



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2024.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

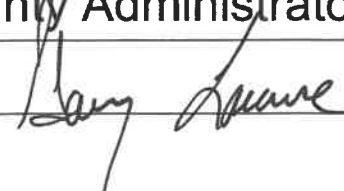
### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Botetourt County  
Program Title: Setting the Record Straight - BOCO Facts 4 U  
Program Category: Communications

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Tiffany Bradbury  
Title: Director of Communications  
Department: Communications  
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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Gary Larrowe  
Title: County Administrator  
Signature: 



## Botetourt County – Setting the Record Straight by Launching BOCO Facts 4 U

### **Executive Summary:**

Botetourt County is a rural county located in southwestern Virginia. The county is 548 square miles and is home to approximately 33,500 residents. Communicating effectively and accurately with a diverse population has become a challenge. Local governments play a crucial role in tackling false news, and it's essential for maintaining trust and the well-being of the community. When false news spreads, it can cause panic, spread misinformation about local events, and erode trust in public institutions. Since local governments are closest to the people, they can quickly and effectively address and correct misinformation. By sharing accurate information and keeping communication open, they can prevent the negative impacts of false news, like confusion and division. This proactive approach helps create a well-informed, resilient community that can confidently rely on its local leaders for truthful information.

The [BOCO Facts 4 U page](#) was created in March, 2024 to correct misinformation spread through the grapevine and via social media in the county. We appreciate our residents who seek truth over false information shared throughout our community. We believe that great discussions of county issues must be based on facts and not assumptions, innuendo, or false narratives.

In July 2023, the county enhanced transparency by live-streaming the monthly Board of Supervisors meetings via the county's [YouTube channel](#). This initiative allowed those unable to attend in person to watch and stay informed about county matters, rather than relying on word of



mouth. The [live-stream](#) is very popular and many of our residents have thanked us for making this type of participation available.

### **Persons and Organizations Involved:**

The Botetourt County Office of Communications led this initiative to control rumors and false claims. They began by researching what other localities were doing and reached out to counterparts in Salisbury, NC, who had launched a rumor control website. After discussing their successes and potential pitfalls, the Communications Director recommended launching a similar site for Botetourt County to County Administration and elected officials. Following this, the BOCOFacts4U site was developed and released to the community. The goal is not to address every rumor but to focus on issues brought up by numerous individuals.

The Communications Team also worked in concert with the Technology Services Department to make the live stream of our Board of Supervisors Meetings a reality.

### **Beneficiaries of the Program:**

Misinformation spreads rapidly in today's social media landscape, impacting public perception and discourse. Transparency and accurate information benefit not only those who live in Botetourt County but also those who are thinking of relocating to our community – whether it be a resident or potential business. The county does its best to combat misinformation by presenting facts. We



also welcome residents to engage with our communications team by signing up for website notifications or by submitting questions or rumors that they have heard via email or phone.

**Replication:**

Creating a rumor control web page like [BOCOFacts4U](#) was straightforward for our Communications Team, who added a dedicated section to the [county website](#). To spread the word, we distributed flyers featuring QR codes at local libraries and our administration building, supported by press releases and social media posts. Securing the integrity of our effort, we collaborated with the BOCO Technology Services Department to protect against potential imposters by acquiring similar domain names.

When it comes to live streaming, we advise consulting your local technology department to determine whether YouTube or Facebook would be the most suitable platforms. Our Board Room was equipped with a Creston system, including cameras, audiovisual equipment, and microphones installed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Communications Team utilizes Zoom to ensure equitable participation in meetings, enabling residents to call in if they lack internet access, and we stream live through this platform.

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion, over the past three years, Botetourt County has made significant strides in

**COUNTY ADMINISTRATION**  
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enhancing communication and transparency within our community. Since the launch of the Office of Communications in 2021, we have revamped our website, increased our presence on social media, introduced live streaming for Board of Supervisors Meetings, and created Storytellers and Getting to Know BOCO video series. We have also improved our State of the County presentation and established a rumor control page. Recognizing the importance of effective public engagement, especially in an era where misinformation is easily accessible and spreads at the click of a button, we are committed to providing accurate information to our residents, businesses, and visitors. We take pride in our efforts to showcase Botetourt County as an exceptional place to live, work, and enjoy life.

Find out more about Botetourt County at [www.botetourtva.gov](http://www.botetourtva.gov).



Get the  
**FACTS**

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**BOCOFacts4U.info**



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