



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: Henrico County, Virginia
Program Title: The Career Mega Sale: Zero Percent Down and It Will Pay You
Program Category: Community Development, Economic Development and Land Use

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Beverly Cocke
Title: Administrative Coordinator of Workforce Development
Department: Henrico County Public Schools Department of Workforce & Career Development
Telephone: 804-514-0044 **Website:** _____
Email: blcocke@henrico.k12.va.us

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Eileen Cox
Title: Chief of Communications, Henrico County Public Schools
Signature: Eileen M. Cox

1. Summary

Henrico County Public Schools is committed to preparing all students for success, whether they go on to college, the military or the workforce. The school division refers to this as being “enrolled, enlisted and/or employed.” But what about the adults in the community as well as those enrolled in HCPS adult education programs? The division found a creative way to engage with the community and bring potential employers to them. Recognizing the needs of the adults in the Richmond region, including those enrolled in HCPS adult education programs, HCPS created the “Career Mega Sale.” In March 2024, the inaugural edition of this innovative hiring event brought together more than 50 local employers, offering adults the opportunity to connect with potential employers and explore career paths. More than 300 area adults, as well as 150 interested high school seniors, participated in the three-hour job fair. Some attendees were ready for a career makeover while others were deciding on their first career path. The Career Mega Sale provides a unique platform for attendees to “shop for their futures,” fostering connections that can lead to meaningful employment and contribute to the economic vitality of the community.

2. The Problem or Need for the Program

Henrico County Public Schools' Department of Workforce and Career Development recognizes the critical need for skilled workers in today's economy. With millions of job openings across the nation, employers are actively seeking qualified candidates. The department collaborates closely with numerous partners, including local businesses, the Henrico Economic Development Authority, ChamberRVA and Virginia Career Works, to

address this growing need. Through these partnerships, the department consistently hears from employers expressing their urgent need for qualified employees. To effectively connect regional employers with potential candidates within the community, the department created the Career Mega Sale. This innovative event provides a centralized way for local businesses to gather resumes, conduct on-site interviews and build valuable relationships with prospective employees.

3. Description of the Program

Henrico County Public Schools' Career Mega Sale emerged as a groundbreaking initiative, addressing the critical need for accessible employment opportunities in the community. To address the evolving demands of the 21st-century workforce and increasing gap between available skills and employer needs, this event aims to bridge this divide by connecting job-seekers with a diverse range of local employers.

This innovative career fair was specifically designed to serve a broad spectrum of people, including:

- **Community adults** seeking employment opportunities, regardless of their prior experience or educational background, as well as those seeking career advancement or a change in career direction.
- **Adult education students** seeking to enhance their skills and gain valuable work experience, who need a path to employment.
- **Graduating high school seniors** who need guidance and support as they move from high school to the workforce.

Employers were invited to participate in the Career Mega Sale based on the variety of entry-level and skilled labor jobs they had available. The department expected community attendees to come with diverse skills and backgrounds. Organizers also wanted to have a variety of career paths represented. Each employer was assigned a 6-foot-long table with two chairs and provided with a business table-tent card. Businesses were asked to bring a tablecloth along with their table display. Since this was a hiring event, there were designated areas for interviewing potential employees.

To maximize the potential for success, the Career Mega Sale emphasized preparation and professionalism. Attendees were encouraged to bring multiple copies of their updated resumes, dress professionally to make a positive first impression and be prepared to participate in on-site interviews with potential employers. This emphasis on preparation ensured that job-seekers were well-equipped to present themselves effectively and increase their chances of securing employment.

The strategic selection of the venue played a crucial role in the event's success. The Career Mega Sale was held at the Adult Education Center at Regency, a unique 48,000-square-foot facility housed on the lower level of a repurposed shopping mall. This location offered several key advantages:

- **Central location:** Easily accessible for job seekers from across the Richmond region, minimizing transportation barriers for potential attendees.
- **Proximity to public transportation:** Ensuring accessibility for those without personal vehicles, promoting inclusivity and broadening participation.

- **Service to a growing newcomer population:** The Adult Education Center at Regency serves a diverse population, including many newcomers to the area. The Career Mega Sale was a valuable resource for these individuals, offering them access to employment opportunities and supporting their integration into the local community.
- **Contribution to community revitalization:** By using the Adult Education Center at Regency, the event contributed to the hub of community outreach programming envisioned in the newly renovated mall space.

To ensure widespread awareness and attract a large turnout, the Career Mega Sale was extensively promoted through a multifaceted approach:

- **Social media campaigns:** Organizers used the power of social media platforms to reach a wide audience and generate excitement. Participating businesses were provided with event graphics to use on their social media accounts, adding to consistency and public awareness.
- **Local media coverage:** An interview on the local WWBT NBC12 morning show featured the event and there was coverage in community news publications such as the Henrico Citizen newspaper.
- **Television commercials:** Targeted TV advertising campaigns increased visibility and helped reach potential attendees.

This comprehensive promotional strategy effectively communicated the event's purpose, target audience and benefits to a broad segment of the community, resulting in significant interest and participation.

As with most new events, organizers were unsure what attendance would be when the doors opened. However, it did not take long to realize the Career Mega Sale was filling a void for the community as a 50-person line formed outside before the event commenced. With hundreds in attendance, the Career Mega Sale proved to be highly successful, filling a critical need within the community by connecting job seekers with a diverse range of employment opportunities. The event not only provided a valuable platform for people to explore career paths and connect with potential employers but may also contribute to the economic vitality of the region by strengthening the local workforce and supporting business growth.

