



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2021.** Please include this submission form with the 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: County of Henrico  
Program Title: Supporting Employee Development Remotely during Challenging Times  
Program Category: Organizational Development

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## **Program Overview**

Any change process can be disorienting. Disruptive and sudden change, like the sweeping transformations caused by COVID-19, can – and did – result in a sense of shock, fear, frustration, confusion, and anxiety. It was imperative that the Department of Human Resources (HR) find a way to support Henrico County employees reeling from the emotional impacts of an international pandemic.

As the COVID-19 threat increased, Henrico County instituted “Level 3 Operations” on March 19, 2020, instructing many employees to start working from home immediately. On March 30, 2020 – the same day Virginia’s Stay-at-Home Order began – HR’s Organizational Learning and Talent Development (OLTD) Division launched a YouTube channel with videos designed to help employees through the pandemic’s stressors while training them in core areas. These videos were created on the staff’s cellphones while they also teleworked.

The impact was clear and immediate. HR received numerous grateful emails from employees hungry for information, expressing delight at seeing familiar colleagues’ faces in a time of isolation and fear, and sharing appreciation for valuable content. During the Stay-at-Home Order, OLTD created 23 videos that received 5,908 views, and by just over one year later, they had created 55 videos that received 18,005 views with 865 hours watched.

## **Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality**

Like most local governments, Henrico County has historically focused on in-person service with employees working in government centers and other facilities spread throughout the county. The onset of the coronavirus meant that safety for residents and employees took precedence

over working on location, and almost 2000 county employees began teleworking in the middle of March having rarely done so before.

This was a profound and rapid change that nonetheless could not result in a decline in service. Employees needed to learn quickly how to navigate the challenges of working from home while at the same time providing customers with needed support, and supervisors needed to be able to successfully manage remote teams that just days before had been working onsite with one another.

COVID-19 threatened more than our employees' physical health. The pandemic's sudden changes and anxiety also threatened their mental well-being, and many were emotionally reeling. They needed training in how to handle ongoing stress and how to navigate this new reality. As 2020 wore on and it remained unsafe for large groups to meet in classrooms, trainers still could not provide instruction in person. All of this created a clear and pressing need to harness the power of video to support employees in real time by creating content to meet their immediate and ongoing needs.

### **How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria**

2020 was an exceptional year that demanded an exceptional response. Henrico County employees needed to meet challenge after challenge with creativity, determination, agility, and heart – all while sequestered in their homes during a mandatory Stay-at-Home Order. How could they work effectively while managing their own anxiety and juggling at-home workspaces filled with distractions ranging from pets to family members to calls from customers and colleagues? Physical isolation meant they were cut off from social networks that would usually provide emotional support, and COVID-19 restrictions meant they were also cut off from the HR

staff, who would typically provide instruction, coaching, and support to help them through these professional challenges.

Henrico County met this demand within weeks of county employees beginning to work from home due to the pandemic, using whatever tools trainers had in their own homes and teaching themselves to become videographers through online research and trial-and-error. Videos provided key information and necessary emotional support at a time when everyone was struggling to cope, and the team continued to innovate with new content and filming techniques as the year went on. The numbers of subscribers, likes, views, and hours-watched all illustrate that the OLTD YouTube channel met a clear need, and the many notes from employees added a human voice to these statistics, proving that HR provided an essential service in an innovative manner when it was needed the most.

### **How Program Was Carried Out**

On March 19, 2020, the coronavirus pandemic caused Henrico County to begin Level 3 Operations, with minimal staffing in each location. Roughly 2000 employees who had worked on-site for their entire careers were now expected to find a way to provide services to residents while working from home. This included most of HR's employees, and so OLTD trainers and coaches scurried to find ways to continue to support employees from their own homes.

On March 20, HR's Training Supervisor took her cellphone outside, set it up on a flip chart stand, and filmed OLTD's first 5:08-long training video: **Dealing with Change and Transitions**. Two days later, she set up next to a river to illustrate that ongoing stress can feel like being caught in whitewater and filmed **How to Handle Ongoing Stress** (4:21 in length). And on

March 28 she drew an illustration in the sand to demonstrate the main points of the third video, **Happiness: How to Improve Wellbeing Today** (6:06 in length).

After extensive research and experimentation, she sent a two-page document on March 29 to OLTD staff describing how to shoot videos with their phones. She followed up with illustrations of how to use household lamps to enhance video quality and met virtually with the team to train them using her personal experiences thus far. The county's new instructional videographers were born!

The content was just one piece of the puzzle; the other was figuring out where these videos would be housed. HR needed a well-known platform that employees could easily access from wherever they were working and with a wide range of devices. OLTD's Division Manager collaborated with Information Technology (IT) to ensure that there were no security concerns with employees accessing content on a proposed OLTD YouTube site, and she coordinated with the county's Public Relations and Media Services (PRMS) department to receive permission to launch a YouTube channel. Meanwhile, additional staff built a prototype of the YouTube channel using free and easily-available software to create a photographic banner and logo for the site.

