

2015 Achievement Awards Virginia Association of Counties

APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2015.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Locality: County of Albemarle

Program Title: Invent Albemarle Innovation Fund

Program Category: Organizational Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

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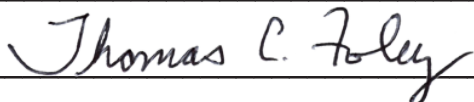
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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: Tom Foley

Title: County Executive's Office

Signature: 



Entry

In the midst of the recent recession, municipalities nation-wide were forced to trim spending in an effort to manage under trying circumstances. Albemarle County was no exception. Before the implementation of the Innovation Fund, Albemarle County struggled to identify new ways to implement innovative solutions and improve internal processes and programs on a tight budget. The Innovation Fund was originally started as an experimental, creative way to reduce costs, improve customer service, and increase productivity. Now in its second year, the program has transformed into a unique way to problem solve. It is a means of nurturing an innovation culture, where the people who know county government the best – county employees – are able to improve operations from the ground up.

The program is organized in a multi-step process so that ideas at different levels of maturation can be fleshed out fully before funding. Programs are first proposed to a certified review team, evaluated for their potential, selected as part of the program, workshopped, matched with a program mentor (a fellow employee who acts as a liaison between the idea proposer and the review team), funded, and then carried out with bi-annual updates. The Fund's step-by-step process allows for good ideas to be acted on and ideas that aren't quite there yet to be reworked and re-envisioned for a later Innovation Fund round.

The innovation fund began on a trial basis with a one-time endowment by the Board of \$166,500 in one-time money. All funds not used each round roll over to the next. The first round of the Innovation Fund was completed in April, 2014, with nine projects selected for funding. The first round spent \$86,990 and is estimated to have saved at least \$60,000 in one-time costs and is expected to save an additional \$70,000 annually in fuel, supplies, and rebates. The remaining \$79,510 in FY 14 funding was reappropriated to the 2015 fiscal year, and an additional \$50,000 was allocated to the Innovation Fund in the FY 15 Budget, bringing the total available funding to \$129,510. Round 2 of the Innovation Fund was completed in November 2014, with seven projects selected for funding in the total amount of \$78,829. It is clear that the Innovation Fund has succeeded in saving time and money with only a small startup investment.

A total of nine projects were approved during the first round. A detailed list of each project is included in the support material. At this time, completed or partially completed projects from round one include a Police mentorship program for new officers, an upgrade from paper to electronic payments for vendors and



suppliers, a mobile training cart, online trainings, a surplus property website, and an online community engagement platform. Overall, Innovation Fund programs were approved in six different departments, including HR, Police, Finance, Fire Rescue, IT, and the County Executive’s Office. The Innovation Fund program encourages a spirit of entrepreneurship and creativity exemplified by the fact that one of the Round 1 projects, *Technology Training Anytime*, won 1st place in the Information Technology (IT) as Efficiency Driver – Government to Government category at the 17th annual Commonwealth of Virginia Innovation Technology Symposium (COVITS) last fall. Additional examples of successful programs are the County Surplus Website and the Consolidated Fire Rescue Fueling Stations. The website cost no money and saved about \$2,000 in the first year by reusing items that the County had already bought. The fueling stations, which saved staff time and money on fuel, contributed to being \$57,000 under budget and saving approximately \$20,000 annually.

Twenty applications were submitted to the Innovation Fund for consideration in Round 2. Of those applications, the review team approved eight for funding (list provided below) and determined that five did not meet the criteria for funding, three could be implemented without funding, and four were of interest but were not yet ready for funding. The applications which have been funded will be reporting back to the review team at their six-month mark later this month.

- Diversity/Recruitment Video—Police Department
- “What to Expect During Construction”—Office of Facilities Development
- Digital Fire Simulator—Fire/Rescue
- Paperless Plan Review Pilot—Community Development
- Citizen Online Computer Station—Police Department
- Automated Check-In—Social Services
- Rapid Response Outreach—Social Services
- Agenda Management System —Board of Supervisors (still being finalized for appropriation)

Although this removes some of the risk for the County, the acceptance of failure is an essential part of the Innovation Fund. The belief behind the Innovation Fund is that there is value in innovation itself and therefore the rewards for having a culture of innovation outweigh the risks of a few ineffective programs. The Innovation Fund can easily be adapted in other counties. Counties can use the Innovation Fund process to find the best answers to problems of varying complexity.



