



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2022.** 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: EDA SWaM Initiative
Program Category: Community and Economic Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Program Overview

Henrico Economic Development Authority (EDA) is the central point of contact for economic development in the County. Through the implementation of effective strategies, the Henrico EDA aims to increase opportunities for citizens to achieve their full potential through economic equity and mobility. To help achieve this mission, the Henrico EDA has intentionally engaged the local Small, Women, and Minority (SWaM) business community through three focus areas: administrative policies, programmatic outreach, and sponsorship of external initiatives.

Since 2018, the Henrico EDA refined the administration of performance agreements to include language encouraging new and expanding companies to consider SWaM certified firms for their contracting and vendor needs. In 2020, the EDA enhanced this commitment by proactively engaging companies regarding the diverse array of suppliers in the community. New programmatic outreach gave rise to the launch of a quarterly SWaM webinar series aimed at increasing SWaM awareness and providing step-by-step guidance on the certification application process. Lastly, the Henrico EDA deepened existing relationships with external partners through sponsorships and purposeful commitments to support the initiatives of the Central Virginia African American Chamber of Commerce, Virginia Association of State College & University Purchasing Professionals (VASCUPP), and the Women's Business Center RVA. Funding and programmatic support from the EDA has been instrumental in reestablishing the Capital Region Small Business Development Center.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

In the fall of 2020, through the research of a hired consultant, it was confirmed that access to economic development opportunities and lack of knowledge surrounding the corporate procurement process pose significant barriers to SWaM businesses. Efforts to increase SWaM certifications and company awareness will support a new or existing company's commitment to a locality; promote loyalty in a local supply chain, boost a sense of community, and strengthen the local economy.

It is quite difficult to find hard data on the quantity and longevity of SWaM businesses in Henrico and throughout the Richmond region. According to US Census data, in 2012 there were 8,667 minority-owned businesses in Henrico. Though this figure has likely changed in the last decade,

it can be assumed that women and minority-owned businesses make up a large portion of the 25,000 businesses in the County.

Recent data from the Virginia Department of Small Business & Supplier Diversity database provides that there are 463 minority-owned businesses registered with the SBSD. Completing this registration process helps elevate businesses and open procurement opportunities with government and private entities. The EDA's administrative, programmatic, and sponsorship efforts are all means of taking a wholistic approach to ensure SWaM businesses have the education and resources for sustained growth.

Additionally, when comparing the number of SWaM certified businesses that are registered with the Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity (SBSD) to the **total** number of small, women, and minority-owned businesses in Henrico, the ratio of SWaM certified firms is disproportionately low. The Henrico EDA's efforts towards increasing SWaM awareness and education aim to close the gap through intentional outreach, connectivity, and data-driven results.

How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

During the summer and early fall of 2020, a hired consultant interviewed local and regional economic development organizations representing twenty-nine localities across the United States to research existing SWaM initiatives. This research suggests that there are no other localities that encourage or facilitate SWaM partnerships within the economic development incentive process. Henrico County sets a precedent for fostering meaningful connections between SWaM businesses and economic development projects. This is best illustrated through the recent expansion of the American Paper Converting facility in eastern Henrico. American Paper, a SWaM-certified company, founded their Henrico facility in 2011 and will soon be adding 69 new jobs and investing \$17M in the project.

Overall, the on-set of the pandemic has disproportionately affected small businesses. Henrico EDA's increased outreach and support will be instrumental in helping support the immediate and future needs of the SWaM business community. The three-pronged approach of administrative, programmatic, and collaborative efforts provides innovative solutions to elevate the profile of SWaM businesses.

How Program Was Carried Out

The Henrico EDA implemented *administrative policies, programmatic outreach, and sponsorship of external initiatives* to support the success of locally owned Small, Women, and Minority (SWaM) businesses. The integration of these three focus areas into the EDA's daily work provides the groundwork for helping to create opportunities for SWaM businesses that lead to their sustained growth.

Administrative

The EDA added SWaM language to all EDA-administered performance agreements, as an ongoing effort to prompt companies to reflect on their vendor and contractor relationships at the onset of a project. When a company selects Henrico County for expansion, they are encouraged to consider SWaM certified firms throughout the construction and development process. The purpose is to cultivate inclusive procurement processes and increase awareness and contracting opportunities for SWaM businesses. The Henrico Economic Development Authority's Board of Directors approved this change after significant dialogue on the EDA's role in supporting SWaM businesses.

