

APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 2, 2017.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico

Program Title: Employee Academy: Engaging Employees at All Levels of the Organization

Program Category: Organizational Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Holly Zinn

Title: Management Specialist

Department: County Manager's Office

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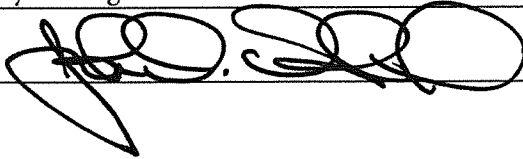
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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: John A. Vithoukaskas

Title: County Manager

Signature: 

1. Program Overview

When Henrico's county manager was appointed in early 2013, he shared his vision of an engaged workforce comprised of employees taking initiative at all levels of the organization. To meet this goal, employees need to understand the county's operations and priorities, and expand their appreciation for how various departments work together. They also need to broaden their networks so they can contact experts from other departments to assist residents.

Henrico County's Employee Academy connects employees with one another, giving them rare insight into the behind-the-scenes operations of diverse county departments. Each Academy session includes tours of three different sites, and, in keeping with the County Manager's vision of "Leadership at all Levels" of the organization, tours are conducted not by top agency heads but by employees occupying diverse roles within each department. Cohort groups of ten employees tour various sites successively, giving them time not only to learn about the divisions they visit but also to get to know one another and enlarge their professional networks.

Fifteen different sites have been included in five Academy sessions, and employee response has been overwhelmingly positive. To date, 234 people have registered for the Academy, and evaluations have indicated a 98% approval rating. The impact on participants has been profound. In post-session surveys, they have revealed that they now understand not only how other departments work, but how their own department fits into the county as a whole. They have also created robust professional networks, and have increased their own engagement – and excitement – as Henrico County employees.

2. Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

Henrico County has nine core competencies. *Understanding the Business of Henrico County* includes the following expectations: “Understands how his or her job impacts overall County or department results”; “In diagnosing problems, considers the interrelationships of departments and functions”; and “Demonstrates understanding of how functions, groups, and units interact to form a whole.” Other competencies include *Leading and Influencing*, *Serving Customers*, *Communication*, and *Personal Accountability*. Henrico’s county manager has made clear that he expects an engaged workforce filled with highly performing employees taking initiative and maintaining personal accountability to serve customers.

Since Henrico County consists of 34 different departments, each with unique areas of responsibility and expertise, this expectation can be challenging. People can become siloed in their own functional areas and might not know where to find answers when customers have unusual questions. Front line staff engaged in the daily work of their sections needed a way to gain this big picture perspective of county operations. The Employee Academy encourages interdepartmental information exchange and networking amongst employees at all levels of the organization, allowing people from diverse departments to meet and share knowledge to meet the expectations set out in the competencies and broaden their understanding of the county as a whole.

3. How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

“Leadership at all Levels” requires employees to feel confident in their decision making and be knowledgeable about a wide range of county operations. For front line employees,

this can be difficult, as much of their daily responsibilities center around their specific functional areas. Henrico County's Employee Academy gets people away from their own job sites and exposes them to the diverse departments and divisions that comprise the county. Participants create new contacts, expand their appreciation for the work experiences of others, and deepen their knowledge of the services the county provides. This, in turn, enables them to better answer customer questions. Perhaps more intangible, but no less important, is the excitement and energy the Academy elicits in the participants. Employees who take part in the Academy report that they feel connected to a greater whole, and return to their own worksites engaged and committed to reinforcing the County Manager's vision of "Leadership at all Levels" and excellent customer service. This program is an excellent low-cost way that any locality can increase employee engagement and collaboration.

4. How Program Was Carried Out

Henrico's county manager was appointed on January 17, 2013, and soon thereafter began holding Town Hall meetings with county employees to engage in open dialog, answer questions, and share his vision. At the Town Hall Meeting on June 7, 2013, three employees from different departments independently expressed a desire to learn more about other county departments and develop a greater understanding of county operations. The county manager, in turn, charged them with proposing a program that would meet this objective of allowing employees throughout the organization to network and share information about their functional areas.

Two months later, the three employees – none of whom were supervisors – met with the county manager to share their proposal for creating the Henrico County Employee Academy. The mission they presented was:

- To create an employee training academy to provide county personnel a multi-level, in-depth education on core county functions, internal operations, legal and ethical considerations, and organizational mission and goals.
- To develop well-rounded employees by expanding their knowledge of the business of Henrico County, while encouraging and fostering county-wide communication, collaboration, and empowered decision-making at all levels to improve the delivery of service to our citizens and customers.

