



ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: Friday, April 3, 2026.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. Contact [Gage Harter](#) with any questions.

PROGRAM INFORMATION


County: Fairfax County
Program Title: Korean Language Social Media Initiative
Program Category: Communications & Community Outreach

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Bryan Hill
Title: County Executive

Signature: 

VACo Achievement Awards Program Submission

Program Title: Korean-Language Social Media Initiative

County: Fairfax

Category: Communications & Community Outreach



Executive Summary:

In March 2024, Fairfax County Government's Office of Public Affairs launched the county's first official [Korean-language social media account](#) to strengthen communication and engagement with the Korean-speaking community, one of the county's largest foreign-born populations. The initiative was developed to improve awareness of county programs, services, and public education by delivering information in a culturally relevant digital format.

Prior to the launch, county information was primarily disseminated through English-language channels or translated static materials that did not fully align with how residents engage with information on social media platforms. Fairfax County identified the need for an approach designed specifically for social media that emphasized accessibility, cultural relevance, and trust-building.

The Korean social media account operates as an independent presence tailored to Korean language and cultural norms, rather than serving as a strictly translated mirror of English-language accounts. Developed and implemented by county staff, the program emphasizes human-centered digital engagement to connect residents with local government in a more meaningful way.

As of 2026, the account has grown to 818 followers through steady, intentional outreach. While growth has been measured, the program has demonstrated the ability to extend public education messaging beyond its existing audience when culturally relevant content aligns with social media trends. The initiative is fully managed in-house by the county's Korean language professional, who also provides translation services, resulting in no additional staffing or vendor costs. This sustainable, low-cost model illustrates how local government can modernize language access

through culturally relevant digital engagement while strengthening interdepartmental collaboration and providing a framework that other jurisdictions can adapt to their own linguistic communities.

Problem, Challenge, or Situation Faced by the Locality

Fairfax County is one of the most linguistically and culturally diverse jurisdictions in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Korean is the third most spoken language in the county, after English and Spanish, with more than 35,000 residents speaking Korean at home, representing a significant population that relies on linguistically accessible information to access county programs, services and public resources. Like many residents, members of the Korean-speaking community increasingly rely on digital platforms and social media to receive timely information about local government programs, services and community updates. While the county has long invested in language access through translation and interpretation services, traditional communication methods did not fully address how Korean-speaking residents engage with digital information and social media platforms. Through outreach and community engagement, the county observed that translated materials and English-language social media channels did not consistently reach this audience where they most often consume information online.

As a result, important county information related to public services, elections, public safety and environmental education risked not reaching a significant segment of residents. Recognizing this gap, Fairfax County developed a dedicated Korean-language social media presence designed to deliver timely county information in formats and channels more aligned with how Korean-speaking residents engage with digital content.

Innovative Solution

Fairfax County's Korean social media initiative represents a strategic shift in how local government communicates with linguistically diverse communities. Rather than relying solely on translated versions of English-language content, the program was intentionally designed as a social media

engagement, reflecting Korean cultural context, storytelling traditions, and audience norms. This approach allows county messaging to feel accessible, credible, and relevant to Korean residents. A central component of the initiative is its emphasis on human-centered storytelling. Through short-form videos and posts, the program highlights Korean American county employees and residents, using personal narratives to make government information more relatable and culturally meaningful. By centering individual stories rather than institutional messaging, these features humanize county government and demonstrate that Korean-speaking residents are represented throughout the public workforce.

The initiative also includes direct video messages delivered in Korean by county staff. For example, a [New Year's Day message](#) from Office of Public Affairs staff, spoken in Korean, reinforced cultural connection and demonstrated the county's commitment to communicating directly with Korean residents in their own language. These messages help normalize multilingual engagement within government communication and strengthen trust through authenticity and visibility. In addition to internal storytelling, the program incorporates community-centered engagement.

During [Immigrant Heritage Month](#), the account featured Korean immigrant residents living in Fairfax County, including small business owners who immigrated to the United States in the 1980s and continue to operate a local tailoring and alteration shop. These stories resonated strongly with Korean-speaking residents, generating views and positive encouragement from community members who expressed appreciation for seeing their immigration and entrepreneurship experiences, and fostering a sense of belonging. Storytelling provided an effective way to communicate with immigrant communities by presenting government information through relatable experiences rather than traditional institutional messaging.

The initiative further leverages culturally significant moments to enhance visibility and engagement. Content has included coverage of [Kimchi Day](#), recognized through a proclamation by the Fairfax

County Board of Supervisors, and [Lunar New Year celebrations](#). These posts acknowledge traditions meaningful to the Korean community while welcoming engagement from residents across Fairfax County's diverse population.

In addition to storytelling and cultural observances, the program uses culturally informed creativity to deliver public education messages. By adapting familiar cultural references and social media trends, the account communicates important county information- such as environmental education and service awareness, in formats that align with audience expectations and digital engagement patterns. For example, a [reel](#) inspired by a viral moment from South Korea's Blue Dragon Awards was used to explain that not all plastic is recyclable, translating a trending cultural reference into a public education message for Fairfax County residents. This strategy enables county messaging to reach beyond existing followers while maintaining accuracy and public value. Together, these approaches demonstrate how local government can move beyond translation to implement culturally relevant, human-centered digital communication. Fairfax County's Korean social media initiative offers an innovative, low-cost model that strengthens community trust, expands engagement, and can be replicated by other localities seeking to modernize language access and community outreach efforts.

