



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: York County

Program Title: York County Gov Series

Program Category: Communications & Community Outreach

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Department: County Administration

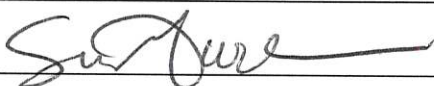
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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Susan Goodwin

Title: Deputy County Administrator

Signature: 



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Executive Summary

The York County Gov Series was created to strengthen public understanding of local government and improve community trust. Many County operations are complex, behind the scenes, or easily misunderstood, which can leave residents unsure of what staff do or how decisions are made. At the same time, many citizens want to engage more deeply with their government but lack an accessible way to learn about County functions.

The ten-week Gov Series addresses this by bringing residents directly into County facilities for interactive presentations, tours, and discussions with department leaders and staff.

Nearly every County department contributed, and a robust marketing campaign generated strong interest with almost 80 applications for only 20 slots. Sessions were intentionally informal, creating opportunities for meaningful dialogue with County leadership and showcasing the dedication of staff across all departments.

The inaugural Series was a clear success, with an 88% average attendance rate and overwhelmingly positive feedback. Participants reported increased confidence in County leadership, a deeper understanding of operations, and a desire for the program to continue.

Many shared what they learned with their neighbors, helping strengthen community awareness. With a structure based on strong internal coordination, effective outreach, and passionate staff, the Gov Series is an easily replicable model for other localities seeking to enhance transparency and resident engagement.



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The Challenge

County operations involve a vast array of disciplines, are often complex and nuanced, and impact the daily lives of residents in many different ways. In spite of all this, they are often unknown, unrecognized, and even misunderstood. In many cases, the efforts of dedicated and passionate public servants go completely unnoticed. Many departments are not public-facing and have no opportunity to share what they do with the general public. In others, residents may simply not know what County officials and staff can and can't do. In still others, County activities become highly visible to the public, but because of confidentiality requirements or misinformation, the public has an incomplete or skewed perception of County activities.

While the negative voices always seem the loudest in these situations, there is a contingent of County residents that are generally happy and want to get involved in their community and learn more about their local government but don't know where to start. This sentiment was expressed by several Gov Series applicants. Additionally, the success or failure of local government activities, especially new initiatives, is impacted greatly by public sentiment and the trust the citizens have in their government. This makes the relationship that the local government has with its residents incredibly important.



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Collaboration/Innovation

The York County Gov Series was created to foster this relationship and educate our residents on the many and varied activities County staff are responsible for. Rather than simply responding to FOIA requests and other citizen inquiries or relying on citizen attendance at Board of Supervisors' and other meetings, the Gov Series takes York County operations to the residents. This provides a platform for County departments to explain and showcase the work that they are so proud of. It also provides residents with a free, informal, and relaxed avenue to interact with County officials and staff and provides insight even beyond what can be gleaned at formal meetings.

This Series represented a collaborative joint effort from almost every County department. The course lasted 10 weeks, with sessions held on Thursday nights from 6 – 8 pm. Dinner was provided for the sessions and gave us a chance to support and highlight local businesses. The sessions covered York County operations with a focus on a specific area or department for each session, with sessions taking place at various department facilities throughout the County. Each week department directors and staff gave interactive presentations with activities, tours, demonstrations, and lively discussions to demonstrate the efforts of their department. Present at each session were: at least one County Administrator, the department head and additional staff from the department presenting, and occasionally members of the Board of Supervisors. Breaks were built into the schedule



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of each session to further create a personal, informal setting for participants to mingle and interact with each other and County leadership and staff.

In the lead up to the Series, the Public Affairs team led a comprehensive marketing campaign to raise awareness and solicit applications. Blending advertisements in established publications with posts on social media and the County website, the team cast as wide a net as possible in their open call for applicants. Within hours of the application going live on the County website, the class was full, and almost 80 applications were received overall. Once the class was finalized, they then launched an email campaign to keep participants updated about the course and send reminders of upcoming sessions. A specialized Gov Series webpage on the County website was also created as a resource hub for the participants. Presentation slide decks were posted after every session for the class to review as well as photos, videos, and any updates or changes to the Series.

