



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](#).

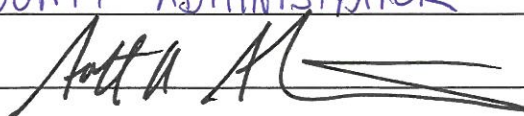
PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: James City County
Program Title: JCCPD Drone First Responder Program
Program Category: Criminal Justice and Public Safety

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

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Title: COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
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Executive Summary: James City County Police Department Drone Program - A Model of Innovation and Collaboration in Public Safety

The James City County Police Department (JCCPD) established a Drone Program in 2021 to improve tactical operations, search and rescue capabilities, and overall efficiency. Building upon the success of its initial tactical drone unit, the program has now evolved into a Drone First Responder (DFR) initiative through strategic partnerships with Duke University, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), and the James City County Fire Department, made possible by a grant from the American Heart Association. This expansion positions JCCPD at the forefront of leveraging drone technology to improve emergency response and potentially save lives.

The JCCPD Drone Program has proven to be an invaluable asset, providing real-time intelligence for officer safety in tactical situations and significantly improving the speed and effectiveness of search and rescue missions. The transition to a DFR program, currently operating within a two-mile radius of the Law Enforcement Center, demonstrates a commitment to continuous innovation and addresses a broader range of emergency calls. Those calls include calls involving immediate threats to life and health and traffic incidents. This interdisciplinary approach, further exemplified by ongoing efforts to integrate drone-delivered Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) for out-of-hospital cardiac arrest patients, underscores JCCPD's dedication to embracing change and growth for the benefit of the community.

The program's success is rooted in strong collaborative relationships with academic institutions and regional partners, ensuring an evidence-based approach to development and fostering community trust. JCCPD's ambitious future goals include expanding the DFR program's reach, successfully implementing AED delivery protocols, and sharing best practices regionally. The James City County Police Department's Drone Program represents a significant advancement in public safety technology, demonstrating a clear commitment to innovation, collaboration, and ultimately, saving lives, making it a highly deserving recipient of this prestigious award.

Award Submission: James City County Police Department Drone Program - A Model of Innovation and Community Service

The James City County Police Department (JCCPD) recognized the need to improve our safety in tactical situations, our response to search and rescue missions, and increase our efficiency and effectiveness. Our response to these needs was to start a Drone Program in 2021. It was initially established as a tactical drone unit supporting law enforcement operations and search and rescue missions. The tactical drone program was very successful and assisted the Special Response Team on recoveries of missing persons and supported the SWAT Team during the arrest of dangerous criminals. The program has since evolved into a Drone First Responder (DFR) program through a partnership with Duke University, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), and the James City County Fire Department. This transformative expansion, made possible by a grant from the American Heart Association, positions JCCPD at the forefront of utilizing drone technology to enhance emergency response and potentially save lives. This submission highlights the program's significant achievements, collaborative spirit, and ambitious vision for the future, making it a deserving recipient of this prestigious award.

Program Description:

The James City County Police Department, in an effort to improve our services and efficiency, recognized the potential of drone technology to enhance public safety and operational efficiency. In 2021, the agency established its drone program with a focus on providing aerial support for tactical operations, critical incident response, and search and rescue efforts. That initial phase of development involved research, rigorous training, finding and purchasing the right equipment, and developing appropriate policies and procedures to ensure safe and effective operations.

Through a good relationship with the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU Health) James City County was recognized as a potential site for an experiment to determine if it is feasible to fly Automatic External Defibrillators to out of hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA) patients. Partnerships with the James City County Fire Department, Duke University, and the Forsyth County Sheriff's Office made it possible for the James City County Police Department to expand the drone program and seek authorization from the FAA to start a Drone First Responder program as a first step towards AED delivery.

Key Program Components and Achievements:

Since 2021 the drone program has proven to be an invaluable asset. Drones have assisted in response to numerous tactical situations, providing real-time aerial intelligence for officer safety and situational awareness. They have also significantly enhanced our search and rescue capabilities and allowed for rapid coverage of larger areas on land and water

than could be searched on foot or by vehicle. Specific examples of successful missions can be provided upon request.