Program Overview

The Albemarle County Board of Supervisors established the Innovation Fund in FY 14 to support the start-up of organizational initiatives that reduce costs and improve customer service and productivity. A cross-functional team of County employees came together to create the Innovation Fund program following adoption of the FY 14 Budget, which made funding available. The team stressed a spirit of entrepreneurship in designing the Fund. Program guidelines were developed as outlined below, along with eligibility criteria and an application and review process.

The “Inventing Albemarle” Innovation Fund supports projects that:

- yield a return on investment, may be measured in new ideas or relationships as well as new dollars
- support an “innovation culture” in the organization
- reduce operating costs/create capacity by freeing up employee time for more productive work
- increase process efficiency, quality, and services that impact staff and/or customers
- leverage technology, including automating/standardizing routine processes
- improve customer experience – both internal and external
- establish a competitive edge

ACCOUNTABILITY/MONITORING

The applicants of the projects selected for funding were required to 1) provide a cost/benefit analysis, including expected return on investment (ROI); 2) identify savings and/or avoided costs, as well as a means of measuring accountability and performance; and 3) provide an analysis of how the proposed project fits into the mission, values and strategic plan goals of the County and how it supports the County’s “ONE organization committed to excellence” philosophy. Progress reports are required for all funded projects to ensure that goals are being met.



Program Highlights *(for use in press releases, brochures, etc.)*

- The “Inventing Albemarle” Innovation Fund supports projects that:
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 - increase process efficiency, quality, and services that impact staff and/or customers
 - leverage technology, including automating/standardizing routine processes
 - improve customer experience – both internal and external
 - establish a competitive edge
- The Innovation Fund was originally started as an experimental, creative way to reduce costs, improve customer service, and increase productivity.
- It is a means of nurturing an innovation culture, where the people who know county government the best – county employees – are able to improve operations from the ground up.
- The Innovation Fund program encourages a spirit of entrepreneurship and creativity exemplified by the fact that one of the Round 1 projects, *Technology Training Anytime*, won 1st place in the Information Technology (IT) as Efficiency Driver – Government to Government category at the 17th annual Commonwealth of Virginia Innovation Technology Symposium (COVITS) last fall.



INVENT ALBEMARLE innovation • fund

BACKGROUND

WORKING DEFINITION OF INNOVATION:

People creating value through the implementation of new ideas.

Evolutionary innovations are brought about by many incremental advances in technology or processes.

Revolutionary innovations are often disruptive and new.

Innovation is synonymous with risk-taking and organizations that create revolutionary products or technologies take on the greatest risk.

THE “INVENTING ALBEMARLE” INNOVATION FUND WILL SUPPORT PROJECTS THAT:

- yield a return on investment, may be measured in new ideas or relationships as well as new dollars
- support an “innovation culture” in the organization
- reduce operating costs/create capacity by freeing up employee time for more productive work
- increase process efficiency, quality, and services that impact staff and/or customers.
- leverage technology, including automating/standardizing routine processes.
- improve customer experience – both internal and external
- establish a competitive edge
- generate long-term improvements in workforce performance and/or organizational sustainability

ELIGIBILITY

- Eligibility - Open to consideration for projects proposed by any individual county employee or work group that can be demonstrated to address one or more of the objectives outlined above.
- This is one-time money, if there are ongoing operating costs the proposal will need to account for how that will be funded.
- Ideas can be submitted for evaluation/potential development for future application – building an “Idea Bank” – or proposals can be submitted for funding

- Plan on at least two rounds, see how many funding requests come forward in the first round to see exactly how remaining funds will be dispersed. Priority will be given to funding requests below \$20,000 in order to use the Innovation Fund for a wide range of potential projects.
- Project Types
There are three project types: New and Untested Ideas, Promising Ideas, and Adapting Proven Ideas. Expectations of the application process will be dependent on its project type.
 - **New and Untested Ideas:** development level award is aimed at encouraging promising ideas at an early stage.
 - **Promising Ideas:** validation award is aimed at projects that have identified initial promise but still must test if their idea is successful.
 - **Adapting Proven Ideas:** scale-up award is aimed at projects that have been proven successful on a small scale elsewhere either internally or externally but haven’t yet been implemented throughout the organization.

