes the interests of vineyards and wineries in the Commonwealth through research, education and marketing. The Board fulfills the following duties:

- Receives funding from the Virginia Wine Promotion Fund and dispenses it for wine-related projects and initiatives.
- Contracts research to improve viticultural and enological practices in the Virginia wine industry.
- Promotes education about and appreciation for Virginia wines.
- Promotes the growing of wine grapes and wine production throughout the Commonwealth.
- Disseminates information on wine and viticultural topics.
- Contracts marketing, advertising and other programs that promote the growth of the state's wine industry and the enjoyment of Virginia wines.
- Collaborates with state, regional, national, and international organizations on their work related to Virginia's wine industry.

The Board consists of 10 members, nine of whom have voting privileges, all appointed by Virginia's governor for four-year terms. Three of the Board members are growers and six of which represent wineries. Approximately two-thirds of the Board's budget goes towards marketing, with the remaining third spent on wine-related research and education.

II. BUDGET

2024-2025 Budget	
Total Revenues (Base appropriations)	\$2,330,810.00
1/3 Minimum to Research and Education	\$776,936.67
2/3 to Marketing and Administration	\$1,553,873.33

III. PROJECTS AND FUNDING

The 2025-2026 VWB grant cycle opened October 7, 2024, and received 42 proposals from 23 organizations via Google Forms. At their December 9 meeting, the Board invited 25 to submit full proposals by February 3, 2025. Informed by the TC’s February 24, 2025, review, on March 31, 2025 and May 7, 2025, the Board selected 15 new grants to award and renewed 4 contracts, as listed below.

Awardee	Title	Approved
VT	Maintain fungicide resistance testing capabilities for grape diseases-2025-2026	\$9,900
VT	Impacts of Exposure to Adult Spotted Lanternfly on Cabernet Franc Yield and Grape Composition	\$59,373
VT	Comparing annual and perennial legumes as under-vine cover crops in Virginia vineyards	\$44,638
VT	Assessing red wine phenolics in three Virginia wine varieties over three vintages	\$47,323
VT	Harvest Maturity and Postharvest Storage of Southern Apples for Cider Production	\$59,797
VT	Improve the efficacy of grape downy mildew management in Virginia	\$56,000
VT	Preparing for Pierce's disease-ready future vineyard operations	\$25,117
VVA	Virginia Commercial Grape Report 2025	\$21,000
VWA	VWA Technical & Reception Programs	\$45,000
VWA	VWA Regulation and Rules Round Ups and Winery Resource Guide	\$42,000
VCA	Virginia Cider Educational Meetings FY 2025-2026	\$8,000
Nelson County	Cost of Production Review	\$17,945
VVA	Virginia Vineyards Association 2026 Winter Technical Meeting Facility Support	\$25,000
Sustainable Virginia Vineyards	Developing a Sustainable Vineyard Certification Pilot Program	\$12,000
Wine Cellar Stories Productions	Virginia Wine Docu-series	\$50,000
Winemakers Research Exchange	Enology Research Services (contract)	\$327,220
VWA	Governor’s Cup Competition (contract)	\$100,000
StonyWater	Grant and Budget Management (contract)	\$73,000
Ringwood Boyd	Virginia Wine Marketing Office (contract)	\$1,250,000

III. A. Virginia Wine Board Marketing Office

The Virginia Wine Board Marketing Office (VWBMO) completed their eighteenth year of operation. With a staff of five full time employees and one part-time, the VWBMO carried out a wide variety of marketing programs.

Below are some of the highlights of their marketing efforts. The total budget for FY 2025 was \$1,615,000.

The Wine Marketing Office's core marketing priorities and objectives include:

- Increase Virginia trade engagement with Virginia wines, in both in-state and out-of-state markets.
- Drive traffic to Virginia wineries with the intent to increase bottle sales.
- Build brand awareness for Virginia wines nationally and regionally.

Marketing Initiatives Completed in FY2025

Trade Relations: With sales through distribution showing the largest reduction in sales, the Virginia Wine Board Marketing Office focused new efforts to build this sector of business.