Interdepartmental Collaboration and Community Partnerships

The success of the Korean social media initiative is rooted in strong interdepartmental collaboration. Agencies across Fairfax County Government actively participate by nominating employees, sharing stories, and supporting outreach efforts. Participating agencies include [Police](#), [Public Works and Environmental Services](#), [Cable & Consumer Services](#), [Public Safety Communication](#), [Fire & Rescue](#), [Public Affairs](#), Library, Elections, Health, Family Services, Tax Administration, Park Authority, Information Technology, and others. This collaborative model allows

agencies to contribute content without additional cost or staffing while ensuring that the Korean-language account reflects the breadth of county services and expertise.

The initiative also fosters community partnerships by highlighting the voices of Korean residents and small business owners throughout Fairfax County. Community storytelling initiatives such as interviews with Korean immigrant business owners during Immigrant Heritage Month and features of Korean entrepreneurs during Women's History Month create opportunities for residents to share their experiences while strengthening connections between the county and the communities it serves. These stories often resonate strongly with the Korean-speaking community by reflecting shared experiences of immigration and community life. The program also collaborates with local Korean organizations, including the Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington and the K-Kimchi World Solidarity Washington DC Committee, to amplify cultural community events. Over time, these collaborations have helped build trust and familiarity between Fairfax County Government and Korean-speaking residents, strengthening the community's connection to local government services and information.

Program Implementation, Staffing, and Financing

The Korean social media initiative is fully developed, implemented, and sustained by local government staff. The county's in-house Korean language professional manages both Korean translation services and the Korean social media account, allowing the program to operate without additional staffing, vendor contracts, or dedicated social media funding.

This integrated staffing model ensures linguistic accuracy, cultural competency, and continuity while maintaining fiscal responsibility. The program leverages existing county resources, making it both cost-effective and sustainable over the long term.

Results and Measurable Outcomes

Since its launch in March 2024, Fairfax County’s Korean social media account has steadily expanded access to timely county information by delivering culturally relevant public education, service updates, and community resources directly to Korean-speaking residents through digital platforms they regularly use.

One of the program’s most impactful public education campaigns, a culturally relevant reel explaining that “[NOT ALL PLASTICS ARE RECYCLABLE](#)” created in collaboration with the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services, inspired by a viral moment from Korea’s 2025 Blue Dragon Awards, generated more than 17,000 views, reached over 11,700 accounts, 259 shares and was viewed by non-followers nearly 96 percent of the time.

This record-breaking engagement illustrates the effectiveness of culturally informed government messaging designed specifically for social media in reaching new audiences and delivering public education on a scale. Additional outcomes include increased visibility of Korean American county employees, stronger community trust, and improved awareness of county programs and services among Korean-speaking residents.

Replicability and Model for Other Localities

Fairfax County’s Korean-language social media initiative offers a replicable model for other local governments seeking to improve communication with linguistically diverse populations. Key elements of the model include:

- Identifying priority language communities
- Starting with a single, widely used platform
- Utilizing in-house bilingual staff
- Focusing on authenticity and cultural relevance
- Leveraging existing content creatively
- Scaling gradually based on engagement and capacity

This model is adaptable for counties of varying sizes and resource levels and does not require significant financial investment.

Conclusion

Fairfax County Government's Korean social media initiative demonstrates how local government can reimagine communication to better serve linguistically diverse communities through practical, sustainable approaches. By moving beyond translated content to a culturally relevant digital engagement, Fairfax County demonstrates how language access can evolve to meet residents where they already receive information. This program strengthens access to information, builds trust, and connects Korean-speaking residents more meaningfully to county programs, services, and public education efforts. Developed and implemented entirely by county staff, the program is fully integrated into existing communications and language access workflows, allowing Fairfax County to sustain the initiative without additional staffing or vendor costs. reflects strong interdepartmental collaboration and responsible stewardship of public resources. The program provides a replicable framework for other local governments seeking to modernize language access and community outreach. By leveraging in-house bilingual capacity, prioritizing human-centered storytelling, tailoring content to how residents engage on social media, jurisdictions of varying sizes and resources can adapt this approach to meet their own community needs. Importantly, this initiative advances Fairfax County's commitment to equity and inclusion as outlined in the [One Fairfax policy](#) and supports the [Countywide Strategic Plan](#) outcome areas focused on effective government and community connection. By providing culturally and linguistically appropriate communication through trusted digital platforms, the program helps ensure that all who live in Fairfax County are informed, respected, and meaningfully connected to local government.

Through this initiative, Fairfax County demonstrates how equity-focused policies can be implemented through everyday government operations in ways that are scalable, sustainable, and

impactful. The Korean social media program reflects a thoughtful, forward-looking approach to public communication and is respectfully submitted for consideration by the Virginia Association of Counties Achievement Awards Committee.