The Career Mega Sale also demonstrated a commitment to equity and inclusion by ensuring accessibility for all participants. The event was strategically located at the Adult Education Center at Regency, a facility that serves a diverse population, including individuals from historically marginalized communities. By providing transportation assistance and interpreter services, the event ensured that individuals from all backgrounds had equal access to these valuable employment opportunities.

In summary, the Career Mega Sale emerged as a model initiative, effectively addressing the critical need for accessible community employment opportunities. By combining a strategic approach with comprehensive promotion, the event successfully

connected adult job seekers with local employers, contributing significantly to the economic vitality of the region while promoting equity and inclusivity for all participants.

The Career Mega Sale served as a testament to the power of collaboration and community engagement in addressing critical workforce development challenges.

4. Responding to Economic Downturn

The Career Mega Sale played an important role in mitigating the impact of economic downturns by directly addressing the growing skills gap and connecting job seekers with in-demand opportunities. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the nation's economy has a skilled labor shortage of more than 7 million unfilled jobs. In Henrico County, there are nearly 9,000 openings. The event served as a vital bridge between local businesses facing labor shortages and a diverse pool of qualified candidates. By bringing together employers from sectors experiencing high demand, such as health care, technology, trades and human services, the Career Mega Sale provided a platform for direct interaction and facilitated the recruitment of skilled workers.

The event also fostered a collaborative approach to workforce development. Many participating employers demonstrated a commitment to investing in their newly hired employees by offering opportunities for continued education and apprenticeships. This not only filled immediate employment needs but also equipped people with valuable skills and long-term career paths, ultimately strengthening the local workforce and contributing to Henrico's economic growth and stability.

5. Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Career Mega Sale actively promoted equity and inclusion by ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for all participants. The decision to hold the event at the Adult Education Center at Regency was partly a response to diverse community needs, including the need to attract students from historically marginalized and under-represented backgrounds, as well as multilingual learners. This centrally located HCPS Adult Education Center campus serves adults who live in an eight-locality region, including Henrico County. The campus is also easily accessible from much of the Richmond region via GRTC's fare-free transit system.

To further enhance accessibility, the event was free and open to the public. Flyers were distributed to students, including those in English-language learner programs. The Career Mega Sale was advertised on local media, including television. Organizers also reached out to community organizations whose populations might benefit from attending. Several nonprofits provided transportation and offered interpreters as well, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of background or language proficiency, had the opportunity to participate and benefit.

6. The Cost of the Program

The Career Mega Sale was conducted with exceptional cost-effectiveness. Using existing resources, such as the tables and chairs at the Adult Education Center at Regency, significantly reduced expenses. Security was provided by school resource officers and mall security, further minimizing costs. HCPS staff members generously

volunteered their time and expertise to ensure the event's success. The Henrico Education Foundation, a nonprofit that supports the school division, provided crucial help by funding reduced rates for television advertising. HCPS provided transportation for students from participating high schools and Henrico County Public Schools' three Advanced Career Education Centers. The students from the ACE Center graphic communications program produced the printing at minimal expense, which cost less than \$300 for the entire event. This demonstrates the event's ability to achieve significant results with minimal financial investment.

7. The Results/Success of the Program

The results of the Career Mega Sale exceeded expectations by bringing together hundreds of community members and employers and providing a place for people to share their resumes and conduct interviews. The goal of offering a comfortable place for the community to learn about local employers and apply onsite was reached. During the three-hour event, 310 community adults participated, as well as 152 high school students. Seniors attended from each of HCPS' nine comprehensive high schools. They included students seeking employment after graduation and students seeking part-time work while they attended colleges and trade programs.

From the employer feedback survey, organizers learned that 100% of participating businesses found the event to be helpful or very helpful. Eighty-eight percent said they met several potential employees from the event, and 13% said they met 10 or more people they wanted to hire. Lastly, 100% said they were interested in participating in

future Career Mega Sale events at the Adult Ed Center at Regency. Because of the positive response, the Department of Workforce and Career Development held the second Career Mega Sale in March 2025.

8. Worthiness of Award

The Career Mega Sale deserves recognition for its significant effects on the community. This innovative job fair provided a unique, accessible platform for job-seekers to connect with local employers in a “one-stop shop” atmosphere. By creatively using the former mall space, the event transformed the shopping experience into a “shop for your future” environment, making it both inviting and memorable.

The Career Mega Sale focused strategically on connecting key stakeholder groups — including adult learners and high school seniors — with employers offering a diverse range of entry-level and skilled positions. The event streamlined the hiring process, facilitating direct interaction between job seekers and those seeking to hire staff.

The overwhelmingly positive feedback from both participants and employers speaks volumes about the event's success. The community expressed deep appreciation for Henrico County Public Schools for creating this valuable opportunity and providing a platform where individuals could take the first step towards their future career success.

9. Supplemental Materials

The Career Mega Sale: Zero Percent Down and It Will Pay You
Henrico County, Virginia
Page 11



Career Mega Sale Highlights:

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

Media Coverage:

<https://www.12onthiside.com/video/2024/03/19/career-mega-sale-march-25-11-am-2-pm-henrico-adult-education-center-regency/>

<https://www.wric.com/news/local-news/henrico-county/henrico-county-public-schools-to-host-career-mega-sale-for-job-seekers/>

<https://www.henricocitizen.com/henrico-schools-to-host-career-mega-sale-job-fair-march-26/>

Henrico CTE Now Podcast:

<https://creators.spotify.com/pod/show/henrico-cte/episodes/Henrico-CTE-Now-Mega-Career-Sale-Event--Season-6--Episode-6-e2i623g>