All Gov Series activities, from executing the marketing plan, to securing speakers, meeting space, and food were coordinated through the County Administration office. Cost for the Series was relatively minimal. By using flexible scheduling, staff overtime was kept to a minimum, and the bulk of the cost came from food and supplies. Some branded “swag”, including a t-shirt, tote bag, notebook, and cup was purchased for the participants, along with other incidentals.



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Program Outcome

The program received an overwhelmingly positive response from the community. The number of applications received, the commitment and participation from the class, and overwhelmingly positive feedback point to its success. As previously mentioned, almost 80 applications were received for only 20 available seats, though the inaugural class was decreased to 18 people since two participants had to withdraw for personal reasons. During the program the participants consistently engaged in discussion, listened earnestly to the presentations, and routinely stayed after the sessions ended to continue discussions with staff. The average attendance rate for the Series was 88%. The class developed a noticeable sense of camaraderie and often arrived at sessions early to mingle with each other and the staff. Throughout the Series staff received many comments from participants thanking them for their efforts and praising the quality and content of presentations. They also joked about jealous spouses who wished they had applied (several did indeed apply for the second Gov Series which will take place in the spring of 2026) and remarked how they had taken the information they learned into their neighborhoods and communities. Participants were also given a post-Series survey which enjoyed a participation rate of 50%, and almost exclusively positive feedback.

Below are some participant responses when asked what their favorite parts of the Series were:



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“Every series was packed with information! The presenters were well prepared and demonstrated in-depth knowledge and skill in their area. I also appreciated the genuine earnest with which every presenter answered the numerous questions asked of them about the details of their job. ... The series really drives home the diverse needs of the county and how important each division of government is in meeting those needs.”

“The evening with Courts & Judicial Services was largely new information for me. The presentation by Public Works and Finance/Budget had excellent information on the many services provided by the County and how they are actually presented in the budget. The finance game was fun and their treats so very clever. Planning and Development provided outstanding information on land use in the County, how the Comprehensive Plan guides land use. Most importantly I benefited greatly from the Q & A portion of each meeting. Thank you for an outstanding experience!”

“I liked the public safety presentations and was impressed that so many of the fire department’s leaders were present. The fire department provided the best dinner ... Overall, I thought all the presentations were very informative and well prepared. Public Affairs did an excellent job of sending out weekly reminders and adding the presentation slides to the York County website so they could be read over again at home.”



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When asked for additional comments that would help develop the series, several participants gave the responses below:

“I can’t find words to express how valuable I found this series. It was much more than I expected. I gained confidence in the leadership of York County. We are fairly new to York County and our knowledge was limited before the series. I thought each department was well prepared and professional. Thank you for this opportunity. I encourage you to continue the Gov series.”

“Wonderful job my husband was so jealous he wants to attend next time!”

“...This was executed beautifully and I learned more than I expected about York County. I appreciate every person who participated and have passed along much of the information I learned to others in the County. The presenters represented the multitude of silent heroes behind the success of York County.”

“The 10 week commitment for participants is a vital component of the Series. ... The quality of the Staff presentations and information gained from my participation fully supports the 10 week duration and 2 hour weekly time commitment. Even on the rare evenings we continued beyond the 2 hours, I found the extra time well worth the information shared. The interactive opportunities provided good experiences and more awareness of the types of



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decisions the County faces. The Series provided weekly opportunities to meet County employees and to ask questions. ... The communication throughout the Series was excellent.”

Model for Implementation in Other Localities

This program can be easily adapted to be effective in any locality. The core tenets of the program are robust advertising and marketing across a variety of media, central internal coordination among departments, and most importantly, passionate and knowledgeable staff. This is the backbone of local government and therefore the backbone of the success of this program. All this program really did was provide a solid platform for our staff to share the excellent work they do every day. Robust marketing, and fluid internal communication and coordination ensured that they had the audience and the support they needed.