



Supporting Organizations



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Many different organizations, government departments, and associations exist to help local leaders in some or all parts of the planning for agriculture process. Below are several entities operating within Virginia that may be able to offer assistance and support.

American Farmland Trust (AFT) is a national nonprofit organization that works to save the land that sustains us by protection farmland, promoting sound farming practices, and keeping farmers on the land.

www.farmland.org

- › **AFT's Farmland Information Center** is a clearinghouse for information about farmland protection and stewardship. It has a staffed answer service and searchable website with extensive resources to support planning activities.

www.farmlandinfo.org

American Planning Association (APA) is a national organization which elevates and unites the planning profession to help communities, their leaders, and residents anticipate and navigate change.

<https://www.planning.org>

- › **APA'S *Sustaining Places: Best Practices for Comprehensive Plans*** provides a framework to turn principles into a plan and score the results, providing processes and pointers for communities to use. <https://www.planning.org/publications/report/9026901/>

- › Virginia has a robust, active state chapter of the APA. The chapter offers many opportunities for learning, and they encourage connections among planning professionals across the state.

<https://virginia.planning.org/>

The **Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)** is an economic development partnership entity of the federal government and 13 state governments focusing on 423 counties across the Appalachian Region. ARC's mission is to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in Appalachia.

<https://www.arc.gov/>

CivicWell (formerly the Local Government Commission) supports leaders responding to the climate crisis and its impact on their communities. It is a nonprofit organization which equips, connects, and cultivates leaders working toward a more sustainable

and resilient future through policy guidance, collaborative partnerships, and direct assistance.

<https://civicwell.org/about-us/>

Cooperative Extension is a nationwide research and education system which, among other things, supports agriculture, natural resources, health and nutrition, community development, and emergency preparedness. It operates through state land-grant universities in partnership with federal, state, and local governments, and the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Extension agents provide technical assistance and translate science to farmers, ranchers, and the general public. <https://ext.vt.edu/>

- The **Small Farm Outreach Program**, a part of Cooperative Extension at Virginia State University, educates and empowers small farmers and ranchers to own, operate and sustain farms and ranches independently with agricultural training programs that improve farm management skills and quality of life. <https://www.ext.vsu.edu/small-farm-outreach-program>

GO Virginia is a bipartisan, business-led economic development initiative that is changing the way Virginia's diverse regions collaborate on economic and workforce development activities. It supports programs—including in agriculture—to create more high-paying jobs through incentivized collaboration between business, education, and government to

diversify and strengthen the economy in every region of the Commonwealth. <https://govirginia.org/>

International City/County Management Association (ICMA) is an association of professional city and county managers and other employees who serve local governments dedicated to creating and sustaining thriving communities throughout the world.

<https://icma.org/>

National Agricultural Law Center has a library of subject-based reading rooms each with a comprehensive list of electronic resources for an agricultural or food law topic. Links are provided to major statutes, regulations, case law, articles, publications, and other research resources.

<https://nationalaglawcenter.org/research-by-topic/>

National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) is a nonprofit organization that represents America's 3,000 conservation districts and the people who serve on their governing boards. NACD promotes responsible natural resources management and conservation by representing locally-led conservation districts and their associations through grassroots advocacy, education and partnerships.

<https://www.nacdnet.org/about-nacd/>

- **Virginia's Soil and Water Conservation Districts:** <https://vaswcd.org/>



JACOB GILLEY



LANCE CHEUNG/USDA

National Association of Counties (NACo) serves county elected officials and employees to advocate for county priorities, promote exemplary county policies and practices, nurture leadership skills and expand knowledge networks, optimize county resources, and enrich public understanding of county government. <https://www.naco.org/what-we-do/about-naco>

National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) provides advocacy, education, research, and training for the nation's regional development organizations. The association and its members promote regional strategies, partnerships, and solutions to strengthen the economic competitiveness and quality of life across America's local communities. <https://www.nado.org/about/>

National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) serves as the national voice for regions by advocating for regional cooperation to address community planning and development opportunities and issues. NARC members include regional councils, councils of governments, regional planning and development agencies, Metropolitan Planning Organizations and other regional organizations. <https://narc.org/>