On March 30, 2020 – just two weeks after starting working from home and the very same day that Virginia's Governor issued a statewide Stay at Home Order – OLTD's YouTube channel ([https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC68aqYPHo11Q6XI8tSDr\\_Xg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC68aqYPHo11Q6XI8tSDr_Xg)) went live, including the original three videos and several additional videos created in short succession:

- March 31: **Working from Home: How to Telework Successfully** (5:01)
- April 2: **Delivering Feedback Effectively: SBI Method** (7:08)

- April 4: **How to Coach Employees to Improve Performance** (7:57)
- April 6: **How to Lead Teams through Stressful Transitions** (5:02)
- April 8: **Managing Remote Teams: How to Supervise Employees Working from Home** (5:30)
- April 15: **Getting Out of Your Head: Mindful Moments for Real Life** (4:17)
- April 17: **Happiness Part 2: How to Improve Wellbeing Today** (3:21)

Staff researched how to create video titles, descriptions, and strategically tag content to make information searchable and easy to find. They also continued to create content, sharing video links with employees on an as-needed basis. Once there were 12 videos to meet a wide range of instructional needs, HR sent a notice to all Henrico County General Government employees on April 28, saying, “it is our sincere hope that these videos are a source of information, comfort and support during this challenging time.”

By the end of that day, the channel had already received 3,111 views, and a total of 96.7 hours had been spent watching these videos! The YouTube channel was clearly meeting a need.

That same week, the County Manager and his Chief of Staff requested a meeting with Human Resources. They asked for recommendations for how to capture the leadership lessons learned from how the county had been responding to COVID-19 with agility, innovation, and heart. In the County Manager’s words, there was “a story to tell” that could illustrate the values behind the leadership actions taking place throughout the county and at all levels of the organization. Their hope was that by hearing these stories, other county employees would have a guide to follow in making their own decisions during this time when staff worked far from their teams and departments.

OLTD proposed creating a **Who We Are** video series, which would consist of conversations between a handful of diverse employees and the County Manager and Chief of Staff, filmed and edited to share the story of the county's response to COVID-19. Receiving the go-ahead, the Training Supervisor identified and reached out to five employees to request their participation in the project; collaborated with PRMS to request support in filming these proposed freeform and unscripted conversations with the County Manager; and met virtually with each potential participant to help them reflect on how their actions during COVID-19 exemplified the County Manager's vision of leading with innovation, agility, and heart. She also met several times with PRMS's TV & Media Services Manager and a TV Producer/Director to strategize filming to meet COVID-19 social distancing standards while also unobtrusively capturing all the participants so that they could truly engage in an unscripted conversation.

On May 13, five employees, the OLTD Training Supervisor, the County Manager, and his Chief of Staff spent two hours discussing how they had been leading and serving during COVID-19, and PRMS skillfully captured the conversation. In the following weeks, the TV Producer/Director and the Training Supervisor edited down the footage into shorter videos that would best illustrate the leadership lessons contained in the conversation.

On May 27, the **Who We Are: Leadership Lessons from COVID-19** video series launched, described as "Leadership lessons from COVID-19 shown through employee stories and conversations with our County Manager. These examples provide us with a guide for leading and serving as we move forward together." HR sent a notice to all General Government Employees advertising the series, and it received 912 views that very same day! In all, this collaboration was able to create nine videos highlighting different learning themes, and the

Training Supervisor created a tenth summarizing all the lessons with **Who We Are: Lessons Learned**.

Meanwhile, staff continued to film and upload videos to meet employees' other training needs. As the YouTube channel expanded, they created seven Playlists to help employees easily find the videos they needed: [Support During COVID-19](#); [Working from Home](#); [Wellbeing](#); [Leadership/Professional Development](#); [Who We Are: Leadership Lessons from COVID-19](#); [Management](#); [Voices of the Heart](#).

OLTD met regularly to strategically decide on the topics that would best meet employee needs. They also created handouts to support several videos, stored in SharePoint or Google Docs and available by clicking on links in the descriptions written below the videos. Some OLTD trainers continued to film and edit using their cellphones while working from home, and others chose to meet up while social distancing so that one person could film while another trained. In addition, staff worked hard to learn how to edit videos using software already used for other purposes and supporting each other in the editing tasks.

By early April, 2021, OLTD had created 55 videos packed with tips and guidance for Henrico County employees. It was astounding to remember that just one year earlier, trainers had been in classrooms teaching in-person workshops, and they never imagined they would be inventing a whole new way of reaching remote employees in just a few short weeks.

