



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: County of Henrico
Program Title: The Henrico Historical Awareness Project
Program Category: Health & Human Services

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Program Overview

The Henrico Historical Awareness Project, now in its 21st year, is a Henrico County Public Schools initiative that provides a coordinated process for fifth-grade students explore Henrico County's rich history. Facilitated through collaboration with key community organizations, including the Henrico Preservation Advisory Committee and Henrico County Recreation and Parks, this project encourages students to delve into the county's past and present. Students, working independently, create a trifold display, video, or digital product. The project aims to foster historical awareness and appreciation among fifth graders while providing a platform for them to express their insights creatively. The Henrico History Project, supported by various organizations, is a testament to the enduring commitment to cultivating a passion for history among Henrico County's youth.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

The Henrico Historical Awareness Project responds to the need for a more engaging and personalized approach to the study of local history within the fifth grade curriculum. While local history is part of the curriculum during the first nine weeks of the school year, the program acknowledges the challenge of ensuring that students find it interesting and personally relevant. It is important — to not just include local history lessons, but actively engage students in exploring aspects that resonate with their interests. By offering students the opportunity to choose and delve into the history of a person, place or event that captivates them, the Henrico History Project addresses the need for a more dynamic and individualized approach to fostering historical awareness among fifth grade students.

How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

The Henrico Historical Awareness Project stands as a deserving recipient of the award for its contributions to historical education and community engagement. This program has consistently demonstrated exceptional results over its 21-year history, achieving remarkable growth in

participation, student engagement and community involvement. It is a program that demonstrates interagency cooperation to create something that other localities could replicate.

The program's success is underscored by tangible outcomes, including a significant increase in the number of schools and attendees at the division showcase event over the past five years. This growth is a testament to the program's ability to captivate and inspire a broader audience of fifth grade students, families and community members. The Henrico History Project's emphasis on inclusivity, active student participation and collaborative community partnerships sets it apart as a model for accessible and impactful historical education. Its adaptability, longevity and commitment to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion priorities further highlight its outstanding contributions. Recognizing the program's transformative impact on education and community unity, the Henrico Historical Awareness Project fulfills the criteria for a VACo award.

How Program Was Carried Out

The Henrico Historical Awareness Project is a cornerstone in fostering a deeper appreciation for local history among fifth grade students in Henrico County. This divisionwide initiative, now entering its 21st year, is a collaboration between Henrico County Public Schools and Henrico County Recreation and Parks. The program also involves various community organizations, including the Henrico Preservation Advisory Committee, the Henrico County Historical Society and the Association for the Preservation of Henrico Antiquities.

The primary objective of the Henrico Historical Awareness Project is to actively engage fifth grade students in exploring and celebrating Henrico County's history. The program aims to go beyond the traditional classroom curriculum by offering students a hands-on, creative opportunity to delve into the rich tapestry of their local community. By creating trifold displays, essays, videos or digital products, Students are encouraged to express their insights into a chosen person, place or event that has significantly shaped Henrico County's history by creating trifold displays, essays, videos or digital products.

The program has evolved over two decades, continually refining its approach to meet students' changing needs and interests. Students could only submit essays for the first 17 years of the program. Beginning in 2016, all students created a trifold display. Beginning in 2022, the program expanded and students were able to create a project of their choice (trifold displays, essays, videos or digital products). The development and implementation of the Henrico History Project is an ongoing process, with yearly cycles that align with the academic calendar. The program culminates in a division showcase event in November, providing a timeline for students to showcase their work. This year's showcase was held at the new Henrico Sports and Events Center.

The primary participants in the Henrico Historical Awareness Project are fifth grade students enrolled in Henrico County Public Schools. Under the guidance of their teachers, these students actively engage with the program during the designated period for the study of local history within the curriculum. The project is designed to be inclusive, allowing every fifth grade student across the division to participate voluntarily at the school level. Each school is able to select one student to showcase their project at the division level, fostering a sense of community and shared heritage.

Henrico County's role is pivotal in implementing the Henrico Historical Awareness Project. The school system coordinates with the Department of Recreation and Parks for all program aspects. Various community organizations help with judging, provide prizes for students and attend the showcase event in November. These organizations include the Henrico Preservation Advisory Committee, Henrico County Historical Society and the Association for the Preservation of Henrico Antiquities

Henrico County Public Schools and Henrico County's Department of Recreation and Parks, in tandem, provide the logistical support necessary for the divisionwide initiative, ensuring that resources, venues and communication channels are available for a successful program implementation. HCPS provides training and materials and actively encourages teachers to

integrate the Henrico History Project into their curriculum, promoting the voluntary participation of fifth grade students in this unique exploration of local history.

The success of the Henrico Historical Awareness Project is significantly augmented by the invaluable contributions of various community partners. The Henrico Preservation Advisory Committee, The Henrico County Historical Society and the Association for the Preservation of Henrico Antiquities play pivotal roles in enriching the program. These organizations provide crucial financial support for prizes and actively engage with students during the showcase event, fostering a deeper connection between students and their local history. Historic Preservation Advisory Committee members go beyond financial contributions: they serve on the judging committee, offering their expertise and insights to evaluate the students' projects. This multifaceted involvement ensures a holistic and meaningful experience for participants.

Furthermore, the commitment of members of the Henrico County Board of Supervisors and Henrico County School Board adds another layer of support. Their attendance at the event and active participation in presenting the awards not only recognizes the students' achievements, but also emphasizes the program's significance within the broader community. The collaborative efforts of these community partners, including elected officials, amplify the impact of the Henrico History Project, making it a community-driven and celebrated initiative.

The Henrico Historical Awareness Project has navigated challenges and embraced innovations over the years, demonstrating a commitment to staying dynamic and responsive to evolving needs.