The program's evolution into a DFR initiative is a direct result of collaborative partnerships with Duke University, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), the James City County Fire Department, Forsyth County Sheriff's Office, and the American Heart Association. The Drone First Responder program is intended to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public safety response to a variety of calls, including any call where there may be a danger to life or health, and traffic crashes. The DFR program currently operates in a 2 mile circle based from the James City County Law Enforcement Center. The program is being run by the Department's Special Response Team. Sergeant Tiara Suggs commands her team of nine drone pilots as they operate the program. All of the drone pilots work in other parts of the Police Department and are drone pilots part time as they can be spared from other assignments. The program is looking to improve and expand and working towards being able to conduct flight operations with AED's on board.

Impact and Benefits:

The James City County Police Department's Drone Program has already demonstrated significant positive impacts. It has enhanced officer safety both through tactical responses over the past several years, and now through rapid response to calls in the DFR response area. The use of drones provides a safer alternative for gathering critical information in high-risk tactical situations, reducing the need to expose officers to potential harm. We have improved our efficiency on search and rescue missions. Drones give us the ability to cover vast areas quickly, increasing the probability of locating missing persons and reducing the time required for search operations. The DFR program provides real-time aerial views of emergency scenes, allowing for better resource allocation, improved situational awareness for ground crews, and potentially faster access to critical information for medical personnel. The future integration of AED delivery via drones holds the promise of significantly reducing response times in OHCA incidents, potentially increasing the chances of survival for patients.

The James City County Police Department prides itself on the relationship we have had with our community over the years. Mutual effort on behalf of the Department, our community partners, and our citizens have given us great support in our community. The drone program and is one more tool in our community outreach that is helping us foster strong relationships with our community. It is also helping us to improve and maintain relationships with our regional partners, academic institutions and the fire department, demonstrating a commitment to collaboration and innovation for the benefit of the community.

The James City County Police Department's fundamental values include a relentless pursuit of safety, embracing change and growth, and collaborating to build community trust. JCCPD's forward-thinking approach to using drone technology positions the agency

as a leader in adopting innovative solutions to enhance public safety and emergency response.

Innovation and Uniqueness:

The James City County Police Department's Drone Program stands out for many reasons. The program's transition from a tactical unit to a Drone First Responder program demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement and exploring new applications of technology. The partnerships we have developed with Duke University, VCU, and the James City County Fire Department are integral to the program's success and highlight a unique interdisciplinary approach to public safety. Participation in the experiment to deploy AED's using drones recognizes the changing demographics of our community and directly addresses the urgent need to improve outcomes for out-of-hospital cardiac arrest victims. The partnerships with academic institutions provides an alternative funding source and ensures an evidence-based approach to program development and evaluation.

Future Goals:

The James City County Police Department is committed to the continued growth and expansion of its Drone Program. Our future goals include gradually extending the reach of the Drone First Responder program to cover more of James City County. Working with our partners to successfully develop and implement protocols and technology for the safe and effective delivery of AEDs to OHCA patients via drones. Investing in new technologies and applications to further enhance program effectiveness. We also want to share our experiences and best practices with our local and regional partners to improve emergency response across the region.

Conclusion:

The James City County Police Department's Drone Program represents significant effort by a large team of individuals and organizations. This program is a large advancement in the technology that we have available to enhance public safety and emergency response. From the programs successful beginnings as a couple of small drones providing tactical support, to its evolution into the Drone First Responder program with the potential to deliver life-saving AEDs, JCCPD has demonstrated a commitment to innovation, collaboration, and serving the community. The program's achievements, strong partnerships, and ambitious future goals make it a highly deserving candidate for this prestigious award. We are confident that the JCCPD Drone Program will continue to serve as a model for other agencies seeking to harness the transformative power of drone technology for the benefit of their communities.