



## 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](#).

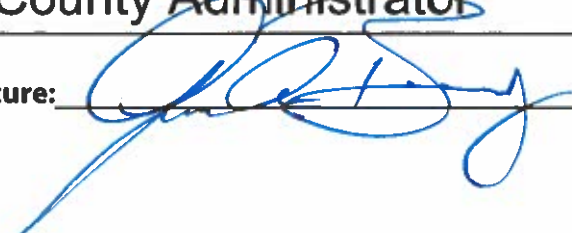
### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Hanover County  
Program Title: Strategic Planning and Citizen Engagement  
Program Category: Organizational Development

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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

Name: John Budesky  
Title: County Administrator  
Signature: 

Hanover County, located in central Virginia within the Richmond Metropolitan Area, spans approximately 474 square miles and serves a population of nearly 110,000 residents, according to the 2020 Census. While the County has a defined suburban area, it remains predominantly rural in character. Guided by the Board of Supervisors and County Administration, Hanover has made government transparency and community engagement a core priority in its policies and service delivery. Hanover County's organizational values of transparency and community engagement are no more prevalent than in the development of the County's strategic plan.



### **Strategic Plan Overview**

Hanover County's FY2024-FY2028 Strategic Plan is a comprehensive and robust organizational plan that not only transparently communicates the County's priorities but also clearly identifies the key steps (initiatives) that departments will undertake to meet the County's defined organizational goals. The fundamental role of an organizational strategic plan is to provide a roadmap for the locality to ensure that government agencies continue being effective, efficient, and responsive to the needs of the

communities they serve. A good strategic plan is more than just developing a mission or vision statement. Rather, it's about translating a community's vision into actionable steps through prudent planning, continuous improvement and performance measurement.

The primary goals for the development of Hanover's strategic plan were to:

- Modernize and update the County's previous strategic plan, developed in 2018, which at the time focused only on outlining the County's goals, strategies and objectives. It did not provide specific tasks or initiatives that County departments would undertake to accomplish organizational goals.
- Review and develop updated priorities and objectives of the current Board of Supervisors
- Obtain and incorporate department staff input on key initiatives
- Obtain and incorporate citizen input on the strategic plan
- Develop metrics that would determine whether the County was successful in achieving its organizational goals and objectives

With the adoption of Hanover County's strategic plan, the Board of Supervisors and County departments have a clear and concise picture of the organization's goals and priorities. The plan also serves as a "roadmap," demonstrating how the County intends to accomplish its goals.

This submission provides an overview of the County's strategic plan, notably the development process, with an emphasis on the collection, contribution and incorporation of input from both citizens and local elected officials, and how this feedback was incorporated into the final, adopted plan.

#### **How Program Fulfills Awards Criteria**

The development of a local government strategic plan is not a novel idea. Rather, it's a best management practice for local public organizations to create and utilize one. The development of

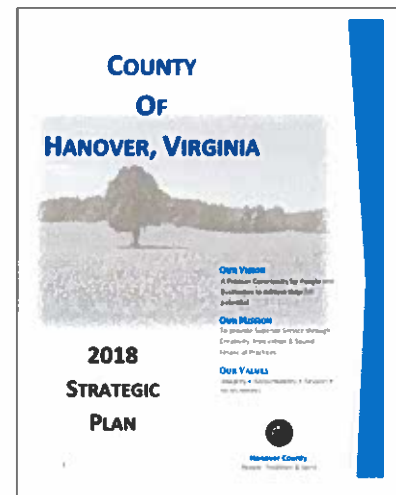
Hanover County's strategic plan is unique in that it was designed with the community in mind. Notably, the development of the plan included a citizen engagement process that sought to obtain, assess and incorporate feedback on the plan before legislative approval. Hanover's development and adoption of the strategic plan is worthy of an achievement award not only because of its profound impact on staff and the organization as a whole, but also because it serves as a model that other local governments can learn from and implement, particularly how it incorporates engagement and feedback into the planning process.

### Development of the Strategic Plan

Local government strategic planning is the process through which elected officials define a future vision for the community, while administrative staff develop the strategies to achieve that vision. In 2021, Hanover County was utilizing a nine-page 2018 version of its strategic plan, which was difficult to find online. The plan identified the County's vision, mission, tagline and organizational values as well as six strategic focus areas – with limited descriptions of each – and brief bulleted goals, strategies and objectives in each strategic focus area.

