



## APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 3, 2019.** Please include this application form with 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: Dinwiddie County  
Program Title: Government Day  
Program Category: Community & Economic Development

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Cierra Gravely  
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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: W. Kevin Massengill  
Title: County Administrator  
Signature: 

**Problem:**

Despite taking a Government course during their senior year in high school, Dinwiddie County graduates did not have a full appreciation of how local government operates, as high school civics focuses mainly on state and federal government. Students were lacking an understanding of local government processes, which directly impacts their level of involvement as citizens of Dinwiddie County.

**Awards Criteria:** Community & Economic Development

Dinwiddie County leaders identified the need to better educate high school seniors on the basics of local government processes. County staff **collaborated** with the Board of Supervisors, Constitutional Officers and public schools to develop an **innovative** Government Day program, whereby students spend an entire day immersed, alongside leaders, in a mock regulatory or budgetary process. The program, now in its 6<sup>th</sup> year, is one that can be used as a **model** for other rural localities.

**Program Description:**

As a requirement of graduation, High School seniors must complete a Government course. Twice each school year, government students are invited to participate in Government Day, which gives them first-hand exposure to the intricacies of one of two local government processes.

The activity is held off-campus and is considered a field trip therefore interested students must complete a permission form and have it signed by their parent or guardian. Forms are returned to government teachers who, in turn, select the students they feel are most appropriate for the activity. Government Day is designed to accommodate 25 students per session, and is held twice each year (spring and fall).

Students are transported by school bus to the event, which is held at either the Eastside Community Enhancement Center or the Robert & Betty Ragsdale Community Center. Once on-site, students participate in a lesson referred to as "Civics 101", facilitated by the County Administrator. They are then placed in five groups of five students, which become their mock Boards of Supervisors. Each group is paired with one of the County's five actual Board members, who provides guidance throughout the activity.

Activities include either a mock rezoning hearing or budget workshop. In either scenario, the County's department managers present their cases and answer questions from the "Board" accordingly. Each board must confer, make their decision(s) and present the outcome with rationale.

In addition to increasing the students' understanding of local government processes, this activity provides opportunities for students to assume leadership roles, and interact with elected officials and County leaders. The activity is also an exercise in critical thinking and allows students an opportunity to speak publicly.

In the days following Government Day, participants are asked to complete an evaluation and provide feedback on their experience. Student responses are used to enhance the Government Day experience for future students.

Government Day is a component of the County’s Youth Workforce Development Initiative and is included in its annual budget. The cost associated with Government Day is minimal. Lunch is provided to all participants (\$300). Each student also receives a certificate acknowledging their participation (\$30). The return-on-investment for Government Day is quite good. After participating in the activity, the majority of students walk away reporting a better understanding of local government, and over the program’s six years of operation, many students have expressed an interest in local government, either as a career path or simply as an involved and productive citizen. We will not know for sure however, for several years, when we begin to see Government Day participants return to Dinwiddie County and take an active role in the real-life process.

Staffing is minimal as Government Day is coordinated by the County’s Marketing & Youth Workforce Development Coordinator in partnership with Dinwiddie County Public Schools.

**Executive Summary:**

Dinwiddie County leaders identified the need to better educate high school seniors on the basics of local government processes. County staff collaborated with the Board of Supervisors, Constitutional Officers and public schools to develop an innovative Government Day program, whereby students spend an entire day immersed, alongside leaders, in a mock rezoning hearing or budget workshop. While the cost is minimal, the impact of this program will last a lifetime. The program, now in its 6<sup>th</sup> year, is one that can be used as a model for other rural localities.

**Brief Overview:**

Government Day in Dinwiddie County has become one of the highlights of senior year for high school students. The concept was born of the need to stimulate interest and increase students’ understanding of local government. The typical high school government course focuses on state and local processes and gives little attention to local practices. Since local government has the most direct impact on the day-to-day lives of citizens, County leaders felt it necessary to supplement traditional classroom instruction with an immersion activity.

Dinwiddie County High School seniors, enrolled in government classes receive a lesson in “Civics 101”, delivered by the County Administrator. Following this lesson, they spend an entire day surrounded by elected officials and County leaders, working through mock rezoning hearing or budget workshop. Students are broken into groups of five; these groups become separate Boards of Supervisors and work together to complete the exercise. Each “Board” is joined by one of the County’s actual Board members and he/she guides the group as they make critical decisions regarding the issue at hand. Each “Board” elects a chairman, who presents the boards decisions (with rationale) to the entire group at the end of the day. This activity expands the students’ understanding and appreciation of local government processes.

Students have an opportunity to speak directly with County leaders throughout the day, to discuss not only the exercises, but issues that are important to them. The activity includes many other elected officials such as the County’s Commissioner of the Revenue, and Sheriff

as well as a variety of department managers. County leaders applaud Government Day as it provides them with the rare opportunity to interact with a diverse group of Dinwiddie County students, their youngest constituents.

Government Day takes place twice each school year, accommodating a total of 50 students at an annual cost of \$660. Given the fact that upon completion, students are empowered to take an active role in local government, and government officials are impressed and inspired by the caliber of student participants. The return-on-investment is high!

Government Day is another shining example of the great things that are happening in Dinwiddie County!

# Government Day Photos Through the Years:

**2014**





# 2015

**Student participants with County leaders.**



**District 1 Supervisor, Harrison Moody listens intently as a student discusses the rationale behind an important regulatory decision.**

# 2016



# 2017



**County Administrator, Kevin Massengill welcomes Government Day participants.**

# 2018



**Above Left:** District 5 Supervisor, Brenda Ebron-Bonner processing the activity with her group.



**Above Right:** Major William Knott answers questions regarding his budget request.

**2019:**



**A High School student presents the decisions of his mock Board.**