One significant challenge has been ensuring sustained enthusiasm among students and educators. In response, the program has undergone continuous evolution, introducing innovative elements to maintain freshness and relevance. Incorporating diverse presentation formats, including trifold displays, videos and digital products, has been key. This approach caters to varying learning styles and also provides students with creative outlets to express their understanding of local history.

A noteworthy innovation has been the relocating the awards reception and showcase to the new Henrico Sports & Events Center. The program outgrew its original space as it increased in popularity and participation. The move to the new venue addresses the challenge of accommodating a growing number of students, their families and community members, providing ample space and parking for everyone involved.

The longevity of the program serves as a testament to its adaptability. Continuous feedback loops involving teachers, students and community partners play a crucial role in refining the program. This collaborative approach ensures that the Henrico History Project remains a dynamic and effective vehicle for fostering historical awareness among the youth of Henrico County. The ability to overcome challenges and embrace innovations has not only sustained the program but also elevated its impact on the community and enriched the educational experience for all involved.

The Henrico Historical Awareness Project profoundly impacts both students and the broader community. For students, the program provides a unique opportunity to connect with their local history in a meaningful way. By allowing them to choose a person, place or event that resonates with their interests, the project transforms historical learning into a personal and memorable experience.

The school division event is a platform for students to share their insights and creations with their families, peers and the wider community. This celebration highlights the academic achievements of fifth grade students and fosters a sense of pride and community engagement. Families, community leaders and local organizations come together to celebrate the students' efforts, creating a shared experience that strengthens the bonds within Henrico County.

The Henrico Historical Awareness Project is a testament to the power of collaborative community efforts in enhancing education. With its enduring legacy, the program not only addresses the need for a more engaging approach to local history but also actively contributes to the cultural fabric of Henrico County. Through the collaborative spirit of community organizations, the dedication of educators and the creativity of students, the Henrico History Project continues to shape the

historical consciousness of the county's youth, fostering a sense of pride and connection to their community's rich heritage.

Financing and Staffing

The Henrico Historical Awareness Project operates efficiently, minimizing costs while delivering a rich and impactful educational experience. The program's structure allows it to be both sustainable and replicable, demonstrating a commitment to providing accessible historical education to fifth grade students.

The capital costs associated with the Henrico History Project are notably minimal. The community partners play a pivotal role in sponsoring prizes, alleviating the financial burden on public schools. The Henrico County Department of Recreation and Parks generously secures the venue and contributes to the event's success by providing food, further reducing costs for participating schools. Schools benefit from existing resources, as all fifth graders are equipped with Chromebooks, eliminating the need for additional technology investments. Any necessary trifold boards for student presentations are purchased by the school division on an as-needed basis, ensuring that every student has the necessary tools for participation. This targeted approach to capital costs ensures responsible resource allocation and sustainability.

The operating costs associated with developing and implementing the program are efficiently managed. Community partners contribute expertise and support without imposing financial burdens on the school system. Their commitment ensures that the program maintains its educational integrity while keeping operating costs at a minimum.

While paper and copies are necessary for judging and program materials, these costs are modest and manageable. The program's collaborative nature reduces the financial strain on individual schools and there is no cost to the school or student. The commitment of community partners and the effective use of existing resources contribute to a streamlined and cost-effective program implementation.

The Henrico Historical Awareness Project serves as a model for cost-effective and impactful historical education programs that can be replicated elsewhere. The key to replicability lies in the collaborative partnerships forged with community organizations, mitigating the need for significant capital investment by schools or divisions. By securing sponsorships for prizes and leveraging existing resources, the program demonstrates a scalable approach that can be adapted to varying budget constraints.

Program Results

The Henrico Historical Awareness Project has consistently demonstrated remarkable success over the years. Tangible outcomes and increasing participation reflect the program's positive effects on students, educators and the broader community.

Increased Participation: One of the clearest indicators of success is the substantial increase in participation over the last five years. The number of schools involved and the overall attendance at the division showcase event have witnessed notable growth. This upward trajectory is a testament to the program's ability to engage and captivate a widening audience of fifth grade students, their families and community members.

| Year | % of Schools Participating |
|---------------|--------------------------------|
| 2017 | 73% |
| 2018 | 83% |
| 2019 | 85% |
| 2020 and 2021 | Event not held due to COVID-19 |
| 2022 | 87% |

| | |
|------|-----|
| 2023 | 94% |
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Enhanced Student Engagement: The program's focus on allowing students to choose topics that resonate with their interests has resulted in heightened engagement. Students are not merely learning about history; they are actively exploring and presenting topics they find personally compelling. This shift from passive learning to active participation has led to increased enthusiasm among students, fostering a genuine interest in local history and its relevance to their lives.

Quality of Student Projects: The quality of student projects has consistently improved, reflecting the program's success in achieving its educational objectives. Trifold displays, videos and digital products created by students showcase a depth of research, creativity and critical thinking. The diversity of presentation formats allows students to express themselves in ways that align with their unique learning styles, resulting in well-rounded and impactful projects.

Educator Satisfaction and Integration into Curriculum: Educators express high levels of satisfaction with the program, highlighting its effectiveness in enhancing fifth grade students' learning experiences. The program's integration into the curriculum ensures widespread participation, with teachers recognizing its value in providing a unique and engaging educational opportunity. The collaborative approach involving educators in the development and refinement of the program has contributed to its seamless integration in the school curriculum.

The program's sustained success over 21 years is a remarkable achievement. Its ability to adapt to evolving educational needs, feedback from stakeholders and changes in student demographics speaks to the program's resilience and relevance. The continuous feedback

loops involving teachers, students and community partners have been instrumental in refining the program and ensuring its ongoing effectiveness.