In 2021, the County Administrator tasked the Deputy County Administrator with overhauling and updating the County's strategic plan with the following goals:

- Increase transparency
- Clearly communicate the specific steps departments would take to accomplish priority area goals
- Provide clear definitions of key terms and actionable steps



- Incorporate input from departmental staff on specific and actionable initiatives to be undertaken
- Gather and reflect feedback from citizens

The multi-year update to the County’s strategic plan entailed numerous steps, including multiple reviews and feedback loops. It started with a review of the Board of Supervisors’ verbalized priorities, which were discussed during a retreat. These topics were categorized by focus area and were generally broad in nature. This data, however, provided tremendous feedback and was used as the foundation for the update to the 2018 strategic plan. Next, was a review of the 2018 plan, which was conducted in concert with the Board’s recent listing of priorities, to determine which elements of that plan would remain or be considered for elimination in the new plan. Additionally, this review highlighted several areas that needed to be expounded upon in the future update. For example, the mission, vision, organizational values and the six strategic focus areas were carried forward from the former plan. However, this review also identified the need for numerous and significant updates and additions, including:

- A review and realignment of all existing strategies and objectives within each focus area
- The creation of new strategies and objectives, and the removal of those no longer applicable
- The development of at least 10 strategic initiatives within each focus area, resulting in the development of over 60 new initiatives in the updated strategic plan.
  - Each initiative was:
    - Aligned with one or more strategies and objectives
    - Provided a general description that explained the initiative to include the responsible department(s) tasked with accomplishing the initiative

- Provided actionable step(s), performance metric(s), as well as a timeline over the next five years
- A review of the County's mission, vision and values. As appropriate, more context (more thorough description) were added for each of the County's four organizational values
- A review of the County's tagline and additional context
- Collaboration with Schools to develop the education focus area within the County's strategic plan to ensure the County's strategic plan is aligned with the Schools' strategic plan.
- Addition of an introduction to the strategic plan section
- Addition of goal statements for each of the six focus areas
- Addition of a detailed overview of each of the six focus areas
- Addition of a key performance indicator section that outlines key metrics and targets used to determine overall success in each of the focus areas

These steps took over a year to develop and resulted in a first formal draft. Once the draft was completed, a workshop was held with the Board of Supervisors to review and determine alignment with their priorities, respond to questions, modify nomenclature, etc. Feedback from the Board was incorporated into the draft plan. To enhance transparency and ensure the plan reflected community priorities, both the Board and County Administration aimed to share the draft plan with residents and solicit their feedback on the entire plan.

### **Citizen Engagement and Feedback**

To engage the community on the strategic plan, our Communications and Community Engagement Department posted several notifications on the County's social media accounts, bringing awareness to the draft strategic plan and informing the public of the County's efforts to obtain residents' feedback. The County Administrator reiterated the County's desire for citizen input during Board of

Supervisor public meetings. Residents had an opportunity to review the draft of the plan on a dedicated website, which included a form to provide feedback, as well as their name, contact information and magisterial district. Residents could also provide their input via email to County staff or share their views on the plan during citizen's time at Board meetings. A two-month time frame was allocated for the collection of citizen feedback to ensure they had sufficient time to review the extensive plan and provide their input.

More than 120 citizen responses were received during the two-month engagement period. Each response was reviewed to determine whether it offered general comments, such as support for or opposition to the overall plan or specific terminology or provided concrete suggestions for edits. All feedback containing specific recommendations was carefully evaluated, and several suggestions led to slight revisions in the final draft of the plan.

**HANOVER COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS'**  
**COMMUNITY STATEMENT**

Hanover County is a diverse community and employer that is respectful and inclusive of all perspectives. We embrace innovation with innovation and provide exceptional service that sets this great place to life.

**HANOVER COUNTY'S**  
**COMMITMENT TO ALL**

All signifies including or involving everyone from a range of different and multiple backgrounds including race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, national origin, geographic location, political affiliation, socio-economic status, language, physical ability, etc.

