

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: Fire Command Officer Exchange Program

Program Category: Criminal Justice & Public Safety

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Holly Zinn

Title: Management Specialist

Department: County Manager's Office

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: John A. Vithoulkas

Title: County Manager

Signature: 

1. Program Overview

Benchmarking and learning from others are important activities for organizations engaged in continuous improvement. Working collaboratively with the Fairfax County Department of Fire & Rescue, the Henrico County Division of Fire has developed a Command Officer Exchange Program to allow chief officers from both departments to experience an internship in the partner organization. In addition to providing networking opportunities with the partner agency, participants have an opportunity to learn how others approach common problems and exchange ideas for improvement back home.

2. Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

The challenges facing the fire service today are significant. From ensuring adequate personnel training, to providing effective community outreach, to ensuring the health and safety of responders, there are a myriad of issues that professional fire officers must face. Given the structure and size of each agency, chief officers often find themselves isolated within a silo – lacking the perspective of an outside opinion or point-of-view. Rather than devising new procedures or expending excessive resources, it can be extremely useful to gather feedback from our peers and to gain the perspective of how they tackle our common challenges.

3. How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

The Fire Command Officer Exchange Program represents the best in working collaboratively with partner organizations, and it improves the administration of all

involved organizations by addressing shared problems, solutions, and successes. Given our assessment of the value of the program, it is an effort that will be expanded in 2017, and will include additional participants and, hopefully, additional fire departments of similar size and complexity. We believe that the return on our investment has been more than realized and even hope to offer an additional cohort for company officers (Fire Captains and/or Lieutenants) in the future.

4. How Program Was Carried Out

The objectives of this program are to facilitate networking between chief officers at the state level, to strengthen relationships between the agencies, to provide professional development opportunities, and to foster innovation and continuous process improvement within each organization. The program development was completed largely through the collaboration of the agency heads (Fire Chiefs), but the implementation has since been handled by graduates of the program. Currently, both program directors are exchange alumni, giving back to the program and offering their service to others to keep this effort moving forward.

A formal Incident Action Plan (IAP) is created to guide each internship program. The IAP specifies the objectives, schedule of events, and responsible parties. Additionally, it provides safety information and other necessary details to ensure that the time is maximized and presents the most safe and effective opportunity for the student officer.

The planning cycle for each visit begins approximately 3 months prior to each visit. This ensures that the scheduling of lodging, transportation, and the internship opportunities is facilitated in a manner to maximize the learning opportunities. For example, many of the visits to Henrico County coincide with the department's response to the spring and fall NASCAR race events at Richmond International Raceway; this allows the visiting Chief Officer to view the department's response to a major planned event and observe the Incident Management Team in action.

Each visit is structured in a manner to afford the participant an opportunity to observe and participate in a wide variety of functional areas. This generally includes attending an executive staff meeting, participating in training evolutions, visiting the support and logistics areas, visiting stations to speak with personnel, touring the Emergency Operations Center, and riding along with command officers (battalion chiefs) on actual emergency response incidents. In addition to taking note of how the other department operates, this immersion experience provides an opportunity to get a solid feel for the organizational culture and values.

5. Financing and Staffing

Each agency provides the hosting of the guest student at no cost. The only incurred costs of this program to the visiting department is funding the hotel room and other per diem expenses of the traveler. These costs are estimated to be approximately \$750.00 per exchange. Administrative coordination is provided by the Executive Officer from each department.

6. Program Results

In the past two-years, both departments have successfully exchanged four Chief Officers with the other agency. Overwhelmingly, these officers have reported excellent feedback from their visits. Each officer has been able to bring back direct lessons learned, as well as offer feedback on reflection on current programs within their home agency. Additionally, due to the strength of the relationships built during the exchange program, there have been numerous occasions where these relationships have been leveraged to solve problems, exchange ideas, and offer assistance following the actual internship program. We believe the quality of these relationships and the collaboration born from the internship period will continue to yield positive returns for each agency, and each community, far into the future.

7. Brief Summary

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