The county manager approved this mission, and delegated the program creation and coordination to the Department of Human Resources (HR). HR expanded the proposal, designing a sustainable structure for an ongoing Employee Academy representing ever-expanding departments and functional areas.

Each Employee Academy includes the following structural elements:

- Three different departments are presented per Academy.
- Employees meet for two hours, every other week, visiting each of the three different departments.
- The Academy meetings include site tours and presentations about specific functional areas and the overall departments.
- Thirty people are accepted for each Academy, and the group is divided into three groups of ten people who visit a different site together at each meeting.

- HR staff attend each site the first time a tour takes place to ensure smooth operation of the Academy, as well as to communicate with tour leaders and participants, track attendance, and deliver class evaluations and post-academy surveys.

Two notable elements of the Employee Academy are the group size and the people leading the tours:

Group Size: Capping the group at ten people per tour increases the immediacy of the experience for participants, allowing for relationship building, informal question-and-answer sessions, and an increased *Understanding the Business of Henrico County*. The small class size creates an intimate, personal experience for the participants and tour leaders alike. Participants become a cohort of peers, attending the three different sites together over the span of five weeks. This ongoing exposure to one another allows them to naturally and comfortably expand their networks.

Tour Leaders: Rather than drawing on agency heads to lead the tours, HR staff contacted employees who had reached emeritus status in the Leadership Development Program (LDP) and requested that they become Academy presenters. This practice further reflects the county manager's vision of "Leadership at all Levels" of the organization. It also gives the LDP emeritus employees the chance to give back: after benefiting from a county-sponsored leadership development program, they now have the chance to share their own expertise and passion for their work and workplace with other employees. The tour leaders have stepped up with remarkable enthusiasm, energetically

leading tours and pointing out interesting parts of their settings rather than simply sharing generalized facts, figures, dates, and statistics.

Session 1 of the Employee Academy kicked off in fiscal year 2014-2015, and included the following departments/sites:

- **Library:** Headquarters and an area library, allowing employees “behind the scenes” library access to view book sorting, collection, and processing
- **Public Utilities:** Water Treatment Plant, where employees could watch the steps of transforming raw river water into safe drinking water
- **Police:** Communications, including a tour of the 911 center and interaction with 911 operators

In fiscal year 2015-2016, and two more sessions were added:

Session 2 included:

- **Mental Health/Developmental Services:** Hermitage Enterprises, a day support and employment training center for individuals with intellectual disabilities
- **Recreation and Parks:** Three Lakes Nature Center, introducing employees to the plant and animal life native to the area, as well as to wildlife living in the park’s wetlands and woodlands
- **Permit Center:** A “One Stop Shop” for residential permitting needs

Session 3 included:

- **Fire:** Visiting a fire station and exploring the apparatus, equipment, and living conditions of fire fighters
- **Police TEMPO:** A program that incorporates effective policing technology into daily operations to prevent, deter, and respond to crime and quality of life concerns
- **Public Works:** Roads Maintenance – discovering how public roadways within the county are maintained

Session 3 was repeated in fiscal year 2016-2017, and Sessions 4 and 5 have been advertised for spring 2017. These sessions include touring James River Juvenile Detention Center; the County Manager's Office; Public Utilities/Water Reclamation; Sheriff/Jail West; Finance; and Police/Fair and Impartial Policing practices.

In all cases, tour sites were chosen to showcase the many diverse elements of Henrico's operations, and to allow unprecedented access behind the scenes.

5. Financing and Staffing

There were no capital cost incurred in the development of this program. The operating costs consisted only of staff time, which was minimal. Academy presenters are salaried employees of various county departments, and facility costs are nonexistent due to meeting at county sites. Employees drive themselves to each site in their own vehicles, resulting in no travel costs associated with the program. There have been no material costs associated with program delivery, and maintaining the program uses existing employee salaries.

Technology use has been minimal since the format involves tours, presentations, and conversations. LDP Emeritus participants were contacted about presenting in the Academy using Microsoft Outlook, and Employee Academy sessions are listed in Henrico County's HRMS system using Oracle's Learning Management System. Registration and class selection are likewise done in Oracle's LMS. Several presenters utilized Microsoft PowerPoint or shared video clips during their presentations.