- The Virginia Wine Board Marketing Office hired a fulltime Trade Relations Specialist to focus on this sector of the market.
- The VWBMO hosted 2 Virginia wine trade tastings for buyers in FY 2025.
 - Washington DC, , May 13th, 30 VA wineries, 110 buyers came.
 - Richmond, VA, June 17th, 20 VA wineries, 40 buyers came
- Co-hosted a Webinar on “How to Build Trade Relationships” with the VWDC March 6, 2025.
- SFA Chicago Reception for James Beard Nominees, June 16, 2025
- TexSom sponsorship, Aug. 25-27, 2024
- Southern Foodways Alliance Fall Symposium, October 27-29.
- Boston Wine Expo, April 5-6, Represented VA wines.

Media Relations: Key media personnel and publications were targeted throughout the year. Both wine sample mailings and media tours continue to be a priority. Wine Enthusiast Magazine selected a new wine critic to cover Virginia wines, Cheron Cowan. The VWBMO hosted Cheron for a 3-day tour of VA wineries. She was also at the VinExpo Explorer so she had two Virginia

wine tours in Oct./Nov of 2024. Efforts in FY 2025 resulted in many main-stream media features.

Featured coverage:

- The VinePair Podcast, Virginia Wine Industry is Blossoming, October 16, 2024
- Virginia Wine – Worth a road trip, Jancis Robinson, April 8, 2025
- Trump’s Wine Tariffs rattle industry but Virginia sees opportunity. Axios, April 18, 2025
- From Uruguay to Virginia, Tannat Takes Off, Wine Enthusiast, April 18, 2025
- Virginia Wine goes To Paris, Forbes, April 21, 2025
- The 10 Best Virginia Wineries to Visit Right Now, Wine Enthusiast, April 22, 2025
- Virginia Wines Grow Up, New York Times, May 28, 2025
- Inspired By Bordeaux: The Long History of Virginia’s Meritage Blends, Decanter, June 16, 2025
- James Suckling: Virginia review June of 2025.

Advertising & Brand partnerships: To support the office’s core marketing objectives, various advertising campaigns and brand partnerships took place throughout the FY. National and regional advertising promoted visitation to Virginia vineyards, using the Gold Medal Wine Trail to plan a visit and awareness. Advertising was placed in Hemispheres Magazine, Dulles Airport, Business Bon Appetit, Conde Nast, and Architectural Digest as well as VinePair and Wine Folly. Local print as well as digital advertising was used throughout the year.

Digital Marketing & Content Development: The VWBMO continued to invest in Virginia Wine’s digital presence in FY 25. VirginiaWine.org drew over 200,000 visitors to the site, a 19% increase. The Virginia Wine Blog drew 6,000 readers, averaging 1,000 readers per month. Social followings and online engagement continue to grow with over 23.7k email subscribers, with a 40% open rate. To enhance user experiences, the website saw improvements to increase landing page functionality and new features like tracking winery visits. Winery profiles also received updates to increase producer engagement on the site.

Virginia Governor's Cup - The VWBMO continues to support and promote the Virginia Governor’s Cup Competition. The annual gala was held in Richmond with a record breaking 834 total attendees, including consumers who purchased tickets. Trade and media were engaged with a virtual tasting series of the competition winners with over 45 recipients of case winning wines.

The Gold Medal Wine Trail was refreshed with the best performance to date with over 2,100 sign ups with over 5,600 check-ins.

International- In FY 25 Virginia Wine engaged with international marketing initiatives. IN October of 2024, the Virginia Department of Agriculture hosted VinExpo Explorer where 30-40 international buyers came to Virginia to tour Virginia wineries and distilleries. The Virginia Wine Board hosted a dinner at King Family Vineyards as part of the team and worked with the International Marketing group to coordinate tours and visits in addition to the dinner. In February, Virginia Wine's largest international initiative was a presence at the 2025 VinExpo in Paris. The event featured a Virginia pavilion featuring six wine producers and media tastings. A media dinner dedicated to Virginia Wine was held at the Bistrot du Sommelier Paris.

Virginia Wine also partnered with VTC for a United Airlines event in Paris in October of 2024 and worked with 2 Virginia wineries to coordinate wine tastings as part of the event.

Wine Month- Virginia Wine Month continues to be a flagship promotion. The month-long initiative offers opportunities for increased visitation and trade promotion. Digital and print advertising support the programming, with 2.3 million impressions leading up to and during Virginia Wine Month.

Updating and Printing the Virginia Winery Guide – The VWBMO updated and printed the Virginia Winery Guide, printing 175,000 copies.

