



ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

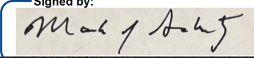
PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Arlington County
Program Title: PS LEADS
Program Category: Public Safety

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Lynne Porfiri
Title: Chief of Staff
Department: Office of the County Manager
Telephone: 703-228-0599 Website: www.arlingtonva.us
Email: lporfiri@arlingtonva.us

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Mark J. Schwartz
Title: County Manager
Signature: 

PS LEADS – Executive Summary

Public Safety LEADS Cohort is an innovative leadership development program designed to enhance collaboration, strategic thinking, and crisis management among Arlington County's Fire, Police, Sheriff, Emergency Communications, and Emergency Management agencies with cooperation from Training and Organizational Development in the Human Resources department. Recognizing a critical gap in cross-agency integration, PS LEADS was developed to break down silos, foster proactive problem-solving, and strengthen public safety leadership.

The program is built on four core competencies:

- Collaboration – Strengthening relationships and team building across agencies.
- Competence – Enhancing knowledge of public safety disciplines.
- Innovation – Addressing emerging threats and leveraging new technologies.
- Action – Developing and implementing capstone projects to tackle high-impact challenges.

PS LEADS features multi-day sessions incorporating expert panels, tactical workshops, and hands-on leadership exercises. Participants work in cross-agency teams to identify pressing public safety issues and propose realistic, actionable solutions that can be implemented within 1-5 years. The program culminates with the presentation of capstone projects developed by each of the cross-agency teams. These projects provide real-world answers to real-world problems and its cost-effective model, leveraging internal expertise, shared agency funding, and existing county facilities, makes it highly scalable and adaptable for other localities. It taps into the knowledge, skills, and expertise that already exist.

PS LEADS builds the capacity of mid-level leaders to navigate complexity, anticipate risk, and lead collaboratively in a rapidly evolving public safety landscape to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

Public Safety LEADS Cohort: A Model for Innovation and Collaboration

Identifying the Challenge: Bridging the Gaps in Public Safety Collaboration

Public safety in Arlington County is a multi-agency effort, encompassing the Fire Department, Police Department, Sheriff's Office, and the Department of Public Safety Communications and Emergency Management. While these agencies work together to protect and serve, a critical gap emerged—not just in communication, but in interconnectedness. PS LEADS was developed to address this gap—not just through training, but through the cultivation of **interconnected leadership capable of steering organizations through disruption and transformation.**

The ability to stay ahead of emerging trends, anticipate potential hazards, and integrate evolving opportunities into a unified strategy was lacking. Without intentional cross-agency collaboration, the county risked inefficiencies, missed opportunities, and suboptimal crisis responses. The challenge was clear: How do we break down silos and build a proactive, unified public safety leadership framework?

PS LEADS: A Blueprint for Innovation and Collaboration

The **Public Safety LEADS Program (PS LEADS)** is a groundbreaking initiative designed to equip public safety leaders, especially mid-career/mid-level management, unlike other leadership cohorts (focused on executive leadership), with the tactical and strategic skills necessary to manage teams effectively before, during, and after crises.

At its core, PS LEADS is structured around four fundamental competencies:

- **Collaboration:** Strengthening inter-agency relationships and team-building skills.
- **Competence:** Expanding cross-disciplinary knowledge in public safety.

- **Innovation:** Anticipating and leveraging emerging threats and technologies.
- **Action:** Developing and implementing solutions through capstone projects that address pressing challenges, often referred to as "gray rhinos," "black swans," or "elephants in the room."

Participants from all four agencies are deliberately grouped into mixed teams to drive inter-agency collaboration. Together, they identify critical gaps across public safety, develop innovative solutions, and present actionable recommendations. These capstone projects are designed to be realistic, scalable, and implementable within 1-5 years, ensuring immediate and long-term impact. This not only provides much needed solutions, but the planning and implementation process gives the participants critical skills to take back to their respective teams and departments.

Execution: A Scalable Model for Other Localities

The program consists of four immersive multi-day sessions, culminating in a final presentation.

Sessions incorporate:

- **Expert-led panels** featuring leaders in public safety, emergency management, and organizational development.
- **Tactical workshops** that simulate crisis scenarios and leadership challenges.
- **Interactive discussions** leveraging real-world cases from county agencies.
- **Regional guest speakers** from the DMV area who bring fresh perspectives on leadership and public safety.

Financing for PS LEADS was strategically designed to be cost-effective and replicable:

- **Internal expertise:** Leveraging County staff as instructors, facilitators, and subject-matter experts.
- **Shared agency funding:** Pooling resources across all four agencies to reduce individual financial burdens.
- **Utilization of existing facilities:** Conducting sessions in county-owned locations to minimize costs.

Tangible Results: Transforming Public Safety

PS LEADS is not just theoretical—it drives real change utilizing capstone projects developed through the program that can make real impact. These initiatives are grounded in a deep understanding of systems-level risk and resource constraints, and they exemplify a proactive mindset: leaders stepping into complexity and shaping the future of public safety rather than reacting to it.

Some past projects are featured below:

- **Practical Climate Resilience for Emergency Response** - This initiative equips public safety personnel with strategic tools, training, and integrated action plans to mitigate climate-related challenges, ensuring emergency responses align with broader climate adaptation goals.
- **Enhanced Dashboard Reporting from the Public Safety Data Warehouse** - This project revolutionizes data visualization, enabling real-time insights, seamless integration, and cloud-based accessibility for enhanced decision-making across agencies.

- **Public Service Housing Initiative** - Recognizing the housing affordability crisis, this initiative proposes innovative housing solutions for entry-level public safety employees, ensuring stability and retention in critical roles.
- **Unifying Public Safety: A Joint Training Center for the County** - This project envisions a centralized, adaptable training facility for all public safety departments, fostering collaboration, standardizing curriculum, and driving innovation in training methodologies.

Why PS LEADS is a Model for Other Localities

Public safety leadership today demands more than tactical excellence—it requires the ability to operate within dynamic systems, work across organizational boundaries, and apply foresight in the face of uncertainty. The absence of a shared leadership framework among Arlington’s public safety agencies posed a risk: missed opportunities for innovation, fragmented crisis response, and slower adaptation to emerging threats. PS LEADS was developed to address this gap—not just through training, but through the cultivation of interconnected leadership capable of steering organizations through disruption and transformation. As the scope of public safety agencies continues to change, more unified, efficient interventions are essential to meeting the needs of residents and ensuring the continuity of critical government services.

PS LEADS is more than a county initiative—it’s a replicable blueprint for fostering public safety leadership and collaboration nationwide. By breaking down agency silos, leveraging internal expertise, and driving real-world solutions, PS LEADS provides a **scalable, cost-effective model** for other municipalities looking to enhance their public safety operations.

This program proves that **when public safety agencies innovate and collaborate, communities thrive.**