

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: Stafford County Government

Program Title: Advanced Life Support (ALS) Pilot Project

Program Category: Criminal Justice and Public Safety

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: Anthony Romanello

Title: County Administrator

Signature: 

Stafford Advanced Life Support (ALS) Pilot Project

Overview

In 2013, Stafford County's Fire and Rescue Department, a combination volunteer and career agency, performed a comprehensive analysis of fire and rescue services. Assuming a performance metric of responding to fire and emergency medical service (EMS) calls within eight minutes or less 90% of the time, and considering deployment of all career and volunteer resources, the study determined a need for 52 additional career positions. Due to fiscal constraints, it would be several years before that many positions could be accommodated in the budget. Accordingly, the department considered low-cost alternatives to enhance response times, and from this, the Stafford Advanced Life Support (ALS) pilot project was born.

The idea was for a 90-day period to move one existing ALS medic unit from an area of Stafford with low call volume (Brooke) to one with high call volume (Rockhill), and use an adaptive staffing model whereby the staff could run an ambulance or join with volunteer staff to run a fire engine. Additionally, one-time savings in the Fire Department budget paid to staff a Quick Response Unit at Brooke.

The benefits were realized quickly:

- Response times were reduced in both areas
- Volunteer staffing increased in both areas
- The adaptive staffing model allowed for greater flexibility and efficiency

The results of this pilot project caused the Board of Supervisors to fund this program in the upcoming budget on an ongoing basis.

Background

The Stafford County Fire and Rescue Department was established in 2005 through an ordinance passed by the Board of Supervisors. The management and organization of the department is under the direction of the County Fire Chief. Operational resources consist of career and volunteer members who respond from stations across the County's 277 square miles serving over 140,000 residents and the bustling Interstate-95 corridor.

A comprehensive risk analysis in 2013 documented the need for an additional 52 career fire and rescue positions to meet the response time standard of eight minutes or less 90% of the time. Knowing that it would take several years to ramp up staffing, the department used an innovative approach to begin to address the gap between personnel and service needs. They focused on two stations in the County – the Brooke and Rockhill Stations. The Brooke Station, in a sparsely populated area, had a career medic unit that responded to very few calls within their first due (immediate response) area and was often called to other areas of the County with higher demand. The Rockhill Station, in a more populous area of the County, had some volunteer staffing but no career staff. The Fire and Rescue Department conducted a 90-day pilot project to determine whether shifting the medic unit from Brooke to Rockhill would shorten response times. At the same time, they assigned a Quick Response Vehicle (QRV) to the Brooke Station and used overtime (paid for with one-time budget savings¹) to fund a career officer for the QRV.

¹ Overtime cost for the pilot project period was \$68,000.

Results

A career ambulance has six full-time personnel assigned to it (two per shift).

Through an adaptive staffing model, these two career personnel at the Rockhill station can run the ambulance or join with volunteers to staff a fire engine or other apparatus where three people is required for minimum staffing.

In Brooke, three career ALS-certified staff (one per shift) were assigned to the QRV. Not only can that officer respond to medical emergencies, he or she can work with volunteer personnel to staff the other pieces of apparatus available at the station, such as the fire engine or rescue units. This increased the department's ability to cover a variety of calls in the Brooke area.

The changes at both stations also increased volunteer staffing. Volunteers are more likely to staff a station if they are able to respond to calls, and with the career staffing and adaptive staffing model at both stations, career and volunteer were better able to leverage resources to run calls.

The study was conducted from September 1, 2014, through November 23, 2014. Fire and Rescue staff evaluated the results on a weekly basis and compared them to the same time period from the previous year:

	Staffing			Response Times (minutes: seconds)		
	2013	2014	Change	2013	2014	Change
Brooke	3.4%	26.2%	+671%	8:18	6:52	-1:26
Rockhill	48.4%	66.7%	+38%	9:32	8:27	-1:05

During the pilot period, response times decreased and volunteer staffing increased. With a small financial investment and a healthy dose of innovation and creativity, the Stafford ALS Pilot Project delivered results.