Cornus Virginicus: VWBMO worked to launch and promote the Third edition of Cornus Virginicus, a limited-release wine that celebrates Virginia agriculture during October. The project is a collaboration between the First Lady of Virginia, Suzanne S. Youngkin, and a rotating Virginia winemaker. The third edition of Cornus Virginicus was developed by Mountain & Vine Vineyard & Winery benefiting State Fair of Virginia Youth Scholarship Fund.

Matching Marketing Grants: The Virginia Wine Board funded five matching marketing grants for a total of \$30,475.

- Virginia Women in Wine: \$5,850
- Norton Wine tour: \$10,000
- Targeting Canadian Travelers: \$3,000

- Peak Shenandoah Wine Showcase: \$5,625
- (Second round) Virginia Women in Wine Events: \$5,625

Industry Projects: The VWBMO supported various projects that aim to further the impact of the Virginia Wine industry.

- Virginia Wine Vision- continued management and updating of the industry wide strategic plan
- Commercial Grape Report- VWBMO worked with the Virginia Vineyards Association to conduct an industry wide survey of grapes grown and tonnage harvested within Virginia within the 2024 Harvest.
- Virginia Cider Apple Report- VWBMO worked with the Virginia Cider Association to conduct an industry wide survey of cider production and sales within Virginia within the 2024 harvest.

III. B. Winemakers Research Exchange (WRE) Accomplishments: FY2024–2025

In FY2024–2025, the Winemakers Research Exchange (WRE) completed the third year of a five-year contract to provide Enological Research Services for the Virginia Wine Board. With a primary mission to promote innovation and quality improvement through production-scale experimentation and practical education in mind, the WRE is guided by a six member Board of Directors composed of industry-leading winemakers and supported by a Cider Advisory Board to guide cider-related initiatives. In FY2024-2025, one empty seat was filled, completing the Board. All staff members were retained from FY 2023-2024 (two full-time staff and one part-time consultant), allowing continuity of services and relationships with Virginia wine and cider producers across the Commonwealth.

WRE’s core service is facilitating applied research around questions initiated by winemakers and cidermakers. In FY2024–2025, WRE supported 48 practical experiments conducted by 24 wine producers and 6 cider producers. These experiments focused on practical solutions to improve grape and cider apple production, wine quality, and market competitiveness. Topics ranged from acid management and yeast selection to lees contact and sorbitol content. Participating producers received chemistry analysis and data interpretation, helping to inform production decisions in real time. A total of 692 chemistry panels were completed in support of these projects. Experiment results were further shared through sensory sessions, educational programming, written reports and webinars.

WRE hosted 9 sensory sessions during the year (6 focused on wine and 3 on cider). Sessions were held across multiple regions (Northern Virginia, Central Virginia, and the Shenandoah

Valley) to promote accessibility for attendees from different regions. These sessions provided opportunities for tasting experimental wines, discussing results, and learning collaboratively. In total, 140 unique individuals representing 83 wineries and cideries participated. New strategies to promote discussion among all attendees, such as assigned seating and structured small-group discussions, encouraged broader participation and informal mentorship among producers.

WRE used a variety of communication tools to share findings and increase engagement. These included a growing online library of reports and resources, regular email campaigns, educational videos, social media outreach, and presentations at 7 regional and national conferences. The WRE website received over 21,000 unique visitors, including users from Virginia, California, Australia, Canada, and the UK. WRE staff also contributed to industry publications and collaborated with academic partners on peer-reviewed research, including a scientific paper on Petit Manseng ripening kinetics and a national poster presentation.

Through experimentation, education, and outreach, WRE continues to advance the science and practice of winemaking and cidermaking in Virginia while raising the visibility of Virginia wine nationally and internationally.

IV. FUNDING LEVEL AT END OF FISCAL YEAR

a. Cash Balance: 6/30/2024:	\$2,062,097.75
b. Revenues through 6/30/2025:	\$2,330,810.00
c. Expenditures through 6/30/2025:	\$2,593,073.87
d. Cash Balance: 6/30/2025:	\$1,799,833.88

V. BOARD MEETING ATTENDANCE

	5/7/2025	3/18/2025	12/9/2024	8/20/2024
M. Seibel	Y	Y	Y	Y
G. Hodson	Y	Y	Y	Y
A. Rose	Y	Y	Y	Y
J. King	Y	Y	Y	Y
N. Walsh	Y	Y	Y	Y
L. Paschina	N	N	Y	N
S. Barnard	Y	Y	Y	Y
K. Baki	Y	Y	Y	Y
A. Shelton	Y	Y	Y	Y
J. Guthrie	N	N	N	Y