

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: Fairfax County

Program Title: DFS Connections

Program Category: Communications and/or Organizational Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Amy Carlini

Title: Public Information Officer

Department: Fairfax County Department of Family Services

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Telephone # 703-324-7758 Fax # 703-324-7332

E-mail: amy.carlini@fairfaxcounty.gov

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: Nannette Bowler

Title: Director, Fairfax County Department of Family Services

Signature: *Nannette M Bowler*

2015 VACo Award Submission



Fairfax County Department of
Family Services

DFS Connections: A Dynamic, Interactive Employee Website

12011 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA 22035
703-324-7500

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs

Included with Entry:

- Application Form
- Program Write-Up
- Short Program Overview
- Press Summary

Fairfax County - Department of Family Services

DFS Connections: A Dynamic, Interactive Employee Website

The Problem:

The Fairfax County Department of Family Services (DFS) includes 2,000 employees in five different divisions, spread over several locations throughout a large county. Employee communications was a challenge. Our printed employee newsletter was time-consuming and expensive, and employees did not find it valuable because by the time it was distributed, it contained old news. The transition to an online newsletter via our employee intranet was an improvement; however, it was still a challenge to gather information from “the field.” The information was mostly top-down and not widely read. Our agency needed an inexpensive and efficient method to promote employee engagement, educate employees about programs and services in divisions other than their own, and improve internal communication.

The Solution:

Beginning in July 2013, we developed a dynamic, interactive employee website (using SharePoint) that includes:

- Articles written by the employees themselves about topics they think are important
- A page where employees can submit kudos for their coworkers
- A suggestion box where employees vote on suggestions. Those that meet a specific threshold are submitted to the senior management team for an online response
- An “Ultimate Guide to DFS Programs and Services” that lists all of our programs, eligibility requirements, contact information and more
- Important DFS initiatives
- Team workspaces
- And much more!

- DFS Countywide Pages**
- Quick Links**
- Community Outreach Events List
- Contact Information for DFS
- Core Values - DFS
- DFS Calendar
- DFS Connections Blog
- Diversity
- Employee Moves
- Messages from the Director
- Org Chart - DFS
- Photo Galleries
- Recognition
- Regional Staff Meeting Schedule
- Ultimate Guide to DFS Programs and Services
- Team/Work Spaces**
- Strategic Planning Workgroups
- WCM Training
- Budget Narrative Team
- Child Welfare Institute
- Communications Team
- CVF QA Team
- DFS Connections Editorial Board
- DFS Senior Management Work Space
- Employee Feedback Group
- Healing of Racism Facilitators
- Leadership Academy Dashboard
- OFW&DSVS Work Site
- P.O.D Unit
- Policy Page List



DFS News Spotlight

Picnic Thank You
by Nannette Bowler, Agency Director
Thank you again to everyone who organized and participated in our first annual DFS Employee Picnic. ... Read more.

Peace Truly Does Begin At Home
by Kathleen Kelmelis, OFW&DSVS
Please consider changing your ordinary plates to something extraordinary with the "Peace Begins at Home" plates. ... Read more.

What's in a Name? Meaning, Purpose and History
by Rita Daniels, Adult and Aging
It is a sign of respect to make an effort to correctly pronounce and remember people's names. ... Read more.

Candy Bars: Ultimate Guide Challenge, Week 2
by the Knowledge Sharing Workgroup
Receive candy bars if you're one of the first to find the answers in the Ultimate Guide! ... Read more.

- Recent Articles**
- The New Employee Welcome Basket**
by Margaret Travers, Cross Division
 - Wanna Earn A Candy Bar? Read below!**
by the Knowledge Sharing Workgroup
 - Visually Speaking**
by the Happiness Matters Workgroup

DFS Topics

- Ultimate Guide to P&S
- Tech Info
- H.R. Corner
- POD
- Kudos
- Happiness Matters
- Team Volunteering
- Suggestion Box

New Kudos To:

new announcement
Kudos to (First and Last Name) Click to
Chuck Berlin
Lisa Vivian, Renee Brown, Sylene I
Tatyana Chambers, Faye Mingo, /
Brenda Rhodes, Moses Lanzas, Ec
Zapata, Rachael Tichacek, Juan Sa
Foster, James Do, Carina Guillen,
Aloumouati

- DFS FairfaxNet Lists**
- Methods - WCM
- Recent**
- 2015 Happiness Matters Celebrations
- Site Contents**

All DFS Connections Articles

DFS Initiatives

Strategic Planning
We are in the process of creating a strategic plan to guide us through 2016. Your input and participation is essential to our success!