APPLICATION & SELECTION PROCESS

While the need for a careful and thorough application, selection and evaluation process is vital, every effort will be made to reduce barriers and recognize and accept the possibility of failure as part of encouraging an innovation culture through this funding source.

Potential selection criteria that project proposals will be judged on the following:

1. Alignment with mission, values and strategic plan priorities
2. Benefits to internal and external Customers
3. Transferability of Solutions, Technologies and Processes
4. Project Management and Schedule
5. Post-grant/long term sustainability
6. Revenue enhancement potential
7. Accelerating the Modernization of Government Services and Practices
8. Probability of Success
9. Supporting One Organization Committed to Excellence/ multi departmental initiatives

REVIEW TEAM COMPOSITION

The Review Team will be composed of ILI grads with broad representation across the organization and will have a “ONE Organization” orientation – initial round will be organized with leadership and support from the County Executive’s Office.

Ideas do not need to have supervisory approval before being submitted, but idea champions will need to have supervisor approval prior to accessing funds.

Each awarded project will be assigned a mentor from the Review Team who will serve as a liaison/ombudsman.

REVIEW PROCESS

Round 2 to be initiated in September, 2014

September 2 – Program announcement/roll out, applications made available to the organization both for funded initiatives and to submit ideas to the Idea Bank

September 22 – Innovation Lab and open house with mentors scheduled to encourage idea development and application submittals

October 3 – Applications are due - review period is long enough to allow feedback and consultation to teams prior to the final decision deadline

October 20 – Review team finishes review and recommends funding allocations

TRACKING AND MEASUREMENT

Each awarded project will be required to identify a tracking and measurement plan and submit a progress report at the end of the first year that will indicate whether goals are being met. Metrics for measuring the outcome of a project can include “innovation measures” - i.e. number of new ideas generated, number of employees involved in innovation effort, number of new opportunities created for the County – as well as more traditional measures of cost savings, revenue generation, and service improvements. Results of the progress reports will be communicated out to the organization.



FY2014 AWARD SUMMARY

COMPREHENSIVE PAYABLES STRATEGY

Finance Department

OBJECTIVE: To move the County from paper-based to electronic payments for vendors and suppliers

RESULT: This project will facilitate the move towards an electronic based processing system, saving the County substantial money annually and strengthening the relationship between vendors, suppliers, customers and employees.

LEARNING CART @ COB 5TH STREET

Information Technology Department

OBJECTIVE: To provide a mobile training cart – consisting of 10 tablets or ultrathin laptop computers – to allow laptop based learning in COB-5 conference rooms.

RESULT: Using these tablets and laptops, employees at COB-5 can get convenient training on-site without having to travel to COB-McIntire for hands-on technology training, saving employee time and increasing productivity.

MINDMIXER - INSPIRING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN ALBEMARLE COUNTY

County Executive's Office

OBJECTIVE: To create an online community engagement platform that will provide meaningful, inclusive citizen involvement in county projects and issues

RESULT: Using MindMixer, Albemarle County will be able to consistently seek feedback, conduct surveys and polls, and encourage dialogue on critical topics in an inclusive and user-friendly method, resulting in more streamlined and robust citizen involvement in critical issues.

MOBILE WEBSITE FOR WWW.ALBEMARLE.ORG

County Executive's Office

OBJECTIVE: A user friendly mobile website for www.albemarle.org

RESULT: A mobile website will make accessing information and interacting with the County easier and more efficient as many more people choose to do business with their mobile devices, resulting in increased citizen convenience and employee productivity.

BE WELL THROUGH INNOVATION

Human Resources Department

OBJECTIVE: To encourage healthier lifestyle choices, a greater sense of engagement, and an opportunity to encourage cross- departmental relationships.

RESULT: By improving existing break rooms and exercise facilities, employees will have improved wellness-oriented, cross departmental gathering places

TECHNOLOGY TRAINING AVAILABLE ANYTIME, ANYWHERE

Information Technology Department

OBJECTIVE: To provide online training courses for those who are unable to attend in person.

