

## Virginia Wine Board

### Invitation to Submit Pre-Proposal

### 2024 - 2025

The Virginia Wine Board (VWB) is soliciting pre-proposals to fund research, education, and marketing projects that further the Virginia wine industry. For additional information regarding the funding priorities of the Virginia Wine Board, as well as current marketing programs, please see details on page 2-4. This pre-proposal system intends to increase the number of applicants as well as streamline proposal preparation and review. The Wine Board will review pre-proposals and invite selected projects to submit full proposals for consideration. An invitation to submit a full proposal does not guarantee funding.

**Funding:** Projects are funded by the wine liter tax. In FY24-25, VWB estimates approximately \$300,000 or more in available funding, though the actual amount is not yet known. Average project size over the past three cycles has been approximately \$33,300 with a preferred duration of one year. If an existing project wishes for renewed funding in the coming year, you must submit a pre-proposal. Cost-sharing or matching is encouraged but not required.

**Eligibility:** This process is open to public and private applicants both in and outside the state of Virginia.

**Evaluation:** The Board will evaluate preproposals on the following criteria:

- Impact: Anticipated measurable impact on the Virginia wine industry
- Budget: Reasonableness

At the full proposal stage, in addition to the above criteria, projects will also be evaluated on:

- Project Plan: Clarity and soundness of the project plan
- Applicant Capabilities: Applicant's proven ability to carry out the proposed project

**Format:** Pre-proposals should not exceed 1 typed page, single-spaced, using 12 size font. The pre-proposal must address and contain the following:

- I. Name, Title, Email & Telephone of Principal Investigator:
- II. Organization:
- III. Type of Project (Select **ONE**): ☐ Research ☐ Education ☐ Marketing
- IV. Title of Project (Fifteen words or less):
- V. Total Budget requested:
- VI. What are the objectives of the project?
- VII. What is the project's anticipated impact on the Virginia Wine industry?

**Deadlines:** Pre-proposals must be emailed to VWBgrants@stonywater.com by 5:00 PM (Eastern) Monday, November 13, 2023. **Pre-proposals submitted after the deadline will not be considered.**

An optional webinar for potential applicants will be held via Zoom on October 30, 2023 at 10:30 am ET. <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81026283989?pwd=UHorZTIsTDJZcDdnWEFNeGJkYThBdz09> or +1 301 715 8592; Meeting ID: 810 2628 3989; Passcode: 925631.

Pre-proposals will be evaluated and voted on during the December 2023 Board meeting. Applicants will be notified by email on the status of their proposal within two weeks of the meeting, along with any specific feedback and suggestions for modification. Applicants selected to submit a complete proposal will receive additional instructions. For those selected, final proposal submissions will be due February 5, 2024. The awarded grant period of performance will run from June 1, 2024 through May 31, 2025.

## Virginia Wine Board Funding Priorities

The Virginia Wine Board seeks preproposals for FY 24-25 research, education, and marketing grants that focus on implementing the Wine Vision strategy ([virginiawine.org/pages/vision](https://virginiawine.org/pages/vision)) to ensure a vibrant and sustainable industry for Virginia farm wineries. While the VWB welcomes proposals supporting any of these three Wine Vision focus areas, the following are of particular interest in FY24-25:

- **Viticulture & Enology:** achieve and maintain equilibrium between the demand for high-quality Virginia branded wine and viticultural sourcing. This area is the highest priority for VWB grants in FY24-25.
  - *Specific interest:* research to strengthen industry-wide partnerships and to increase efficiency and profitability of growing grapes and producing wine. For example, research on crop threats throughout the state or pest management approaches applicable to multiple regions.
  - Pursuant to § [3.2-3005](#), at least one-third of the Wine Boards' funding shall be expended for projects that advance viticulture and enological research concerning the growing of grapes and the production of wine in Virginia. The Wine Board expects most of the funds in this FY24-25 opportunity to be expended in this area.
- **Marketing & Trade:** Build brand awareness, excitement, and credibility of Virginia wine through sales and relationships with industry members, consumers, trade partners, and media.
  - *Specific interest:* New ideas to explore engaging trade partners (restaurant, wine shops, etc.) or e-commerce initiatives that widely support the industry.
  - Many marketing programs must be managed in tandem with existing marketing efforts. See the Review of Current Marketing Programs below on p 3-4, and talk with the Virginia Wine Board Marketing Office to see if your proposal fits within their existing marketing efforts: [Annette.Boyd@VirginiaWine.org](mailto:Annette.Boyd@VirginiaWine.org)
- **Financial Sustainability:** Achieve profitability that enables wineries to sustain current business models with the opportunity to garner outside investment.
  - *Specific interest:* Information and data analysis, such as trends in ecommerce affecting Virginia as well as the needs of Virginia wineries related to building financial sustainability and supporting pursuit of outside investment.

