



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: _____

Program Title: _____

Program Category: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: _____

Title: _____

Department: _____

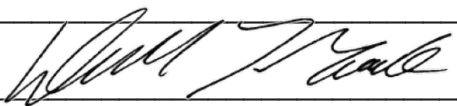
Telephone: _____ Website: _____

Email: _____

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature:  _____

2025 VACo Achievement Award Entry

Chesterfield Café con la Comunidad

ABSTRACT OF THE PROGRAM:

With Chesterfield's Spanish-speaking population growing rapidly, the Communications and Media Division of Chesterfield's Constituent and Media Services Department (CMS), in partnership with Community Engagement and Resources, developed Café con la Comunidad, an engaging multicultural discussion between county leaders and Hispanic community members.

The event was designed to engage and educate Chesterfield's rapidly growing, monolingual Spanish-speaking population by providing immediate access to elected officials, key administrators, agencies and other resources available to them.

To show our commitment to informing this segment of the population, presentations and introductions were spoken in Spanish, with non-Spanish-speaking staff using translation headsets in order to hear questions and responses in English. Additionally, all departmental material was translated into Spanish, and most staff present were bilingual – allowing Spanish-speaking residents to comfortably interact and engage in their native language.

The results were a highly publicized, well-attended event that served as a first for Chesterfield and metro Richmond.

NEED AND CONTEXT

For years, Chesterfield's Latino population has quietly woven its patterns into the county's diverse cultural tapestry.

During the 2020 Census, that population accounted for nearly 16% of the population – making it the county's fastest-growing group of residents. Furthermore, more than 40% of metro Richmond's Latino/Hispanic population makes its home in Chesterfield. That's the densest concentration of Latino/Hispanic residents in the region and one of the highest clusters in Virginia.

That prolific growth posed a challenge for CMS:

- 1) What is the best means of communicating with the fast-growing Latino/Hispanic population when several come from various parts of Latin America and do not speak fluent English?
- 2) What resources and technology are available to ensure leaders understand the needs of this community?
- 3) How is CMS going to receive the information with limited bilingual speakers on its team?

Aside from language barriers, there was another glaring obstacle: Trust in government.

Several of the county's Latino/Hispanic residents have escaped/fled their native lands in Latin American communities for economic and political reasons.

While they have started their lives anew in Chesterfield, their opinions and trust in government are low, thus, posing another challenge for the Café con la Comunidad planning team – how do

we create an atmosphere of trust and safety to learn of the needs of the Latino/Hispanic community, and how best to service them?

Furthermore, aside from its distrust in government, Chesterfield, like many other jurisdictions, has a Latino/Hispanic population that remains very elusive. They simply do not have an interest in government because they are either too busy trying to survive or because of their documentation status and not wanting to risk deportation.

With months leading up to the 2024 General Election, this work would only grow more challenging as rhetoric and campaign promises targeting this community would grow.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

The event was designed to engage and educate Chesterfield's rapidly growing, monolingual Spanish-speaking population by providing immediate access to elected officials, key administrators, agencies and other resources available to them.

CMS was strategic in making this event inviting and trustworthy. It had to be a celebration of culture, an educational opportunity, and a chance to engage with county leadership. A first of its kind for the county/region, Café con la Comunidad captured the original tenets the planning team wanted to accomplish.

With the assistance of CER, CMS held several meetings prior to the event with the Latino Advisory Council. Beulah Recreational Center, located in the heart of the largest concentration of Latino/Hispanic families, was selected to host.

CMS also created a Café con la Comunidad brand, incorporating bright colors and Spanish design elements and fonts remanent of being in an Abuela's home cocina. The logo and design elements would be used on posters, fliers, postcards, t-shirts, and media releases to brand the campaign.

Café con la Comunidad was designed to allow native, monolingual Spanish speakers to meet and ask questions to county leaders and administrators. To show our commitment to informing this segment of the population, presentations and introductions were spoken in Spanish, with non-Spanish-speaking staff using translation headsets, provided by Latinos in Virginia Empowerment Center, in order to hear questions and responses in English.

Aside from an informal question-and-answer session, Café con la Comunidad also featured staff from several county departments including Social Services, Fire and EMS, Libraries, Police, Parks and Recreation, Mental Health, and many more.

Each information table included a Spanish-speaking representative and bilingual material to help further immerse and engage the community.

The planning team incorporated several grassroot elements into the strategic communications plan to help advertise the event, including:

- Posters/fliers with QR codes disseminated by Latino Advisory members and placed in the community.
- A calendar website for pre-registration, including a video of prominent Latino community members and Board of Supervisor leaders encouraging residents to participate which was shot in Spanish with English subtitles.
- A template of drafted social media posts in Spanish.

- A Spanish news release shared with Spanish-speaking media.

CMS wanted Café con la Comunidad to be a fiesta of culture and information. To achieve this, a popular Latino DJ was hired, Latin deserts were provided, a kid's zone was available (with childcare), and a Latin-based food truck was on hand.

As word spread, local businesses and community leaders reached out to inquire about ways to advertise and contribute.

