



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2020.** 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: _____

Program Title: _____

Program Category: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: _____

Title: _____

Department: _____

Telephone: _____ Website: _____

Email: _____

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Virginia Association of Counties Achievement Awards

My Chesterfield Academy 2019

Executive Summary

Chesterfield County, in partnership with the Asian & Latino Solidarity Alliance of Central Virginia, or ALSACV, launched a new program called My Chesterfield Academy that empowers residents, particularly those from multicultural communities, to understand and navigate Chesterfield County's government, as well as connect to other community resources. The program is the first of its kind in Virginia.

My Chesterfield Academy was offered in seven sessions, once a month on Thursdays, June-December, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. During the sessions, participants met with leaders from county and school departments and toured county facilities. They explored how their local government works, learned how to resolve issues, and obtained information and resources.

Upon graduation, participants will be able to help their communities to better understand and access government services. Graduates also will have the opportunity to interact with residents from other communities through the My Chesterfield Academy alumni network.

Need for the Program

Immigrants and newcomers often struggle to find the services and programs they are looking for. There are several reasons for those difficulties including language, cultural and belief barriers, and many others.

Many people and families work hard every day to succeed and find the resources they need to survive. Many of these people depend totally or partially on the resources and services that the county offers. Paradoxically, in many cases those services and programs are unknown even to people who were born here or who have lived for years in the county.

Another common situation with immigrants is that they are afraid to approach government agencies. This fear prevents them from seeking solutions to their health, transportation, education, security, etc. problems. These fears cause them to do nothing, thereby increasing the chances of greater consequences not only for themselves but for the entire community. For example, a health emergency could lead to worse consequences for the county or prove fatal for the newcomer's community.

Fear of government and authorities as well as ignorance of the programs, services and resources available in the county can greatly affect the well-being of the multicultural community as well as the greater community. In the past Chesterfield has not had the necessary tools to reach these communities and prevent incidents and situations that can be addressed with training and timely and appropriate information.

My Chesterfield Academy was designed specifically to fill those gaps in services and information that the multicultural and newcomer members of our community can experience while living in the county.

Description of the Program

In June 2019, we began My Chesterfield Academy, a special orientation program designed to welcome and empower residents, especially those from multicultural communities, to understand and navigate Chesterfield County's government, as well as other community resources. The sessions included roundtable discussions and informative classroom sessions with networking breaks.

Our first academy had 22 participants from 11 home countries, including Mexico, Egypt, China, Senegal, Colombia, Venezuela, Cuba and Korea. And our program, which was modeled on a similar one in Nashville, was the first of its kind in Virginia.

My Chesterfield Academy was offered in seven sessions in June-December. The sessions were held once a month on Thursdays, from 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. During the sessions, participants met with leaders from county and school departments and toured county facilities. They explored how their local government works, learned how to resolve issues, and obtained information and resources. Participants graduated in February 2020 during a Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors meeting.

We couldn't have accomplished My Chesterfield Academy without the partnership of the Asian & Latino Solidarity Alliance of Central Virginia. This nonprofit organization brought this innovative academy to the attention of county leaders. A representative from the organization spent several hours with staff from Citizen Information and Resources over a seven-month period to help to plan the curriculum and meet with presenters to explain how this academy differed from the county's Government Citizens Academy and customize it for this particular audience.

Sessions were scheduled in county and school facilities, among other sites across the county. Hosted by the Chesterfield County Department of Citizen Information and Resources, My Chesterfield Academy was funded entirely through corporate sponsorships and donations to the Asian and Latino Solidarity Alliance of Central Virginia, which is a nonprofit 501(c)3. The academy was free to participants due to the sponsorship; however, they were required to deposit a refundable \$50 fee to cover meals and other expenses. This fee was returned upon graduation.

Participation was open to individuals who live or work in Chesterfield County, or those who are members of organizations that serve Chesterfield County.

Academy presenters were county leaders from various departments, who offered their expertise about county programs and services, as well as community leaders who connected participants to additional community resources.

In Chesterfield County we are proud to say that our participants were those who were already actively involved in their communities, including other members of ALSACV. They have proven leadership abilities, and they are already disseminating the information they learned in My Chesterfield Academy within their individual communities. Each of our graduates is an important resource in helping his or her

communities to better understand and access government services. Now that they have graduated, they will continue to interact with residents from other communities through the My Chesterfield Academy alumni network.

The Cost of the Program

My Chesterfield Academy was funded entirely through corporate sponsorships and donations to the Asian and Latino Solidarity Alliance of Central Virginia, which is a nonprofit 501(c)3. The academy was free to participants due to the sponsorship; however, they were required to deposit a refundable \$50 fee to cover meals and other expenses. This fee was returned upon graduation.

Chesterfield County staff provided their time and expertise to develop the success of the academy. Citizen Information and Resources Department used its own printer to print some materials, such as session agendas, sign in sheets and county related information.

The total cost for ALSACV was around \$4,000 which included snacks, water, juices, coffee, lunches, folders, bags, badges, etc.

The Results/Success of the Program

My Chesterfield Academy as an orientation program provided the tools and knowledge to participants so they could not only navigate the county systems and find the programs and services for themselves, but also educate their communities on how to find county and community services and programs.

These participants, who are now My Chesterfield Academy alumni, are county ambassadors in their communities, not only to share what they learned, but to encourage their own people to attend future academies.

The academy is creating our future community leaders and helping them to achieve their own personal, professional and family goals and solve their needs while supporting the community.

One marvelous example of how the academy makes a difference in our community was expressed by one of the participants during the graduation.

“It was very important to me to participate in the academy. I learned about all the different programs and services Chesterfield County offers to its residents. There are many families, not just in Chesterfield County but nationwide, and not just Latinos, but people from many countries, cultures and backgrounds. They are great workers and want to succeed, but they need opportunities such as My Chesterfield Academy. I am Latino, and I have been married for 20 years and have three children. My oldest daughter has Down Syndrome and thanks to the academy, I was able to gain knowledge about county and school programs and services to better assist my daughter and my family.”

My Chesterfield Academy is changing and transforming the lives of our community members, especially those underserved and those who typically do not have easy access to services, programs and resources in Chesterfield County.

Worthiness of Award

Chesterfield County is aware that each member of our community deserves the same services and opportunities. It is part of the equity model that any modern society must follow.

We in Chesterfield County have a social responsibility to all our residents and it is our duty to give back and provide support to our entire community.

Recognizing that all people have potential, but may not all have the same opportunities to succeed and achieve their goals. With My Chesterfield Academy, Chesterfield County hopes to reach our multicultural communities to provide tools and information about how to access resources and opportunities that will lead to a better quality of life.

In Chesterfield County we are convinced that we are stronger together, and when we are inclusive, our doors must be open and accessible to all. We believe that it is imperative that immigrants have access to integration support and opportunities to contribute back to their communities.

My Chesterfield Academy is the catalyst to effectively integrate our multicultural members by supporting and engaging them in our community.

Supplemental materials

- Event flier
- Event videos

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4UOkn_g5p8

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iq9VRPS2YO8>

- Pics
- Webpage and social media

<https://www.chesterfield.gov/4290/My-Chesterfield-Academy>

<https://www.nbc12.com/2019/04/02/chesterfield-launches-new-academy-reach-multicultural-communities/>

<https://www.progress-index.com/news/20190328/chesterfield-announces-new-academy-for-multicultural-communities>