



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: Stafford
Program Title: Citizen Action Officer
Program Category: Customer Service

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Anthony Toigo
Title: Citizen Action Officer
Department: County Administration
Complete Mailing Address: P.O. Box 339, Stafford, VA 22555
Telephone: 540-658-4159 Website: www.staffordcountyva.gov
Email: atoigo@staffordcountyva.gov

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: Thomas C. Foley
Title: County Administrator
Signature: *Thomas C. Foley*

Virginia Association of Counties

2017 Achievement Award



Stafford County, Virginia

Citizen Action Officer

Program Press Summary

Serving as a Stafford County Supervisor is officially a part-time position. Official government meetings are held twice monthly with several events in between. Some supervisors are employed professionally full-time. Regardless of job classification, supervisors are required to be knowledgeable and attentive to the concerns of their citizens. To support and assist supervisors in balancing their professional and personal lives with the responsibilities of being an elected official, Stafford County created a position to offer full-time staff support specific to the Board of Supervisors. Adopted at the beginning of fiscal year 2012, the Citizen Action Officer position manages, tracks, and coordinates action and information for concerns citizens raise to their County Supervisor.

With over 1,650 cases resolved over five years, the Citizen Action Officer position has advanced the Board of Supervisors' budget priority of service excellence by providing personalized attention to the concerns citizens bring to their district supervisors. Since the position's inception, Stafford's citizen action officers have worked tirelessly to improve government efficiency, provide excellent customer service, and build strong, meaningful relationships between County Supervisors and their citizens.



The Need for the Program

Prior to the creation of the Citizen Action Officer position, Stafford County had no formal process for assisting County Supervisors in resolving the concerns of their citizens. Supervisors were required to keep their own record of citizen concerns, contact information, and to interact directly with County departments and staff members to resolve concerns. Stafford's citizen action officer serves as the link between supervisors and County staff. When concerns arise, a supervisor will notify the citizen action officer, who will begin coordinating a plan of action with the appropriate County staff or agency. An access database is utilized to provide supervisors with a weekly report of their citizen correspondence. Each supervisor's weekly report includes the citizen's name, contact information, the County staff/department assigned to the case, and case updates.

Description of the Program

The Citizen Action Officer aids Stafford County's Board of Supervisors by managing, tracking, and coordinating action for citizen concerns received by supervisors. A budget item authorizing the creation of the position and allocating funding for salary was included in Stafford County's Fiscal Year 2012 Adopted Budget. Stafford's Citizen Action Officer is part of the County Administration team, reporting directly to the County Administrator on a weekly basis.

Localities seeking to establish such a position could propose to fund this item as part of their budget process and present the position to their governing body as part of budget adoption. Once approved, it would take approximately two to four months to advertise the position and advance through the hiring process. A minimum of a bachelor's degree in Political Science, Business Management, Administration, or a related field is required. The position is advertised as entry-level with previous experience in government preferred.

The clientele served by the citizen action officer are the Stafford County Board of Supervisors and the approximately 142,000 citizens of the County. Stafford County is comprised of seven electoral districts. The citizen action officer works very closely with all seven supervisors and the County Administration team to keep them informed of citizen concerns on a daily basis. Working to maintain strong, positive relationships with administration and supervisors is essential. Local elected officials and government staff are bound to assist the citizens of the locality they serve. Service excellence is a priority for the Board of Supervisors. By employing a citizen action officer, Stafford County is able to increase service excellence for citizens, supervisors, and County staff at a relatively low cost.

A typical day for Stafford's citizen action officer consists of recording citizen concerns as they are received by supervisors and updating open concerns as the appropriate party works towards a resolution. Upon receiving a new concern, a supervisor will notify the citizen action officer via phone or e-mail. The citizen action officer then inputs the concern and the citizen's contact information into a Microsoft Access database for record-keeping. After reviewing the nature of the concern, the citizen action officer identifies the problem and notifies the proper County staff or organization to best resolve the concern. Stafford County's citizen action officers have worked on a wide variety of cases. Some typical cases include roadway maintenance, zoning violations, traffic enforcement, and stormwater management. The citizen action officer also assists supervisors by organizing the necessary materials and event venues needed for public meetings.