6. Program Results

The Employee Academy has been met with resounding approval from employees:

- In post-class evaluations and surveys, employees have rated the Academies with a 98% overall course approval rating for content and delivery.
- 234 employees have registered for the Academy sessions so far, and this number continues to grow.
- Of the 81 people who have participated in past Academies, 42 have registered for another session. This is an incredible 52% that have sought additional access to subsequent Academies after their first experience.
- As the Employee Academy's reputation spreads, demand is exceeding capacity. For the first time since inception, the 2017 Academies have more registrants than can be accommodated.

Post-session evaluations and surveys reveal the following comments from participants:

- Learning about the different departments helps me understand what happens to make the county great.

- I learned how departments work together to help Henrico County citizens and I'm better able to refer my clients to resources in other County agencies. It also gave me a greater appreciation of the work, stresses, and pride that other county employees encounter.
- I now feel more knowledgeable in my own job role.
- I loved learning about the different aspects of a division (there were many, many things that I didn't know). We may have an idea about what a department does, but truly seeing the departments and getting an explanation helps it all make sense. It shows how the county is integrated into one entity to help serve the customers of Henrico.
- Networking with different people throughout the county was tremendously beneficial.
- My husband commented that I should get a job as a spokesperson as he hadn't seen that amount of enthusiasm from me in a while. Needless to say, I had great time, learned a ton, and can't wait to join the next group in the spring.
- I now have a better understanding of the services we provide and what it takes to run the entire county.
- During every day calls from citizens, I am better able to assist or refer them to the correct area for their needs.
- I've told neighbors and coworkers about the different departments I visited.
- I now have a better sense of who to contact as issues arise. It's good to have a face to go with some of the people you speak to on the phone.

- I have learned so much more about other departments, how they do things, the scope of what they do, and the collaboration that's going on between different departments.

7. Brief Summary

Henrico's county manager has made clear that he expects an engaged workforce filled with highly performing employees taking initiative and maintaining personal accountability to serve customers. To meet this goal, employees need to understand the county's operations and priorities, and need to broaden their networks so they can contact experts from other departments to best serve customers.

Henrico County's Employee Academy meets this need by connecting employees with one another so they can learn more about the behind-the-scenes operations of diverse county departments. People from a wide range of functional areas meet and share knowledge to broaden their understanding of the county as a whole. Each Academy session includes tours of three different sites and tours are conducted by employees occupying diverse roles within each department. Cohort groups of ten employees tour various sites successively, giving them time not only to learn about the divisions they visit but also to get to know one another and enlarge their professional networks. Fifteen different sites have been included in five Academy sessions so far, with more planned for the future.

Employee response has been overwhelmingly positive. To date, 234 people have registered for the Academy, and evaluations have indicated a 98% approval rating. In post-session surveys, employees have stated that they now understand not only how

other departments work, but how their own department fits into the county's overall operations and vision. The program is now in its third year, and its positive reputation has created high demand. Participants have created robust professional networks, and have increased their own engagement and knowledge as Henrico County employees.

From:

Sent: Monday, January 05, 2015 3:46 PM

To:

Subject: LDP Emeritus Opportunity

LDP Emeritus Participants,

We are asking our LDP Emeritus employees to volunteer as tour guides for County employees as they learn more about the County and its departments. Specifically, we are asking your availability to lead tours on the following dates:

February 27, March 13, and March 27, 2015
2:00 – 4:00 p.m. each day

We believe that your contribution of time will make a big difference to employees as they seek to increase their understanding of “The Business of Henrico County” via these tours and brief presentations.

Specifically, we are asking that you do the following:

- Guide a group of approximately 8-12 employees through your workplace, pointing out interesting facts about the work you and your colleagues do.
- Share information about work units you are involved in, plus any additional information you can provide about your agency as a whole.
- Allow time for a question and answer period.

The purpose of these tours is for participants to learn more about the work of your department. This can be accomplished through a tour and accompanying explanations, a formal presentation followed by a tour, or speakers from other sections of your department describing different work units. It's up to you! All that we ask is that you accomplish this within the two-hour timeframe given.

We will be responsible for all notifications with participants, including directions to your facility, and will stay in contact with you throughout the weeks leading up to the tours.

Please contact me by this **Friday, January 9th** to let me know if you are able to participate in the inaugural Employee Academy class.

I will contact you by phone the week of January 19th to discuss the format of your tour and presentation and answer any questions you might have.