



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: Saluting Our Future: Celebrating Military Commitment

Program Category: Health and Human Services

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

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1. Summary

Henrico County Public Schools organized a new Military Commitment Celebration to recognize students who had committed to military service after graduation. The students had made commitments by enlisting, joining a Reserve Officer Training Corps program or accepting a spot at a military academy. These students' commitments are often overlooked during graduation ceremonies and the event was created to recognize their civic and military commitment. The celebration featured a formal dinner, a guest speaker and a ceremonial oath of commitment. The event was attended by about 150 people, including the students, their families, school staff members and community leaders. The program's goals align with the Virginia Department of Education's "three E's framework" ensuring that students graduate prepared to be enlisted, enrolled and/or employed — emphasizing paths to successful postgraduation outcomes. The event was possible through a collaboration of school counselors, JROTC instructors, students from the Advanced Career and Education Center at Hermitage culinary and hospitality programs and the HCPS Department of Workforce and Career Development. Twenty-six students were honored, marking the first time that Henrico County organized such a comprehensive celebration for military commitments. The event's budget of \$2,500 helped cover dinner, decorations and other expenses, ensuring a memorable experience for all attendees.

2. The Problem or Need for the Program

In Henrico County, students who commit to military service after graduation often receive little recognition, despite the significance of their decision. Typically, their commitment is acknowledged only with a brief round of applause during graduation ceremonies. This lack of recognition for military-bound students was an inadequate recognition of their achievements and ambitions. Henrico County Public Schools recognized the need to provide a more substantial

and meaningful acknowledgment of these students' military commitments. By creating the HCPS Military Commitment Celebration, HCPS aimed to address this gap and ensure that these students receive the respect and recognition they deserve. The initiative aligns with the Virginia Department of Education's "three E's framework" ensuring that students graduate prepared to be enlisted, enrolled and/or employed.

3. Description of the Program

The HCPS Military Commitment Celebration was conceived to address the lack of recognition at the division level for Henrico County students who choose military paths after high school. The event aimed to give these students a proper celebration of their commitment, marking a pivotal moment in their lives, publicly recognizing students who had committed to military service, whether by enlisting, enrolling in an ROTC program at a university or deciding to attend a military academy.

Program Development and Implementation

The program's development began by identifying students who had made military commitments. School counselors played a key role in identifying and reaching out to these students, ensuring that those who were eligible for recognition were invited to the event. To make the celebration more meaningful, JROTC instructors were enlisted to provide a color guard and identify an appropriate guest speaker who could inspire the students and their families. The event was further enriched by the participation of students from the culinary and hospitality programs at the Advanced Career and Education Center at Hermitage, who took charge of organizing and preparing dinner for the attendees. This collaboration ensured that the event not only recognized the students but also engaged multiple parts of the school community.

Event Details and Implementation Timeline

The celebration was held as a formal event, with an emphasis on creating an atmosphere of respect and recognition for the students. The formal dinner enabled students to celebrate with their families, friends and community members. The highlight of the evening was a ceremonial oath of commitment, where each student reaffirmed their dedication to military service. This ceremonial moment was paired with speeches from the guest speaker, who shared words of encouragement and highlighted the importance of military service in the context of civic duty and national security.

Planning for the event took place over several months. Initial planning began in the fall, with school counselors identifying students in the winter months. Collaboration with JROTC instructors and HCPS culinary and hospitality programs began in early spring to ensure that logistics for the event, such as the guest speaker, color guard, meal preparation and venue setup, were thoroughly planned and executed. The event itself took place toward the end of the academic year, shortly before the school division's high school graduation ceremonies.

Key Participants and Their Roles

The success of the program relied heavily on the collaboration of various stakeholders. School counselors were instrumental in identifying eligible students and ensuring they received invitations to the celebration. They also played a vital role in promoting the event and encouraging student participation. JROTC instructors, who have a deep connection to military values, helped elevate the event by identifying an inspiring guest speaker and providing a color guard to give the event a formal and respectful tone. Students enrolled in the culinary and hospitality programs at the HCPS Advanced Career and Education Center at Hermitage contributed significantly by organizing the dinner and creating a memorable dining experience for the attendees.

HCPS' Department of Workforce and Career Development was the primary sponsor of the event, providing the financial support needed to host the celebration. The department worked closely with school staff to ensure that the event aligned with the school division's broader goals of workforce development and career-readiness. The collaboration among these diverse groups showcased the division's commitment to providing students with comprehensive support and recognition, no matter their postgraduation path.

Program Goals and Outcomes

The goal of the HCPS Military Commitment Celebration was to provide a platform for students to be celebrated for their military commitments, creating a sense of pride and recognition for their decision to serve. The event helped students feel honored for their dedication and helped celebrate their achievements with family, friends and community members. By doing so, the division reinforced the idea that military service is a respected and valued path for young adults. The event also fostered a greater sense of community involvement, bringing together various groups from Henrico County Public Schools and the broader community. It demonstrated the power of collaboration, as stakeholders from different sectors worked together to create an event that had lasting significance for both the students and their families.

4. The Cost of the Program

The total budget for the HCPS Military Commitment Celebration was \$2,500, which covered dinner, decorations and other event-related expenses. A significant portion of the budget was allocated to the meal, ensuring that the 150 attendees enjoyed a formal dinner that reflected the importance of the occasion. The event's decor was also important for creating a formal atmosphere. This required funds for table settings, centerpieces and other aesthetic touches that contributed to the event's dignified tone.

There were no costs associated with the guest speaker, color guard or the ceremonial oath of commitment, as these elements were provided by the JROTC instructors and other community volunteers. While the cost of the event was relatively modest at \$2,500, replicating the program elsewhere would require similar budgeting for dinner, decorations and ceremonial items. However, costs could be adjusted based on the size and scope of the event and partnerships with local employers or schools could help reduce expenses.

5. The Results/Success of the Program

The HCPS Military Commitment Celebration was a tremendous success in recognizing Henrico County Public Schools students who had committed to military service after graduation. Twenty-six students were honored at the event and the feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive. Students, their families and community leaders expressed deep appreciation for the event, which provided a respectful space to acknowledge the students' important decisions. One of the most powerful aspects of the program was the ceremonial oath of commitment, where each student reaffirmed his or her pledge to serve in the military. The moment not only highlighted the significance of their decisions but also underscored the community's support for their service. Students expressed feelings of pride and honor by the recognition.

The collaboration among school counselors, JROTC instructors and the HCPS culinary and hospitality programs was another notable success. By working together, these groups ensured that the event ran smoothly and provided a high quality experience for all attendees. The collaboration also showcased the school division's commitment to supporting students across all post-graduation paths, whether military, academic, or professional.

The event also served as a model for future celebrations of military commitment, offering a clear template for how HCPS can continue to recognize the achievements of students who choose to commit to the military. The program's success has prompted discussions about expanding

similar recognition efforts for other career paths, helping to reinforce the school division's commitment to preparing students for diverse futures.

6. Worthiness of Award (Approximately ¼ to ½ page or 175 words: justify why program should be awarded an achievement award)

In the past, Henrico County students who commit to military service after graduation often receive little recognition, despite the significance of their decision. Henrico County Public Schools recognized the need to provide a unique, substantial and meaningful acknowledgment of these students' military commitments through the HCPS Military Commitment Celebration. The initiative aligns with the Virginia Department of Education's "three E's framework" ensuring that students graduate prepared to be enlisted, enrolled and/or employed. This unique program carries significant impact and serves as a model for other counties seeking to fill a gap that exists at the end of students' K-12 careers.

9. Supplemental Materials