The culmination of months of grassroots communications and planning began to materialize and when doors opened on Aug. 27, 2024, everyone was pleasantly surprised by the turnout.

THE COST OF THE PROGRAM

The Communications and Media Division spent \$1,000 on this event for t-shirts that were purchased from a local Latino business to keep in line with our mission for the event. The Community Engagement and Resources Department spent \$2,796 on printing, giveaway totes, décor, food and drinks. A portion of the food and drink was donated by local Latino business.

The remaining communication tenets of the program were conducted in-house at no cost, which includes:

- Designs for posters, fliers, signage and stickers
- News release and social media development
- Promotion and media relations

Staff Time	Staff time from all relevant departments is given at no charge
Audio/Video Equipment	No additional cost as already have the equipment
Design Materials	\$0
Event t-shirts	\$1,000
Printing costs, décor, food/drink	\$2,796
Promotion/Media Relations	\$0, all earned media
Total	\$3,796

THE RESULTS/SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM

More than 150, mostly monolingual Spanish-speaking residents, attended the first ever Café con la Comunidad – wildly exceeding expectations for an inaugural event. In fact, the event was so popular, county staff was rushing to add more chairs to provide seating as more residents poured into the event.

Aside from the high participation, the planning team was able to quickly determine several themes during the Q-and-A session that would lend itself to a series of future Café con la Comunidad events:

- Navigating how to establish and grow a business and finding
- Public Safety
- Education and public-school curriculum
- Finding affordable housing and tenant rights in Virginia

The planning team is working closely with the Emergency Management Department to establish an emergency communications plan for monolingual, non-English speaking communities after participating in Café con la Comunidad. As part of that communications plan, CMS will target community leaders and grassroots organizers to help share emergency information to people, much like how CMS is able to send information through the Latino Advisory Council.

The event has also opened doorways for residents to further engage with staff about their needs after several departments present were able to exchange contact information with our residents – with many reaching groups who would otherwise have a difficult time communicating their needs in English.

There has also been a noticeable shift in the type of information we print, post and share through our various platforms, with several departments vowing to make their materials bilingual.

In April 2025, we held the second Café con la Comunidad which focused on starting and growing a small business in the county along with finding employment opportunities. It showcased several free resources/programs offered in Chesterfield related to starting a business or find employment in our county, including:

- Chesterfield Economic Development Authority
- Chesterfield Planning & Zoning Department
- Chesterfield Community Enhancement
- Virginia Career Works

INNOVATION

Since first launching Chesterfield Café con la Comunidad, Chesterfield has received several accolades from regional communications partners and the community about the successful implementation of the event. Several municipalities have also reached out inquiring ways they could implement such a program that engaged their Latino/Hispanic population.

We are also learning and finding other ways to engage the Latino/Hispanic community through similar efforts and are growing more inclusionary of the needs of this population.

Furthermore, when several jurisdictions have opted to hinder public methods of engaging its Latino/Hispanic population in an engaging and inviting environment, Chesterfield, without question, embraced this challenge in a tactful and masterful way – becoming an example to other local governments.

Supplemental Materials (Optional)

Media Stories:

- **‘For Latinos, by Latinos’: Chesterfield bridging connections with Spanish-speaking families through ‘Cafe con la Comunidad’ – NBC 12 (Aug. 20, 2024)**

<https://www.12onyourside.com/2024/08/20/latinos-by-latinos-chesterfield-bridging-connections-with-spanish-speaking-families-through-cafe-con-la-comunidad/>

- **Hundreds attend Chesterfield’s first ‘Cafe Con La Comunidad’ – NBC 12 (Aug. 27, 2024)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vyxv9cUjilc>

- How Chesterfield County is reaching out to its large and growing Spanish-speaking community – CBS 6 (Aug. 27, 2024)

<https://www.wtvr.com/news/local-news/chesterfield-county-spanish-speaking-community-aug-27-2024>

- Town hall connects Spanish speakers with Chesterfield County resources – Richmond Times-Dispatch (Aug. 30, 2024)

https://richmond.com/news/local/article_5f479e2a-58ce-11ef-ac25-2f42436a4d74.html

- Chesterfield launches meeting series for native Spanish speakers – Virginia Public Media (Sept. 5, 2024)

<https://www.vpm.org/news/2024-09-05/chesterfield-launches-meeting-series-for-native-spanish-speakers>

- Chesterfield County Champions Central Virginia's First-Ever Monolingual Community Meeting for Spanish-Speakers – Virginia Association of Counties [Pages 13-14] (Oct. 5, 2024)

<https://www.vaco.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/connections100124.pdf>

Promotion Videos

Café con la Comunidad Mixed Language Promo - <https://youtu.be/jf7rM9CFCRA>

Café con la Comunidad Spanish Promo - <https://youtu.be/rH-nl1VOTB4>

Chesterfield Café con la Comunidad (Spanish version) -

<https://youtu.be/Eh7sq2ZUiRY>

Chesterfield Café con Comunidad - <https://youtu.be/L92h4X1axQc>

News Release: <https://www.chesterfield.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=5137&ARC=12487>

Blog: <https://www.chesterfield.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=5172>

Photos from event: <https://chesterfield.canto.com/b/QF129>