Healing of Racism
We strive to create a culture that embraces and celebrates the oneness of humankind every day, where we treat each other and those we serve with genuine respect and appreciation... and it is the rule, not the exception.

FIRST, BREAK ALL THE RULES
First Break All the Rules
The need for more recognition, clarity in what is expected of us, the ability to grow and learn, the need for resources to do our jobs, and more was the feedback given on DFS's strategic goals at the regional meetings. "FBATR" addresses all of these ideas. That is why we are tying the concepts of the book directly to our strategic plan.

STRENGTHS FINDER
StrengthsFinder
The process of becoming strengths-based involves understanding the energy derived by working from strengths, valuing the diversity of strengths and strategically providing opportunities for individual and collective strengths to be maximized. The activity will help DFS prepare for performance evaluations and Career Management Plans.

Bianca, Janet Little, Lisa Payne-Ci
Nease, Natalie Bailey, Alba Quino
Theresa Chen

Editorial Board

- The Editorial Board provides guidance for this website and articles for the News Spotlight. If you have an idea for a future article, please pitch your story to any one of the Board members below.
- Adult and Aging**
Tameca Brown
Rita Daniels
Joel Smith
 - Children, Youth and Families**
 - Cross Division**
 - Director's Office**
Sarah White
 - Office for Children**
Rachel Copeland
 - Office for Women & Domestic and Sexual Violence Services**
Kathleen Kelmelis
 - Self-Sufficiency**
Monica Arzoo
Tameca Franklin
Jessica Pierce
Sandra Zaccarias
 - Communications**
Amy Carlini
Theresa Chen
Kim Clark
Nancy McDonough
Angella Morlu



Department of Family Services - Vision, Mission and Values
Vision By 2020, we will be a model social service agency, understanding and effectively responding to the needs of our community.
Mission Promote the well-being of our diverse community by protecting and improving the lives of children, adults and families through advocacy, education and effective supportive services.
Values Integrity and Accountability, Collaboration/Teamwork, Excellence, Customer Focus, Respect Value Employees

Please email suggestions, comments, or corrections to **DFS Web Team** at HS-DFSWebTeam@fairfaxcounty.gov

This solves the email problem as well. Employees were feeling overwhelmed with too many messages and inboxes were filling up. Now, an email is sent once a week (Monday) with a link to the DFS Connections page and a bulleted list of the new information. This drives employees to the website where information can be easily found (past articles are archived) and they no longer have to search for old emails or be inundated with new ones.

Employee Editorial Board:

From the beginning, we felt it was important that this effort be employee-driven. The agency director of communications asked for volunteers to serve on an Editorial Board to determine what information should be included on the website and how it should be designed. A 20-person Board was selected with representation from every division, every location, and every job class level. Our agency webmaster used the Board's input to design the site, and the Editorial Board then became the main content providers.

They came up with a schedule that ensures at least two new articles each week are sent to the communications director to post. The writers choose their own topics, such as information about different programs, employee spotlights, best practices, book reviews and more. Articles are lightly edited by the communications director and approved by division directors before being posted. Board members serve a six-month term so the opportunity is regularly open to new members.

Kudos:

The Kudos Page was set up so that every employee could enter kudos themselves, limiting the amount of work it would take if one person had to manage the page. This is one of the most popular features of the website.

Not Your Old-Fashioned Suggestion Box:

This is the newest feature to our page, launched just one month ago. Any employee can submit a suggestion. Suggestions remain online for two weeks. During that period, employees rate each suggestion using a star rating system (one-five stars). Those that receive at least 20 ratings with an

average of 4 stars are forwarded to the senior management team for a timely online response. This promotes employee engagement by encouraging people to submit creative ideas. They, in turn, rally their coworkers to vote for their suggestions. The senior management team is held accountable for providing timely feedback for those that meet the criteria, which frees them from responding to duplicate or “one-off” suggestions.

