



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2024.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Albemarle

Program Title: Supervisor Training Program

Program Category: Organizational Development

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Ann Wall

Title: Deputy County Executive

Signature: *Ann Wall*

# VACO Achievement Awards

*Supervisor Training Program*

*Albemarle County, VA*

## Executive Summary

Albemarle County, like many organizations, faced challenges in retaining skilled employees and maintaining operational efficiency in a post-COVID workplace environment and the wake of “The Great Resignation.” Of Albemarle County’s 822 employees, 452 have worked for the organization in their current roles for five years or less. Albemarle County identified the effectiveness of middle management as a crucial factor in addressing these challenges. Middle management faces pressures from above and below, and a survey by the McKinsey Global Survey found that companies may be unintentionally thwarting middle managers’ ability to perform in their roles by being underdeveloped and unempowered. The absence of comprehensive supervisor training can lead to gaps in leadership skills, hindering employee development and organizational effectiveness. The County’s Office of Performance and Strategic Planning (PSP) developed a Supervisor Training Program to address the critical need for well-equipped middle management. The program aims to empower supervisors with the necessary tools and resources to ensure efficient operations, improve employee retention, and foster organizational growth.

## *Narrative*

Prior to the creation of the Supervisor Training Program in 2023, the County offered Key Designated Leader (KDL) training in person to specific supervisors and select non-supervisory staff. The COVID-19 pandemic halted all training programs, and as operations began to return to normal, staff provided feedback that they missed KDL trainings, both for the content provided and the opportunity to engage across departments. With no supervisors' training since the fall of 2019 and significant turnover across the organization during The Great Resignation, the County began re-evaluating what the training program could look like.

Research from Forbes indicates an overwhelming 87% of middle managers “wish they had received more management training” when they first became a manager. That same study showed 98% of managers believe their company needs to offer more training for managers to deal effectively with “important issues such as professional development, conflict resolution, employee turnover, time management, and project management.” According to a study by Gallup, employees who are supervised by engaged managers are 59% more likely to be engaged themselves. Furthermore, organizations with engaged employees experience 41% lower absenteeism and 17% higher productivity.

The challenge was two-fold: first, to bridge the gap in middle management training to improve organizational effectiveness, and second, to enhance employee retention by providing supervisors with the skills and resources needed to support and develop their teams effectively. This required the development of a more robust training program that not only addresses the specific needs of supervisors but also promotes Albemarle County's core values of community, integrity, innovation, stewardship, and learning.

The County started with a smaller training program for supervisors in 2022 that met seven times across 14 weeks with a group of 18 to 25 middle managers. By 2023, it was recognized that while this was a strong program, it was not the most efficient way to train all the County's supervisors on key skills and ensure that all supervisors are operating from a common skill set. The idea evolved to make the program more large-scale with the goal of getting all middle managers in the organization on the same page more quickly and building more cross-departmental connections.

The Supervisor Training Program grew into a comprehensive initiative designed to equip supervisors with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in their roles. The program encompasses various training modules and initiatives tailored to address the needs of middle management. Two Supervisor Conferences were held to equip participants with essential knowledge and skills. The first, in August 2023, saw the participation of 148 supervisors and focused on goal setting and building psychological safety into the supervisor-employee relationship. Based on feedback from the first session on what training supervisors needed most, the second event held in November 2023 focused on principles of conflict management, understanding your own conflict style, and de-escalation skills for 125 participants.

The importance of the Supervisor Training Program is underscored by the impact it has on organizational effectiveness, employee retention, and overall performance. In addition to improving employee engagement and retention, the Supervisor Training Program also plays a vital role in fostering a culture of innovation and collaboration within the organization. By providing supervisors with the skills and resources to effectively lead and develop their teams, the program enables employees to reach their full potential and contribute to the organization's success.