**PEOPLE**  
Residents are the heart of Hanover County. And we exist to serve the residents. We embrace the diversity of our community, and respect and promote opportunities for all of our residents, visitors, and co-workers. We are able to achieve our goals through a dedicated and skilled workforce. We have communities where residents feel safe and are physically and socially connected to one another. Residents have ownership of the community and actively participate in citizen involvement opportunities.

**TRADITION**  
All residents reside in a welcoming and thriving County that embraces and builds on its history but also focuses on its future through innovation and creativity. Both residents and visitors have opportunities to learn, be inspired by, and enjoy the community's arts, cultural, and recreational activities. The provision of quality local government services, strong financial management, and the tradition of being a well-run organization continue to remain hallmarks of this community.

**SPIRIT**  
Hanover County is led by a spirit of public service to provide effective local government services with integrity and high ethical standards for all residents and visitors. We aim to provide exceptional customer service and maintain efficient processes through creativity and innovation.

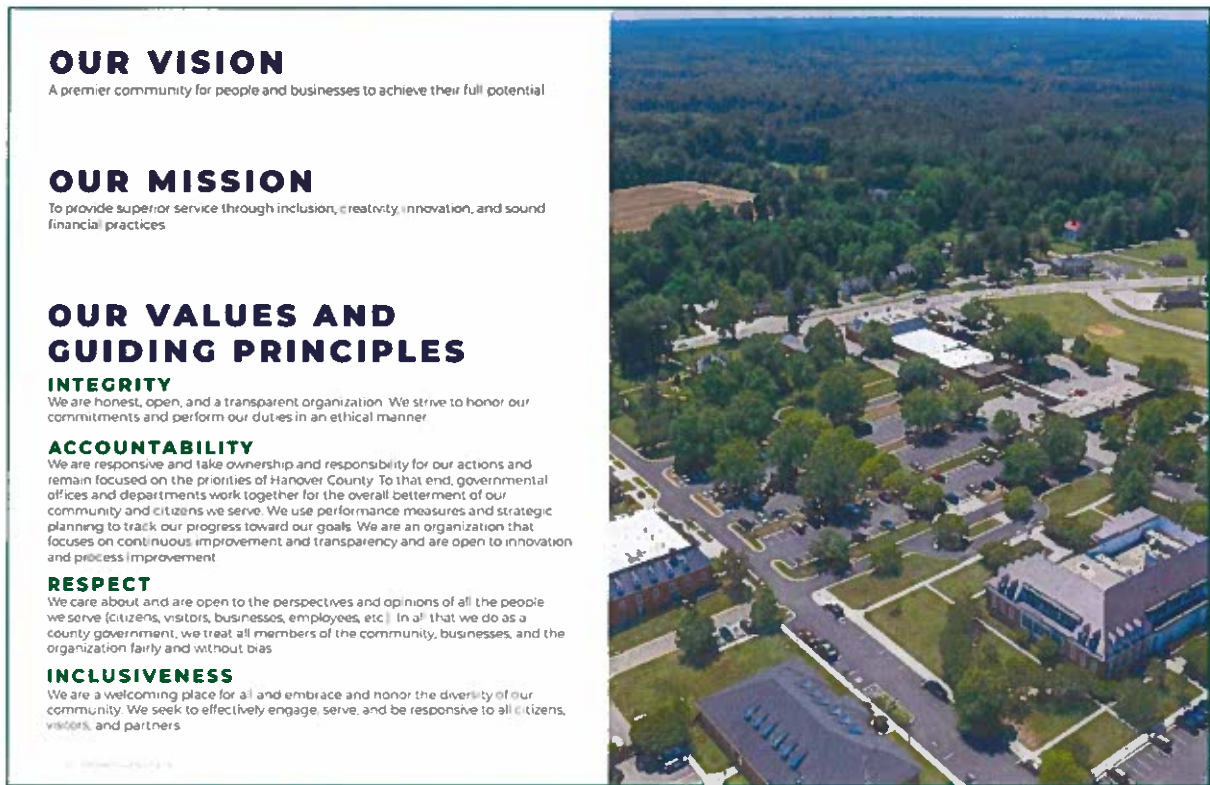
## **Program Results**

The results of much of the citizen feedback were incorporated into the final draft of the strategic plan. A summary of citizen feedback was tabulated and summarized for the Board of Supervisors. The County and Deputy County Administrator met with all Board members to review all feedback in addition to the recommended edits that were to be included in the final draft of the strategic plan. During these meetings, all citizen feedback, as well as additional administrative edits, were reviewed with Board members to obtain their input and comments. At the conclusion of these meetings, all Board members were satisfied with the final proposed revisions to the draft plan. A final, updated strategic plan was then developed and prepared for final Board approval, which included a red-lined version of the updated draft plan. This red-lined version of the draft strategic plan easily and clearly showed the recommended edits to the draft plan. Finally, this updated red-lined version of the draft plan was submitted as part of the Board's legislative agenda packet, which was also available to the public. At the February 2023 Board meeting, the FY2022-FY2026 was adopted unanimously.

In November 2023, three new members were elected to the Board of Supervisors. In the spring of 2024, a Board workshop was held, during which the strategic plan was reviewed to ensure the new members supported the plan. The process for developing the plan was reviewed, along with each of the priority areas, goals, objectives and initiatives, as well as the plan development process, which highlighted the collection and incorporation of citizen feedback. The Board's feedback resulted in a newly updated proposed plan. County Administration produced a redlined version of the draft plan in the early fall, showing the Board's recommended edits. In October 2024, the Board unanimously approved an updated FY2024-FY2026 Strategic Plan!

The focus on obtaining residents' input was critical, not only to ensure the County addressed citizen priorities, but also to support the broader goal of increasing public involvement in local

government. By contributing to the vision for their community, residents helped determine which services the County should provide and what priorities it should pursue over the next five years.



