



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: Prince William County

Program Title: Prince William County Police Department Cadet Program

Program Category: Criminal Justice & Public Safety

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Christopher Shorter

Title: County Executive

Signature: 

Virginia Association of Counties (VACo)
2026 Achievement Awards
Nomination Narrative

Nominee: Prince William County Police Department

Project: Police Cadet Program

Program Category: Criminal Justice & Public Safety

Abstract/Executive Summary:

The Prince William County Police Department (PWCPD) aims to deliver police services through a shared responsibility with the community that enhances the quality of life and strengthens public trust. As of the most recent census, Prince William County is considered the most diverse county in Virginia, and the County is proud to be home to a widely diverse population. Since first taking the helm in 2021, Police Chief Peter Newsham has sought to profoundly improve and enhance the Department's recruiting strategies so that it substantially reflects the diversity of the community it serves.

Police departments across the country, including Prince William County's, continue to face staffing shortages as they struggle to recruit and retain officers, and many departments have been forced to find new ways to fill the gaps. The PWCPD recognizes that there is increasing competition within the field of law enforcement, and police departments across the country are working tirelessly to attract and recruit the next generation of police officers.

The PWCPD Cadet Program has served as an outstanding recruiting tool to encourage youth from the county to pursue a career in policing. Young people from the community between the ages of 18 and 21 are eligible to serve as a Cadet. It is a full-time, competitively paid position with benefits that allows them flexibility to continue taking college-level courses. Cadets gain knowledge of and firsthand experience in a variety of areas of community policing, operations, investigations, and support. Upon reaching the age of 21, Cadets can then transition seamlessly to the police academy as a recruit to complete their training to become a full-fledged police officer.

Currently, the Department has 14 full-time cadets, of which six are female and eight identify as Black or Hispanic. Most notably, since the beginning of 2024, the Department has had 15 cadets successfully transition from the Cadet Program to formally enter the Police Academy.

Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) Achievement Awards

Nomination Narrative

Program: Prince William County Police Department, Police Cadet Program

Challenge/Situation:

The Prince William County Police Department (PWCPD) aims to deliver efficient and effective police services through a shared responsibility with our community that enhances the quality of life and strengthens public trust. The Department is a nationally accredited law enforcement agency providing 24/7 coverage to residents, business owners, and visitors in Prince William County. With an authorized strength of 747 sworn officers and over 200 civilian professional staff members, the Department is comprised of four divisions and 13 bureaus, including patrol services, specialty units, and investigative and support resources.

As of the most recent census, Prince William County is considered the most diverse county in Virginia. The County is proud to be home to a widely diverse population encompassing a vast array of cultures, origins, races, and ethnicities. Since first taking the helm in 2021, Police Chief Peter Newsham has sought to profoundly improve and enhance our recruiting strategies so that the Department substantially reflects the diversity of the community we serve. To that end and over the last few years, we have made great strides in our recruiting and hiring of the next generation of officers. At the forefront of those efforts has been the development and expansion of the PWCPD Cadet Program.

Police departments across the country, including Prince William County's, continue to face staffing shortages as they struggle to recruit and retain officers, and many departments have been forced to find new ways to fill the gaps. The PWCPD recognizes that there is increasing competition within the field of law enforcement, and police departments across the country are working tirelessly to attract and recruit the next generation of police officers. Police departments nationwide are seeking top talent and face significant recruiting challenges, as potential candidates are presented with many options.

Program Description:

The PWCPD Cadet Program has served as an outstanding recruiting tool to encourage young people from the county to pursue a career in policing. Young people from the community between the ages of 18 and 21 are eligible to serve as a Cadet. It is a full-time, competitively paid position with benefits that also allows them flexibility

Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) Achievement Awards

Nomination Narrative

Program: Prince William County Police Department, Police Cadet Program

to continue taking college-level courses. Cadets gain knowledge of and firsthand experience in a variety of areas of community policing, operations, investigations, and support. Upon reaching the age of 21, Cadets can then transition seamlessly to the recruit academy to complete their training to become a full-fledged police officer.

When Chief Newsham first arrived in 2021, there were only a few cadets in the program, and the Department quickly worked to significantly expand the program by identifying funds within our budget and establishing a process for recruiting and hiring cadets from the community.

Results/Success of the Program:

Currently, the Police Department has 14 full-time cadets, of which six are female and eight identify as Black or Hispanic. Most notably, since the beginning of 2024, we have had 15 cadets successfully transition from the Cadet Program to formally enter the Police Academy. Of those 15, a third of them are female (five) and almost half (seven) identify as Black, Hispanic, Asian, or other race. These are important numbers to note as the Cadet Program has helped us improve organizationally across a number of areas:

- Provides a structured path for young people in the community to serve as police officers in the very neighborhoods in which they were raised,
- Encourages more young women to explore a career in which female officers have historically comprised less than 15 percent of the police officer ranks,
- Created an avenue for people of races and ethnicities that have historically, and regrettably, been far too underrepresented in police officer ranks, and
- Established a consistent pipeline of cadets who are interested in serving as the next generation of police officers, which in turn helps alleviate a portion of the recruiting challenges that we face.