



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2024.** 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](#).

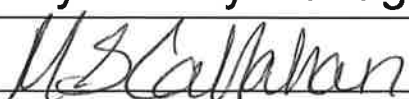
### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico  
Program Title: Interview Preparation Program  
Program Category: Organizational Development

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

Name: Monica Smith-Callahan  
Title: Deputy County Manager for Community Affairs  
Signature: 

## **Program Overview**

The Interview Preparation Program is a comprehensive initiative aimed at equipping individuals with the specialized skills and knowledge necessary to excel in job interviews for Henrico County Division of Fire. This submission will provide a detailed description of the program, including its objectives, development and implementation process, timeline, clientele, the county's role in implementation, and the contributions of other partners.

The primary objective of the Interview Preparation Program is to empower individuals with the skills and confidence needed to succeed in job interviews while ensuring the County employs the best qualified applicants. The program aims to enhance participants' interview techniques, communication skills, and overall employability. Offering the Interview Preparation Program improves the interview process by ensuring candidates are prepared and able to relate their background, values, and qualifications to the panel. By providing comprehensive training and support, the program seeks to increase employment opportunities for individuals in the community and to develop larger and more diverse candidate lists for employment.

## **How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria**

This program has proven to be a multifaceted solution-based program worthy of an achievement award due to its profound impact on candidates and the organization as a whole. As an innovative idea, it has effectively integrated extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, such as recognition and psychological benefits, which are especially valuable to employees. Henrico County Division of Fire's interview preparation program has significantly contributed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion within its firefighter entry-level recruitment process. This commendable initiative, consisting of two comprehensive sessions, aimed to equip candidates with essential interview practices, techniques, and tips, ultimately enhancing their overall performance during the hiring process. One of the program's key strengths lies in its commitment to fostering diversity. By providing all candidates access to the interview preparation sessions, the Division of Fire ensures an equal opportunity for individuals from various backgrounds to excel in the competitive selection process. This inclusivity attracts a broader range of applicants, promoting diversity within the firefighting force. The emphasis on accessibility aligns with the principles of equity, reinforcing the notion that every candidate, regardless of their background or previous experience, deserves the tools and knowledge necessary to present themselves effectively.

The tailored approach of the program recognizes the importance of equitable representation in the community. By providing candidates with the necessary skills to navigate the interview process, the Division of Fire actively works towards breaking down barriers that may have hindered the success of underrepresented groups in the past. This proactive approach aligns with the broader goals of diversity and inclusion, creating a more welcoming and supportive environment for individuals from diverse backgrounds. The program has recognized exceptional contributions and reinforced positive behaviors and performance, contributing to a culture of appreciation and motivation within the organization.

Second, this program offers collaborative efforts through successful partnerships. The development of the Interview Preparation Program involved a collaborative effort within the Division of Fire's Personnel Section and support from the County's HR Section and the Organizational Learning and Talent Development (OLTD) group. The Interview Preparation Program is attributed to the contributions of various partners and was key to providing this program. The county plays a crucial role in the implementation of the Interview Preparation Program. It provides support by allocating resources, including funding and facilities, to ensure the smooth operation of the program. Additionally, the county actively promotes the program through various channels, such as social media, community outreach events, and partnerships with local media outlets. Finally, other outside divisions within the county assisted with other resources. For example, Henrico County Recreation and Parks division supported by providing a meeting location and audiovisual equipment to conduct the sessions.

The program's successful outcomes and tangible impact, as exemplified by the transformative success stories of candidates and the widespread adoption of its principles within the organization, further underscore the program's worthiness of an achievement award. These aspects collectively demonstrate the program's exceptional ability to foster a culture of recognition, motivation, and positive change within the organization, making it a deserving recipient of an achievement award. This encapsulates a strong justification for the program to be recognized with an achievement award.

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

The Division of Fire's Personnel Section recognized that a large number of candidates had scored poorly in the interview portion of the hiring process. Many of these candidates had documented

skills and resumes that demonstrated they should be qualified. To improve outcomes for both the candidates and the Division of Fire, the Interview Preparation Program was initiated. The program was implemented through in-person sessions offered for all candidates in the entry Firefighter process. The sessions included informational handouts, videos from Henrico's OLTD team and open forum time for questions and answers. Members of the Division of Fire's Personnel Section, both civilian and uniformed, explained the interview process steps and were available to answer questions. The material provided focused on helping candidates best represent themselves and "tell their story" during the panel interview. The media provided by OLTD showed examples of good and bad interviews, methods for answering behavioral-based questions, and other tips and techniques for interviewing. Information was given on preparation, rehearsing, and overcoming nervousness in job interviews.