### **Financing and Staffing**

There was no capital cost incurred in the development of this program, and operating costs consisted primarily of staff time. The training videos are created by salaried employees, and



facility costs are nonexistent due to filming either at county sites, out in the community, or in employees' own homes. Handouts are created electronically and linked with the videos, so no additional printing cost is incurred. Most videos were filmed using staff's cell phones and edited on software available for free.

The few additional costs include: the purchase of three \$21 lavalier microphones and a \$20 tripod to improve the videos' sound quality; editing software that had been purchased for county staff prior to COVID-19: Adobe Creative Suite, at a cost of \$827.79 for a license; toward the end of 2020, OLTD purchased two LED ring lights to facilitate smoother indoor lighting for \$28 each.

Although these few purchases enhanced this project, it could easily be replicated without these purchases. The initial YouTube channel was launched without the use of any of them.

### **Program Results**

Just two weeks after starting working from home and on the very same day that Virginia's Governor issued a statewide Stay at Home Order, HR's OLTD YouTube channel went live. By April, 2021:

- The channel had 216 subscribers.
- OLTD had researched, filmed, edited, and uploaded 55 original videos, many with tip sheets created to reinforce the learning linked within the video descriptions.
- Videos had accumulated 764 "likes" and had been viewed 18,005 times.
- People had spent 865 hours watching videos on OLTD's YouTube channel!

The **Who We Are Series** provided a roadmap for employees navigating new challenges, illustrating the County Manager's vision for leadership and service during the pandemic through informal, heartfelt, and inspiring conversations. The first video was viewed 912 times on the day it was released!

Employees sent many notes expressing gratitude for the channel and video content:

- *We really, really need what you all are doing. I haven't watched them all because I want to save some for later. Thank your group for finding such an effective way to help.*
- *Wow ... those are some very amazing videos! Thanks for your creativity and flexibility to meet this new need! You guys are awesome, and this helped me to remember all of my training.*
- *You are amazing! Thank you for the inspiring and informative videos. I have already subscribed.*
- *Wow! These videos are such a great way to be innovative and engaging. They're going to help.*
- *I post one of the videos each day in our group chats so our day and night shift can view the videos daily and continue their growth. Promoting the videos has greatly impacted our operation and is a great way to lead my staff. We can continue to be educated through OLTG despite not being in the classroom because of the effects of Covid-19.*
- *Each of the videos were instrumental to me when everything in the world was uncertain.*
  - *The videos on **Stress and Change** gave me guidance how to lead during the pandemic and social unrest.*
  - ***Defeating Negativity, Courageous Conversations, and Listening with Empathy** gave me the tools to help facilitate conversations that needed to be*

*held within my Division that two years ago I would have never had or would have jumped into without being able to sit back and listen to others' points of view.*

- **Change and Transitions, Employee Engagement, and Remote Employees** are continuing to assist in the transition of phasing my employees back into our facility, all the while remaining safe and mixing in a hybrid work schedule.
- **Employee Feedback** is the latest tool in my kit that I am using daily.
- *As a result of these videos, I feel more empowered to speak up and act upon situations I may have been hesitant to previously. My leadership has been very much refined by these videos.*
- *I was part of a group which brought my Directors some systemic issues which I perceive in my department. My group met before the "big meeting" to voice our concerns with even having such a group. Using the **Listening with Empathy** video, I reminded the group that they need not approach the meeting with angst, but also ready to listen to the other side and their viewpoints.*

The videos exceeded original expectations by becoming valuable parts of blended learning efforts, some developing into prerequisites for training classes and others becoming required viewing for assignments within Henrico's leadership programs.

### **Executive Summary**

2020 was an unprecedented year that demanded an unprecedented response – and the beginning of 2021 has been equally tumultuous. In March 2020, many Henrico County employees began working from home, and although this was brand new for most of them, they nonetheless needed to meet work challenges and serve county residents who were also reeling from the rapid changes brought on by Covid-19. Employees were cut off from social networks

that would usually provide emotional support, and they were also removed from the HR's OLTD staff who would typically provide instruction, coaching, and support to help them through these professional challenges.

It was imperative that HR find a way to support these employees. On March 30, 2020, OLTD launched a YouTube channel with videos designed to help employees through the emotional toll of the pandemic and training them in core areas. While themselves working from home for the first time, OLTD staff used online research and trial-and-error to quickly teach themselves to become videographers, and they began making short instructional videos using whatever tools they had in their own homes.

By December 2020, OLTD had created 40 videos that received 11,467 views with 522.9 hours watched, and by early April – just one year after launching their YouTube channel – OLTD had created 55 videos that received a total of 18,005 views, with 865 hours watched and 764 “likes”! The YouTube format allowed employees to access the videos whenever their schedules allowed and using whatever devices they had on hand, and employees appreciated the connection, support, and instructional content. OLTD received numerous grateful emails expressing how helpful the videos were in employees' time of need, such as, *“Each of the videos were instrumental to me when everything in the world was uncertain.”*

Best of all, this program is replicable for any locality at either no or very minimal cost.