



## 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: Preparing Students for the World of Work — the Henrico Way  
Program Category: Community and Economic Development

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Victoria Davis  
Title: Public Relations Specialist  
Department: Public Relations  
Telephone: 804-501-4933 Website: www.henrico.us  
Email: dav127@henrico.us

### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Brandon Hinton  
Title: Deputy County Manager for Administration  
Signature: 

## **Program Overview**

The focus of Henrico County Public Schools' (HCPS) Department of Workforce and Career Development is to prepare students for success in postsecondary education and the world of work. Our programs strive to unite academics and real-world learning experiences. Students in HCPS' Career and Technical Education — or CTE — programs have the opportunity to learn about career pathways and careers from professionals directly in the field. During the summer of 2021, 33 rising HCPS seniors gained meaningful work-based experiences in various departments of Henrico County government in the first “County Manager’s Summer Academy for Workforce and Career Development.” Not only did these students have a chance to intern in a career they were interested in exploring, but they also had an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of what the county government does on a daily basis for the residents of Henrico County.

This program would not have been possible without the support of Henrico’s County manager and HCPS’ superintendent, who paved the way for our collaboration with county government employees, particularly those in human resources. This unique summer academy is a great example of how Henrico County Public Schools and Henrico County government work together, creating a win-win program for all.

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

Understanding the work environment of so many different careers and how to be prepared for the workplace is impossible to teach students in a classroom setting. We all know that learning outcomes increase dramatically anytime we have an opportunity to teach in a real-world setting. Yet there are never enough opportunities for students in our career and technical education two-year programs at the ACE centers. The challenge for HCPS is finding more opportunities like internships that will better prepare students for postsecondary education or the world of work.

Every school division is seeking local business partners who can offer real-world experiences, especially internships. As the need for key workers with certifications and licenses grows, we want to prepare our career and technical education students to be “life-ready” upon graduation by providing them with authentic experiences.

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

There are many reasons this innovative program is deserving of recognition. It was made possible through strong collaboration and cooperation between the school district and county government and provides a model that other localities may find helpful as they review workplace opportunities for high school students, as well as meeting current internship and future employee needs within their departments. Most importantly, this summer internship program provided students with the opportunity to bring together academics and real-world learning experiences as they worked alongside professionals in the field. It is through such meaningful work-based learning experiences that students can build career-related knowledge and skills. The program fostered a deeper understanding of the planning and execution that goes into county administration. Students learned about “The Henrico Way” as they joined departments around Henrico and gained an appreciation for all that goes into making Henrico great. By all indications, it was a positive experience for all parties. Because of this program, the collaboration between the HCPS Department of Career and Workforce Development and the county’s Department of Human Resources has grown, to benefit students and the county alike. While the County Manager’s Summer Academy for Workforce and Career Development provided a tremendous opportunity for our ACE Center students, the goodwill and teaching opportunities that have been generated will continue to serve Henrico County.

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

The Department of Workforce and Career Development set out to expand our work-based learning experiences, as we focus on preparing students for future success after graduation. Work-based learning experiences enable students to apply classroom instruction in a real-world business work environment. Such experiences also assist students with the transition from the classroom to the workplace. Students' knowledge, skills and attitudes are enhanced by participation in supervised, authentic experiences. With this in mind, we began working on a partnership with Henrico County government to develop a summer internship program that places the student in various county workplace environments. The aim of the program was to develop and practice career-related knowledge and skills for a career field related to the student's career interests, developing skill sets and goals.

The primary objective of the County Manager's Summer Academy for Workforce and Career Development was to provide Henrico County Public Schools students at the Advanced Career Education Centers an opportunity to participate in a nine-week paid internship program with Henrico County between their junior and senior years. Students completed an application process where they highlighted the job-ready skills they had acquired through their HCPS career and technical education program. Other requirements included the completion of Part 1 of their CTE coursework and attaining the Workplace-Readiness Skills certification, as well as the OSHA-10 certification for those in the trade programs.

The secondary objective of the program was to provide students with a better understanding of not only the workplace, but also of Henrico County. We wanted students to gain an appreciation for all the hard work and planning that goes into making Henrico one of the best-run counties in the country. By developing relationships and seeing for themselves what is often referred to by

our county manager as the “Henrico Way,” students gained pride in our community and an improved understanding of county government and services provided. As students feel a part of the Henrico family that takes care of its residents, it is our combined hope that some may find themselves interested in becoming future county employees.

After word grew of the summer academy, so did the excitement. More departments wanted to sign up for one or more interns. Additional students inquired about the program and applied. While our initial goal was to provide 10-12 internship opportunities for students; it did not take long to realize we would double or triple that number. With input from county departments, specific learning objectives were developed for the program. Participants were given an intern manual and were expected to complete a reflection journal. Orientation of interns was set up through our partners in the Henrico County Department of Human Resources. Students were provided with a logo shirt as part of their academy attire. Other items such as steel-toed work boots were provided by the county as needed. In addition, our department ensured transportation was not a barrier for any intern and provided accommodations where needed.

While the HCPS Department of Workforce and Career Development first had the idea, it was the Henrico County Department of Human Resources and the county employees that made it a reality. Collaboration was the key to making this program possible. Between the plethora of virtual meetings and emails, it was a team effort to prepare and execute this program to “grow our own” employees. However, the success of the County Manager’s Summer Academy for Workforce and Career Development was based on the dedication of the Henrico County employees that supported and taught our students daily throughout the summer. Their enthusiasm and patience made the difference.