The Interview Preparation Program was developed over a period of six months, during which the curriculum was designed, training materials were created, and a suitable location reserved. Candidates were notified early in the process and were able to sign up for a session in advance. Sessions were offered in the evening and on weekends to accommodate access for over 150 candidates in the hiring process.

The Interview Preparation Program caters to individuals from diverse backgrounds actively seeking employment with Henrico County Fire Department. The program is open to job seekers of all ages (18 years or older) and educational backgrounds, focusing on assisting those who face obstacles to employment, such as individuals with limited work experience, veterans, and individuals from low-income families. The program aims to provide equal opportunities for all participants and create an inclusive learning environment.

Moreover, the Interview Preparation Program is a comprehensive initiative that aims to empower individuals with the skills and confidence needed to succeed in job interviews. Through its well-designed curriculum, collaborative partnerships, and support from the county and other partners, the program provides valuable training and resources to job seekers, ultimately increasing their employability and contributing to the overall economic growth of the community. This program has successfully improved the overall performance of the candidates interviewed. When candidates best represent themselves, both the candidate and the organization benefit.

### **Financing and Staffing**

The Interview Preparation Program is an invaluable resource for job seekers and was able to be both developed and implemented utilizing existing County resources was able to operate at a minimum cost for printing materials.

### **Program Results**

The Interview Preparation Program has yielded remarkable results and achieved significant success in empowering job seekers and improving their chances of interview success. One of the key indicators of the program's success is the increase in job applications from program participants. Through the comprehensive training and support provided by the program, participants have gained the necessary skills and confidence to apply for a wider range of job opportunities. As a result, there has been a 42% increase in the number of job applications submitted by program participants. This increase demonstrates the program's effectiveness in empowering individuals to actively seek employment and take advantage of available job opportunities.

The program has witnessed numerous success stories in terms of job placements and successful interviews. Program participants have reported securing employment in various industries and organizations, from entry-level to managerial positions. These success stories are tangible evidence of the program's impact on participants' employability and interview performance.

For example, one male program participant, had been struggling to secure a job interview despite having a solid educational background. After completing the Interview Preparation Program, he gained valuable insights into effective interview techniques and improved his communication skills. As a result, this participant successfully secured multiple job interviews and eventually landed a position as a Henrico County Firefighter with the Division of Fire. His success story is a testament to the program's ability to transform individuals' interview skills and enhance his employability.

Another success story is a female military veteran who faced challenges transitioning into the civilian workforce. Through the Interview Preparation Program, she received training and support tailored to her unique circumstances. The program equipped her with the necessary skills to effectively communicate her military experience and transferable skills during interviews. As a result, this participant also secured a job as a Henrico County Firefighter with the Division of Fire,

successfully transitioning into a fulfilling sworn career. Her success story showcases the program's ability to address the specific needs of diverse populations and facilitate their successful integration into the job market.

In addition to these individual success stories, the program has also measured outcomes in terms of participant satisfaction and feedback. Program evaluations and surveys have consistently indicated high levels of satisfaction among participants, with the majority reporting improved confidence, interview skills, and overall employability. This positive feedback further validates the program's effectiveness in achieving its objectives and delivering tangible results.

### **Brief Summary**

In conclusion, the Interview Preparation Program has achieved remarkable success in empowering job seekers and improving their interview performance. The program contributes to creating a more inclusive work culture by instilling confidence in candidates, enabling them to better represent themselves. This boost in self-assurance is particularly crucial for individuals who may have historically faced systemic challenges. As candidates become adept at showcasing their individual strengths, the fire department gains a workforce that reflects the rich tapestry of the community it serves. Henrico County Division of Fire's interview preparation program serves as a beacon for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within the firefighting sector. By providing candidates with the tools to excel in the interview process, the Division of Fire not only enhances individual performance but also cultivates a more inclusive and representative firefighting force. This forward-thinking initiative stands as a model for other organizations seeking to advance diversity and equity in their respective fields.

The program's outcomes are evident in the significant increase in job applications from program participants and the numerous success stories of individuals securing employment in various industries. The transformative impact of the program on participants' interview skills and employability. Participant satisfaction and feedback further validate the program's effectiveness. Overall, the Interview Preparation Program has proven to be a valuable resource in equipping individuals with the necessary skills and confidence to succeed in job interviews and secure meaningful employment.