The Ultimate Guide to Programs and Services:

This guide was developed by a team of employee volunteers. Our clients often need multiple services. They may come into DFS through one “door” but could benefit from being directed to additional programs. Employees found it challenging to know about programs outside of their own let alone refer clients to them, so the Ultimate Guide was developed. Employees can find programs through a linked index and easily read about eligibility requirements for each one. Contact information for each program is also listed. This helps us better serve our clients who have many needs. It also helps employees feel like part of one big team rather than several isolated programs and divisions.

Initiatives:

The initiatives section includes information about a book, “First, Break All the Rules,” that DFS is using to frame our thinking and how we do our work. It also has a link to information about “StrengthsFinder,” which is one of the tools that all employees and teams are using for staff development and hiring for talent. “Healing of Racism” is an important training program in which every employee will eventually participate. The fourth initiative is our ongoing strategic planning efforts. We have links to more information about all of these initiatives with frequent updates.

Team Workspaces:

As part of our strategic planning efforts, we currently have more than 12 employee workgroups that are working to find solutions to various challenges we face. Through our DFS Connections webpage, each

group can access a team workspace where shared documents are stored and can be edited by multiple people at one time.

Other Useful Content:

In addition to all of these things, the website also includes links to a “Happiness Matters” page where ideas for icebreakers are posted, as well as other activities that promote happiness in the workplace. We also have a Team Volunteering page to encourage team building while also volunteering in our community. Helpful links to our Professional and Organizational Development page, Human Resources page, and IT page are also on our website.

Results:

We will soon be compiling statistics for Year Two that include the new Suggestion Box and the new Ultimate Guide for Programs and Services. Below are some stats from the first year.



Year One Data (July 8, 2013 – July 8, 2014)

Articles	TOTAL	102
Articles by topic (Board members chose topics)	DFS Programs and/or Initiatives	39
	Best Practices and/or Personal Advice	24
	Miscellaneous/fun	15
	Employee Spotlight	9
	Health and Wellness	8
	Volunteering	7
Editorial Board members	TOTAL	39
Top writers by number of articles	Stacey Hardy, POD	10

	Kathleen Kelmelis, OFWDSVS	6
	Maryam Ulomi, Finance/DAHS	6
	Rita Daniels, Adult and Aging	6
Comments	Total for all articles	68
Most comments for one article	“On the Other Side of the Desk” by Dalal Hamad	6
Kudos Announcements*		104
Hits to DFS Connections page		31,696
Hits to Kudos page		3,024

*One announcement may recognize several employees

The Fairfax County Department of Family Services went from a printed quarterly newsletter that was time-consuming and expensive to produce (and rarely read) to an exciting, dynamic, employee-driven website. Instead of passively reading top-down information, employees actively provide the content through articles and kudos, they provide suggestions and vote on them, they proactively seek and easily find information about programs and services, they work collaboratively to share and edit documents, and they learn about important agency initiatives. DFS Connections is engaging, timely, cost-effective and FUN!

Fairfax County - Department of Family Services

DFS Connections: A Dynamic, Interactive Employee Website

Short Program Overview

The Fairfax County Department of Family Services (DFS) includes 2,000 employees in five different divisions, spread over several locations throughout a large county. Employee communications are a challenge. Beginning in July 2013, DFS developed (using SharePoint) “DFS Connections,” a dynamic, interactive employee website that includes:

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- An “Ultimate Guide to DFS Programs and Services” that lists all of our programs, eligibility requirements, contact information and more
- Important DFS initiatives
- Team workspaces

This dynamic website provides an inexpensive and efficient method to promote employee engagement, educate employees about programs and services in divisions other than their own, and improve internal communication. Instead of passively reading top-down information, employees actively provide the content through articles and kudos, they provide suggestions and vote on them, they proactively seek and easily find information about programs and services, they work collaboratively to share and edit documents, and they learn about important agency initiatives. DFS Connections is engaging, timely, cost-effective and fun.

Fairfax County - Department of Family Services

DFS Connections: A Dynamic, Interactive Employee Website

Press Summary

The Fairfax County Department of Family Services has designed a dynamic, interactive website for employees called “DFS Connections.” This internal website provides an efficient method to promote employee engagement, educate employees about programs and services in divisions other than their own, and improve internal communication. On this site, employees actively provide the content through articles and kudos, they provide suggestions and vote on them, they proactively seek and easily find information about programs and services, they work collaboratively to share and edit documents, and they learn about important agency initiatives. The DFS Connections website is engaging, timely, cost-effective and fun.