During the nine weeks of the program, 33 students had a chance to intern in a career that interested them, gaining a deeper understanding of it and related career pathways. Many students were excited to be following their career dream, while others decided to explore a new area. Not only did these rising seniors have the opportunity to work during the summer in various Henrico County departments, but they also had a chance to develop relationships and to see for themselves what is often referred to by our county manager as the “Henrico Way.” This program allowed students to pull back the curtain and see how well-run our county is and how it maintains a first-class workforce.

The interns were immediately treated as part of the “Henrico family” team. Fostering such relationships is key to building a great workforce. We know that students feel most comfortable in a relationship where there is trust and mutual respect. Fostering such relationships is key to building a great workforce. With changing demographics such as aging and retiring workers, there is a growing labor shortage as more and more skilled workers are needed in the workforce. As the HCPS and county departments of human resources look for strategic ways to recruit employees, summer interns are a wonderful source for potential future staff members. Employers do not have to wait for graduation, as seniors in our ACE Center programs are available to work during their final semester for two full school days per week.

### **Financing and Staffing**

There were few outright costs associated with the County Manager’s Summer Academy for Workforce and Career Development program. Participating ACE Center students worked 29 hours a week, earning \$11.08 an hour during the nine-week program. This rate follows the summer internship program made available to college juniors. Therefore, the hiring of summer interns was already allocated in the county budget. Lunch was provided during orientation and

training days. Interns were given shirts from their assigned county departments. Hard-toed shoes, hard hats, and protective eyewear were provided as needed. One could argue there was an intangible cost associated with the assigned mentors, who take time away from their job to train the interns. However, according to the county human resource specialist who directs summer internships, productivity did not falter during the program's nine weeks. Instead, participating departments saw morale improve as the employees enjoyed interacting with the young people. We are currently collaborating on ways to expand the program to more county departments for summer 2022.

### **Program Results**

What started as a pilot program with the Henrico County Department of Public Utilities, offering meaningful work-based learning opportunities while boosting awareness, quickly grew into a program where 33 rising seniors benefited, as did ten county departments. The departments of Fire, Police, General Services, Public Works, Public Library, Community Corrections, the Circuit Court Clerk's Office, the Extension Office and Information Technology each took on at least one of our high school summer interns. The County Manager's Summer Academy squarely met both of its two objectives and then some.

During our onsite visits, we found students working alongside county employees as they learned and laughed together. The interns happily explained what they were doing, and exuded excitement and a sense of confidence as they showed us around. When asked about the best part of their experience, interns repeatedly cited one aspect: the hands-on learning experience and the chance to actually work, as many students thought they would be doing a lot of watching instead.

The experience succeeded in taking John Dewey’s philosophy of “learning by doing” to a new level. Furthermore, when asked if they would recommend the summer academy to other students, all participants said yes. Some cited an experience that gave them perspective on a real workplace environment. Others said they gained practical applications of what they were learning in school, and how it could be applied to real-world jobs. Interns also said they learned a lot about how to speak and socialize with coworkers and other adults.

Participating Henrico County departments relayed that they greatly enjoyed the presence and participation of the interns, and voiced their desire to participate in 2022. Many departments already take college juniors as summer interns and were quite surprised by the professionalism and enthusiasm of our high school juniors. The county employees were excited to share their craft with our students — the good, the bad, and the smelly. Although as one intern at Henrico County’s water reclamation facility stated, “It really isn’t that smelly.”

The experience at the County Manager’s Summer Academy led some students to rethink and reflect on their future career goals and aspirations. Three such rising seniors from the emergency medical technician, or EMT, program did just that. The young women, who interned with Henrico Division of Fire, had an opportunity to help save lives, and they embraced it. The interns rode with fire medics and completed emergency room rotations. They also had the opportunity to sit in on calls at the county communications office, where 911 calls are dispatched. During the internship, these two students learned something that they said had affected their perspectives: in Henrico County, of the 781 cardiac arrest calls in 2020, only three received bystander care. They learned that people are afraid to step in, as they do not know what to do in an emergency. After the completion of their internship, the students decided they wanted to do more. They had already been certified as EMTs through our ACE Center program, and they went on to attain additional



Red Cross training to be instructors. With guidance from our Department of Workforce and Career Development and the Henrico Division of Fire, the students created the Helping Henrico Heroes program to provide training in public places for citizens to learn what to do in such emergency situations, using an abbreviated 90-minute first-aid class. Currently, they are working on an implementation plan and class curriculum, while training Henrico County employees in CPR and first aid classes. It was their summer internship with the Henrico County Division of Fire that lit a spark in these rising seniors to make public safety education their priority.

### **Brief Summary**

With the goal of expanding work-based learning experiences for students enrolled in Career and Technical Education courses, the Department of Workforce and Career Development began working on a partnership with Henrico County government to develop a summer internship program that places the student in various county workplace environments. During the summer of 2021, 33 rising HCPS seniors gained meaningful work-based experiences in ten departments of Henrico County government in the first “County Manager’s Summer Academy for Workforce and Career Development. An application was required of each interested student, as well as completion of basic coursework and certification.

The primary aim of the program was to develop and practice career-related knowledge and skills for a career field related to the student’s career interests, developing skill sets and goals. The program is also an example of a “grow your own” approach to staffing, developing beginning skills and sparking interest in careers in county government in current Henrico citizens who are in the process of creating career aspirations and paths.

This innovative nine-week program also provided students with a better understanding of Henrico County and all the work and planning that goes into making Henrico such an outstanding place to live. By developing relationships and seeing for themselves the “Henrico Way,” students gained pride in our community and an improved understanding of county government and services provided.

Collaboration was the key to making this program possible. Careful planning involving the school division and county government offices was essential in ensuring a high quality experience for students and the county employees who would be working directly with them. This collaboration continued throughout the program, supporting its success. Feedback from students and county employees has been overwhelmingly positive and hopes are to expand the program for the Summer of 2022.