Programmatic Outreach

The Henrico EDA engaged the Henrico Purchasing Department and the Virginia Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity to establish a webinar series targeting SWaM businesses in the County. The SWaM 1.0 and 2.0 webinar series was a result of the new partnership. These webinars were held quarterly to educate businesses on the importance of SWaM certification and the process to become SWaM certified. Webinars were advertised through all EDA social media outlets as well as posted on the SBSDB website. The SBSDB maintains a database of individuals and business owners who have requested to be notified of upcoming events, which includes location information. The SWaM webinar information was sent directly to companies with Henrico-based addresses. Participants registered for the webinar using an Eventbrite link. The day before the event all registrants were sent a Google Video link to access the webinar. This was the preferred hosting platform to facilitate the event. Participants were given a 10-minute grace period to join the Google Video. Late participation was prohibited to ensure participants received the full webinar content. Each webinar included three components: an overview of the Henrico EDA and its services, the Henrico Purchasing Department's procurement process and annual metrics, and SWaM certification content facilitated by the Virginia SBSDB business services manager. SWaM

1.0 provided an overview of the certification program, while SWaM 2.0 provided step-by-step instruction on the Commonwealth's certification process. At the end of each webinar, participants engaged in a question-and-answer period to ask questions and ensure they understood the SWaM certification process. The webinar series was open to business owners across the Commonwealth, but marketing was targeted toward businesses located in Henrico County.

Key Sponsorships

Sponsorship of regional initiatives and events has allowed the EDA to extend its support for efforts spearheaded by other organizations that prioritize the growth of SWaM businesses in the County and throughout the Richmond region.

The COVID-19 pandemic took a toll on small businesses. Restaurants that were hometown favorites found themselves shutting their doors after years of success. Businesses reliant on in-person customer interaction were forced to pivot or close as COVID protocols and restrictions constantly changed. The Henrico EDA along with sister economic development agencies in the Richmond region saw the need for a centralized organization solely focused on small business support. In November 2020, the Henrico EDA along with Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, New Kent, and Powhatan counties, the town of Ashland, and the city of Richmond joined together to provide funds to reestablish the Capital Region Small Business Development Center (SBDC). Those funds served as a match to CARES Act funding from the Small Business Administration (SBA). The Capital Region SBDC is part of a network of 26 other Virginia SBDCs that provide business development programming, counseling and expertise to support small business needs. Since its inception the Capital Region SBDC has counseled over 500 clients, assisted with over \$4.1M in capital formation, and created/retained 200 jobs in the Richmond region. Financial support from the Henrico EDA was instrumental in establishing the Center and has maintained a strong partnership as they continue to impact businesses at all stages of growth.

SWaMFest is an annual gathering of procurement professionals and business owners hosted by the Virginia Association of State College & University Purchasing Professionals (VASCUPP). In April 2021, the EDA partnered with the Henrico Purchasing Department to sponsor a virtual booth to speak with attendees about the Henrico procurement process and business resources available through the EDA.

In August 2021, the Women's Business Center RVA hosted their annual conference, EmpowHer Conference: Celebrating Women in Our History and Building a Brighter Future. Along with Fulton Bank, the EDA co-sponsored the opening reception at the Cultural Arts Center in Glen Allen.

The Central Virginia African American Chamber of Commerce (CVAACC) Black Business Accelerator Program is a three-month program created to help black businesses propel their business through ongoing coaching, educational sessions, and access to expanded corporate networks. During 2021, with financial support from the EDA, the CVAACC offered an abbreviated version of the program as a feedback loop for its full launch in spring 2022.

Financing and Staffing

The EDA incurred minimal costs facilitating the SWaM webinar program but committed significant staff time to program development and facilitation. The EDA committed \$40,000 to the Central Virginia African American Chamber of Commerce for the Black Business Accelerator Program. Costs for the SWaMfest Virtual Booth totaled \$500 and were split between the EDA and the Henrico County Purchasing Department. The EDA sponsored the opening reception of the Women's Business Center RVA Annual Conference, covering the \$625 cost for space at the Cultural Arts Center at Glen Allen.

Nearly 60 hours of Marketing/Creative time for social media messages, creation of marketing material, and design and layout changes to the website were paid to the EDA's advertising agency totaling approximately \$5,000.

Program Results

Since the inaugural SWaM webinar series in May 2021, the Henrico EDA has had approximately 220 businesses registrations for the two-part series. Businesses in attendance learned how SWaM and Micro Business certifications provide a competitive advantage of doing business in Henrico County, and they received a live demonstration of the application process resulting in several application submissions in real time. Additional SWaM webinars are scheduled throughout 2022.

The EDA's commitment towards supporting external partners and initiatives has bolstered the frequency of interactions with SWaM businesses. Through our co-sponsorship at SWaMfest, the

EDA connected with hundreds of SWaM firms from across the Commonwealth. Additionally, the EDA's sponsorship of the Black Business Accelerator Program supports the Central Virginia African American Chamber of Commerce efforts to help black businesses with legal and financial preparation of records, increase "C-Suite" contacts and foster industry specific relationship building. The spring cohort of the Black Business Accelerator Program will conclude in May 2022.

Brief Summary

Small, women and minority owned businesses are important threads in the fabric of a community. The Henrico EDA has made SWaM businesses a priority through actionable, sustainable initiatives that educate and empower business owners to elevate their business to the next level. The instructional webinars and collaborative partnerships with state and regional organizations have been pivotal in helping SWaM businesses explore new avenues for business growth.