Proposals must be for the benefit of the industry in general. Proposals submitted for the benefit or profit of individuals, groups or firms will be rejected. While the VWB may incubate ideas that eventually stand on their own, these grants are not small business loans for setting up or financing individual businesses.

Projects seeking funding for marketing efforts may be better suited to the separate VA Wine Board Matching Marketing Grant program, which can support promotion of a specific sub-region, group of wineries, or other marketing efforts. To learn more about this 50/50 match program, visit this site: <https://www.virginiawine.org/resources?category=2> or reach out to [Annette.Boyd@VirginiaWine.org](mailto:Annette.Boyd@VirginiaWine.org).

## **Review of Current Marketing Programs**

The Virginia Wine Board Marketing Office is contracted by the Virginia Wine Board to manage the overall marketing of the Virginia Wine industry. Their annual Marketing Plan, which can be found below, covers the overall branding and marketing of the VA Wine industry.

### **Virginia Wine Board Marketing Office**

#### **FY 2024 Marketing Plan**

##### **Objectives:**

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

Virginia wineries are feeling the impacts of increased cost, expanded production and additional competition. Consumer behavior has shifted to expect more entertainment, more options and with inflation have less dollars to spend. Wineries are working to accommodate these market challenges and are seeking visits from wine buying customers. In addition, wineries and restaurants are facing labor shortages and rising costs. The strategic objectives for FY 2024 seek to address these challenges and increase Virginia Wine sales.

##### **Marketing Initiatives**

**Advertising & Brand Partnerships** - Sponsored content and advertising continues to be an impactful way to reach wine buying audiences while increasing brand awareness. Successful partnerships have been executed with United Airlines/Hemispheres, Wine Folly, Wine Enthusiast, and VinePair. Partnerships will be continued with various outlets while identifying new opportunities to expand reach.

FY 2024 partnerships include: Hemispheres, MediaMax- Conde Nast Traveler and Bon Appetit, PBS Unwine'd, Dulles Airport, Provi (trade focused), local publications etc.

**Website & App** - Building off the 2023 usability study, improvements and redesign are underway and will continue into 2024 to improve user experience. Initial focuses include new search functionality, updated results display, usability improvement of mobile app navigation. Additional projects will be explored following testing of initial upgrades.

**Media Relations** - Continue to evaluate and invest in garnering media attention to bring more awareness to Virginia wine.

**Trade Relations**- Invest in the expansion of trade support for Virginia Wine through a series of marketing campaigns throughout the year supported by key events.

Key events:

- 2023 Fall Cider Dinner – Introduce trade and media to the many types of cider being produced in Virginia.
- 2024 Spring Virginia Wine Trade Tasting- Northern Virginia
- Annual programs to get trade partners supporting Virginia wines will include:
- Virginia Wine Month – Continue to build trade support for Virginia Wine Month. Exploring the opportunity to create a paid wine pass featuring supportive retailers and restaurants.
- Seasonal promotions- Spring and winter campaigns focus on providing unique opportunities for messaging on Virginia wines and ciders to increase sales
- Wine Ambassador Program – Creates the opportunity to engage with trade partners to support and share about Virginia Wine at various educational and promotional events.
- Provi advertising- Utilizing the Provi (previously SevenFifty) platform to communicate and to advertise directly with buyers
- VIVINO - Report to be published in FY 2024 to evaluate VIVINO user behavior and purchasing habits in the Virginia and Washington DC regions.
- TEXSOM - Sponsorship continuing in FY 2024 featuring tasting breaks of VA Wine for sommelier volunteers.

**Governor's Cup Competition Marketing** – The Governor's Cup Competition and corresponding case mailing program continues to be a cornerstone for media, trade to taste and learn about Virginia wines. Additionally, the Gold Medal Wine Trail serves as a valuable tool to generate consumer interest and provide data on visitation to winning wineries.

**Content Creation & Social Media-** Continue to build presence and following of @vawine online. Content on social media is amplified with email marketing, blog content and supported with digital advertising. All content aims to support and build the Virginia Wine brand.

**Virginia Winery Guide** – FY 2024 reprint of current guide.

**Wine Library** – Continue availability of wine samples as media interest remains steady. This is a simple and effective way to engage interested media about Virginia wines.