



County of Albemarle  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

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**To:** Albemarle County Economic Development Authority  
**From:** Ashley Hernandorena, Business Development Manager  
**Date:** 7/21/2026,  
**Regarding:** Freeze Loss Mitigation Training Support for Monticello Wine Trail

**Background:**

In April 2026, a sudden hard freeze had a devastating impact on early grape buds across Virginia, with many vineyards projecting a total loss without mitigation. Proper pruning techniques will play an important role in supporting vine recovery, optimizing sap flow, and promoting long-term vineyard health and productivity in the years ahead.

**Proposed Investment: \$20,000 Source Economic Development Investment Pool 5807**

The Monticello Wine Trail, led by Executive Director Tracey Love, is seeking a \$20,000 investment from the Albemarle County Economic Development Authority to help bring the internationally recognized Simonit & Sirch Pruning School to the Monticello AVA following the devastating spring frost of 2026.

The total project cost is approximately \$30,000, with the Monticello Wine Trail committed to securing the remaining \$10,000 through winery participation, educational funding, and industry partnerships.

**Alignment & Recommendation:**

The request for support is in direct alignment with the Albemarle County Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) Goal Grow a Modern Agribusiness Economy, Strategy 3.6: Support the growth of Albemarle County's wine industry.

The frost caused significant damage across vineyards throughout the region, but the greatest concern is the long-term health of the vines. Unlike annual crops, vineyards are permanent agricultural infrastructure, and the pruning decisions made this winter will influence vine health, productivity, and longevity for years to come. This training will equip vineyard managers and crews with internationally recognized best practices to protect these agricultural assets and strengthen the resilience of one of Albemarle County's signature industries.

The proposed program includes:

- Three days of hands-on winter pruning workshops led by Simonit & Sirch in December ideally
- Spring webinar on shoot selection and frost recovery
- Scientific educational materials and technical resources
- English and Spanish instruction for vineyard managers and crews
- Regional participation from wineries across the Monticello AVA

Staff recommends supporting this initiative as it aligns closely with EDSPs priorities by supporting workforce development, agricultural resilience, business retention, tourism, and the protection of existing agricultural

investments. If approved, staff requests a summary from the Monticello Wine Trail of program outcomes following the training implantation.