**OUR VISION**  
A premier community for people and businesses to achieve their full potential

**OUR MISSION**  
To provide superior service through inclusion, creativity, innovation, and sound financial practices

**OUR VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

**INTEGRITY**  
We are honest, open, and a transparent organization. We strive to honor our commitments and perform our duties in an ethical manner.

**ACCOUNTABILITY**  
We are responsive and take ownership and responsibility for our actions and remain focused on the priorities of Hanover County. To that end, governmental offices and departments work together for the overall betterment of our community and citizens we serve. We use performance measures and strategic planning to track our progress toward our goals. We are an organization that focuses on continuous improvement and transparency and are open to innovation and process improvement.

**RESPECT**  
We care about and are open to the perspectives and opinions of all the people we serve (citizens, visitors, businesses, employees, etc.). In all that we do as a county government, we treat all members of the community, businesses, and the organization fairly and without bias.

**INCLUSIVENESS**  
We are a welcoming place for all and embrace and honor the diversity of our community. We seek to effectively engage, serve, and be responsive to all citizens, visitors, and partners.

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## Conclusion and Executive Summary

A strategic plan is a powerful tool for local governments. It ensures that the priorities set by the Board of Supervisors are reflected in the organization's goals, that clear strategies, objectives and initiatives are developed to achieve those goals, and that the county government remains accountable for meeting the needs of the community. Additionally, strategic plans can be used to assist local governments in making complex financial decisions and navigate challenging times. Tantamount to any well-managed professional organization is the development of a strategic plan that is used to guide business decisions and how the County and its employees perform its responsibilities.

Hanover's FY2022-FY2026 strategic plan, as well as the updated FY2024-FY2028 plan, provide governing officials, administrative staff and other employees foundational principles as well as a roadmap for how the government will accomplish its goals and objectives. To further enhance the relevance and applicability of the strategic plan, County officials sought out and obtained community feedback to ensure we were meeting the needs of the community. This process resulted in several revisions to the plan. This process helped build community support for the County's intended direction. The final adopted strategic plan not only overhauls and expands upon the 2018 version but also serves as a clear guide for how the County can achieve long-term success.

In conclusion, Hanover County's development of a five-year strategic plan is worthy of a VACO achievement award because it achieved three goals:

1. The County now has a focused roadmap for the accomplishment of organizational goals and priorities, which is supported by the Board of Supervisors and the citizenry.
2. The plan was based on and guided by citizen feedback and participation – a hallmark of democratic governance.
3. The inclusion of a citizen engagement process, and the careful review and evaluation of community feedback, offers a model that other localities can follow in developing their own plans.

The final strategic plan can be found on the County's website here:

<https://www.hanovercounty.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2829/Hanover-County-FY24---FY28-Strategic-Plan>