#### *Supervisor Training Program Implementation*

Approximately 14 Albemarle County staff members were involved in implementing the Supervisor Training Program to varying degrees. Preparations began in mid-May with initial communications to

all supervisory staff and meeting notices to block calendars for the identified quarterly conferences. As the summer progressed, PSP staff worked with executive leadership to refine program goals and develop instructional themes, which were then communicated to departmental leadership teams to ensure early buy-in for the program. Human Resources staff worked throughout the summer to prepare their content for the inaugural session, which was focused on effective goal setting. Meanwhile, staff from PSP and the County Executive’s Office worked with an external instructor to adjust their standard program and complete the necessary logistical work for the event.

A detailed breakdown of staff time and focus:

	<b>Type of work</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Cost</b>
HR staff (3)	Preparing instructional content	60	Staff time
CE/PSP staff (4)	Logistics work - finding venue, working with caterer, purchasing supplies, setup, cleanup	10-12	Staff time
PSP staff (2)	Planning, communications, content development	20-30	Staff time
Outside facilitator (1)	Adjusting existing instructional materials	5-6	Donated
Executive leadership	Preparing content, learning about the program and supporting it internally	6-8	Staff time

By November, the preparation and planning time had decreased significantly, as the organization understood and accepted the program concept and goals.

	<b>Type of work</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Cost</b>
PD staff (1)	Preparing instructional content	5	Staff time
CE/PSP staff (3)	Logistics work - finding venue, working with caterer, purchasing supplies, setup, cleanup	5-6	Staff time

PSP staff (3)	Planning, communications, content development	5	Staff time
Outside facilitator (1)	Adjusting existing instructional materials	5-6	Donated

Costs were similar for each event, as they were held at the same location and used the same caterer.

	<b>August</b>	<b>November</b>
Facility rental	815.00	815.00
Catering (breakfast and lunch)	2,843.04	2,843.04
Supplies	476.89	176.53
Snacks	91.70	208.34
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,226.63</b>	<b>4,042.91</b>

One challenge to implementation was including 24/7 shift-based workers, particularly in public safety departments, and due to their limited availability to attend the training. PSP staff met with these departments individually to understand their in-house training programs and ways to enhance their trainings for frontline supervisors by bringing the content from the Supervisor Training Program to their existing programs, rather than requiring them to attend the conference, and thus incur additional staffing/overtime costs.

The County continues to offer quarterly supervisor conferences to reinforce learning and development. The conferences held in calendar year 2024 used a modified approach by grouping several departments together for the curriculum instead of all departments at once. This allowed for easier scheduling and the opportunity for smaller and more targeted discussions on the content of those sessions, which were rooted in HR policy updates and annual performance reviews.

### *Program Results*

Since the start of the program, significant progress has been made in providing continuous training for middle management in Albemarle County.

By investing in supervisor training, Albemarle County is not only improving organizational effectiveness but also fostering a culture of employee development and growth. This program also saw success due to the buy-in of leadership in our organization. With their support in promoting the event, we in turn saw engaged middle managers for the programming, who saw these conferences as an investment in them and their careers.

Following the August conference, participants were surveyed on how they would rate their understanding of the course topics presented on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the least understanding and 5 being the most understanding. The weighted average of those responses showed understanding of how to apply psychological safety behaviors as a supervisor (4.33 out of 5), the expectations for goal setting (3.81 out of 5), and the HR-provided tools and forms for goal setting (3.85 out of 5).

Following the November conference, participants were surveyed on how they would rate their understanding of the course topics presented on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being the least understanding and 5 being the most understanding. The weighted average of those responses showed understanding of their own approach to conflict (4.24 out of 5), how conflict can impact team functions (4.31 out of 5), and strategies for de-escalating conversations when needed (4.25 out of 5).

The ongoing commitment to supervisor training reflects Albemarle County's dedication to continuous improvement and adaptation to meet the evolving needs of its workforce. This proactive approach ensures that supervisors remain equipped with the latest skills and knowledge, enabling

them to lead their teams effectively. Through the Supervisor Training Program, Albemarle County is creating a supportive and empowering environment for its leaders. This investment in human capital has led our organization to a more engaged, productive, and satisfied workforce.