National Association of Towns and Townships (NATaT) serves more than 13,000 towns and townships across the U.S. to enhance the ability of smaller

communities to deliver public services, economic vitality, and good government to their citizens. <https://www.natat.org/>

Piedmont Environmental Council works to protect and restore the lands and waters of the Virginia Piedmont while building stronger, more sustainable communities. As part of their work, PEC helps communities pursue a thoughtful approach to land use planning that balances growth and development with natural and cultural resource protection. <https://www.pecva.org/>

The **Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission** is a 28-member body created by the 1999 General Assembly. Its mission is the promotion of economic growth and development in formerly tobacco-dependent communities, using proceeds of the national tobacco settlement. To date, the Commission has created tens of thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars of investment in Southern and Southwest Virginia. <https://revitalizeva.org/>

United States Conference of Mayors is the official non-partisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. Members set organizational policies and goals, share information and best practices, and otherwise contribute to the development of urban policy. <https://www.usmayors.org/>

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is the federal agency that administers federal laws related to agriculture and forestry, food and nutrition, natural resource conservation, rural development, and related issues. It is comprised of 29 agencies and has offices at more than 4,500 locations across the U.S. and abroad.

<https://www.usda.gov/>

- » Agricultural Marketing Service:
<https://www.ams.usda.gov>
- » Farm Service Agency:
<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/index>
- » National Institute of Food and Agriculture:
<https://nifa.usda.gov/>
- » Natural Resources and Conservation Service:
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>

Vermont Law School Center for Agriculture and Food Systems works to address food systems challenges, provides legal services, and develops resources to empower the communities it serves. <https://www.vermontlaw.edu/academics/centers-and-programs/center-for-agriculture-and-food-systems>

The Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) exists to support county officials and to effectively represent, promote, and protect the interests of counties to better serve the people of Virginia. VACo's missions are to be: efficient, innovative and goal-oriented; an effective force representing local governments at the state and national levels in legislative and regulatory processes; and a valuable resource network for planning and implementing new ideas and technologies. <https://www.vaco.org/>

The Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions (VAPDC) is an organization comprised of the 21 Planning District Commissions/Regional Councils in Virginia. VAPDC works to bring diverse resources together at the regional level in partnership with local, state, and federal entities to strengthen regions and the Commonwealth. <https://www.vapdc.org/>

Virginia Community Food Connections works to create healthy, food-secure communities and strong, equitable regional food systems by ensuring fresh and local produce is accessible and affordable for all. The organization brings together organizations including small farmers markets, local nonprofits, and key stakeholders to address food security, farmer viability, and affordable access to fresh produce.

<https://virginiacfc.org/>

The **Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)** promotes the economic growth and development of Virginia agriculture, provides consumer protection, and encourages environmental stewardship. Headquartered in Richmond, the agency has several field offices, four regional diagnostic animal health laboratories and a global network of representatives promoting Virginia products internationally. <https://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/>

The **Virginia Farm Bureau** supports farmers through a number of programs to create an environment where agriculture can prosper in order to improve the lives of Virginians. It works in the legislative, business, leadership, and education realms. <https://www.vafb.com/supporting-farmers/farmers-in-action>

The **Virginia Foundation for Agriculture, Innovation and Rural Sustainability (FAIRS)** is a 501(c)(3) foundation organized in Virginia. It is a Cooperative Development Center offering technical assistance to those transitioning into, or involved in, value added agriculture. These services are offered through assistance from and cooperation of our partners. <https://vafairs.com/>

The Virginia Land and Energy Navigator (VaLEN) brings together GIS information related to prime farm and forestland, land conservation, brownfields, transmission lines, and other topics to support land use planning and decision-making at the local level. VaLEN's goal is to support and inform decision-making and can be used to balance economic development and natural resources conservation. https://valen.ext.vt.edu/web_portal/about

The Virginia Tech Center for Economic and Community Engagement provides research and university connections to organizations and communities, helping them to think strategically and find a pathway to economic prosperity. <https://cece.vt.edu/>

The **Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service** offers rigorous training programs and nationally recognized applied research in service to the public good. Our non-partisan, reliable services help policymakers and elected officials, students, governments, and community leaders in Virginia and beyond. <https://www.coopercenter.org/>