RESULT: Development of a prerecorded online training course library for employees who need technology training (i.e. public safety staff) but aren't able to attend a particular class, resulting in a better trained and more technologically competent workforce.

BUILDING BETTER OFFICERS: POLICE MENTORSHIP

Police Department

OBJECTIVE: To create a Mentor Program for young officers in law enforcement, especially females

RESULT: This program will strengthen relationships between new and experienced police officers, resulting in increased retention rates, enhanced job performance, and improved workforce diversity.

FIRE RESCUE CONSOLIDATED FUELING STATIONS

Fire Rescue Department

OBJECTIVE: Provide fuel tanks at select fire rescue stations in the County.

RESULT: Fuel tanks will allow fire rescue stations to take advantage of a lower state contract rate for fuel (rather than paying the price at the pump), which should result in significant savings for the County over time

SURPLUS PROPERTY WEBSITE

Finance/ Purchasing Department

OBJECTIVE: To create a website that would allow county government and schools to preview surplus items before they are sent to the warehouse for public sale.

RESULT: An online resource that catalogues surplus items so that they are more readily available to county entities as a first option rather than purchasing new items, saving money and time.



Innovation Fund – Round 2 Approved Projects

Project	Dept	Estimated \$ Amount	Description
Diversity / Recruitment Video	Police Department	\$15,000	Diversity recruitment video to assist County departments to seek out diverse candidates who would reflect county demographics. The police department particularly has struggled for many years in attracting minority applicants to the agency and its current strategies have had a minimal impact in this area.
What to Expect During Construction	Office of Facilities Development	\$2,625	"Hand-out" document on thick stock paper to improve communication between County staff and citizens that are working in or near a facility where construction work is taking place. This will support the BOS goal of a more transparent local government by letting customers know what to expect during construction.
Digital Fire Training Simulator	Fire/Rescue Dept.	\$19,426	Innovative training tool designed to allow for realistic fire training with minimal resources, allowing for high repetition of core skills. Fire Rescue has long struggled with providing realistic training for suppression personnel. This new technology provides a realistic, portable, and cost effective manner in which to simulate a real fire.
Paperless Plan Review Pilot	Community Development Dept.	\$4,872	Pilot program that will enable the Community Development Department to move toward a more efficient and better integrated records management system by taking steps to phase out paper plans from the review stream. The pilot will make use of a number of software programs and technology platforms to facilitate the exchange of information internally within the County and between the County and the applicant. These technologies will enable staff in various County divisions to annotate plans, share mark ups and review comments, compare revisions, and track an application's review status, resulting in better coordination throughout the review process and improved customer service.
Citizen Online Computer Station	Police Department	TBD	Increase customer service by providing a public access computer and work station for the purpose of making an online police report. The ACPD has a need to provide quicker assistance to citizens who come to the Police Department to report minor incidents. The ability to report online is currently only available to persons with internet and their own computer. By adding a public access terminal the department can provide better customer service by allowing citizens to complete an online report themselves without having to wait for a patrol officer to drive in from out in the county. This also keeps officers on the street patrolling and responding to needs of the community.

Agenda Management System	Board of Supervisors	TBD	Streamline the Board of Supervisors meeting agenda preparation, online posting and archiving processes by using a comprehensive software platform. The platform allows users to create agenda items, assign them to the appropriate agenda, send items through a work flow process for approvals and create a final agenda product that is ready to go online or to be uploaded to Board member ipads. This streamlined process will allow multiple users to work on the agenda simultaneously and will save a significant amount of time for Board Clerk staff and others throughout the organization. The software platform will also allow more sophisticated searching and retrieval of past items by both staff and the public, and will increase transparency and access to Board materials for the public.
Automated Check-In	Social Services Dept.	\$1,820	New technology to better control the flow of customers in the Social Services lobby. Wait times can be significant due to the number of customers and other meetings. An electronic check in system will improve wait times, provide for better privacy when having to interact with DSS specialists, and increased efficiency. This system will help support the department by using human resources more effectively and therefore improving the customer experience.
Rapid Response Outreach for Social Services	Social Services Dept.	\$7,600	Rapid response outreach capacity and capability to enable the Department to relate to its customers and stakeholders in new ways. Will increase visibility with under-served and hard-to-reach clients, many of whom are not aware of all the services that are available to them.