As a function of this position, the relationship between Stafford's citizen action officer and County staff cannot be understated. The citizen action officer acts as the Board of Supervisors' liaison to the organization. When citizen concerns arise, the citizen action officer is the individual tasked with coordinating a resolution at the staff level. This allows County staff and

external organizations to work through the citizen action officer as they help to address concerns for the Board of Supervisors. The citizen action officer must understand the daily work of County staff and the functions of every department. This is especially important as they communicate the progress of a case to supervisors and their citizens.

The citizen action officer must also build strong relationships with organizations external to local government. A strong relationship with the Virginia Department of Transportation is essential, as supervisors often receive concerns related to the condition of state-maintained roadways.

Stafford's citizen action officer also serves as the Board of Supervisors' liaison for inter-governmental affairs. The citizen action officer works closely with the offices of state and federal officials to track legislation and resolve matters under the purview of higher levels of government. Lastly, the citizen action officer works closely with homeowners associations and their property managers to resolve community concerns, and to send notice of upcoming meetings or events. With these relationships taken into consideration, Stafford's citizen action officer plays an essential role in strengthening the relationship between the County Board of Supervisors, Administration team, internal and external organizations, and in providing service excellence for all citizens of Stafford County.

Stafford County utilizes a Microsoft Access database to aid the citizen action officer in his or her daily work. The use of an Access database allows the citizen action officer to enter written record of citizen concerns as they are received. Each record is assigned an identification number and is categorized under the appropriate District Supervisor. Fields inside record entries list the name, contact information, and contact method for each citizen, the name and department of the County staff member assigned to the concern, current status (open or closed), a description of the concern, and updates on the issue's resolution. Using Access' reporting function, the citizen

action officer drafts a weekly report for each supervisor. Each report is specific to open concerns occurring within a given supervisor's district.

Cost of the Program

The most significant cost of the citizen action officer position is the cost of the individual's compensation. Stafford County's Human Resources Department identifies the annual salary range for this position as between \$47,476.00 at minimum, and \$69,576.00 at maximum.

In addition to the position's salary, the citizen action officer conducts daily work by using a laptop computer. Stafford's citizen action officer utilizes a Dell laptop, purchased for approximately four-hundred (\$400) dollars. The use of a laptop computer allows work to be conducted remotely, as needed. Programs and features such as Microsoft Office are installed by the County's Information Technology Department using already-purchased software. Office space for the individual is provided by utilizing already existing space within Stafford's Administration Office. Additional office supplies are purchased as needed. The position is also eligible for mileage reimbursement.

The cost of the citizen action officer position is greatly dependent on the individual's salary, concurrent with their education and experience. Stafford County's citizen action officer is employed within the parameters of the above-mentioned pay scale. Additional minor costs for technology, office supplies, mileage reimbursement, and compensatory time are accrued as necessary.

Results/Success of the Program

Results indicate Stafford's citizen action officer position has increased government efficiency. Since the position's inception at the beginning of Fiscal Year 2012, citizen action officers have worked a total of 1,686 cases. As of June 2017, a total of 1,655 cases have been resolved while 31 remain active. In total, 98.2% of all cases have been resolved since the position's inception. A breakdown of cases resolved by fiscal year is found below.

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| FY 2012 | 357 |
| FY 2013 | 204 |
| FY 2014 | 122 |
| FY 2015 | 176 |
| FY 2016 | 185 |
| FY 2017 (YTD) | 611 |
| Total: | 1,655 |

For every case worked, the citizen action officer personally interacted with each concerned citizen or their County Supervisor. Such personal interaction is in line with the Board of Supervisors' priority of service excellence, as it helps to build communication and trust between citizens, their District Supervisor, and local government staff. In resolving cases, the Citizen Action Officer works directly with internal County departments and external government organizations. Working with various internal and external organizations helps to increase communication and efficiency between the Board of Supervisors and the appropriate staff. Furthermore, the Microsoft Access database and reporting system used by the position helps supervisors stay informed of the progress of citizen concerns as staff works to resolve them.

Short Overview

Decisions made by local elected officials often have a profound impact on the day to day lives of their constituents. Recognizing this, Stafford County's Board of Supervisors consistently provides priority budget funding for service excellence. Through the funding of the new and innovative citizen action officer position, Stafford County provides its Board of Supervisors with an additional tool to build, strengthen, and reinforce the relationships supervisors have with their constituents. Employing a citizen action officer creates a means for local government to more personally serve its citizens. By tracking, managing, and coordinating action for the concerns of citizens, Stafford's citizen action officer works diligently each day to improve government efficiency, provide service excellence, and to build strong relationships between supervisors and their constituents.

